Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I hold the Minister in high respect, but I think we should have something more than just a mere statement that this is the law, and that is all there is to it. I would like the Honorary Minister to make a statement regarding the point I have raised, so that I may be able to inform the returned soldiers that a decision will be reached in the near future.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West—in reply) [6.7]: Obviously, I cannot give the hon. member an official reply to the question he has submitted. I should advise him to see the Director of Land Settlement, Mr. Fyfe, and that should be very easy to arrange. Everyone knows the difficulties that have confronted Mr. Fyfe and his officers in regard to this problem.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Yes, but it is time something was done.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If the hon. member were to approach Mr. Fyfe on the subject, I am sure he would receive a satisfactory reply.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 7th November, 1946.

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

QUESTIONS.

FISH.

As to Quantity Canned, Exported, Etc.

Mr. McDONALD asked the Minister for the North-West:

1, What weight of fish was exported from Western Australia during the year ended the 30th June, 1946?

2, What proportion of such exports were—(a) canned; (b) not canned; (c) sent to the Eastern States of Australia; (d) sent to other countries?

3, What weight of fish during the same period left this State as ships' stores?

4, Since operations commenced in Perth for the canning of Perth herring up to the 30th June, 1946, has the take of Perth herring from the Swan River for such canning operations increased or decreased?

5, What is the percentage increase or decrease?

6, To what causes is such increase or decrease attributed?

7, Is it a fact that the supplies of Perth herring in the Swan River have been seriously depleted?

8, Are exports of fish from this State to the Eastern States continuing?

9, Will such exports accentuate the shortage of fish for local food consumption?

The MINISTER replied:

1, 38,736 lbs.

2, (a) 23,690 lbs.; (b) 15,046 lbs; (c) 19,895 lbs.; (d) 18,841 lbs.

3, As quantities of fish for ships' stores are purchased for cash, the providors are unable to furnish accurate details of such purchases.

4, Decreased.

5, 43 per cent.

6, During the war period Perth herring was being caught compulsorily by fishermen specially reserved from Army service for the purpose of catching this species, which was then being canned for the Armed Forces. Since the cessation of hostilities, no compulsion has been exercised and fishermen have to a large extent shifted their operations to species for which they receive a much higher

price than that allowed by the Prices Branch for Perth herring.

7, No.

8, Yes.

9, It is not correct to assume that there is a shortage of fish for local consumption. If the total quantity sent to the Eastern States and other countries in the year 1945-46 had been available to the people of Western Australia, it would have meant only a little more than one ounce extra for each man, woman and child in the State. Such exports consequently have little or no effect on the quantities available to the public here.

CHAMBERLAIN TRACTOR FACTORY.

As to Proposed Industry at Welshpool.

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Works:

1, Is he correctly reported in "The West Australian" of the 24th October, 1946 (regarding the proposed Chamberlain Tractor Factory at Welshpool) as stating that 1,000 operatives would be employed there by the 30th June, 1947, and that 1,000 tractors would be completed and released by the 31st December, 1947?

2, If so, what data was used to enable such conclusions to be reached?

3, What is the estimated annual demand for tractors in Western Australia during the next five years?

4, What proportion of that demand is it anticipated the Chamberlain tractor can meet and upon what data is that anticipation based?

5, When production reaches 2,000 tractors a year, is it considered that export to other States and countries will be possible?

6, To what States and countries is such export likely and in what quantities?

7, What anticipation is there that prices of these tractors will be sufficiently competitive to enable export to be made?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes.

2, Information supplied by Chamberlain Industries compiled from data obtained from manufacturing two prototype machines.

3, At least 1,000 per annum.

4, Seventy-five per cent. based on anticipated demand.

5, Yes.

6, (a) All States; (b) Africa, India, Near East and New Zealand; (c) quantities will be determined by trade demands.

7, Orders have already been received from the above countries at profitable prices.

THREATENED CESSATION OF POWER.

As to Handling of Eggs.

Mr. FOX (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture: In view of the cessation of power as from 6 a.m. tomorrow and the perishable nature of the product, what arrangements have been made for the receiving, candling and grading of eggs?

The MINISTER replied: The Deputy Controller of Egg Supplies has arranged for the handling and cold storage of eggs arriving at the Metropolitan Markets, the cost of such storage and the additional cartage involved to be paid from the funds of the Controller of Egg Supplies. Growers will be paid on the candling and grading outturn as soon as candling facilities are again available. It is hoped that arrangements can be made by the Marketing Board for an auxiliary plant which will enable candling to be resumed early next week.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

As to Threatened Railway Stoppage.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne): With the permission of the House, I should like to make a statement. I announce with the greatest regret that negotiations with the Loco Drivers' Union for a settlement of the dispute have failed and the issue is now far beyond the question of the working of Garratt engines. A far wider issue is involved and a more important one, namely, whether industrial disputes are to be settled by legal and constitutional methods or by direct action. By rejecting our offer to mediate and the generous offer made by the Government yesterday for a settlement, the union has taken the responsibility of plunging this country into industrial chaos. It is not the Commissioner of Railways or the President of the Arbitration

Court or the Government that the union will injure, but thousands of fellow-workers.

I should like to trace the course of this dispute. In September, 1945, when 19 Garratts were working, the first threat of a stoppage was issued to the Government in the form of an ultimatum unless the Garratts were withdrawn from service. On the 4th October, 1945, a letter was received from Mr. A. R. Davies, president of the union, addressed to the Minister for Railways, who was then in Sydney on State business, stating that no A.S.G. engine would be taken on traffic after 12.1 a.m. on Thursday, the 11th October. I received that letter on behalf of the Minister for Railways and gave it every consideration. I replied in temperate terms and asked that, before such drastic action were taken, the union should explore every possible avenue. I took the unusual course of addressing the union during that week, with the result that the ultimatum was withdrawn and, on my promise that a Royal Commission would be appointed, proposals were submitted to the union and agreed to by the union. These proposals are contained in a letter dated the 11th October, 1945, in which the Government approved the appointment of the most impartial person it could select to make the inquiry—a judge of the Supreme Court.

The conditions accepted as an alternative to the union's ultimatum were—

That a Royal Commission be appointed.

That all Garratts then in service be continued in service.

As I have already stated, they numbered 19.

That all Garratts out of service and awaiting minor repairs and alterations be restored to service.

That all Garratts then in service requiring major repairs and frequently out of service be given a low priority on the repair list.

Other conditions such as the speed limit of trains, the withdrawal of Garratts from passenger trains and the driving of them bunker first were submitted and agreed to by the Commissioner. Subsequent to that, a letter was received by me from the union thanking me and members of the Cabinet for sincere and sympathetic efforts to bring about a settlement of the dispute, the repercussions of which—and these are their own words—"could have been tremendous." The State executive of the A.L.P. placed on record sincere thanks for the Government's unremitting attention to a matter which might have caused the most grave industrial dislocation, and expressing appreciation of the terms of settlement.

In response to a letter submitted to the union and containing the suggested terms of reference, a reply was received stating that the terms of reference given to the judge appeared to cover all the points in dispute. Those terms of reference were to determine whether such locomotives fulfilled all reasonable requirements from the point of view of safe, economical and satisfactory working and, if not, whether alterations and modifications were practicable to achieve such working; and whether such locomotives should be discontinued in use. It was obvious from the very start that some members of the union were never desirous of a settlement by any other means than by direct action. No sooner was the agreement reached and the Commissioner appointed, than there were continued requests to the Government, in spite of the undertaking in regard to engines requiring minor repairs, pressing for the removal of the Garratts.

Unfortunately, the Government did not think it necessary to have a definition of what constituted minor or major repairs, with the result that no engine which has gone off traffic since the appointment of the Royal Commissioner has gone back into traffic with the approval of the union. The Commissioner continued in all States with his investigations. He spared no effort in making inquiries from men of very high standing—from both constructional engineers and engineers responsible for designing and building engines of all types. After a rather lengthy period—longer than we had originally hoped—he submitted his report. In the initial stages, the Government agreed to abide by his decisions. Even if it meant the complete scrapping of all Garratt engines purchased by the Government, the Government stood to abide by that decision.

But the Royal Commissioner, after giving a very complete scrutiny, examining many authoritative witnesses and conferring with many experienced people, said very definitely that, in spite of the Garratts having defects in design and many weaknesses, including some factors that required amending in regard to rendering them safe, there was no reason whatever why they should be discarded. He said there was no justification

whatever—these were his words—for taking the action of the Queensland Railway Department and the unions in discarding those engines. In his recommendations, he stated that to amend the safety factor, engines in traffic should be checked regularly for axlebox sideplay, and, if the tolerance did not exceed ⅜ of an inch, there was no reason why the engines should be withdrawn from traffic. He made many other recommendations and suggestions which, in his own words, "looks more formidable than it really is." In addition, he recommended that all the works associated with redesign of the bogey and other important aspects be under the control of an engineer apointed by the Commonwealth Government. But he stated very definitely that the engines then in traffic should be permitted to continue in traffic, provided those checks were regularly made. Members have been furnished with a copy of his report.

There is nothing ambiguous in what the Commissioner states as to there being no justification whatever for the removal of the Garratts from traffic provided the safety factors he listed, particularly axlebox sideplay, were given attention. On receipt of the report, the Government gave it immediate consideration and adhered to its decision, made at the time of his appointment, that it would do all in its power to implement the recommendations. It immediately communicated with the Commonwealth Government regarding the appointment of an engineer. Unfortunately, that was just prior to the Commonwealth elections and, in spite of reminders, we have had no satisfactory result from our approach to the Commonwealth. But, so that it could not be said that the Government was tardy in giving effect to the recommendations, we have approached the Governments of South Australia and New South Wales.

We first approached South Australia, for the reason that at Islington workshops we considered there were likely to be available engineers of high standing and experience. Although Mr. Playford's first reaction was favourable, he found, after some days, that it was impossible to accede to our request. I continued, therefore, to press for the satisfaction of the requirements of the Royal Commission in regard to an engineer from the Commonwealth, but with no satisfactory result. I then approached, in a personal way, the Premier of New South Wales, who readily agreed to examine all prospects of making available to us an engineer capable of giving effect to the recommendations.

I had a conversation with Mr. McKell on Monday last, and he said he thought he could assist us, because the Commissioner of Railways had been asked by him thoroughly to scrutinise his position and advise whether any such appropriate man would be available. I had word, in conversation with him two days ago, that we could rest assured he would provide an engineer, and he asked for further details of the work expected of that engineer so that he might appoint and send to us not only the best man he had but the most appropriate man for the purpose for which we required him. Mr. McKell has had that information. We know that he has been out of town since yesterday, and I am still awaiting information both as to the time when the engineer can be sent to us and his name; but he is coming.

Something has been said by the union as to the tardiness of the Government in giving effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner, but the only reason it has not been possible to have axlebox sideplay and other urgent requirements checked has been the non-co-operation of the union. At every stage the union insisted that no more Garratts should go into traffic, and that has been its attitude the whole way through.

At the stage when the union again developed a tendency to issue an ultimatum, and after the Government had expressed a desire to have the union's comments on the recommendations to enable us to give effect to them, we requested those comments in writing. We also requested, in writing, the comments of the Commissioner of Railways, and although to him the Royal Commissioner's finding are very unpalatable, he has agreed to co-operate to the limit with the Government in giving effect to them, but the union has not at any stage, in spite of repeated requests, given us in written words any comment on the recommendations. Instead of that, it pressed for a meeting with the Minister for Railways and myself, to discuss the report. If there was any approach at that stage it was not to me, but to the Minister, who was ultimately able to get them to meet him, and it

was obvious that they did not intend to make any comment on the recommendations, but continued to request, and press that request, that the Garratt engines should go out of traffic.

There was no other qualification, and finally it was again found necessary, on the eve of an ultimatum being issued, for a sub-committee of Cabinet to meet the union. We met four members of its executive in the presence of the Royal Commissioner, Mr. Justice Wolff, and after two or three hours of discussion, of criticism of the report, criticism of the Garratts and criticism of the administration, I asked Mr. Justice Wolff whether anything he had heard or anything that had happened since he framed his report and recommendations would induce him to alter in any way his recommendations or to vary his report, and he said, "Not one word, and not in any way." Shortly after that an ultimatum was issued that, as from midnight on a certain date, the Garratts would cease work. The Government notified the State Disputes Committee of the Australian Labour Party. It was asked by the President of the Arbitration Court, who had noted what was transpiring through public statements, whether the Government would be prepared to meet him and the representatives of the union. We did that.

We discussed many alternatives as to what might be, pending the appointment of an engineer, an agreed basis for the continuation of the working of Garratts, but not at any stage did we find the representatives of the union co-operative. The Government, however, through its representatives in Cabinet, continued in an endeavour to negotiate. It continued to endeavour to give effect to the Royal Commissioner's recommendations and, indeed, a sub-committee of Cabinet met representatives of the union and made the suggestion that all new work at the loco. workshops at Midland be suspended, and that the 50 or so men then released be put half on the older type of engines for repairs and half to service Garratts and make them roadworthy. We made every advance that could be imagined, and finally, with another ultimatum pending, we met in the Arbitration Court on the morning of Sunday, the 13th October.

It was then the Government suggested that, pending the appointment of an engineer, the six Garratts then in traffic continue to be worked, as the Commissioner of Railways had explained how desperate was the position of the Railway Department with its seriously depleted tractive power. The Commissioner of Railways was pressing for at least 12, or if possible 18 Garratts, to be again in traffic by Christmas time, but no plea of the Government, no expression or desire from us, no guarantee that no more than six Garratts would continue in traffic until the engineer arrived and until one engine—we suggested three to start with—be completely equipped in accordance with the Royal Commissioner's report, met with any response. That, again, was not satisfactory to the union and so, as days went by, for various reasons the number of Garratts in service was reduced to three, although six were awaiting immediate return to traffic, in the yards at Midland.

To show how desperate has been the attitude of the union to get the Garratts out of service under any pretext, even during the course of the inquiry, when one engine had to be fitted with certain test appliances, the union insisted that if an engine then in the yards went on traffic for the test, one in traffic had to be withdrawn. In an endeavour decently and peacefully to solve this serious problem, the Government agreed even to that. What happened following the conferences in the Court of Arbitration is not ancient history. It is well in the minds of members how the President of the Arbitration Court found that he was dealing with people who could not be relied on, and against whom he expressed his opinion in very hard words. The union has attacked the Government in the Press and has made untrue statements, but our attitude has continued to be that, while there was a hope remaining of a settlement of this dispute, nothing provocative would come from us.

We refrained from making any public statement because we felt that any statement issued in terms silimar to those being used by the union, would wreck every hope of settlement. But apparently our restraint has been interpreted as weakness. I think it may be necessary to comment on the insincerity of some members of the executive of the union, and although that has already been done by the President of the Arbitration Court, and although I do not intend to indulge in a contest of invective,

such statements as the one that this Government is the enemy of the workers are such palpable drivel as will serve to show the tendencies of the persons who make such comments. It has been stated by them that out of loyalty to the Labour Government they kept the Garratts working. Had they honoured their promise and undertaking it was possible for 19 Garratts—provided only minor repairs were necessary—to be kept in traffic. Had they honoured their obligation the Garratts would have been in traffic—and many more than were actually in traffic—so the suggestion that they were working Garratts and had worked them out of loyalty to the Labour Government is a mere sham, and by their irresponsible action they have defied the court, the Government, the Labour Party and the community.

In the last few days we have made every endeavour to obtain an eleventh hour saving of the serious situation with which this country is now faced. No effort has been spared by the Government, which has continued to be decent in its approach, with a desire to uphold the Constitution as well as the civil law, but that has simply been thrown back in our faces. The allegation that this Government has not been and is not sympathetic to the workers is just plain communistic nonsense. I am reminded of the statement made yesterday by the president of the union who described himself as a fanatic. He certainly behaved like one. He made a statement which involved the principle that there is no need for Governments, no need for Administrations. He said that if the Government forced this dispute on the union, admitting the seriousness of the step as the Government had pointed out to them and admitting how the people must suffer, they would see to it by taking possession of the trains and carting the food to the community. In other words, the Government did not matter at all! It was the attitude and the declaration of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

In spite of all that nas been said to us and our endeavours to negotiate, we submitted to the union what was perhaps the last approach that a Government could make, and it was made at about 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon. That approach was made with a definite purpose, not to show any sign of weakness, but to display absolute generosity and to show that Ministers were prepared even at the last hour to meet them. The four points that appeared in the Press this morning involved certain basic principles. The first represented in other words—no victimisation. The second provided an opportunity for the union to have somewhere to which to retreat—that the Garratt engines be withdrawn from service and the men not asked to work them during the intervening days that will follow until the engineer arrives. The third point insisted upon the working of the Garratts after the arrival of the engineer and the appointment of a committee, the members of which were to say if the engines were safe to work. The fourth point provided that we were prepared to see that only a limited number of the Garratts should remain in work.

After very many hours of negotiation, with the Government pointing out the drastic effect on the community of this State, the suffering that must take place, the disorganisation that must immediately be with us and pressing hard with its desire that constitutional means be observed, we met with no reasonable response at all. As a matter of fact, acceptance of the terms set out in their reply to us would have been tantamount to unqualified surrender. It was worded in a way that was so ambiguous that it provided no basis upon which a settlement could be reached, because any basis of settlement, if it is to express any meaning at all, must be explicit.

Early this morning, no agreement being possible, the undertaking given to us was that the union executive would meet at 10 o'clock today to consider the four points agreed to by them as a counter to our proposals—they were not very different, but almost identical with ours—and to consider a fifth point. The executive was to meet at 10 a.m., but it did not meet. On the other hand, the representatives of the union were at Midland Junction and Fremantle—according to the Press—and motions were carried by the branches there supporting the action of the union.

This afternoon the Disputes Committee of the Australian Labour Party, which has endeavoured to take hold of this dispute and to deal with it lawfully and constitutionally within the constitution of the Labour Party itself, has been unable to have the dispute handed over to it by the

union. In my view the men were determined to strike and what has happened in the last 24 hours in their approaches to us was a mere pretence and a sham. We therefore got to the stage where, knowing that the representatives of the union acknowledged that they in their last sentence, when we analysed it, had apparently tricked themselves instead of us, there could be no basis for negotiation in these circumstances. They have refused to accept the terms—and they were generous terms—of the Government.

Now the position is that whatever approach is made, it will not be on the terms suggested by us. We get back to the point where we were when the Royal Commissioner submitted his report. In the meantime we await the arrival of the engineer to assist us in giving effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. In the interim the public, the innocent victims of this unlawful action, must suffer. The Government feels that all those who are associated within the Labour movement with this union cannot stand for the actions and decisions of the union executive. In that union and on its executive are some very fine men, but we have no opportunity to negotiate with them. They have decided their course of action—not on the issue of the Garratt engines, not whether three or 25 of them shall be worked, but whether the Government shall govern.

So we are at this point, Mr. Speaker, that despite all the support that the union will get from the Communistic Press and through those who are allied either directly with communism or with that brand of sentiment, no action of their own in recent times has been constitutional within the constitution of the Australian Labour Party. Thus, while we realise that the public of this State will suffer tremendously and while we realise that the public might, while not suffering fully, be disposed if not to support, to sympathise somewhat with the Government, we also realise that the self-same public may in a very short time, when their suffering has become more intense, say, "What is the Government doing? The issue is merely as to three Garratt engines." That is not the issue. What I have said to the House represents almost, from the Government angle, the full story of this dispute.

BILL—LOAN £5,050,000.

Message.

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

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton-Leederville) [5.12] in moving the second reading said: This is the Bill that was foreshadowed when I spoke on a motion moved by the member for Toodyay. It deals not only with the various concessions which the Government proposes to extend to ex-Servicemen of the recent war, but also includes a number of other matters it is desirable to incorporate in the Act. As a matter of fact, in view of the numerous amendments that have been made during the past few years, the introduction of a consolidated measure was in contemplation but finally it was decided to introduce the Bill to deal with some essential amendments and then later on, if the opportunity offered, to present to the House a consolidated measure. The Land Act at present specifies the principal officers associated with the department. Since the Act was last amended the organisation of the department has been changed to the extent that the special problems of land settlement, including war service settlement, have been placed under the control of the Director of Land Settlement. The Bill includes a provision for the legal recognition of the appointment of that officer.

A matter that has on a number of occasions proved a vexed question and which has arisen out of circumstances that are the direct result of war conditions, relates to the disposal of town lots by the Crown. At present it is essential in accordance with the provisions of the Act, that the freehold of such land shall be sold by the department only by auction. We have had some weird experiences in carrying out that provision. As the Crown is not bound by the regulations controlling land prices, the lots have been knocked down to the highest bidder. On several occasions very high prices have been paid for such land. In most instances the lots were made available at the request of people genuinely de-

siring to build on them, but the prices sometimes went beyond the resources of genuine buyers, a position which the department was unable to control. When they were put up to auction, we found that the person who was genuinely trying to secure a block for a home was in keen competition with people desiring to invest in land and that in most cases he was unable to secure a block. This position has got beyond control.

It is interesting to note that on the Goldfields, where people are accustomed to leasehold tenures, the department made available a number of lots on a leasehold basis. Where more than one application was received for a lot, the matter was dealt with by a land board, which had regard to and required evidence of the applicants' intention and ability to build. By that system it was possible to meet the genuine demand that existed and there was even a surplus of lots available to meet future requirements. But it was not always possible to apply the leasehold system so sucessfully in other parts of the State, as it was found by experience that no sooner was the leasehold granted when the leaseholder made application to have his lease converted to freehold. The new provisions proposed in the Bill will enable town lots to be sold under special conditions, under which such blocks—both for sale and leasing—will be allocated by a land board in those cases where more than one person applies for one.

The board will be able to ensure that the needs of the persons genuinely desiring land for home-building or for legitimate business purposes will be considered before those who merely wish to speculate or seek an avenue for investment. It is also provided that where town lots are leased under the special provisions of the proposed new section, the lessees will not have the automatic right to apply for the freehold at any time after the lease is granted. This has happened in the past. As I said, no sooner has a lease been granted when application is made for the freehold. Not only does this cause much work in the department, but the department is unable to ensure that the land is utilised for the purpose for which it was granted. I am quite satisfied that a land board, which can be appointed from time to time—there will not necessarily be only one board—will be able to allocate these lots fairly.

I could give the House much information as to what has happened in the past with regard to the sales of these blocks, but I do not desire to weary members in that way now. In the past 10 years, much progress has been made under various schemes of reconstruction which the Government has instituted in the marginal areas, the lakes country and salt-affected areas, including schemes in which the Rural and Industries Bank is concerned. The work, however, is by no means complete. In some cases revision of the original programme may be desirable in the light of experience, and other areas still require to be dealt with. The majority of these schemes has one feature in common, which is that they are largely based on the programme of linking properties to provide additional land in order to make an economic unit in the areas concerned, as found necessary by experience.

To give effect to these programmes, power is required to allot the various additional areas to specific persons. At present, the general procedure has been to throw the land open for selection by the public. The new section will enable areas affected by reconstruction schemes to be defined for such purposes, and the land available therein may be disposed of to particular persons under the provisions of the scheme. Members are aware that in the marginal areas we have increased the acreage for individual farmers from 2,000 up to 5,000 and 7,000. This is to enable them to run sheep. There may be four or five settlers, and we may have to divide a block in two. Under the present system, it is difficult to say that one part shall go to three settlers and another part to two settlers. However, the farmers have greatly assisted us to overcome these difficulties.

The proposed new section will enable areas in reconstruction schemes to be defined for such purposes. Mr. Fyfe, who, as a Royal Commissioner, conducted an inquiry into the pastoral industry in 1941, made a number of recommendations the majority of which the Government has implemented, and thus a considerable measure of relief has been afforded to this important industry. Several of the recommendations, however, involve amendments of the Land Act and the oppor-

tunity is now being taken to incorporate them in that Act. Paragraph 367 of the Commissioner's report recommended that the Pastoral Appraisement Board should be given power to request lessees to submit any evidence required by the board when dealing with reappraisement of rent of pastoral leases, or applications for relief from payment of rent owing to losses by drought, flood, etc. In the majority of cases information required by the board has been readily supplied, but there have been occasions when all the information needed by the board was not forthcoming. Mr. Fyfe was the chairman of the board for a number of years and is well seized of the problems with which it has to deal. The proposed new section will give the board power to call and examine witnesses on oath.

The board will also be able to require lessees to submit evidence considered necessary, such as books of account, etc. These powers are essential, as the board has to make recommendations that, in some cases, involve considerable concessions. Paragraph 366 of the Royal Commissioner's report recommended that the Pastoral Appraisement Board should be given the power to recommend relief from pastoral lease rent for a period not exceeding two years from the end of a drought. The Act at present only makes provision for the board to recommend relief in a year when losses from drought, flood, etc., occur. The Bill will extend the additional powers to the board as recommended by the Royal Commissioner. The board has been making its recommendations where necessary on the basis suggested and in a number of cases approval has been given to its recommendations pending an amendment to the Act. It is now desired to give legal effect to this procedure. I doubt whether any member will disagree with the principle involved.

A long period of drought, such as many stations experienced in recent years, may be followed by a good season; but, as the stations do not suffer losses in that year, the owners are not in a position to take advantage of the improvement in the season. It takes a considerable period to restock the properties and during this period little income is received, while large expenditure must be incurred to secure additional stock. Members will agree that the work of the Appraisement Board is most important, and the Government's desire is to give it this power so that everything possible may be done for the people of the North-West. It is at present provided in the Act that the Land Purchase Board shall inspect properties recommended for purchase by the Crown. There are many properties at present to be dealt with and inspected; and, on the grounds of urgency and more expeditious handling of war service land settlement, an amendment is sought to permit of a little more latitude in the matter of inspections by the board.

Cases may arise where it is difficult for all the members of the board to inspect a particular property and this occasions delay in dealing with the offer under consideration. The Bill requires the board to satisfy itself as to the fair value of the land and improvements and also its suitability for agricultural settlement, but will not make mandatory an inspection by all of the members. Departmental officers make intensive investigations of each property and a great deal of information in regard to it is obtained. This is considered by the board and must be of great assistance in enabling the members to satisfy themselves as to the value and suitability of the property.

Members are no doubt aware of the extreme difficulty in securing, for the purpose of the War Service Settlement Scheme, sufficient wheat and sheep properties. I have mentioned this matter on more than one occasion. When properties are offered for the purpose of the scheme, it is desirable that the procedure for dealing with them should be such as to enable the earliest possible decisions to be reached. I now come to the very important provisions dealing with the concessions to be extended to discharged Servicemen of the recent war. First, there arises the question of the definition of a discharged Serviceman. I have an open mind on this point, but I think the definition included in the Bill will be regarded as satisfactory.

Mr. Leslie: Where did you get that idea from?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Partly out of my own head and partly from reading the newspaper statements of the hon. member and in various other ways. The Government will be glad to have assistance in this matter because we appreciate the

many difficulties confronting us today. There is a good deal of difference between the conditions after the 1914-18 war and those following the recent conflict. During the last war, many men were called up or volunteered, and spent two, three or four years in the Services without having any opportunity to leave Australia, but were compelled to be away from their properties. I want to emphasise that, because some of the legislation is to deal with properties that men left. If they were called up or volunteered, and were unable to leave Australia, the Government feels that they should not be penalised. A definition has been arrived at, and we hope it will afford justice to all but, as I say, we are prepared to consider any suggestions that members may offer.

The first concessions to be dealt with are those which will apply to returned men who acquire properties in repurchased estates. In these cases the same concessions will be extended as applied to returned soldiers from the 1914-18 war. Briefly, these are the deferment of the first half-yearly instalment and capitalisation of the first 12 months' interest on repurchased estates. Provision is also made so that the payment of rent, both on conditional purchase leases and on repurchased estates, may be deferred for the period lessees served in the Forces. The leases concerned may also be extended for the term necessary to cover the period of deferment. That is why I am particularly anxious that the definition should give these people an opportunity to participate in the legislation. The further concessions which will be available do not apply in the case of repurchased estates. Provision is made for a rebate of half the rental payable on conditional purchase leases, excluding the cost of improvements and the cost of survey. The rebate will apply to discharged members who already hold conditional purchase leases. In such cases, the reduction will commence from the half-year in which the lessee enlisted. They would not have the opportunity when they first enlisted, because they would not then be soldiers.

For the first five years of the term of a conditional purchase lease, a discharged member will not be required to pay any rent or interest on the cost of survey or the value of improvements. Necessary machinery is included to cover the sale, transfer or disposal of leases, subject to the concessions, and renders obligatory the giving of notice to the department of the disposal or transfer of such a lease. That is an essential clause because, after the 1914-18 war, a soldier who obtained certain concessions and then sold his property to a civilian, was compelled—I do not say rightly, and it does not apply this time—to refund the concessions he had obtained. They got over that by simply not giving any notice of the transfer. What happened was that a civilian would take over the property and finish paying it off in the 25 years, and then the transfer would be quietly made. On this occasion we think that a soldier who sells out to a civilian should have the benefit of the concessions that he received during the time he was on the land, and should not have to make any refund. As a result, such a civilian purchaser would acquire the land from the date he takes it over because he is not eligible for the concessions. I am keen on that clause, because we should know just what is being done.

Cases are bound to arise where discharged men from the recent war will take over leases which are the subject of concessions under the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act of 1918. In these instances, the concessions already applied under that Act will be allowed to continue instead of the concessions it is now proposed to provide. The concessions I have outlined will not be granted for any area in excess of the maximum a person is entitled to hold under conditional purchase lease, under the Land Act; i.e., 5,000 acres of grazing land or its equivalent in cultivable land, as provided in the principal Act—and that, I think, is 2,000 acres. Discretion will be extended to the Minister to approve of the granting of a rebate of rent as I have outlined to certain next-of-kin of a deceased member in respect of any conditional purchase lease previously owned by the member, and which may have devolved to the next-of-kin. I think that this legislation is not only equal to but in many respects better than that which was made available for the men of the 1914-18 war, and I am quite satisfied that these concessions and benefits will be not only availed

of but greatly appreciated by the men who will eventually receive them. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Thorn, debate adjourned.

RESOLUTION—WAR FUNDS REGULATION ACT.

To Approve of Proclamations for Transfer of Assets.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following resolution received from the Council:—

That under the provisions of Section 5, Subsection (4) of the War Funds Regulation Act, 1939, this House approve of the issue of proclamations authorising the transfer of the assets of the Australian Comforts Fund (Western Australian Division), the Naval Welfare and Comforts Fund and the R.A.A.F. Comforts Fund in the terms set out in the proclamations.

Mr. SPEAKER: The question is:

That the resolution be agreed to.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [5.39]: I have much pleasure in supporting the resolution, because it has been brought forward to deal with the transfer of funds raised during the war by different organisations, such as the Australian Comforts Fund, the R.A.A.F. Comforts Fund, and others. The resolution deals in particular with three funds that are no longer required by the organisations that raised them. During the war, these bodies did a good job in supplying comforts and parcels to our men who were serving in the Forces oversea. After the 1914-18 war, a lot of criticism was offered and dissatisfaction expressed as to the handling of funds that really became surplus when the original objectives of the organisations had been fulfilled. The member for Collie is still connected with a fund that has been operating ever since the last war. That fund has been in the hands of a good committee, and throughout the years it has been doing excellent relief work.

Under the existing Act, we have made provision for resolutions to be brought forward from time to time to deal with the allotment of these funds to other worthy organisations that will benefit from the assistance, and that can do good work with the money. I assume that from time to time resolutions of the nature of the one now before us will come forward. I am in full agreement with that, because I know from experience that the returned men were dissatisfied with the handling of funds after the last war, and naturally I have great pleasure in supporting the resolution. I have examined the transfer of the funds of the three organisations, and believe they are going to assist very worthy causes.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [5.42]: I have pleasure in supporting the resolution. This is a matter of some difficulty regarding the recipients.

Mr. Thorn: I realised that, but did not mention it.

Mr. McDONALD: That is not so much so in the case of two of the funds, but it is in that of the Australian Comforts Fund. It is impossible to make a worthwhile contribution to a great number of funds, and I think the Minister has rightly endorsed the recommendations of the management of the Australian Comforts Fund, which has given the matter careful consideration and decided on beneficiaries who, in its opinion, can make the best use of the fund. So it appears to me that the distribution is one which can be justified, and one which Parliament is entitled to ratify. This is an occasion when the House can express its appreciation of the marvellous work done by the management of these funds, and the members of the various organisations. Parliament might also pay tribute to the public. The record in connection with these matters is one of which the State might well be proud.

The Services and the whole of the people are under a debt to many men and women who, we know, spent an immense amount of time in working for and building up these organisations so as to make a success of the various patriotic funds. We are glad of their achievements and we feel it will be a satisfaction to them that they should have ended their tour of office with a surplus which they can pass over to other deserving funds so that those funds may carry on the good work. I support the resolution.

MR. DONEY (Williams - Narrogin) [5.45]: I rise only to say that there have been many occasions when, on account of the activities of the several towns in my electorate concerning the funds named in the resolution, I have had occasion to visit the Chief Secretary's Department. I have always been impressed by the thoroughness and exactitude of the information that has been given to me in response to my inquiries by Mr. Devereux, who was in charge of this branch of the Chief Secretary's work. I am wholly in accord with the motion, but I am anxious that it should be made known to Mr. Devereux that not only I but my colleagues appreciate very much the assistance he was to us in enabling us to understand the purpose of the funds in question.

Question put and passed; the resolution agreed to, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 5th November. Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 65 had been agreed to.

Clause 66—Amount of rate:

Mr. DONEY: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause (1) the word "three" be struck out and the word "two" inserted in lieu.

The townsites mainly along the Goldfields line with respect also to all that territory covered by the reticulation pipes offset from the goldfields main, have had a rate of 2s. in the pound. The same rate would apply to towns such as York and Beverley. Everywhere south of Beverley and upon the new line to be served by the scheme and adjoining the territory served by the Goldfields water supply, the rate will be not less than 3s. That is a rather strange difference, and is sure to lead to some misunderstanding in the future. No doubt the department assured itself that the 2s. rate would be a just one and payable as regards the capital cost of the original undertaking. It is therefore fair to assume that the same 2s. rate might be permitted to apply throughout. In estimating the cost of the proposed scheme the department made its compilation upon a 3s. rate, whereas in the case of the goldfields water supply scheme a 2s. rate was imposed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I strongly oppose the amendment. If the hon. member desires that only one maximum rate shall remain in the clause, I am willing to agree, but it would have to be the 3s. rate.

Mr. Doney: I am not anxious for that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am prepared to delete the portions of the clause which provide for the maintenance of the maximum rate of 2s. in districts where that rate now applies. This clause does not impose rates of either 3s. or 2s. in the pound. It provides that in any districts where the rate does not now and must not exceed 2s. in the pound that principle shall be continued in the new legislation. It will allow a rate in the pound to be imposed not exceeding 3s. in certain districts, and not exceeding 2s. in districts where that is the maximum that can be imposed at present. I see no objection to deleting a reference to the rate not exceeding 2s. in the pound, which would leave the clause to state that no rate shall be imposed in excess of 3s.

Mr. Doney: I am not saying that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not suggested that the hon. member has said so. On the argument that there should be only one maximum figure, I am prepared to meet it by leaving in the clause only the 3s. and deleting all reference to the 2s.

Mr. WATTS: I would have been prepared to accept the Minister's argument in regard to the rate in question had it not been for the known facts that there are towns at present served by the goldfields water supply which under the Act have not been charged more than a rate of 2s. There is also the other fact that in the making up of the estimates in the blue book issued by the department in regard to extensions of the scheme now under consideration, provision was made for a rate of 3s. in the pound. One can arrive at no other conclusion than that, whilst it is proper to maintain a maximum rate of 2s. in the areas already served under the goldfields water supply scheme, it is intended to apply the 3s. rate to towns and townsites situated in the

areas to be served by the new scheme. There will be a handicap placed upon towns which may be situated not very far apart in that one may be charged a rate of 3s. in the pound on the annual value, whereas another town can only be charged a maximum of 2s. This makes for the absence of uniformity and is a handicap against the possibility of industrial development or any other sort of development which requires the use of much water in the towns situated in the new part of the scheme.

In certain Great Southern towns already there is a rate of 3s. in the pound under the existing Water Board Act in order to cope with existing liabilities on schemes which are somewhat failures. What is going to be done in the case of those towns that are already rated in respect of obligations they owe to the Crown, in some cases 3s. in the pound and in others as low as 1s. 6d., when the scheme now under consideration reaches them? Are their debts to be written off or are they to go on paying the old rates until the debts, including interest, are paid off? In the case of one town it is under an obligation to repay to the Crown a debt of about £35,000, the interest on which is approximately 4 per cent. per annum. The rate struck in the pound is 2s. 3d. At that rate the debt will continue for considerably more than 20 years.

There is another township where the rate is 3s. in the pound and the expenditure by the Public Works Department was £81,000. The rate will not pay all the expense attached to the running of the scheme, and last year there was a loss of approximately £5,000. In Pingelly there is a liability on the part of the local authority which is being met, or partly met, by a rate of 1s. 6d. in the pound. No one has said what is going to happen to the old debts if they are not paid at the time the new obligation commences. The position is important. In the face of the blue book we cannot allow this lack of uniformity. I would like the Minister to say what is to happen, when the proposed scheme reaches these townships, to their existing liabilities.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If there is any special anxiety to ensure that the maximum rate shall be uniform, I am prepared to agree to it by deleting the proviso. As to the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, in no township, irrespective of whether it is served by a water board or by a Government scheme, would the people have a double rate imposed upon them.

Amendment put and negatived.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have already informed members that after the Bill was printed, the Government agreed that the maximum rate per acre should be 5d. instead of 6d. I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (2) the word "six" be struck out and the word "five" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN: Notice has been given of three amendments which are interwoven, affecting as they do the same words or some of them. I propose to take the amendment that seeks to strike out the greater number of words, though this will prevent other members from moving their amendments. The member for Williams-Narrogin may move his amendment.

Mr. SEWARD: If the member for Williams-Narrogin is successful in having certain words deleted, I wish to amend the words he proposes to insert in lieu. Shall I be able to do that?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Mr. LESLIE: If the member for Williams-Narrogin fails in his amendment to have words struck out, would I be excluded from moving my amendment?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, the hon. member would be excluded whatever the fate of the amendment of the member for Williams-Narrogin.

Mr. LESLIE: If my amendment were taken first, would that exclude him?

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment of the member for Williams-Narrogin occurs first in the paragraph. The member for Williams-Narrogin could move portion of his amendment down to the word "owner" in line 7 of paragraph (b); otherwise any action desired will have to be taken on recommittal.

Mr. DONEY: Paragraph (b) of the proviso to Subclause (2) puts on the Minister the onus of determining whether the water supply of any occupier is adequate for his purposes. I wish to transfer to the farmer himself the onus of determining the adequacy of the water supply be-

cause he, from his experience, would be better qualified to determine his needs. If he made a mistake, he would suffer, and if the Minister shouldered the responsibility and a mistake were made, the farmer would still be the sufferer. I move an amendment—

That in lines 3 to 7 of paragraph (b) of the proviso the words "sufficient water supply for his own exclusive use and the Minister is satisfied that such water supply is adequate for all the purposes of such owner" be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This amendment can best be described as dynamite. If it were accepted, the Government would have no alternative to abandoning the Bill. We could not allow each land owner to determine whether he would come under the scheme or not, because that would create an impossible situation and land owners could wreck the financial basis of the scheme. This Government would never proceed with a comprehensive scheme if the responsibility of deciding which land was to be rated and the extent to which it would be rated were left in the hands of the land holder.

Mr. WATTS: I regret that the Minister adopts such a definite attitude to the amendment, because there are cases in which a serious position might be created. On the second reading I gave estimates of the expenditure incurred by certain people to provide water supplies and of the cost that would be entailed to utilise the supply under this Bill. I showed that that expenditure runs into some hundreds of pounds on small properties and considerably more on larger properties. Everyone seems to have lost sight of the fact that if such a property were sold, the purchaser would not pay for two assets. The purchaser would say that the reticulated scheme was worth so much for putting it in, but that the £1,500 paid to instal the original water scheme must be written off. Consequently a property, which might be worth £6,500, including £1,500 occasioned to provide the original water supply, would still be worth only £5,000 under the reticulated scheme. People so situated will be very differently placed from those who are under no such double obligation. Nobody could be better informed on requirements than the occupant of the property, and I was hopeful that some method could have been devised whereby this problem could be adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties. I support the amendment.

Mr. SEWARD: I support the amendment. A farmer came to me and informed me that he was trying to get a writing down of his debt. I asked him for his papers and the first one he showed me was a notice from the Water Supply Department demanding the payment of £370 for water. He said, "I have never had a gallon of water. I have my own water supply and my property is not connected with the Government scheme." That is what will happen to other farmers if they are compulsorily rated under this scheme. They have spent large sums of money to put in effective water schemes and yet, under this measure, they will be rated at so much per acre. If the amendment is not passed, a very heavy burden will be imposed on many farmers. The productivity of the land is not so great that it can bear any further burden and this provision might well have a crippling effect.

Mr. DONEY: I appreciate that an occasion may arise to cause the Minister to feel a little perturbed, but I credit the farmer with sufficient sense not to say that his water supply is adequate if it is not. Will the Minister inform me what action would be taken to determine whether there was a sufficiency of water on a given property?

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. DONEY: Before tea, I suggested to the Minister that he might tell the Committee by what means he would ascertain whether there was an adequate supply on any one property.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have suitable officers in the Lands Department and the Agricultural Department who can decide that question. I do not foresee any difficulty at all in obtaining expert advice on which to base a decision on that point.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. LESLIE: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 of paragraph (b) of the proviso to Subclause (2) the words "including domestic purposes" be struck out.

I can see the Minister's point that the earlier part of this clause is vital to the Bill, but I do not think that the words which I am moving to be struck out are at all vital. How will the term "domestic purposes" be interpreted? There will be large differences of opinion on what is considered to be an adequate supply of water for domestic purposes. I have at Wyalkatchem a 5,000 gallon water tank for domestic purposes and find the supply insufficient for my purpose; yet other people consider a 2,000 or 3,000 gallon tank sufficient for their purposes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I find it hard to believe that the member for Mt. Marshall is serious in moving this amendment and I certainly hope he will not press it. I cannot imagine that it will receive the support of the Committee. The Minister would make no extravagant estimate as to the quantity of water required on a holding. He would decide on the advice given to him whether a concessional system of rating should apply and he would be empowered to take into consideration the quantity of water that might reasonably be expected to be required for domestic purposes.

Mr. Doney: We can take it for granted that the Minister would confer with the farmers.

Mr. WATTS: As I understand the position, a family of five would require 200 gallons per day on the computation set out in the Bill, or 1,400 gallons per week or 75,000 gallons per annum. One now begins to see that the question of domestic supply is likely to be controversial, as it is unlikely that such a supply would be found in the majority of holdings. I admit it is to be found in some, and I have already quoted two. Therefore the point is of more importance than appears at first sight, if the quantity were calculated on that basis. The words "including domestic purposes" could be used to obliterate the possibility of a reduction of the rates. That, as I think the member for Mt. Marshall would admit, is really what is gnawing its way into his thoughts and I submit it is a matter of more importance than appears at first sight. I consider that a form of controversy has been raised that could have been avoided by the words having been left out, because they are redundant. How many more than "all" purposes are there, and why should the words "including domestic purposes" be inserted in the proviso?

The Minister for Works: It is desirable to include domestic supplies.

Mr. LESLIE: I was aware of the figures my Leader quoted, but this is so vague. Does it allude to the proportion of water available for domestic purposes or has consideration to be given to what kind of water is to be used? I can see how the objective of providing water on the farm, or the main purpose for which the water is used, as a source of production, is going to be lost in this domestic supply point. It is possible a man may have an ample supply of water for stock and everything else but that because it does not meet with the requirements of some interpretation which an officer of the department may lay down, he will say, "You are not going to have the concessional rate because you have not an adequate domestic supply of water within the meaning of the Act."

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. LESLIE: I move an amendment—

> That in line 8 of paragraph (b) of the proviso to Subclause (2) after the word "Minister" the following words be inserted:—"in lieu of assessing the amount of water rate to be charged against and paid in respect of such holding shall charge for the water consumed on the holding at rates to be prescribed, the quantity consumed being ascertained by the meter fixed on the holding or by any other prescribed means but so that the amount to be paid in any one year shall not be less than the sum of two pounds."

The Minister should have received from many organisations resolutions intimating the desire of people who are at present on the Goldfields and agricultural water supply schemes for an alteration in the system of rating. They want to pay for the water they use and not be compelled to pay the rate whether they use the water or not. Undoubtedly that is an injustice. The Bill provides for a concessional rate; but at the same time, if the principle is to be adopted of rating on a flat rate whether the water is used or not, merely because it passes a man's door, it will perpetuate that injustice. I have a letter from a farmer in the Bencubbin district which will illustrate what happens. He writes—

> I enclose for your perusal:—(1) Water rate notice, dated 1st July last, showing that I owe £630 19s. 8d. arrears of rates and £46 1s. 6d. current rates, totalling £677 1s. 2d.

He owes £677 1s. 2d. for water rates. His meter reading on the 30th June last showed that up to the 18th December the total quantity consumed was 151,100 gallons. For that quantity he was called upon to pay £630. From December to June a further 15,300 gallons were registered on the meter and the total rate he was called upon to pay for that was £46 1s. 6d. He says that he has no dams and that he commenced farming in April, 1929, when there were no fences and only 400 acres were cleared. Members will see the injustice of rating on an acreage basis in such a case merely because a water pipe happens to pass alongside a boundary fence. This is not an isolated instance; and it is because of circumstances like those that we find from some quarters opposition to this scheme being introduced. Men fear they are going to have unjust burdens imposed on them.

This man is in a fortunate position. Although called upon to pay nearly £700 for less than 200,000 gallons he has no dams and therefore has not the same trouble that many have had of having incurred considerable capital expenditure in providing an adequate supply of water and yet having to pay a rate for a service they will never use. If they did use it, it would only be a severe cost to the scheme. Last year when the question of water supplies in the Kodj Kodjin area and South Trayning was mentioned and a reference was made to the inadequacy of the existing supplies from the Barbalin scheme, attention was drawn to the fact that the call made on that water supply today is far in excess of the original conception for two reasons. One is that the farmers have increased the amount of stock they are carrying, and the other is that they have allowed the dams to silt up and are getting no water. The only supply of water they had was from the reticulation scheme.

If we insist upon these farmers paying for the water, whether they use it or not, there is the danger that they will eventually say, "Why should we go to the cost of maintaining our own supplies when we can get water from the scheme?" As a result there would be a drain on the scheme which would limit the possibilities of its extension, or of bringing to the country districts the increased benefits that the Minister anticipates. The principle of taxing a person because some facility is brought near to his property is unjust. Land is not specially taxed just because it is within two or three miles of a railway station, nor do we say to a man that because electric current is taken past his door he is to be specially rated. In the city, electric current will be connected and a meter installed without any cost except that of meter rent. Yet if water passes within half a mile, or perhaps a mile of a farmer's boundary, and it is of no use to him, he is to be charged a water rate out of all proportion to the benefit he will receive The amendment will impose no injustice; a man will pay for what he uses.

The Minister for Lands: That does not happen in the metropolitan area.

Mr. LESLIE: It does.

The Minister for Lands: I am entitled to 45,000 gallons of water a year and I use 19,000 because I have my own scheme, but I pay for the 45,000.

Mr. LESLIE: There is a difference there in that the rate in the metropolitan area is a comparatively light one. Who, in the city, would pay £600 or £700 for 200,000 gallons of water?

Mr. Abbott: People would in business.

Mr. LESLIE: I am not talking of businesses, but of men in a position similar to that of the Minister for Lands. Water supplied to a business man or a farmer is for the purposes of the business. We are not quarrelling over a matter of £2 or £3 a year, but of £50 or £60 a year—a question of 1s. per head for each sheep on the farm. It is not laid down, in connection with any other public utility, that a person shall pay for it whether he uses it or not. I ask the Minister to adopt a reasonable attitude. The amendment will benefit the scheme because it will remove what opposition there is to it, and it will do away with a serious injustice that exists.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: At least half of this scheme will be what the member for Nedlands described the other night as a national work, that is to say the cost in connection with it will be carried not by the people who will be served by the scheme, but by the people of Western Aus-

tralia, generally, and, to the extent to which the Commonwealth provides financial assistance, by the taxpayers of all the States of Australia. The clause now under debate introduces an entirely new principle in water supply legislation in this State and represents an effort on the part of the Government to establish a system of rating to give to people who have made reasonable provisions for their requirements a concessional rate at a figure well below the maximum rate. If the procedure set out in the amendment were included it would have the same effect, in principle, as would that of the amendment moved earlier by the member for Williams-Narrogin.

We must have a clear cut and sure financial basis for a scheme of this description, and that basis must be established before the scheme is commenced. It is of no use establishing such a scheme if the financial basis is unknown and the financial returns largely uncertain. Under this provision we would take a water main through, perhaps, hundreds or even thousands of acres of country and because the farmers in that area had water supplies of their own they would not be rated except, perhaps, to the extent of £2 a year. We would have to meet the cost of taking the main through those areas so that the farmers further back, and not as well situated, could get all the water necessary for all purposes. We cannot contemplate establishing a huge scheme of this description, to serve the drier areas and to meet the urgent requirements of farmers in the unreliable rainfall districts, unless all the country in between bears a reasonable proportion of the cost.

Therefore the amendment, no matter how attractive it might appear to be superficially, is dangerous in principle. Members representing the metropolitan district will know that what the member for Mt. Marshall said about the rating in the metropolitan area for water, sewerage, drainage, electricity supplies, and so on, was not correct. The Government could not go ahead with a scheme of this nature unless it was sure of the financial basis of the scheme. The amendment, if agreed to, would make the scheme a gamble, financially, to a great extent. I therefore oppose it.

Mr. LESLIE: The Minister, by making this concession in the first place, conceded the principle that it is unjust to charge people for something they do not receive or use. He says the Government cannot undertake the scheme as a gamble—

The Minister for Lands: Not after last night's vote.

Mr. LESLIE: I am not considering it as a gamble. When introducing the Bill, the Minister spoke of its value to the national economy. It has repeatedly been said during this session that the needs of the people must be met. The question of cost cannot always be the deciding factor. When the railway to Wiluna was constructed, the questions of payable returns and continuity of returns were the deciding factors.

The Minister for Lands: It was a matter of agreement.

Mr. LESLIE: The argument now used by the Minister was not raised in that case, nor were the people past whose properties that line ran asked to pay a rate for it but, if it is necessary to extend the pipeline to Mukinbudin, people will be called upon to pay a rate because it passes their properties. The financial returns from this scheme must be uncertain. We cannot know that in ten or 20 years' time—long before the sinking fund has cleared the debt—three-quarters of the country served will not be out of production.

The Minister for Works: Someone might have dropped an atomic bomb on it by then.

Mr. LESLIE: I want the Minister to deal with the justice of charging people for something they do not ask for and do not want. He conceded the principle, by making a concessional rate, and I ask him now to go the whole way and say that the same conditions shall apply to this water scheme as apply to any other national utility, where the consumers pay for what they use and the whole community carries the rest of the burden.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Mt. Marshall has convinced me absolutely that it is a grave mistake for the Government to include, in any Bill it brings down, a concession.

Mr. SEWARD: The Minister said that if we cut out a certain part of the scheme, the agricultural area to the east of Pingelly,

the scheme would become impossible. Why is that so? It would simply reduce the total cost of the work by a certain amount and the Commonwealth, in giving assistance to the State, would contribute proportionately less. If the proposition were to leave a gap in the middle of the scheme, the argument might apply, but this is an argument only to cut out an area where the farmers have their own supplies. I do not see why that should render it impossible to supply the towns.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As an example, if we built a water scheme from Mundaring to Merredin, the only financial return received for the tremendous expenditure involved would be the rates and revenue for the water supplied to the town.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. DONEY: I move an amendment—

That in line 11 of paragraph (b), the word "five" be struck out and the word "seven" inserted in lieu.

It is in that part of the clause that the Minister recognises that the farmer is entitled to recompense for the heavy expenditure involved over the years in securing his own ample water supply. Something has been done in that a rebate in respect of the first five years is being granted to a man who already has his own supply, but that will not recoup him ordinarily for the money he has outlayed. Assuming he has spent £250, we could ascertain how much he would be recouped during the five years during which he would receive the rebate. If his annual water bill were £25 and he received water at 3d. instead of 5d. per acre, he would save £10 a year. Thus in the five years he would have been recouped only one-fifth of his outlay. I make that comparison to justify my contention that, in cases where the water supply is adequate, the period might justly be increased to seven years.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have given much thought to this amendment and am prepared to accept it on the clear understanding that I cannot approve of the next amendment aiming at reducing the concession rate from 3d. to 2d. per acre.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. DONEY: I am under compulsion to move the next amendment, though I express satisfaction that the Minister should have so readily accepted the previous one. I move—

That in line 21 of paragraph (b) the word "three" be struck out with a view to inserting the word "two."

This proposes a reduction from 3d. to 2d. where a settler has spent a large sum of money to get a water supply and has then to pay for the reticulation of his farm.

Mr. Watts: I think there are about 600,000 acres that pay the rate and have no water.

Mr. DONEY: The total area supplied by the goldfields scheme is 1,400,000 acres, and of that I believe 760,000 acres would be rated at 3d. per acre. The remaining 640,000 acres would be on the 4d. or 5d. basis. The 2d. and 3d. rates would ensue without reference to the question whether the farmers involved had already spent money on water supplies. The districts concerned would be those around York, Beverley and other towns.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have already indicated that I cannot agree to the amendment.

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

Ayes	.. .. ..	10
Noes	.. .. ..	25
Majority against	..	15

AYES.		NOES.	
Mr. Abbott	Mr. McDonald	Mr. Coverley	Mr. Panton
Mr. Brand	Mr. McLarty	Mr. Fox	Mr. Read
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Seward	Mr. Hawke	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Watts	Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Smith
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Doney (*Teller.*)	Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Styants
		Mr. Hoar	Mr. Tonkin
		Mr. Johnson	Mr. Trint
		Mr. Kelly	Mr. Willcock
		Mr. Leahy	Mr. Wilson
		Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wise
		Mr. Needham	Mr. Withers
		Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Cross
		Mr. Owen	(*Teller.*)

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That a new paragraph be added as follows:—(c) Where not less than twenty per cent. of the owners of rateable land in any ward of any road district (not being a townsite) petition the Minister in writing asking

that the holdings comprised in such ward shall not be rateable under this Act and stating that the majority of such owners do not desire to be supplied with water under this Act on the ground that they have supplies of water previously provided upon their own holdings at their own expense sufficient for all their purposes, including domestic purposes, the Minister by such means as he may prescribe shall satisfy himself of the truth or otherwise of such facts and upon his being so satisfied the holdings of such owners in such ward shall not be supplied with water and shall not be rateable under this Act.

During the second reading debate I suggested that the best way of ascertaining whether any reticulation should be extended to these difficult areas would be to conduct a poll. The amendment deserves the closest and most sympathetic consideration that can possibly be given to it. I am not unreasonable. I am prepared to leave the final decision to the Minister, so long as when the facts are established to him the law provides the course he shall take. If the wording of the paragraph is not suitable to the Minister, I am prepared to allow him to alter it as he thinks fit, provided he accepts the principle involved.

I wish the Minister to ensure that if more than 50 per cent. of the occupiers of the land do not want it reticulated, then they shall not be rated. In certain places—I do not think they are numerous—grave hardship will be caused if some proposition such as this is not incorporated in the Bill. Many of the people could not provide the finance. One has only to look through the files of the Rural Relief Department and of the Rural and Industries Bank, as well as other institutions of that character, to ascertain what has been spent on water conservation in some of these areas, and what possibility there would be of spending additional money in order to take advantage of getting water from a pipeline passing the boundaries of their properties.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The clause already provides for a substantial concession to the farmer whom the Leader of the Opposition seeks to cover by his amendment. We have provided that such a person shall be entitled to receive, over a period of seven years, a concessional rate of not more than 3d. per acre. The amendment asks that where the Minister, upon petition from the landholders concerned, is satisfied that they are reasonably supplied with water as a result of expenditure on their own part in times gone by, the area in which they live shall not be supplied with water and therefore shall not be rated. I regret I am unable to accept the amendment. The same arguments can be advanced against it as were put forward by me against some other amendments moved in connection with this clause. The time to give consideration to what the Leader of the Opposition has in mind is before the areas and the boundaries of the areas to be served by the proposed scheme are finally decided.

I said when the member for Mt. Marshall was speaking on the second reading of the Bill that the boundaries as set out in the plans were not beyond alteration. In preparing the plans we had to have boundary lines and we set them down where we thought was most appropriate, and in some instances because of other reasons. However, the boundaries are not fixed beyond the possibility of alteration, and if it could be shown that there is justification for making changes here, there and somewhere else we would, before proceeding with the actual work of constructing the scheme, give every possible consideration to suggestions for adjustments. Therefore I suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that if he wants something in the Bill dealing with this principle, he might try to devise a provision that would enable such people as he seeks to cover in this amendment to present a petition for consideration.

I might add that people do not require to have a legal right to present petitions. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition has already forwarded to me petitions from some of his electors, not on this point, but on other matters associated with this legislation, and petitions are receivable at any time from any group of people in the State upon any matter. So I do not see the necessity to put anything in the Bill about that, but I do suggest that from the point of view of trying to achieve something effective along the lines set out in this amendment, that would be the better procedure, and I think it would prove in the long run to be the most effective one.

Mr. WATTS: I understand this Bill is to be recommitted, and I will endeavour to devise a better amendment for submission on recommittal.

Mr. McDONALD: While I appreciate the difficulties in relation to an amendment of this description, at the same time I wish to support the principle that as far as possible inside the scheme there should be some flexibility to meet the case of areas where the imposition of these rates on top of sometimes considerable capital expenditure in creating domestic water supplies, would mean that there would be hardship and perhaps some injustice created. The scheme contains provision for modifications, and obviously it will need to be altered from time to time to meet varying conditions in so large an area as is involved in the scheme and with so many differing conditions in those areas. I feel that some reasonable safeguard for the people of those areas, consistent with the financial soundness of the scheme, would be desirable; and I trust the Leader of the Opposition will be able to devise one that will meet with general approval.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clauses 67 to 70—agreed to.

Clause 71—Water rates when payable:

Mr. DONEY: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 after the word "payable" the words "in advance in accordance with the by-laws for the time being in force" be struck out with a view to inserting the words "within one month after notice of assessment in the prescribed form has been served upon the ratepayer" in lieu.

The payment of rates and the period wherein they can be paid without penalty is a matter of very considerable importance. I do not suppose anyone knows exactly what is wrapped up in this clause with its very obscure meaning. It may mean that rates shall be payable within 10 or 14 or 21 days or it may mean they shall be payable within one month. I prefer to have some little certainty on the matter. Water rates vary; yet the clause says they are to be paid in advance. I do not know how they are going to be determined in advance, for it is not known until an account is submitted what the amount will be.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am prepared to try to meet the hon. member's wishes on this point. If he would agree to have his amendment amended by deleting the words "served upon," and substituting the words "issued to," I would be in agreement with it.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

Mr. DONEY: I move—

That the following words be inserted in lieu of the words struck out:—"Within one month after notice of assessment in the prescribed form has been issued to the ratepayer."

Amendment (to insert words) put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 72 to 89—agreed to.

Clause 90—Land may be sold for arrears of rates, etc., remaining unpaid for three years:

Mr. DONEY: I move an amendment—

That the subparagraph marked "Fourthly" of paragraph (g) be struck out.

I have had to take action of this type in connection with the Road Districts Act on two occasions, only then it was the Agricultural Bank that was involved and not the Rural and Industries Bank. There can be no sound ground for so high a priority for the Rural and Industries Bank because, after all, it is a trading bank in competitive business with other banking institutions. It should trade on a basis of equality with its competitors. I feel sure that the Rural and Industries Bank would not wish to have it otherwise. Although the Minister might find reasons for being a trifle more than fair to a Government institution, he will, I think, agree with me that there can be no reason for being unfair to the competitors of the Rural and Industries Bank.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not able to accept the amendment. The trustees of the bank were consulted before the Bill was drafted.

Mr. Doney: I have no doubt of that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They are anxious that this part of the clause should remain. The matter was also discussed with Treasury officials and with the Treasurer and, as a result, the clause was drafted in its present form. I trust it will remain as it is.

Mr. WATTS: I do not think the Minister has fully reviewed the implications of this subparagraph. As I understand the clause, a second mortgage to the Rural and Industries Bank could claim priority, on a sale of property for water rates, over a first mortgage to any other person or institution. If the Commissioners of the Rural and Industries Bank desire to place themselves in that position, then I do not know them. They would not expect to take precedence over an institution which they had allowed to take a mortgage in priority of their own at an enforced sale.

The Premier: They have first mortgages.

Mr. Doney: They are not all first mortgages.

Mr. WATTS: They will soon have some second mortgages if they have not them already.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 91 to 111, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2 p.m. on Tuesday, the 12th November, 1946.

I submit this motion not primarily because of difficulties associated with lighting, but because of those associated with the conduct, by the Controller of this House, of the affairs of his department. I believe, in moving for the sittings to commence at 2 p.m., and anticipating that they will cease at 6 p.m., that it will mean a minimum number of meals to be served here, which will be of great assistance to the Controller.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.52 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 12th November, 1946.

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

QUESTIONS.

COPPER AND SUPER-FERTILISER.

As to Expediting Production.

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

1, Is the Minister aware of the growing demand for copper and super-fertiliser in the heavier rainfall areas of the State?

2, Is the Minister aware that owing to difficulties with the men engaged in mixing this fertiliser at the works there is some doubt as to whether the copper mixture will be available this season?

3, In view of the growing importance of this fertiliser will the Government intervene in this matter with a view to expediting production of the copper and super-fertiliser?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, Yes, following upon the activity of the Department of Agriculture.

2, Yes.

3, Consideration is being given to means whereby copper may be applied to pastures requiring this element.