

South Australia.—55 per cent. of advances is made as a gift and the balance is repayable with interest; £2,165 only has been written off.

Tasmania.—25 per cent. of advances is a gift and the balance is repayable free of interest.

Therefore, it appears that other States also have made concessions. Under this Bill, Western Australia, I am pleased to say, proposes to make a greater concession—that is, if Parliament approves of the measure. The intention of the parent Act was to relieve the farmer of his obligations and excess liabilities, not to replace one debt with another. None of the powers contained in the 1942 Act are abrogated; and if repayment of from five per cent. to 20 per cent. proves to be a hardship, the trustees are still at liberty to write off the debt. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT. (CONTINUANCE)

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 9th September.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.37]: I secured the adjournment of the debate in order to study the effect of this amending Bill. After having examined it carefully, I am satisfied that it merely deletes the words "British subject" in the parent Act. I was particularly concerned about the provision relating to the speaking of the English language, but that has not been altered. I have no objection to the Bill and 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.

House adjourned at 5.40 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 16th September, 1947.

Questions: Coolgardie State Battery, as to delay in re-starting	693
Lined, as to establishing industry in South-West	694
Noxious weed, as to water hyacinth in Lake Monger	694
State Shipping Service, (a) as to slipway facilities at Fremantle	695
(b) as to ensuring supplies during possible hold-up	695
Country shows, as to "checking-up" on butter and cream exhibits	695
Bills: Wheat Marketing, 1R	696
Economic Stability Act Amendment (Continuance), 1R	696
Public Trustee Act Amendment, 3R	696
Public Services Act Amendment, report, recom.	696
Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment (Continuance), Standing Orders Suspension, 2R, remaining stages	697
Traffic Act Amendment, Com.	699
State Housing Act Amendment, 2R	702
Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment (Continuance), 1R	726
The Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act Amendment, 1R	726
Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 1), returned	726
Industries Assistance Act Amendment (Continuance), returned	726
Road Districts Act Amendment, 2R, Com.	726

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

QUESTIONS.

COOLGARDIE STATE BATTERY.

As to Delay in Re-starting.

Mr. KELLY (on notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) What is the reason for the continued delay in re-starting the Coolgardie State Battery?

(2) Has consideration been given to the possibility of having the fault rectified at some other foundry either in Kalgoorlie or at the State Implement Works?

(3) If so, what decision was reached?

(4) What further delay is it anticipated will take place in re-starting the Coolgardie State Battery?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Delay at Kalgoorlie Foundry in repairs to main counter shaft, which was sent to the foundry immediately the battery stopped.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) Answered by No. (1).

(4) Shaft promised definitely by the 12th. If promise fulfilled, battery should recommence crushing about the 18th instant, providing enginedrivers are available.

LINSEED.

As to Establishing Industry in South-West.

Mr. REYNOLDS (on notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) In view of the fact that a committee has been appointed to inquire into the possibility of establishing the linseed growing industry in Western Australia, is he aware that flax production in the South-West has been well established during the war years, sponsored by the previous Government?

(2) Although linseed grown for seed and oil purposes is a different plant from flax fibre, will this committee give consideration to the results of flax growing in the South-West?

(3) Would the Government call a meeting, say, at Donnybrook, so that experienced flax producers could give first-hand information to the committee?

(4) Why has no flax farmer been included on the committee?

(5) Is he aware that on the 22nd September next the Commonwealth Disposals Commission is to hold a public auction sale of all equipment, machinery, etc., from the flax mill at Beelerup, near Donnybrook?

(6) In view of the apparent desire of the State Government to follow the example of its predecessor to encourage flax growing for the production of linseed in Western Australia, is he prepared to take action to prevent the disposal of the flax mill at Beelerup and to retain it for the State?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) It is not considered necessary to call a meeting at Donnybrook to deal with the possibility of establishing linseed growing in this State, as the departmental officers have sufficient information in connection with the growing of linseed at this stage to be able to handle the position.

(4) The Vegetable Oil Seeds Committee is dealing with linseed and not flax and at the present time the linseed growing industry is on a very small area on account of the difficulty in obtaining seed of a recognised rust resisting variety.

It is not anticipated that linseed will be grown commercially in the present flax growing areas of the South-West. The appointment of a growers' representative on the committee is being given consideration.

(5) Yes.

(6) It is not considered that the machinery of the flax mill at Beelerup would be of any value for the linseed industry.

The machinery at the mill is utilised purely for the production of fibre from flax. At the present time there is an oil extraction plant situated at West Subiaco which is capable of handling linseed produced for the purpose of oil extraction.

NOXIOUS WEED.

As to Water Hyacinth in Lake Monger.

Mr. NIMMO (on notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is water hyacinth, of the type that has almost taken possession of the water surface of Lake Monger, regarded as a noxious weed?

(2) Did the Agricultural Department recently notify the Perth Road Board that water hyacinth was a noxious weed and must be cleared from a swamp in the board's territory?

(3) If the answer to question (2) is "Yes," will the Agricultural Department take the same action against the Perth City Council?

(4) If not, why not?

(5) Is there an outlet from Lake Monger to the Swan River?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The Perth Roads Board has been advised to clear water hyacinth from the swamp referred to.

(3) Our Weeds Officer is co-operating with the City Council in an effort to devise a practical means of removing the weeds from Lake Monger.

(4) A practical means of removing hyacinth from the lakes in question requires to be devised before removal can be enforced.

(5) Quantities of the weed do get into the Swan River from Lake Monger but the opinion is that it will not live in salt water.

STATE SHIPPING SERVICE.

(a) *As to Slipway Facilities at Fremantle.*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (on notice) asked the Premier:

(1) What is the rated tonnage capacity of the Fremantle slipway?

(2) What is the lowest tonnage to which the "Koolinda" can be reduced, and to what minimum draft can the "Koolinda" be reduced?

(3) What is the cost of sending the "Koolinda" to the Eastern States for docking?

(4) Is it possible to increase the capacity of the slipway in order that the "Koolinda" may be slipped there?

(5) If the answer to question (4) is in the negative, will he state the reasons why such increase of capacity is not considered possible, having regard to the following aspects:

(a) Ability of engine to haul extra load.

(b) Ability of cradle to carry extra load.

(c) Ability of foundations to carry extra load.

(6) If the answer to question (4) is in the affirmative, will he secure an estimate of the cost of such alterations and will he undertake the effecting of those alterations?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) 2,000 tons.

(2) 3,327 tons with draft 10 feet 2½ inches forward and 14 feet 6 inches aft.

(3) Normal expenditure in drydock is approximately £3,500 but this could be exceeded if surveyors require additional work to be done in dock.

(4) No.

(5) (a), (b) and (c). The slipway has been designed and constructed to take vessels of 2,000 tons displacement.

(6) Answered by No. (4).

(b) *As to Ensuring Supplies During Possible Hold-up.*

Mr. HEGNEY (without notice): asked the Premier:

(1) What is the present position of shipping on the North-West coast in relation to the marine engineers' dispute?

(2) Has any consideration been given by him to the matter of arranging other trans-

port by sea, land and/or air, to northern ports and townships to ensure that residents will be provided with essential supplies in the event of the tying-up of State ships?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) The present position is that State ships are running to normal schedule. Should a hold-up occur in October, arrangements are under consideration for the transport of essentials to North-West ports. I discussed the matter this morning with the manager of the State Shipping Service, and it was decided that arrangements should be made immediately to cater as far as possible for the needs of the North-West generally should a hold-up occur with regard to shipping.

COUNTRY SHOWS.

As to "Checking-up" on Butter and Cream Exhibits.

Mr. LESLIE (on notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware that officers are attending at country agricultural shows and, with a view to prosecutions, are "checking up" on the allegedly illegal disposal of a few pounds of surplus farm butter and cream brought to the shows and exhibited by the farmers' wives who ordinarily produce butter and cream for their home use only?

(2) Is he aware that these officers are reputedly employed by the Rationing Commission?

(3) Is his, or any other State department, associated with this latest practice?

(4) In view of the fact that this interference serves no purpose other than to annoy the people and further discourage production, will he withdraw any association which State departments have, if any, with the employment and activities of these officers and, furthermore, will he make representations, urgently, to the appropriate Commonwealth Minister pointing out the harmful effect that such practices have on normal production of essential foodstuffs?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No, officers of this Department are not acting in this way in connection with

butter and cream restrictions imposed by the Commonwealth.

(2) No.

(3) No.

(4) No, but representations will be made to the appropriate Commonwealth Minister should it be established that harmful effects are accruing through such practices on the normal production of food stuffs.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Wheat Marketing.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.

2, Economic Stability Act Amendment (Continuance).

Introduced by the Attorney General.

BILL—PUBLIC TRUSTEE ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

Recommendation.

On motion by the Attorney General, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clause 2.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 63, Repeal and new section;

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Clause 2 proposes a new Section 63 to be inserted in the parent Act, and I refer to Subsection (3) of the proposed new section. Members will recall that this subsection provides that every officer shall take the long-service leave to which he shall be or become entitled under this section between such dates as the Commissioner, after obtaining a report from the permanent head, may direct or approve, but within seven years next after becoming entitled thereto. The subsection goes on to say —

Provided that, upon application by the officer and on the recommendation of the Commissioner, the Governor may, in the case of any officer, approve the accumulation of his long service leave entitlement up to a maximum of twelve months thereof.

When the Bill was in Committee previously the member for Leederville moved and secured the passage of an amendment which altered the proviso in this way, that the accumulation should not exceed six months, and he added a further proviso that in the case of an officer who at the commencement of the Act—that is, the new section—had accumulated at least six months' long-service leave, then approval might be given to long-service leave up to a maximum of 12 months. That meant that normally no long-service leave would be accumulated beyond six months; but if at the present time an officer had already accumulated six months' leave, and in practice it was found not to be possible for him to go away immediately, as might be the case with a number of key officers, then with regard to those officers only who had accumulated six months' leave already, permission might be given to accumulate their leave, including that six months, up to a maximum of 12 months. I agreed to the amendment because we both had the same idea in mind, namely, that officers should take their leave when it became due; but I said I would examine the position further as affected by the amendment and if necessary would ask the leave of the House to recommit the Bill.

It has now been pointed out to me by the Public Service Commissioner that while the amendment would allow permission to accumulate long-service leave up to a maximum of 12 months for officers who already had six months' leave due, there was a class of officers who, although they did not have six months' leave due, might have six months' leave due in a week's time, a month's time or one or two years' time. Under the amendment they could not be allowed to accumulate their leave even although they could not possibly be spared from the Public Service at the present time.

The Public Service Commissioner informed me that accumulations of long-service leave in the Public Service amount to 250 years. This, of course, has been occasioned by war difficulties, and he said it would be some time before that lag could be disposed of. I now propose to suggest to the Committee—and I have discussed this with the member for Leederville—that his amendment might be further amended in two ways. The first is merely a formal one, namely, that instead of the words "commencement

of this Act"—that is, the Bill now before the Committee—we should use the words "proclamation of this Act". This would avoid any ambiguity in the use of the word "commencement" in a Bill which is retrospective to the 1st February, 1942.

The other amendment is to enable the opportunity of accumulating leave to be extended not only to officers who now have six months' leave due to them, but also to any officers who, in the next five years, might have six months' leave due to them. That means that this power to allow long-service to accumulate beyond six months will be limited to a period of five years from the proclamation of the Act. The Public Service Commissioner tells me that he believes that, if allowed five years, he will be able pretty well to dispose of the lag in long-service leave; but he has asked that he might be allowed this additional period up to five years from the date of proclamation of the Act in which to work off the arrears of long-service leave to which a number of officers are entitled.

There are 2,500 officers in the service, and the amount of overdue long-service leave is not only very considerable, but, in addition, there are officers falling due for long-service leave, continuously, in fairly large numbers. The amendment I propose to move will give the Commissioner a breathing space of five years in which to overtake the lag of long-service leave and, at the same time, meet the needs of the service regarding the officers whom it is difficult to send away at any particular time. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (b) (inserted by a previous Committee) of Subsection (3) of proposed new Section 63 be struck out and a new paragraph inserted as follows:—“(b) In the case of any officer who at the date of the proclamation of the Public Service Act Amendment Act, 1947, has accumulated or within five years of such date shall accumulate at least six months' long service leave, approve the accumulation of his long service leave entitlement (inclusive of the long service leave already accumulated) up to a maximum of twelve months thereof.”

Hon. A. H. Panton: Do not you have to move to strike out the word “commencement” and insert in its place the word “proclamation”?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: That point is covered in the paragraph that I am moving to be inserted in lieu of the one that is

being struck out, because it commences, “In the case of any officer who at the date of the proclamation of the Public Service Act.”

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

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [4.53]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Bill to be introduced and passed through all its stages at the one sitting.

This is a continuation Bill, and the Act expires at the end of this month. It is, therefore, necessary to pass the Bill before then. Members know what the measure is and the difficulties there would be if it were allowed to lapse.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [4.54]: I have no objection to the Premier suspending Standing Orders for this purpose. The Attorney General discussed the matter with me and, as the legislation now on the statute-book expires on the 30th September, it is necessary for an amending Bill to pass so as to continue it. I support the motion for the suspension of Standing Orders.

Question put.

The SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

First Reading.

Bill introduced by the Attorney General and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [4.59] in moving the second reading said: I wish to acknowledge the consideration of the Leader of the Opposition, and other members of the House, in enabling this Bill to go forward expeditiously. The measure is to continue the operations of the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act, 1939, a wartime measure familiar to members as it has been continued from year to year ever since

it was first enacted. This legislation has been giving members, and the public generally, concern in some respects. It was passed in 1939, on the outbreak of war, and was divided into two parts, as regards its operation. The first part pegged all the existing rents at the figure which obtained on the 31st August, 1939. There were some further provisions in the Act as to houses that might be let for the first time after that date and, in respect of such houses, machinery was provided by which a fair rent could be determined by a magistrate. The first part of the Act had in view the freezing of rents at the figure existing on the 31st August, 1939, with certain minor provisions by which, in specific circumstances, rents might be increased.

For example, if the rates payable by the landlord were increased, he would be entitled to increase the rent by the amount of the increase in rates. The rents so fixed were known as the standard rents. The other part of the Act had for its object the giving of some security to tenants and provided that, while the Act continued, no tenant could be ejected from the premises, whether a shop, a home or an office, while he paid his rent, unless with the consent of the court. The second part of the Act aimed at preventing arbitrary evictions and was intended to give tenants some security of tenure. The position of those whose rents were pegged by the measure at the standard rent—that obtaining on the 31st August, 1939—will need, sooner or later, to be given serious consideration.

While other people have had increases in wages or salaries, cost of repairs and renovations have risen greatly and the value of money has depreciated to a considerable extent since 1939, and landlords have not received any consideration in respect of those circumstances or factors. Their rents have remained fixed at the same sum as they received on the 31st August, 1939. One question that must be considered in relation to this legislation is whether the time will come, or whether it has now come, when permission should be given to all those house-owners whose rents were pegged in 1939 to obtain, by some means, a fair increase in the amount of their rents, having some correspondence to the decreased value of money and the increase that has taken place in the various costs that the landlord has to bear.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Are you intending to deal with that matter in an additional amending Bill?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am.

Mr. SPEAKER: As a matter of fact, the Attorney General should wait, and make his remarks on the other Bill.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think you are right, Mr. Speaker. To enable the House to discuss those matters, and in anticipation of its passing this Bill, I have on the notice paper another Bill to amend the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act. When that Bill comes before the House there will be opportunity for members to discuss the various factors of this legislation and the incidence it now has on the housing and rental situations generally. There will be ample time then for members to discuss such factors, whereas there is not now that time if we are to continue this measure before the expiry date on the 30th of this month.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Would this be a softening up process, in connection with the subsequent Bill?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, it is merely to show that I feel the House would desire an opportunity of discussing the legislation, and if members will be good enough to pass the continuance Bill there will be opportunity for discussion at a later date.

The Minister for Education: If they do not pass this measure there will be no Act to amend.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: By means of this Bill we can ensure that the parent Act will continue to operate until such time as the House is able to consider its effect and, if necessary, to amend it. To avoid the position which would arise if the present legislation expired without a continuance Bill having been passed, I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.7]: It is possible, Mr. Speaker, that you would rule me out of order if I attempted to introduce a general debate on this Bill, since its purpose is the continuance of the existing statute. That being so, and in anticipa-

tion of another measure being brought down, I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, Etc.

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 11th September. Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Local Government in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 6 had been agreed to.

Clause 7—Amendment of Section 31:

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: When the Bill was previously before the Committee some debate took place as to the requirement in the parent Act for every driver of a motor vehicle to possess a license. From that the discussion went to the provision of this clause in relation to Section 31 of the Traffic Act, as connected with the position of a court empowered to order the forfeiture of a license in the event of a conviction for driving while under the influence of liquor. It was suggested that if the driver of a tram or trolley-bus, prosecuted under the provisions of this clause—if it became part of the Act—were convicted, in addition to the penalty which might be imposed on him by the court, he would also be liable to forfeiture of his license. I expressed the opinion that that would be impossible, as the Act in no place required him to have a license, and therefore it would not be within the capacity of the court to deprive him, either temporarily or permanently, of something that he was not required to have.

I had previously expressed the same opinion in regard to another aspect of the same matter, on an earlier clause of the Bill, to the effect that no steps could be taken to prosecute a driver for not possessing a license which he was not required by law to possess. However, as I realised the anxiety of members to be perfectly certain on this matter, and as I was equally anxious

that there should be no possibility of misunderstanding in such a case, I reported progress and referred the matter to the Crown Law Department. I was gratified to find that the minute I received from the Solicitor General read—

I am in entire agreement with you that there is nothing in the proposed amendment to require the driver of a tram motor, tram car or trolley-bus to have any license to drive, or to require that the vehicle bear any number plate, and that therefore no amendment is strictly necessary in order to provide the safeguards referred to in the "Hansard" notes of the relevant debate.

However, I submitted to the Solicitor General that in my opinion it would be preferable—certainly it could do no harm—for the matter to be made crystal clear. I have had an amendment drafted to secure that crystal clarity to which I have referred. I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the proposed new Subsection (4):—"but so that the court before whom any person as the driver of any tram motor, tramcar or trolley-bus is convicted of an offence under this section shall have no jurisdiction to punish such driver for any such offence other than by inflicting the penalty or sentencing to the term of imprisonment mentioned in this section."

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If the amendment will do what the Minister suggested it will, I can support it. The authority of the court to suspend licenses is contained in Section 31, and this clause proposes to amend that section. I take it the Minister is clear that the part of the section giving the court the right to suspend a license is not part of the penalty to which portion of his amendment refers. The word "penalty" in the section, I think, is used in relation to the monetary penalty, but then reference is made to a penalty of imprisonment, and later the court is required to suspend a driver's license for first and subsequent offences until the license, after so many offences have been committed, is suspended permanently. I do not know whether the obligation on the court to cancel licenses for a period or permanently would be held to be part of the penalty established by the section. If it could be so held, the Minister's amendment might not have any effect, except possibly to direct the court to suspend the license as well as to inflict a monetary penalty or even a penalty of imprisonment.

The Minister for Local Government: I think I can clear that up for you.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The point should be cleared up, because it would be unfortunate if the courts interpreted the amendment to mean that they should not only impose a fine or imprisonment, but should also suspend the driver's license.

Mr. NEEDHAM: Unfortunately, I was not present when the provision was previously discussed, but I am anxious to ensure that the driver of a tram or trolley-bus shall not suffer a double penalty. The proposed amendment, I understand, is designed to avoid a double penalty, but I am not satisfied that it will do so. I think the word "penalty" could be so construed as to put the tram or trolley-bus driver in the position of being fined or imprisoned and also of losing his license. If we accept the amendment, can the Minister assure us that no further action would be taken against a driver by his own employer?

The Minister for Local Government: This section deals only with intoxicated drivers.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I am trying to prevent the possibility of a man's being punished by the court and by his employer. If the Minister can satisfy me that the amendment will do this, I shall support it.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Had the hon. member been present on the previous occasion, he would have gathered that the greater part of my activity since has been to ensure the very things he desires. Clause 6 was amended after discussion between myself and the member for Northam along the lines mentioned. Clause 7 does not refer to dangerous, negligent or reckless living by a sober person; it refers only to persons who drive while under the influence of liquor. The Act provides that, on conviction for this offence, a license shall be cancelled or suspended, and the point was raised whether that would be a double penalty. There are arguments against its being so—that the driver of a tram or trolley-bus is not required to have a license and therefore could hardly have it suspended or cancelled. That point I have had verified by the Solicitor General. However, to make the matter crystal clear, I recommended to the Solicitor General that a further amendment be pre-

pared. That is the amendment I have moved.

The member for Northam has raised a question whether the use of the word "penalty" in the amendment does not indicate that it would be a pecuniary penalty plus the penalty of the dispossession of the license. I have no doubt whatever that that would be quite impossible. Section 31 says, "Such person upon conviction for such offence shall be liable to a penalty of £50." That is the penalty to which the amendment refers; there is no mention of any penalty in regard to the dispossession of license, which, by the amending legislation of 1946 was, by some curious process, added to Section 31, rather than to Section 32. I have not the slightest doubt that this amendment is sufficient to cover all the points which have been raised and which I am anxious to have clearly covered. If the member for Northam is still in doubt and cares to move for the insertion of the word "pecuniary" before the word "penalty," I shall not oppose it.

Mr. MARSHALL: I thought I indicated clearly on the previous occasion the position that must arise under this measure so far as it applies to drivers of State-owned transport. I raised the point of the dual penalty, one under the Act and the other the punishment that might be inflicted by the employer. For the first time in the history of this State, drivers of State-owned transport are to be subject to the traffic laws. By this amendment it is proposed that penalties shall be imposed for breaches. What I want the Minister to understand is that up to the present the Commissioner of Railways has had his own bylaws and regulations to control his employees. But now those employees are going to be placed under this Act. That being so, the proviso the Minister has submitted will not be effective. Under other Acts of Parliament, the Commissioner of Railways has punished his employees for misdemeanours, one such offence being the driving of a vehicle while under the influence of liquor or drugs to such an extent as to render him incapable of handling it safely.

But now a new position arises. I venture to say that wherever there is any doubt the Commissioner will stay his hand, and rightly so. He may suspend the driver

concerned from employment until the court has heard the case, because he will be aware that the law will be put into operation by the Police Department and that his employee will be brought before the court, which previously did not happen—at any rate, not for minor offences. It may have been the case in fatal accidents but not, I think, for minor misdemeanours. So the Commissioner may wait until the court case is heard. The court will have nothing to consider because, under the proposed proviso, no action will have been taken by the Commissioner, who will be waiting to see what punishment will be meted out by the court, or for the court to prove conclusively that the employee concerned was guilty.

The court will impose its punishment in the event of finding the person guilty. It cannot consider any punishment imposed by the Commissioner, because that gentleman would have stayed his hand. But when the Commissioner finds that his servant has been guilty of this grave offence, notwithstanding the penalty that the court may impose, he can still—and I have no doubt will—say, “You have been convicted and punished for being under the influence of liquor while in charge of one of my vehicles. You are therefore not worthy of further service and I will dismiss you.” So the man will be penalised twice, notwithstanding the proviso.

The Minister for Local Government: And so is every other drunken driver.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not think that happens with every other driver.

The Minister for Local Government: He must lose his employment, under the existing law.

Mr. MARSHALL: I want to point out another instance of differentiation between State employees and those working for private employers. Many of the former have served up to a stage where they are entitled to long service leave and other concessions. If they are dismissed they lose all those concessions. No private employee is penalised to that extent. The proviso will be quite all right if the Commissioner of Railways takes action prior to the court case being heard; but I suggest that when the alteration to the law is made, the Commissioner will rightly hold his hand, because he will not have to conduct a depart-

mental inquiry but can safely wait to see what the court's decision will be. But I do not think there is anything in the proviso that will stay the hand of the Commissioner after the court case, and he can take whatever action he likes. It is true that the private employer can do that, but the private employee can transfer from one employer to another and will lose nothing more than his job for a while. But if a State employee is dismissed, he loses perquisites in the way of superannuation, long service leave and other concessions. However we look at it, the punishment will be more severe on the State employee, and the possibility is that he will be punished twice, notwithstanding the proviso.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The member for Murchison has raised a point which we discussed here last week. On that occasion we decided that the court, in imposing a penalty on drivers of trams and trolley-buses, must take into consideration any punishment previously inflicted by the employer on the worker for the same offence. Members on this side tried to have an amendment inserted to cover those employees who might be punished by the employer after the court had inflicted its penalty. The endeavour made by the Opposition was to ensure that in those circumstances the employer would not have the right to impose any punishment at all. However, the Minister was not prepared to accept that amendment, because he considered it went too far. At the same time, he admitted that there was some merit in the principle upon which the amendment was built. I think he undertook to have the matter closely considered with the idea of formulating an amendment to be inserted in the Bill in another place.

The Minister for Local Government: That is so.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: He also went so far on that occasion as to move an amendment which he thought would cover the position. Members on this side considered it was rather dangerous because it could, in practice, encourage the employer to inflict penalties after the court had meted out punishment. I trust the Minister has not lost sight of this point, because it is important. It would be unfortunate if the Bill were to pass, leaving the employer in

exactly the same position as he is in now in respect of imposing penalties and punishments upon drivers already convicted and punished in the courts for the offences specified in the Bill against the provisions of the Traffic Act. I have some doubt as to whether the Traffic Act would be the right one to use to limit the employer's right to impose penalties and punishments.

The Minister for Local Government: I have looked into that, and it would not be.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If an Act is to be amended in this regard—and I think one should be—it would have to be the Act from which the Commissioner of Railways, in this instance, derives his legal authority to impose punishments and penalties. Therefore, I take it for granted that the Minister, in considering a suitable amendment, is doing so along the lines, not of amending the Traffic Act, but the Government Railways Act and the Government Tramways Act.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 11, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—STATE HOUSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 11th September.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [5.45]: Although the Bill contains proposals to deal with only three particular matters, namely, the increase in the membership of the board, the increase in the cost of houses, and, that portion which seeks to permit the State Housing Commission to enter into agreement with local authorities for the provision of roads, the subject-matter behind the Bill is one which arouses a considerable amount of interest. In fact, I should say that there is no subject of greater interest to the people of the whole of this State, and of the Commonwealth, than that of housing, because it is so intimately connected with every individual. Tens of thousands of people in our own State are waiting to get homes, and the housing programme has an effect not only on those waiting for homes, but on the whole of our economic set-up.

The Premier: It would be nearer the mark to say, ten thousand, and not, tens of thousands, surely.

Mr. LESLIE: I will give the figures. It can be said that there is not an individual who is not affected by the housing situation, though he may personally not be worried about providing himself with a home. People are affected by the position in their occupation and because they are supplying the materials for homes, and because the materials they would like to supply—the manufactured articles—have to wait until the homes are made available. This subject opens up possibilities for very wide discussion, and we had an indication of that in the remarks the other evening of the member for East Perth. When I was sitting on the other side of the House I had the privilege on many occasions of hearing the present Leader of the Opposition, who was then the Premier, addressing the House and giving us a homily on not bringing up matters because of their political significance.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I hope this one is not political.

Mr. LESLIE: The Leader of the Opposition will hear about it. When we brought forward a subject in all honesty and sincerity, the Leader of the Opposition, the then Premier—and even while he was Minister for Lands—was wont to make a suggestion that behind it we were actuated by political motives. I cannot do better than suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that he might turn his homily to the members on his side of the House today.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We have not the same discipline here as you have over there.

Mr. LESLIE: I feel that what the member for East Perth expected to sound like hard, ringing blows on the present Government had a very tinny sound because of the political propaganda that dominated his utterances.

Mr. Graham: I was not accusing the present Government.

Mr. May: He never spoke of the Government.

Mr. LESLIE: Possibly he did not, but it seems rather strange that, although we have, for several years, had a system to control permits for houses, now there is a change of Government a member of the Opposition brings forward accusations, not against the Government, but against a set

of conditions which could not possibly have arisen in the last four or five months.'

Mr. Graham: Nobody suggested it. It has existed for two or three years.

Mr. LESLIE: I am glad to hear that, as it is reassuring, but it is strange that these circumstances have been brought to the notice of the member for East Perth only within the last couple of months.

Mr. Graham: I am not like you. I speak when I have evidence, and not simply for the sake of talking.

Mr. LESLIE: It has taken the hon. member a long time to accumulate his evidence. I do not deny the possibility of such evidence having existed, but it must have existed at the time when the member for East Perth was sitting on this side of the House. Why did he not bring it forward then?

Mr. Graham: Because I was not aware of the facts, as I am now.

Mr. LESLIE: What induced the hon. member to go in search of the facts?

Mr. Graham: They were brought before me.

Mr. LESLIE: Then why were they not brought before the hon. member when he was sitting on this side of the House?

Mr. Marshall: Ask those who brought the information to him.

Mr. LESLIE: Whether the information was brought to the member for East Perth, or whether he searched for it, behind it all there is something with the appearance of a political motive.

Mr. Triat: Do you favour the idea that such abuses should continue without investigation?

Mr. LESLIE: No, but regardless of the side of the House on which a member sits, when he discovers the existence of such circumstances it is his duty, as a member of Parliament, to bring the facts to the notice of the Minister concerned. Then, if he finds he cannot get redress, he can air the subject on the floor of the House.

Mr. Graham: Members have been doing that for months. This at least is bringing the matter to a head.

Mr. Marshall: The member for Mt. Marshall must have annoyed a lot of Ministers since he first came here.

The Minister for Lands: He is evidently using the right bait today.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. LESLIE: When members have finished their conversation I will continue. I have always had the best possible relationship with the Housing Commission, but I am not satisfied with the results that have come my way. I also could quote many circumstances that appear to be anomalous, not only with relation to housing, but with regard to other matters where control is exercised. I could mention matters dealing with tractors, motorears, housing, the release of materials, rationing and so on, in regard to which I have not been able to understand the reasons for decisions given by the controlling authorities. I have sometimes investigated the circumstances leading to such decisions being given; and I cannot say that I have been completely satisfied, but on all occasions I have been satisfied that the controlling authority has acted to the best of his ability, according to his own judgment, on the facts before him. In the case of both the Housing Commission and other departments where permits have to be issued, I have seen applications submitted and supported by statements that had no foundation in fact.

In the circumstances of the present day, with so many controls and restrictions, it is not surprising that we are breeding a race of lawbreakers and that there is intrigue and black-marketing wherever we go. Today such methods appear to be the only way in which people can get hold of things with which to make progress in their work. I am satisfied that this state of affairs does exist, but it is beyond my capacity to nail it down. If I were desirous of making political capital out of it I think I could pin down some cases—

Mr. Reynolds: Surely you would not do that!

Mr. Fox: Would you protect the lawbreakers?

Mr. LESLIE: I do not think I have given the slightest indication that I would try to protect any kind of lawbreaker.

Mr. Hoar: There is no political capital to be made out of this question. That was not the intention of the member for East Perth.

Mr. LESLIE: I will accept that, particularly in view of the fact that the information was brought to the member for East Perth. Surely it was his duty to be suspicious of the motives that caused these facts to be brought before him. It will take him a great deal of effort to convince me that the motive behind it was not political.

Mr. Fox: What does the motive matter so long as the facts are true? If they are not true you can bring them back on the member for East Perth. He would be discredited if he could not stand up to the accusations he has made.

Mr. LESLIE: I will deal with that in a moment. The motive of the member for East Perth may have been all right, but the circumstances mentioned must have existed for more than a few months and somebody must have been aware of them. The hon. member quoted the case of a house at Bayswater. That place must have been in course of erection a considerable time ago.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He did not say it was not.

Mr. LESLIE: No, but the fact that it was to contain two bathrooms, and would cost far more than the limit supposed to be allowed by the Commission, must have been known to somebody—if not to the member for East Perth, then to his informants. It was the duty of those people to bring the matter forward at that time, but instead of that it has been brought forward at this stage. I am not sure how far I can blame the hon. member, until he can clear himself of whatever doubts I have in my mind. I am inclined to support his request for the appointment of a Royal Commission.

Mr. May: You say there is no political motive?

Mr. LESLIE: No. It would give the member for East Perth an opportunity of clearing himself before such a commission. He could clear himself of any suggestion that his action was actuated by political motives. A Royal Commission would serve a useful purpose, but would the hon. member give such a commission more definite information than he gave the House the other night?

Mr. Graham: Let us have the Commission first and then you can worry about that.

Mr. LESLIE: I do not know what is the inclination of the Government, but I would support the hon. member in asking for a Royal Commission, except for the fact that I do not know how far we would get unless he is definite on the statements brought forward.

Mr. Graham: I have 150 pages of matter received in the last two or three days, and I will submit it all after deleting the names of the persons who supplied it.

Mr. LESLIE: It is the rule, with evidence from any source, that the bona fides of the witnesses shall be known.

Mr. Graham: With their consent I would be prepared to submit their names also.

Mr. LESLIE: If a man is not prepared to give such consent he must expect his bona fides to be doubted. I would like to hear how retired farmers have managed to get homes in Perth after leaving their farms.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I would like to know what starving cocky has enough money to buy a home. We have been hearing about them for years.

Mr. LESLIE: They manage that occasionally. I should like to find out whether there is any doubt about the bona fides of their applications. I could quote, I suppose, a score at least of farmers who for years have been living on their farms under very uncomfortable conditions, who desire to come to and remain in Perth for medical treatment and are unable to get a home in Perth.

The Minister for Lands: There are other reasons. A lot of them sell their properties to returned men and their families who then occupy the farms.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, I was going to refer to that in a moment. Many of those farmers hold medical certificates indicating that they should be in the metropolitan area to receive specialist treatment and they cannot obtain reasonable living accommodation for themselves and their wives, as a result of which they have to forego the treatment or undertake it at considerably greater expense and with greater mental strain for themselves and their families. Yet these are men who have done their duty by the nation. In all my experience I have not known of any farmer who unjustifiably obtained a home in Perth. The

circumstances of the case mentioned by the member for East Perth should certainly be investigated.

Mr. Graham: I have some better ones than that.

Mr. LESLIE: We want something more definite than a vague suggestion that this sort of thing occurs.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It was not very vague.

Mr. LESLIE: It was so vague that I am unable—and I think the Premier would also be unable unless he has received information privately—to put a finger on the person concerned and so ascertain the facts of the case. I think the Government would be wise to have an investigation to determine whether there is any foundation in fact for the allegations that have been made. Now that they have been made, it is necessary to satisfy the public mind on the matter.

Mr. Graham: I suppose you know that half of your members are aware of cases quite as glaring.

Mr. LESLIE: I do not know. What I do know is that there have been anomalies. I could not understand why a decision was given that certain people should receive a permit, but I have investigated sufficient of these cases—as well as cases affecting other departments where permits are necessary because of control—to satisfy myself that the departmental officers acted with the best of intentions. Probably someone a little lower down the scale had a string to pull, but, generally speaking, where a permit has been issued unjustifiably—and again I am not referring specifically to housing permits—perhaps even to the extent of nine cases out of ten, the departmental officer has been misled.

Regarding the distribution of essential commodities controlled by permit, I have suggested that an investigatory system be set up, particularly in the country, to ensure that the applications lodged are bona-fide, but have found that the suggestion was not welcomed. Governments are not prepared to incur the expense of having investigating officers for this purpose, and those who under war-time conditions carried out an excellent job—I refer to local government officials—are loth to undertake inquiries of this sort and saddle themselves

with a pile of extra duties, for which they would receive no remuneration, but would suffer considerable inconvenience.

Control of some sort is necessary. Why should any individual have to submit his case to the member for his district in order to have it taken up with the responsible authority? Such work is becoming part and parcel of our duties, and I do not think it should normally come within the ambit of a member's duties. Those duties lie rather in the direction of attempting to correct an injustice, remove an anomaly or clarify an issue between a department and an elector. To become a pleader or counsel for electors, I consider, is not the job of a member of Parliament. Something that a Royal Commission might well investigate is the extent to which pressure from members of Parliament has influenced the Housing Commission to issue permits. I am afraid that my influence in that direction has been negligible; if ever I had a balloon, I should say that it has been pricked long ago.

Mr. Reynolds: You surprise me!

Mr. LESLIE: I cannot see why the Commission need be appointed unless the member for East Perth is prepared to give his assurance that the facts which he brought to light the other night will be placed before it. However, I understand it is not incumbent on him to attend before the Commission to give evidence; he is protected by Parliamentary privilege. He need not attend the Commission even if it calls him. He would have to volunteer his evidence. In order that he may keep faith with this House and with the people of the State, however, it is necessary that he should give that evidence and hide nothing of what he said the other night.

Mr. Graham: The Royal Commission would be overwhelmed with people prepared to give evidence.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Are you going to appoint the Royal Commission?

Mr. LESLIE: I am not the Government.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I thought you were!

Mr. LESLIE: I am doing what every other member is entitled to do, and that is to express my point of view on the matter before the House. Whether a member of Parliament is a member of the Government or not, he is entitled to do that. Honestly,

I am not satisfied with the housing position. If a Royal Commission is appointed, it should inquire not only into the circumstances mentioned by the member for East Perth, but also direct its attention to whether there have been malpractices and whether or not there has been injustice inflicted by the Housing Commission. But such an inquiry will not improve in any way whatever the present housing position. I do not consider it worth while to appoint the Royal Commission for that purpose only, except that it would at least enable the member for East Perth to justify his outburst the other night.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I think there is something bigger than that. It would give officers, those who are responsible, the opportunity to justify themselves. That is the big point.

Mr. LESLIE: The unfortunate point is that the member for East Perth was not specific enough in his charges to sheet home the slightest responsibility to any one particular officer.

Mr. Styants: The reflection is on all of them.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, from the Premier down to the lowest officer.

Members: No, no!

Hon. A. H. Panton: He made that very plain.

Mr. LESLIE: I think the reflection is on all the officers, and not only on the present Government but the previous Government.

Mr. Styants: It has nothing to do with the Government.

Mr. LESLIE: Possibly it may not, but this is a Government department.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: My attitude would have been that if there had been malpractice, it matters not when it occurred, it should be investigated.

Mr. LESLIE: I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. It was unfortunate that the matter was brought up in the circumstances in which it was. I will put it this way: I do not think the Royal Commission could do any harm. If the Government sees fit to appoint it, well and good. I do not know whether the Government, in its wisdom, intends to appoint it or not; but, if appointed, I hope its field of investigation

will not be limited merely to inquiring into the charges made against the Housing Commission. I hope its scope will be to inquire into the whole housing position. As I have said, no person is free from the impact of the unfortunate situation in which this and the other States of the Commonwealth find themselves with respect to housing. The Premier interjected when I said there were tens of thousands of people waiting for homes. I have here figures which have not been prepared by a departmental officer with a view to painting a pretty picture for the Press. These figures are factual, and, as I interpret them, are a matter for grave concern to every person in the State, including members of Parliament. I find that the number of applications for homes is 23,257.

Mr. Styants: The Premier said 11,000.

Mr. LESLIE: Therefore, there is cause for concern. I doubt whether the Premier, who is supplied with information by his departmental officers, can give a true picture of the number of houses that are required. For some time I have attempted to obtain those figures, so that we might get down to basic sound information. People to the number of 23,257 have applied for houses, either under the Commonwealth-State scheme, the War Service Homes scheme, the Workers' Homes scheme, the McNess Housing Trust, or privately.

Mr. May: Many of them are dual applications.

Mr. LESLIE: I agree that many persons have applied in a dual capacity. Until we find out how many have, and how many applications are still "alive," it will not be possible for Parliament or the Government to plan properly a comprehensive action to overcome the housing situation.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. LESLIE: Before tea, I mentioned that there were applications for 23,257 houses. I want to make perfectly clear that that is the total number of applications received since the inauguration of this control of housing. I mention these facts because this Housing Commission, whose membership it is proposed to increase, must of necessity be concerned with the number of applications and the possibility of coping with the demand for houses that faces it. For Commonwealth-State houses, the

number of applications has been 7,602; for war service homes, 3,123; for houses under the State Housing Act—that is, under the old workers' homes conditions—1,113; and for houses under the McNess Trust scheme, 611. The total to the end of June was 12,447; that is, from people who desired houses provided with Government assistance. For the month of July alone, the total number of applications under the heading of Government-assisted homes was 565, bringing the total to the end of July to 13,014.

According to the figures given by the Premier and published in "The West Australian" the other day, 991 houses had been completed under those respective headings. Actually, the houses erected under all headings were 1,155. That means that for houses under the Government-assisted scheme there are 11,859 applications still outstanding. Up to the end of June, there were 9,796 applications for private permits to build, and for the month of July there were 447 applications, making a total of 10,243. It is impossible to find out what number of houses have been completed under that heading, but 4,673 of those 10,243 applications have been approved. It is certain that nowhere near that number has been completed, although a considerable number may have been put under construction. But even if we accept that figure as the number which has been completed, it leaves a total of 5,570 applications outstanding for private permits. That, taken with the number who have applied for houses under the Government-assisted scheme, means a total of 17,329 applications for homes still outstanding.

The Premier: The latest figure I have from the Commission is 11,000.

Mr. LESLIE: I am giving the figures as at the end of July. The Premier may be able to give us later figures. Those I have quoted are authentic. The workers' homes authorities may handle them in a different way. I have quoted those figures because I feel that for the last two years at least the position in regard to housing has not been made clear to the people.

Mr. Triat: Which people?

Mr. LESLIE: The people of this State, and of the Commonwealth. The system started

a couple of years ago, and I find that the present Government is perpetuating this mysterious method of handling figures. The newspaper report from which I quoted a little while ago stated that the progress made since the inception of the Commonwealth scheme was: completed homes, 991; under construction, 697. Actually, we have a constant duplication of figures of homes completed and homes under construction so that the public is never able to obtain a true picture of the position. The only worthwhile figure is that which treats of a home that has been completed and occupied by a householder. That is the only figure worth handling. I repeat it has been the practice for the last two years to indicate the position in this obscure way, and I make an appeal to the Government to alter that system and let the people know exactly what the true position is. It might be suggested that in this enormous number of applications for homes which I have quoted and the enormous number of applications for permits still outstanding there will be included a large number of those who have applied for permits under the various schemes; that they are duplicated applications.

It may be that a person will apply for a house—especially an ex-Serviceman—under the Commonwealth-State Housing Scheme, and also for a war service home, for a worker's home and possibly for a private permit to build as well, hoping that lightning will strike at least on one of the four corners he has set out. I agree that is a possibility. In fact, I am certain of it. But whatever credit we are prepared to allow against that total, we will have to raise a debit for those who have not made an application because they think their chances of getting a permit at present very small. A member mentioned to me earlier that this will include possibly families of two—a man and his wife only—who have not bothered to apply. I know that is so. There are also those who are in a position and have the intention to marry but who have made no effort to secure a home or to put in an application because they fear it will be a waste of time.

Mr. Reynolds: They would run into a thousand.

Mr. LESLIE: Thank you! I think that is a conservative figure. So, whatever credit

must be placed against these figures I have quoted, there is also a very large debit to be taken into consideration. I feel, therefore, that the figures as to the actual needs of the people are rather on the conservative side. I have quoted these figures for a particular purpose. Apart from the fact that I make an appeal to the Government to give a true reflection of the picture, my main purpose is this, that if we are to have a Royal Commission—and I hope the Government is prepared to make some sort of inquiry because of what has been said here—into the Housing Commission, I think we should go further, and see whether some effort could be made whereby there could be an increase in the number of houses being built.

I am afraid that the Bill will not in any way improve that position. We should make some effort. The post-war housing programme for Western Australia was declared to be 3,500 a year. Even if that figure is attained—and we are far from doing so—we will be many years catching up with the homes required, even if no more applications come forward. The rate of construction is as follows:—Since these schemes came into being—that is from the 1st January, 1940—to the end of June last, the number of houses which have been completed under the Government-assisted plan was 1,024 and another 131 in July, making a total of 1,155—the figure I quoted previously. In all that time we have made such small inroads that if we continue with the present rate—even without any further applications being received—a considerable number of years will elapse before we can make up the leeway.

Mr. Nimmo: You will be getting the pension by then!

Mr. LESLIE: I grant that. But applications are coming in at this rate: For the month of July, 1,012 applications were received for Government-assisted and private homes. That figure is made up of 565 applications for Government-assisted homes and 447 applications for private permits. Our building rate for the month of July was 131 Government-assisted houses, and there were 349 private homes for the quarter—for the previous three months. We could take a third of that, on the average, for the month of July. If we compare these figures with the 1,012 applications received we can

see that instead of keeping pace even with current applications, we are going steadily backwards—and goodness knows what the position will be in a short time! About 1,000 applications a month are received, and even if we reached the post-war programme of 3,500 houses a year we would not get anywhere near the required position. As a fact, the scheme for 3,500 houses has not been anywhere near attained. The shortage of materials—

Mr. Triat: They are in cobwebs.

Mr. LESLIE:—might be advanced as a reason against achieving this objective, but I think there are more reasons than that for our failure to keep up with our post-war plan. The member for Northam, in an address earlier in the session, spoke inspiringly of post-war work and a post-war programme, and made reference to our planners—theorists I call them—and to the economists. But there is one direction in which our theorists, our planners and our economists prepared a post-war programme based upon conservative figures, but those figures have not been possible of attainment; and, in fact, have not been accepted by the people who are to assist in carrying out this post-war work.

About 1942 our economists and planners were considering the post-war programme of housing, and they made a survey of the position. They, no doubt, were aware of the importance of housing and knew that the whole of our national economy revolves upon housing accommodation. They made an estimate of the required labour force to deal with a post-war programme to provide what they considered would be the minimum required in the building industry in the immediate post-war years. They based their figures on an estimated requirement of a 50 per cent. increase in home-building and a 20 per cent. increase in other buildings on what took place in 1939. They found that a 50 per cent. increase meant an additional 60,000 houses per year in the whole of the Commonwealth, or a building programme in Western Australia of 3,500 houses a year. That is where the figure of 3,500 arises. When they prepared the programme it was considered that, for its completion, a labour force of 130,000 men would be required on the building site. The number engaged in 1939, for the whole of Australia, was 94,880 and so, to make up

the necessary post-war labour force would require an increase of approximately 32,850 skilled tradesmen. Apportioning that out between the States would mean that in Western Australia alone a further 2,090 skilled operatives would be required.

I mention these matters as they must be the concern of the Housing Commission in its investigation and consideration of the lag that has taken place in the proposed postwar building programme. The planners submitted those figures to the building industry and asked its representatives to adopt this postwar plan and agree to the increased labour force required. The Commonwealth suggested that, to supply the required labour, it would be necessary to take in a large number of ex-Servicemen for training under the postwar reconstruction training scheme. While in Western Australia the increased building labour force required is 2,090, the number of ex-Servicemen who have applied to be rehabilitated and to assist in the housing programme totals only 2,029, a figure below the estimated requirements to complete our 3,500 houses programme which, as I have already pointed out, is in itself inadequate.

Unfortunately those who should be concerned with improving the situation of their fellowmen have not agreed—although they agreed to the 50 per cent. postwar housing increase and the 20 per cent. “other building” increase—to the figures of the potential labour force required, and consequently have applied restrictions to the intake of trainees, which cannot have other than an adverse effect on the possibility of our overtaking the lag in the housing programme. Up to date, out of 2,029 who have applied for training in the building trades, only 639 have been admitted.

Mr. May: And you cannot keep the materials up to them!

Mr. LESLIE: I said at the outset that there were many difficulties in the way of the housing programme. The shortage of materials is one, and today it is a bottleneck, but I have sufficient faith in the commonsense of our people to believe that sooner or later they will get down to bed-rock and produce the necessary materials. The bottleneck will then be the labour force. The Commonwealth Government already sees that position in the offing; hence the keenness to obtain migrants from overseas.

From information received I am convinced that the people sought are skilled tradesmen. The Commonwealth visualises the position that will arise unless skilled tradesmen can be imported. When that is done our own men, who should have been given opportunity to assist in this great national work of reconstruction—and also to rehabilitate themselves in the process—will be denied that chance.

Mr. SPEAKER: Can the hon. member connect this up with the Bill?

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, in this way; it is intended that one of the members of the board should be an ex-Serviceman or a representative of the ex-Servicemen's organisation. By virtue of his representations the board will be made aware not only of the limiting factors but of what is required to alleviate the present position. Such a representative cannot fail constantly to press the very viewpoints that I am putting before the House tonight. I fear that the only way of overtaking the housing shortage is by means of a change in outlook on the part of the people generally. A different attitude must be adopted by those responsible for the production of the requisite materials. I am not prepared to say what the effect of a longer or shorter working week will be, but I am quite happy if men only work 30 hours per week, provided their output is reasonable. In order to obtain such an output it is necessary for those who are now agitating for better living standards to realise that more money in the pay envelope and more leisure do not alone provide such a standard.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the hon. member is getting a long way from the Bill.

Mr. LESLIE: I will get back to it in this way—

Mr. Rodoreda: What do you mean by that? You have not been away.

Mr. LESLIE: I would like to see a Royal Commission appointed.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What, another one?

Mr. LESLIE: No, this one will do. Its terms of reference should cover a complete inquiry into some of the aspects I have mentioned. It should examine both the labour position and the materials position so that the facts may be put clearly before the people, in order that they may realise that if the present housing lag is to be

overtaken there must be more co-operation than has existed in the past, and that self-interest must give way to public interest in this regard. Servicemen fought for their own security as well as the security of other people. During their absence, those who were fortunate enough to remain at home were able to get houses or at least had the opportunity to acquire whatever was offering.

Mr. Fox: There was nothing offering.

Mr. LESLIE: I could quote quite a number who did very well because they were aware of the opportunities that existed. I believe that, when the true position regarding housing is made known, we shall be able to overtake this serious lag, provided we get the co-operation of which I have spoken and provided we realise that the outlook for Australia is not gloomy, but that there will be opportunities even in the skilled trades for everybody. I am satisfied we shall then find that the complaints made in this Chamber—as well as others that I feel confident will yet be voiced—will have disappeared.

I should like the Premier to inform us whether borrowings by the local governing authorities under this measure will be included in those that a road board can undertake, or whether they will be considered as something quite apart. As members are aware, every local authority is permitted to borrow only up to a certain proportion of its revenue.

The Minister for Education: It will not be included at all.

Mr. May: The Premier is going to the Commonwealth for the money.

Mr. LESLIE: I regret that the Bill will still leave in existence the very unsatisfactory position whereby no rates will be paid to the local authorities until such time as the houses are constructed and disposed of. Where land in a townsite is occupied by Government officers and is retained as such, there may be reasons why the Crown should not pay rates to the local authority for the provision of roads and other amenities, but I fail to see any reason why, once the Government has acquired land for the purpose of a housing scheme, it should not be rated immediately. The Housing Commission, under its powers of acquisition, would be able to acquire whole blocks of land in highly desirable residential areas,

past which roads must be made to serve residences beyond that area, and yet the portion of land held by the Government—and probably to be held for many years unless the housing position is improved—will be a burden on the ratepayers of the district. I understand that a private member has not the power to move in this direction, but as this housing business is to all intents and purposes a trading instrumentality, provision should be made so that when the Government acquires land for building purposes under any one of these schemes controlled and operated by it, that land should immediately become ratable.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I think the Lieutenant-Governor's Message recommending this Bill is unlimited and that you would be in order in moving in that direction.

Mr. LESLIE: I am afraid that is beyond my capacity.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It is an admission that anything is beyond your capacity!

Mr. LESLIE: I confess it is beyond me for the moment; I believe it would be outside of the scope of the Bill. The object of the Bill is to provide loans for housing, not for striking a rate.

I have pleasure in supporting the second reading, and commend the Government most heartily upon having decided to appoint a woman to the Commission. Particularly do I commend the Government for appointing an ex-Serviceman. My great interest in the ex-Servicemen is that one-third of the applications for Government-assisted homes comes from these men, and if we are going to have the building interests and others represented on the Commission, those people who are to live in the homes and who are to pay for them are entitled to representation.

MR. MANN (Beverley) [8.6]: The member for Mt. Marshall has spoken for quite a long time on this Bill and no doubt will help the Government to improve the measure. The member for East Perth charged the present Government and the past Government—

Hon. A. H. Panton: And the Mitchell Government.

Mr. MANN: No, he has not brought in the Mitchell Government. He has made a definite statement to Parliament that all

is not well with the Housing Commission and its ramifications in the domain of home building, and the Government must accept the challenge and appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into his allegations. No Government could stand and face the people after a member of Parliament had made a definite accusation that graft is going on unless it held an inquiry. When a Royal Commission is appointed, the member for East Perth must give evidence. Under the powers vested in Royal Commissions, he would be required to give evidence and reveal the names of those people who have approached him regarding the corruption that is alleged to have been carried on.

The wide powers given under the Act place a Royal Commission beyond the scope of Parliament; it is a body really supreme to Parliament because it reports, not to Parliament but to the Governor. So, when it comes to an investigation, the hon. member will be compelled to disclose the names of his informants and prove his charges of corruption. Apparently there has been some very loose work about the housing business and the Government will have to give effect to the request for a Royal Commission. I shall leave it at that and in due course we shall see what will happen. The Bill before us is a very interesting measure. One of the chief provisions is that for the appointment of a woman to the Commission. All I hope is that she will help to improve the housing position, though I am wondering how she will be able to do it.

We have heard quite a lot of talk in this House about the activities engaged in by women. They have entered the fields of law, medicine and economics, though I am afraid some of them have forgotten housekeeping. In fact, we have heard so much about the ability of the marvellous female that we feel almost diffident about being mere males. I sometimes wonder what is behind the whole idea. The Bill will be passed in any case, and it appears that members are satisfied with the personnel of the Housing Commission. I am concerned, however, about the unfortunate persons who have to live in the houses and pay for them. We know that the Commonwealth Arbitration Court—and I will connect this with the Bill, Mr. Speaker, as I shall show you—

has decreed that the 40-hour week shall come into operation at the end of the year.

Hon. A. H. Panton: At the beginning of next year. Don't exaggerate!

Mr. MANN: And we know that costs will be increased.

Member: Blame the worker.

Mr. MANN: I am not blaming the worker, but our economic conditions. The member for Murchison agrees with me.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Don't wake him up.

Mr. MANN: Costs will become greater and greater until we have a collapse, and then what will happen to the unfortunate worker on the basic wage who is purchasing a worker's home? What chance will he have? I suggest that the Government take that phase into consideration. Now we are to have nationalisation of banking, and I hope to connect that up with the Bill, too.

Hon. A. H. Panton: So does Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MANN: Nationalisation of banking will have the effect of causing costs to rise still higher.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You are waking up the member for Sussex.

Mr. MANN: We are getting away from the democratic system. We now have control, control, control! I commend the Premier for having brought in this Bill to help the people of Western Australia.

Hon. A. H. Panton: This Bill means more control.

Mr. MANN: When these disorderly interjections cease I shall resume.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is a reflection on the Chair.

Mr. MANN: The chief person to be considered is the worker. We know what happened after World War I. Returned soldiers secured homes which, even after they will have been paying for them for 40 years, will still have a debt on them. We saw the pitiful spectacle of the soldiers settled on the land after World War I and we know the burden of debt that they are carrying. It seems to me that the persons acquiring these homes will also have a big burden of debt to carry, so let us try to help them. A jerry-built type of house is being erected today, a type of house that will not wear like those built 20 years ago, when good workmanship was put into them.

Mr. May: But you will have the boards. ment to give evidence before it. He would

Mr. MANN: I am not responsible for them. The 49-hour week and the nationalisation of banking, if this comes about, will unquestionably increase costs. It has been said that the Prime Minister is bringing about the nationalisation of banking in order to freeze the funds of Labour unions and so stop strikes. I wonder what would happen if we had another depression in a year or two. I think it will come.

Members: No.

Mr. MANN: I suppose that I am the least conservative member in the House. I am broadminded in every way, but if a depression should come tomorrow or in six months' time—

Member: Do not be a Jeremiah.

Mr. MANN: —how many houses will be for sale?

Mr. Fox: Who will buy them?

Mr. May: The Associated Banks.

Mr. MANN: Houses were sold during the last depression. I am supporting the Bill. There does not seem to be much in it, when all is said and done, but it is an attempt to improve the present housing conditions. My view is that the term of repayment should be made longer and that the rate of interest should be lower. I believe that every man should possess his own house, if possible. Members must agree that the outlook for the future of this State and of Australia in general is not bright. In fact, the whole economic structure of the world is in danger. There is a tendency to inflation; prices are rising. Who knows that within the next 12 months whether we shall not have inflation throughout the world? My sympathy is for the man on the basic wage.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You have changed a bit.

Mr. MANN: No. I look upon that man with more kindness than do members on the other side of the House.

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MANN: How can the man on the basic wage exist today? I do not think the Government can refuse to appoint a Royal Commission. What is more, a Royal Commission could subpoena a member of Parlia-

ment to give evidence before it. He would have tell the Commission what he knew, so that it could be made public to the State through the Press. There are two types of men who may be charged with corruption; one, the man who offers the bribe and the other the man who accepts it. The Commission would have no small task. As a country member, I have not had much to do with the Housing Commission, because the number of requests from country districts are small. I desire, however, to compliment Mr. Bond and the members of his staff, whom I have found honest and just in all dealings that I have had with them.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: So has everybody else.

Mr. MANN: I pay this tribute to Mr. Bond: He is holding a highly responsible job and is carrying on his duties with honesty and sincerity. He is bearing a big burden of responsibility as secretary of the Housing Commission. Let us give him a little encouragement to continue to do so. If it should be found that any member of the Housing Commission has been dishonest and corrupt, let him be charged accordingly and punished. We, as members of Parliament, are privileged and may criticise and even criminally libel some person who has no redress, Parliament being supreme.

Mr. Graham: Last Chapter!

Mr. MANN: We owe our seats in Parliament to those who elected us. Should we charge people outside with corruption?

Mr. Graham: There is nothing I said in this House that I would not be prepared to repeat outside.

Mr. MANN: Having made that statement, is the member for East Perth prepared to charge these people with corruption, because if they cannot prove themselves innocent, their case must go to the Criminal Court? I am not worried about housing. Fortunately, the country people are moderate in their views, and their requests are small in number. I support the Bill and I know it will be carried because of the eulogistic remarks that have been made on both sides of the House.

MR. BOVELL (Sussex) [8.21]: I desire to congratulate the Premier on introducing legislation providing for the appointment to the Housing Commission of a woman and a

discharged member of the Forces. In his speech, the member for Mt. Magnet referred to the rising costs of housing and the necessity to provide in this Bill for an increased amount to £1,500, to meet building costs. The rising cost of housing gives us great concern. It is my considered opinion that it is the right of every British subject to possess his own home. Finance plays a most important part in the building and owning of such a home. By courtesy of the Governor of the Commonwealth Bank, and with his compliments, I received over the week-end a copy of the balance sheet of the Commonwealth Bank.

Mr. Reynolds: It is a good one, too.

Mr. BOVELL: It is an excellent one.

Mr. Reynolds: Very illuminating.

Mr. BOVELL: Yes, and I am going to illuminate the hon. member further.

Mr. Reynolds: Thank you.

Mr. BOVELL: In this report there is a figure relating to the depositors in the savings bank department. It says that those people, who are small depositors, contributed £426,066,682. The rate of interest on individual amounts up to £500 is 2 per cent., the figure decreasing thereafter. The Premier could do a great service to the Commonwealth by influencing the Federal Treasurer, who controls the Commonwealth Bank, to set aside £100,000,000 of this money—the savings of the people—to provide a special fund for housing. If that were done, a borrower could be enabled to obtain £1,000 and pay at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., or £25 a year, for the use of the money. That would provide a working margin for administrative costs. This is an effort to help the workers that members opposite say they represent.

Mr. Reynolds: We do not say we represent them; we do represent them.

Mr. BOVELL: I hope that is so, and that members opposite will give consideration to what I am saying, because I know what I am talking about.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I thought it was material we wanted, not money.

Mr. BOVELL: It is money.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You ask the Treasurer.

Mr. Reynolds interjected.

Mr. BOVELL: I am trying to help the people the hon. member says he represents—the people that have not the money. I want this money made available for the building of houses at a reasonable rate of interest which will provide the Commonwealth Bank with funds for administrative expenses only. That is only a suggestion as to how the workers of this country can be provided with capital at a reasonable rate in order to erect and own, in time, their homes. I want to refer to certain remarks made by the member for East Perth concerning members of the Public Service. I have gone to the Housing Commission and officers of the Workers' Homes Board with requests, and have not always been given what I have asked for—not by any manner of means—but I have received what I have never asked for, and that is courtesy and consideration.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And sympathy.

Mr. BOVELL: Yes, and a sympathetic hearing, too. I feel that the charges made by the member for East Perth have involved the good name of public servants of this State. He drew from a hat March hares like a conjuror on the stage, and they disappeared into thin air. I am sorry that any member of this Chamber should, in trying to convince the House of corrupt practices, involve innocent persons. I hope that during the time I am in Parliament I will never, in my endeavour to prove somebody wrong, involve somebody who is innocent. In closing, I would quote these words of William Shakespeare—

Good name, in men and women, is the immediate jewel of their souls.

Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;

'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;

But he that filches from me my good name

Robs me of that which not enriches him

But makes me poor indeed.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [8.27]: I am sure members on this side of the House listened with much attention to some of the remarks of the member for Mt. Marshall, and I am sure those in the front benches listened with apprehension. For one thing, he debunked some of their election propaganda. Before the election, in all the papers and on all the placards there was reference to the housing muddle. Now we have heard a member of the Government

Party standing in his place and saying it is going to take years to catch up, even if no further applications are made. What has the Government to say for its election propaganda after that? "Even if no further applications are made at present," the hon. member said. In fact, he declared that we are going backwards. That is a damning condemnation of the Government's election propaganda.

Mr. Hoar: Haven't they shifted those cobwebs yet?

Mr. FOX: We knew there was no truth in it, but many house-hungry people did not know, and they took it at its face value. But they are waking up to the fact that there was no truth in it. We know the big job the Government has in front of it and are not envious.

The Attorney General: And we are going forward, too; not backward.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Cheer up!

Mr. FOX: I disagree with the member for Sussex with regard to the charges made by the member for East Perth. That hon. member knows that if a Royal Commission is appointed he must stand up to his charges; and I think he should be congratulated rather than condemned. I have had a lot of dealings with the Housing Commission. I do not know any of the inspectors. I know one or two men who are in the Housing Commission's offices, and I have the greatest respect for every man with whom I am acquainted on the Housing Commission—for the secretary and the Under Treasurer, the Principal Architect and the builders' representative. I do not know the other members. I have complete confidence in the integrity of those people. The member for Mt. Marshall accused the member for East Perth of condemning the Government. He did not condemn any Government. The Government is not responsible for any of the matters enumerated by him; and he probably does not know who is responsible for them. But the Government should make a searching investigation into his charges.

Mr. Graham: I have dozens more of them!

Mr. FOX: If he can substantiate those charges there is something rotten in the State of Denmark. If it is a fact that two officers, without children, of the Housing Commission have been given homes, it is

something which should be investigated. Let us see who put in the reports to enable those people to get a home. I do not blame the Commission for granting them a home, because it might have had very bad reports of the conditions under which they were living. Let us find out who made the reports and whether, when they were furnished, they knew there was no truth in them. I am not against two-unit families getting a home. We have young married people living for five or six years with their parents or in a room. We want population, and the native born immigrant is the best.

It is the policy of the Government not to give homes to two-unit families, and the same policy was followed by the Housing Commission when the previous Government was in office. If some two-unit families have got homes then members have a right to know how they got them. The member for East Perth stated that he knew of cases where houses were built without a permit at all. There should be a substantial penalty for anyone who builds a house without a permit. The Commonwealth Department of Supply and Shipping used to control the issue of tyres. If a person acquired a tyre without getting it through the department he was not only prosecuted, but the tyre was confiscated. We could, in an appropriate Act, fix a penalty so that anyone who built a house without a permit would forfeit the building. What is wrong with that?

Hon. N. Keenan: You try it on!

Mr. FOX: The member for Nedlands is a K.C., but I will put up a suggestion to him and he can say whether there is any merit in it.

Hon. N. Keenan: Why not cut his head off?

Mr. FOX: That would be done in some countries, and perhaps if such a person got his deserts it would be a just penalty. But it might be going too far. I would not like to cut off anyone's head. If the house were confiscated, the Housing Commission could acquire the land, on which the house was built at Sub-Treasury valuation. I have been informed of instances somewhat similar to those mentioned by the member for East Perth, and in company with some of my colleagues I have gone to the Housing Commission and examined files to see whether

there was any truth in the statement that people had got homes to which they were not entitled. But each file I looked at disclosed hardship. We were quite satisfied that the people who got the houses had some merit in their applications. We did not find one where the person was not entitled to a permit. I do not know, with the exception of one man, any of the officers of the State Housing Commission.

It is freely stated that sums of money are handed out for permits or for tenancies. Possibly some people in the Commission might have some knowledge of permits that are about to be issued. It is possible for some of those officers to go to the people about to receive permits and suggest that if a sum of money were handed over the permit would be issued. I am not suggesting that that is done, because I do not know of it. I have not been able to break down any of these charges, but in the interests of the members of the Housing Commission and those working in the office I think that a searching inquiry should be made into the charges levelled by the member for East Perth. He said that houses were built up to the value of £2,000 and more. He mentioned a building for a two-unit family.

Mr. Graham: And there are many more, too.

Mr. FOX: I do not think that the construction of any mansion—and I think we could call a house costing £2,000 a mansion—should be permitted while so many people are wanting houses that would cost £900 to £1,000. Such houses would meet the needs of the two-unit families, and others. I hope that no permits will be issued in excess of the amount provided in the Bill. There are one or two other matters I wish to mention and one is in connection with brick areas. Many people own blocks of land in brick areas, but they cannot afford to sell them because it is difficult to buy blocks in the metropolitan area at the present time. Some local governing bodies object to any but brick houses being erected in those particular areas.

This is another matter to which the Government should give consideration. A jarrah and asbestos house with a tiled roof, built at a cost of £1,000 or £1,200, looks equally as well as a brick house. Such a

home might require a little more for upkeep, but that is the responsibility of the tenant or the owner. I am sure that more building would go on in some of these districts if the Government considered the question of doing away with most of these brick areas. I understand that Hon. E. H. Gray, when he was Minister, had that regulation knocked out in the area controlled by the Melville Road Board. Quite a lot has been said about the shortage of timber and other materials. We all know that they are short at the moment, and that is also adding to the cost of houses. Many contractors employ men and they have to retain them even if materials are not kept up. If they put them off someone else takes them. Therefore, they are compelled to pay them whether there is work for them to do or not.

The member for Sussex mentioned obtaining money at a lower rate of interest. That is the only set-off against the high cost of housing. There is no other way of bringing a home within the reach of the ordinary working man. If he builds a house at the present maximum cost allowed by the Housing Commission he will have a millstone around his neck for the rest of his life, but if we can reduce the interest to about 1½ per cent.—which would cover the cost of administration—that will offset the high cost.

The Premier: Where can we get money at 1½ per cent.?

Mr. FOX: We can get it when we nationalise the banks.

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. FOX: That is where we can get money for home building.

The Minister for Lands: That is when you will wake up.

Mr. FOX: The Commonwealth Government would then have no trouble in providing home builders with money at 1½ per cent. interest. The member for Beverley said that if we nationalise the banks it will put up the cost of home building, but he conveniently forgot to tell the House how it would have that effect.

Mr. Mann: A 30 hour week, and bureaucratic control!

Mr. FOX: It is difficult to obtain building land in the metropolitan area, but a large tract of country, suitable for workers'

homes, is being subdivided at Hamilton Hill, about five miles from Fremantle. It is being cut up into two acre blocks. There is a good bus service and electricity. A gasworks is being erected there at present and buildings in that area will have available all the amenities. It will not be a brick area, but a good, reasonably priced type of house could be built there. As to the appointment of a woman or an ex-Serviceman to the Commission, I think that body is already large enough. It is not that I am averse to a woman being appointed, but what would she know about the building of a home? What information could she give the Commission, and what information could an ex-Serviceman give it?

The Minister for Works: What about all the things in the home that save the housewife work?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You mean the husband?

Mr. FOX: Would not architects and others who have for years been connected with the building trade know what is necessary in a home?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The best labour saving gadget in a home is a husband, as a rule.

Mr. FOX: I am not averse to a woman being appointed, but I see no necessity for it. I think the Commission is doing a good job and that we will be better satisfied if the Government conducts a strict investigation into the charges made by the member for East Perth. Perhaps a Royal Commission would be the best means of investigating them.

MR. CORNELL (Avon) [8.45]: The more I have listened to the speeches this evening, Mr. Speaker, the more there has been impressed on me the circumlocation of parliamentary debate. This is a small Bill, dealing with three main points, but we have traversed a great deal of ground in order to reach them. In view of the license that you, Sir, have extended to previous speakers, I hope you will also bear with me, if I fall into like error. Whether the addition of a woman to the Housing Commission would result in more houses being built, only the future can tell. Despite what the Minister for Works has said, I do not think a woman would have a great amount of influence on the type of home to be constructed.

The Minister for Works: You do not know women as well as you should.

Mr. CORNELL: I doubt very much whether a woman would have a great deal of influence on the type of dwelling to be constructed because, as far as I can see, the houses being built at present are of standardised pattern. With all her persuasive eloquence I do not think a woman would be successful in having that pattern modified. Women have gone down in history by their having changed the course of events, and if a woman member of this Commission could add one more home to the present quota her name would also go down to posterity. The Communists have recently, in a pamphlet on housing, attempted to solve the problem. Hitler wrote "Mein Kampf," and now the "Commos" have issued "Mein Pamph."

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke with feeling the other night on the jargon that characterised psychological cranks. There is a jargon that characterises the Communist Party. When you have heard one, you have heard them all. However, they have issued the pamphlet to which I referred and in it they hold, as in the hollow of their hands, the solution of the housing problem. They are authorities on every subject under the sun. In fact, I would say that the only greater living authority might be my friend, the member for Mt. Marshall. The "Commos" can give us the inside story of Indonesia. They attempt to frame Australia's foreign policy and they know more about it than Dr. Evatt himself, which is saying something. They can also give us the inside story of Russia, but it is significant that none of them show any particular desire to live in their spiritual home.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no "Commo" on this Commission.

Mr. CORNELL: I realise that, Mr. Speaker, but I am endeavouring to show their lack of qualification to criticise the Government's housing policy. They have proved my point now on the nationalisation of the banks. To conclude what I have to say about the Communists, there is a story told of one whose cry was "Show me a dead policeman," but who ran like blazes whenever he saw a live one. That seems to be their attitude, even in the issuing of pamphlets criticising the present housing setup. The best thing the Communist Party

could do for the workers of Australia would be to stop making strikes its business and cease undermining the workers' will to work. In that way the Communist Party could give positive proof that it was no longer the disruptive element that it has been in the past. In that way it could do the workers of Australia a really good turn. I would suggest that that party send a few million of the publications to Russia, where "Uncle Joe," the patriarch of the party, is in a spot of bother with his own housing programme.

The high cost of housing has been mentioned and the Bill makes provision for an increase in the present maximum. I agree with speakers on both sides of the House who have said that at present it is impossible for a man on the lower income range ever to own a home. If he ever does, I think he will develop a belief in Santa Claus. Despite all that has been said as to the desirability of a working man owning his house, there is a division of opinion in Labour circles in that regard. For instance, not so long ago Mr. Dedman said he did not believe in creating little capitalists by permitting men to possess their own houses. About the same time, a prominent union secretary said he was opposed to a working man owning his home because once he did, he became more satisfied and less militant.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I think he referred to a man while he was trying to get it!

Mr. CORNELL: I sometimes wonder whether the control of materials that we experience today has the desired effect. That factor and the issuing of building permits, with concomitant bottlenecks and delays that are apparent in the provision of houses, are reducing the business to the black-market stage, and I agree with the member for East Perth that a black-market with respect to building materials and permits does exist. For that reason, I support the proposition to appoint a committee of inquiry, be it a Royal Commission or otherwise, into the allegations that he made as well as into many others that we hear—not specifically in this Chamber, but outside. One State has abolished the control of building materials and I doubt very much whether the position there is any worse than that which obtains in Western Australia today.

Apropos of the construction of houses in the country areas, the situation is certainly

not satisfactory. The position in Merredin, which is in my electorate, is particularly bad and no doubt that also applies in other country centres where there is a fairly large industrial population. I investigated the conditions under which some of my electors are living, and I found that the conditions under which they are dwelling is a blot on the escutcheon of good government. Although houses are being erected there, probably to a greater extent than in some other country towns, this activity has not yet overcome the lag. The main trouble is to get contractors to undertake the necessary work.

Another feature that does not help the housing position in the country districts is the manner in which Government departments and business concerns transfer their employees willy-nilly from one place to another, without making prior inquiries as to whether housing accommodation awaits them. Men are transferred from town to town or from the country to the metropolitan area, and when they proceed to their new domicile they find no housing accommodation is available. In consequence of that, they have to split up their families, with results that are detrimental. I also feel that the Premier has undertaken a big task in placing under his wing the Department of Housing. I proffer him a very strong recommendation that he appoint another assistant Minister to help him in what is a super-human task.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Would you suggest the member for Beverley?

Mr. CORNELL: The Premier could do worse.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Perhaps, but not much.

Mr. CORNELL: At any rate, the member for Beverley appears to have his hands full with his work on the Royal Commission appointed to deal with workers' compensation in which respect, as members opposite will admit, he is an undoubted authority. However, the Bill has my approval but I view the future respecting housing with a great deal of concern. I can only express the pious hope—I do not know where the desired change can come from—that there will be a decided improvement in the future. If there is not, there are some people who may have to transfer from one side of this House to the other!

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [8.55]: I do not propose to dwell at length on the housing problem, because I devoted about half an hour to that subject during the course of my contribution to the Address-in-reply debate a few weeks ago. I shall direct my attention to the three amendments the Bill proposes to make to the parent Act. The first I shall refer to concerns the proposal to increase the amount of the advance to £1,500. It is most unfortunate that that course has been found necessary because in raising it to that figure, we shall not be catering for the man on the basic wage or one within a reasonable margin of that wage. The original intention, or purpose, or objective of the Workers' Homes Act was not to provide for those in receipt of the higher salaries. It was to aid the man who was unable to secure a home for himself, his wife and his family without financial assistance. I believe the Act still contains a provision that where applications are received from a man who is paid, say, £7 a week and from another in receipt of, say, £5 a week, the board may grant the man who gets the smaller wage the home that is to be built.

The only type of person that will be able to borrow and repay an amount such as £1,500 will be the individual in receipt of about £10 a week. Even with such people, it will be a life-long job, but nevertheless they will be in a much better position than the man who is living in a house belonging to a landlord and for which he has to pay rent. In the first place, the great advantage will be the security of tenure. The person who is buying a home for himself knows that no landlord can come to him and say, "I want this house for some other purpose, and you will have to get out." While it is true we have certain restrictions against that practice, that relief will not go on forever and in due course we will get back to the pre-war stage where an owner of premises will be able to demand possession of it. In addition to that, the person who is buying a home and is allowed 35 years within which to complete his purchase, has to make payments that represent about the amount that would have to be paid to a landlord in the shape of weekly rent. In the circumstances, although it may be a life-long job, the man who is buying his own home must be much better off

than the individual who has to pay rent to a landlord.

One aspect about which I am particularly concerned regarding the large sums that will have to be repaid, is the position that will arise during depression years. In the boom period from 1923 to 1928 individuals secured homes for which they had to make repayments in the vicinity of £2 10s. per week. They may have been in receipt of £7 or £8 a week. Then came the depression with the compulsory reduction of remuneration by 22½ per cent. While it is true that legislation was passed for the purpose of reducing the interest rates, the capital was not reduced at all. Thus the prospective owner found himself in the position of having to provide £2 10s. per week out of his wage of £7, less 22½ per cent. That was a great injustice. Many lost their homes because they were unable out of their reduced incomes to keep up the weekly payments demanded. I am afraid that within the period it will take these people to repay the £1,500, there will be a severe and substantial drop in the price of houses and owners will find themselves in the identical position that many people experienced during the depression years.

If an investigation were made into the cost of these homes, it might pay a good dividend. The other night the member for Canning implied that the shortening of hours had had an effect upon the provision of homes. Of course that has not been the case up to date, because there has not yet been any shortening of the hours of the working week. What will be the effect after the 1st January next remains to be seen. I would not be at all surprised if the shortening of hours did add to the cost of building homes.

I understand from a contractor friend of mine that, because of the uncertainty of releases and provision of materials, whenever a contractor submits a tender for a building, he allows a substantial amount for what is called waiting time. This waiting time consists of the period his working staff cannot be fully employed because materials are not available. The charge represents a considerable sum on a house of a value of £1,500, but I am told that all contractors without exception make that charge. I believe that, with the set-up we have in the shape of control permits, first for the

building and then for the release of materials by the State Housing Commission, it should be possible to do away with that problematical expense—the amount charged for waiting time. With a proper regulation of the number of permits and the number of buildings authorised, there should be very little time wasted in this way.

We find that, owing to some inadvertence, only this year permits to build were issued for 10,000,000 bricks in excess of the number available. It seems that somebody connected with the State Housing Commission fell down badly on his job to allow that to occur. One of the prime reasons for controlling the supply of materials and issuing permits and putting the business into the hands of the State Housing Commission was to ensure that permits would not be issued in excess of the materials available. Strict adherence to the issuing of only sufficient permits for the materials available and the removal of the need for contractors' charging waiting time, I believe, would lead to a substantial reduction in the present cost of houses.

I wish to direct attention to the fact that, although a house now costs 50 per cent. more than a similar type cost before the war, the standard has decreased considerably. If one looks at some of the homes, particularly those not under the supervision of the State Housing Commission—the inspectors of those bodies are constantly watching the work—one may see very inferior material being used. I believe that the practice of ordering first-class timber for the erection of a home has gone by the board. I have seen some very poor material being used. Not long ago, in Kalgoolie, I saw a place where the whole of the flooring of a worker's home had been condemned by the local inspector because he thought it was not worth while to use it. In the metropolitan area, one may see timber being used for homes that, in pre-war days, would not have been put into a stable. So, not only has the price increased, but the standard of the homes being erected has decreased considerably.

The next matter I wish to deal with is the proposal to appoint a woman to the Housing Commission. I have no objection to the appointment of a woman to any board. As a matter of fact I believe that

in many instances the presence of a woman on a board would be an improvement, but in this case I fail to see how the inclusion of either a woman or an ex-Serviceman is going to improve the position, either from the point of view of the number of homes made available, the material, or the conveniences to be provided.

The Premier: Do not you think that, from amongst the ex-Servicemen, we might get a practical person such as an architect or a contractor with new ideas?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: How many members of the present Commission are ex-Servicemen?

Mr. STYANTS: If the Commission were designing the homes and determining where the conveniences would be placed, I should say there was something in the contention that the appointment of a woman would be an advantage, but the Commission does not have anything to do with the designing. The architect designs the homes. For this work we have a very capable woman to suggest where the conveniences should be located. Even though we have a woman architect to assist in this way, the final arbiter is the prospective owner or his wife. The Commission is representative of the building industry, the skilled workers engaged in the industry and three others including the Under Treasurer, but they have nothing to do with the conveniences provided in the home. Therefore I cannot see how a woman as a member of the Commission can have any more say.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You do not doubt that a woman would have a say, do you?

Mr. STYANTS: I have no doubt whatever. However, the day when a man placed himself on a pedestal and considered himself the supreme being of the Universe has long since passed. Woman has proved that, with the exception of physical or brute strength, she is at least the equal of man.

The Premier: Some women in this country are greatly interested in housing and have ideas with regard to it.

Mr. STYANTS: But that is not the function of the Housing Commission. The function of the Commission is to ensure that there are no bottle-necks, that the requisite materials are available, and that a general principle for the provision of homes is evolved. When one has an idea about

a house, it is carried into effect by the architects.

The Minister for Education: Not an idea about a house, but an idea about housing.

Mr. STYANTS: There are about 30 standard plans for the consideration of clients, but their adoption is subject to the desire of the prospective owner. The proposal to increase the amount to £1,500 presupposes that the Government—I think rightly—favours the ownership type of home being built by the Housing Commission.

As far as the other types are concerned, if it were suggested by the woman member whom it is proposed to appoint to the State Housing Commission that certain alterations should be made, I think her suggestion would get scant consideration for the simple reason that standard plans have been prepared and much persuasion would be needed to alter them, because to do so would add to the cost. But I take it that in the proposal to re-commence building homes for ownership the desires of the owner will be taken into consideration. I feel certain that that will be so, and the person who would have the final say as to where the nursery was to be placed or where provision was to be made for the pram or the cradle would be the wife of the owner.

Mr. Reynolds: It should be.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. They know what they require and it should be for them to say exactly where these should be placed. I have no prejudice at all against the women of this State. I have great admiration for their war effort. I was in the rehabilitation section in the Claremont Showgrounds in 1943. I was in charge of it for a considerable time and one of my jobs was to find easy positions for men who, for health reasons, had been discharged by the Army. In my official capacity I was taken to many of the munition factories and factories producing war materials in the metropolitan area in order to get an insight into some of the jobs which would be suitable for them.

Not far distant from Parliament House I saw women standing up to lathes in a trench mortar bomb factory for 12 hours a day, and I was informed by the management that after a very short period of tuition these women were able to produce more trench mortar bombs than men were

making in the annexe at Midland Junction with the same type of machine. Not only did the women do a great job in this and other war factories, they also did a great job in the war services. I can remember that 18 drivers were sent from Western Australia to an R.A.A.F. school for driver-mechanics in Victoria. Six of these were females and three of the first four who secured the highest passes were women. They were driver-mechanics and I have seen them, with cars on lifts, doing their own greasing and looking after the cars just as capably as a man could do. So I say that the day has gone when man can place himself on a pedestal and consider himself a being superior to woman.

I say again that, with the exception of physical strength, I believe woman to be the equal if not the superior of man in almost anything one could mention. Therefore, from that point of view I have no objection at all to the appointment of a woman, but I do object to the policy, the attitude or the pleading put up by certain women's organisations in this State that women should be appointed to boards such as this merely by virtue of their sex. That is wrong. If they demand equal rights for women, they should achieve their objective on their merits, as I believe they are quite capable of doing, not by demanding that a board shall consist of four or five members, one of whom must be a woman. Let a woman get the job on her merits, as she is quite capable of doing, and she will feel prouder for having obtained the position. I heard the Premier say two or three nights ago that the target for the ensuing 12 months, as far as the provision of homes in this State is concerned, was 3,600. I have seen many targets set and am beginning to despair of a possible ever being secured on any of them.

For the 12 months ended last June, 1,700 homes were completed in Western Australia. During that period there were 5,800 marriages. I saw in "The West Australian," only two or three days ago, that for the six months ended, I think, last month, 2,700 marriages had been solemnised. If that rate be maintained for the full period of 12 months, the total would be 5,500, so that even if the target set is a possible score, the 3,600 homes will not even meet the current demand. Do not let us delude ourselves into believing that the housing

position is getting better. It certainly is not. Let us face the cold facts. We are not overtaking the leeway; we are not even keeping up with the current demand. We should not allow ourselves to get into a state of complacency by assuring ourselves that the position is getting better, because actually it is desperate, and those 11,000 people who have sent in applications can testify to the acute shortage of houses.

There is one feature which I consider should receive the attention of the Government. The member for South Fremantle stated that when a house is built without a permit, the person who obtained it under false pretences should have it taken from him and it should be disposed of to someone else. That is somewhat along the lines that I want to bring under the notice of the Government, if it has not already had its attention drawn to it. We see cases from time to time where the amount authorised by the permit is exceeded. I have in mind a particular case, because the person happened to come from Kalgoorlie. He was building a home in the metropolitan area and the limit of its cost was £1,250. That was the limit of the amount that could then be spent on erecting a home for any person anywhere in the State.

During the construction of the house, an officer from the Workers' Homes Board, as it was then—the State Housing Commission now—inspected the building and drew the attention of both the contractor and the owner to the fact that the foundations and the building being erected thereon would considerably exceed the amount of the permit of £1,250, but neither the contractor nor the owner was concerned at all about it. They built the house, which was estimated to have cost £2,300, and they were prosecuted for doing so, but were only fined £120. The owner laughed at the penalty of £120, saying that the three additional rooms he got were well worth the additional £40 each. It was no penalty at all to him. Just recently a case occurred in Kalgoorlie. A firm secured a permit to build a big machine shop. The sum set out in the permit was exceeded by a considerable amount and the firm was prosecuted by the State Housing Commission and fined about £40. The firm probably exceeded the amount of the permit by hundreds of pounds. I believe that the Act should be

altered to provide that where the amount of the permit is exceeded to any extent the excess building should be demolished. That is the only way to stop that practice.

The Premier: The Act does provide for forfeiture of material, a penalty of £100 and six months' imprisonment, or both.

Mr. STYANTS: But does it also provide for the demolition of the excess building if a man puts up a couple of additional rooms? Does the present Act provide for the demolition of such rooms and confiscation of the material? It is no penalty at all to some people who, having secured a permit for £1,250, build a house costing £2,300 and are then fined £120. He will pay willingly for the purpose of getting an additional three rooms. So I think that aspect should be taken into consideration. It shows the very selfishness of people when they are prepared to do that kind of thing and there should be a substantial penalty. The demolition of the additional building erected over and above the amount of the permit would, I believe, be a deterrent to the adoption of such practices.

I do not propose to associate myself with the charges made by the member for East Perth because I have not any information which would substantiate them. But for a long time I have felt that the most deserving people have not received houses, or all the houses, that have been available from the Commission. I mean they have not received the permits. I am not going to associate myself with the assertion that there has been any bribery or corruption. It may have been bad management. I do not know the set-up in the matter of making a recommendation. I do know there are two officers who eventually sign a permit before it is issued and I would be very much surprised if either of those officials lent himself to corruption of any kind. I believe that if those gentlemen have wrongly put their names to permits they have done so in good faith, believing that someone lower down in the scale was giving them the faithful service that could be expected.

But I feel that, apart from the Government point of view, in justice to the whole of the officers associated with the Housing Commission, the Government cannot ignore the charges made by the hon. member and that some kind of inquiry should be initiated

to see whether there are corrupt practices taking place or whether by bad management or carelessness these abuses are creeping in, and also to give those officers who are completely innocent of any corrupt intention or practice an opportunity to clear their good name. I believe that to a greater or lesser extent all controls develop into ramps and that is why I think that at the earliest possible moment we should get rid of them. There were other controls that operated—priorities for travel and that kind of thing—that I am firmly convinced developed into ramps, and I am also firmly convinced that any kind of control will so develop.

The only other point I wish to deal with is the proposal in the Bill to allow the State Housing Commission to advance a loan to a local authority—whether it be a municipal council or a road board—for the purpose of constructing roads in an area where the State Housing Commission proposes to undertake an extensive building programme. To the principle I have no objection; I think it is quite a good one. But I had a look at the report of the Premier's speech; and whilst he stated that an agreement can be made between the State Housing Commission and the local authority under this proposal, he did not tell us what are the conditions of the agreement. I also noticed that the Minister for Local Government in introducing the Road Districts Act Amendment Bill and the Municipal Corporations Act Amendment Bill, adopted the same attitude. Whilst he said agreements would be permissible he did not tell us the details of the agreements.

The Minister for Local Government: The agreements would contain matters that were agreed upon. They would not be the same in each case.

Mr. STYANTS: There is a very extensive clause—

The Minister for Local Government: That is only for repayment of moneys advanced.

Mr. STYANTS: That is the point I cannot comprehend from the wording of the clause. As a matter of fact I think that the clause, which contains one sentence of something like 190 words, is a classical example of what should not be done in drafting a measure. I do not know whether the member for Nedlands, whom we all look

upon as an acknowledged authority on drafting, has given any attention to this particular clause.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think this matter could be better dealt with in Committee, unless the hon. member can avoid dealing with it as a clause.

Mr. STYANTS: Then I will say that the provision is made in the Bill, without mentioning any clause. As a matter of fact, I said it was in a clause but I did not state the number. However, in deference to your ruling, Sir, I will say that in the Bill there is a provision that does not read at all clearly. I understand that the Government appointed an officer to do the drafting of Bills. I think he came from the Crown Solicitor's department and it is reasonable to assume that he is paid a salary of about £1,250. Whatever the meaning of that particular portion of the Bill might be it is certainly very cleverly concealed in the wording. I believe that if the clause is permitted to go through in its present form, it will provide a harvest for lawyers in interpreting exactly what it means. The portion of the Bill to which I refer reads as follows:—

Provided that the agreement shall provide that in consideration of the Commission making available to the local authority a sum of money for the provision in an area of roads specified in the agreement, the local authority will make and provide the roads out of that sum and will, from time to time, make appropriations from that part of its revenue, made up of general rates, but excluding general rates levied on the land in the area, to meet payment of interest, if any, under the agreement and the general rate levied from time to time by the local authority on the land in that area until such time as the total of those appropriations equals, subject to adjustment and payment of any final balance, that sum; and that the agreement shall provide that the Commission will pay all rates and charges leviable under any Act in respect of the land in the area other than the general rate levied on the land in the area during that time, when they become payable.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Is that in the housing Bill?

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. And it is in the Road Districts Act Bill and the Municipal Corporations Amendment Bill almost word for word. There are over 180 words in the one sentence. There is a breathing space here and there afforded by means of commas, whereby one can come up for air. After

giving it quite a lot of study, I can understand something of what it might mean; but I am not certain.

The Premier: It wants a lot of studying!

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. As a matter of fact, I have asked four other members whether they could tell me what it meant and after close study they gave it up as a bad job.

The Premier: Yes; I consulted two lawyers.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Did they agree?

Mr. STYANTS: I suggest that if it were submitted to the three legal gentlemen who adorn the front bench we would get a different interpretation from each one:

The Minister for Local Government: No, you would get exactly the same interpretation. It is quite easy.

Mr. Marshall: You would not if they were not all members of the Government.

Mr. STYANTS: It states—

The agreement shall provide that in consideration of the Commission making available to the local authority a sum of money for the provision in an area of roads specified in the agreement, the local authority will make and provide the roads out of that sum—

That seems quite easy to understand. It goes on as follows:—

and will, from time to time, make appropriations from that part of its revenue, made up of general rates, but excluding general rates levied on the land in the area.

That means that a rate will be levied on the whole of the particular municipality or road board with the exception of a general rate to be levied on the land particularly concerned. That is understandable, too, because the board will be paying the general rates. I understand that, in the case of these homes, the paying of the rates is not left to the tenant-owner, but to the board. But then the Bill goes on to mention the "payment of interest, if any." Is it to be optional for the State Housing Commission to loan a sum of money to a local governing authority without interest? Is it to be left to it to say whether it shall charge interest or not?

As far as I know neither the State Housing Commission nor the Government is able to secure any large or small sum of money without paying interest. Why it should be left to the option of the State Housing Commission to demand interest from a local

authority is beyond me. There may be some explanation, but I think it should be made quite clear in the agreement that interest shall be payable at current rates. When I go further into that particular portion of the Bill, it becomes utterly unintelligible to me. If the Premier's attention has been drawn to it, I have no doubt that when he is closing the debate he will tell us exactly what it does mean. I think we should know.

The Premier: Like you, I was utterly beggled.

MR. MAY (Collie) [9.33]: I feel that I should, in some small measure, contribute to this debate. The member for Mt. Marshall took us all round Western Australia and got himself mixed up in a pile of figures and, as far as I can make out, did not give us much information about the Bill. I do not see where there is likely to be any increase in the number of houses built, simply by adding to the personnel of the Commission. If it is finally decided that a woman shall be appointed to the Commission—and I have no objection to that—I hope the Government will choose a woman who has been through the mill; and by that I mean one who has had the problem of obtaining a home during the last two or three years. Such a woman would, I feel, be able to bring experience to bear as to the type of applicant who should receive priority. That is the only useful purpose that a woman, if added to the Commission, could serve. The Premier had an afterthought to appoint an ex-Serviceman to the Commission. It would seem likely that someone has been laying on the pressure, because he added that amendment subsequent to introducing the Bill.

The Premier: The Leader of the Opposition has already drawn attention to that.

Mr. MAY: I am just reminding the Premier of it. It would seem that the only excuse for enlarging the Commission is to suit certain interests. I do emphasise, however, that if a lady is to be appointed, consideration should be given to one who has had the experience of battling for a home. Much has been said about the activities or decisions of certain individuals in the employ of the Commission. I want to speak as one who has the worst housing conditions to contend with in the State.

The Premier: I was struck, when I was in Collie at the week-end, by the nice class of house there.

Mr. MAY: Yes, and they were built before the war. At the moment I have 150 families living in houses with other families. The unfortunate part is that such a state of affairs is seriously affecting the social life of those families. In addition to the 150 houses required for those people, I need 250 for men whom we want to come to Collie to work in the mines in order to cope with the extra output of coal. So, I want to tell the Premier that at the moment I want 400 more houses in Collie. I do not see how the appointment of a woman and an ex-Serviceman to the Commission will help in that direction.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Unless she comes from Collie.

Mr. MAY: If the Premier is short of an experienced woman, I can supply him with several.

Hon. A. H. Panton: He wants an inexperienced one.

Mr. MAY: I am told, I suppose because of the position at Collie, that I am more interested in the building of houses than is any other politician in the State. That has been said to me by officers of the Commission. My experience is that I have not been able to trace any corruption amongst the officers. I am daily advocating the cases of people who want homes, and I want to say that when a house in Collie is ready for occupation, very searching inquiries are made by the allocation officer of the Commission. I have not yet been able to find any fault with the allocations that have been made. From the secretary of the Commission downward, I have, in all sections, received nothing but courtesy. I do not know whether we are more honest at Collie than in the metropolitan area, but I have not been able to trace where anyone has been allocated a home out of turn. I hope the Minister for Railways will be able to help remedy a position that has existed for some time owing to the fact that members of the staff of the Commissioner of Railways—both loco and traffic staff—under the present system are transferred from place to place.

I understand that it is by being transferred that men gain seniority in the rail-

ways, but I hold that it is no use transferring a man from one location to another unless he has a home to go to in the place to which he is sent. If a man is not able to obtain a house in the area to which it is proposed to transfer him, he should be allowed to remain in his present position, occupying whatever accommodation he now has, and he should be granted whatever seniority he would have gained by the intended transfer. The present method only aggravates the housing shortage and I do hope the Minister will investigate this aspect of the transfer of railway employees.

The Minister for Railways: I have already taken notice of that matter.

Mr. MAY: The Bill suggests an increase in the maximum price for a house to £1,500. I have endeavoured to find some explanation of how that will help remedy the present position. It will only aggravate the existing materials shortage, and will make no difference to the average working man as he, today, cannot afford a house at £1,250. If some people can build houses at a cost of £1,500 that will only be robbing of materials those who cannot afford so much.

The Premier: No.

Mr. MAY: That may not have been the intention of the Bill, but if the maximum is raised to £1,500 that will increase the cost of materials and mean the use of more of them.

The Premier: No, it is to meet the added cost of the same amount of material.

Mr. MAY: There is no need to raise the maximum price at present.

The Minister for Education: The maximum is now £1,250.

Mr. MAY: That is so, and a decent house can be built for that figure.

The Premier: The maximum for a war-service home is £1,500.

Mr. MAY: It is no use the Premier telling me that the increase will cover only the increase in the cost of labour.

The Minister for Education: It is not necessary to spend the full amount.

Mr. MAY: It will be spent by some, to the disadvantage of others who cannot afford such a large amount. Nowadays we should try to preserve our available materials for houses built at lower cost.

The Premier: Houses will still be allotted according to needs.

Mr. MAY: Perhaps, but we can build more houses if less material is used for each. That is the only bad feature I can see in the suggestion to raise the maximum price. The shortage of materials has been emphasised by other speakers, and those acquainted with the timber industry know that during the war—owing to its being a total war—all the seasoned timber was used in the war effort. It is impossible to get seasoned timber in one or two years and it is no use saying that the worker should work longer hours to produce more material, when timber that is already produced cannot be used because it is too green. We will not solve the materials question by trying to flog the workers into working longer hours. As I have previously said, the worker did not cause or want the war. When war was decided on he was expected to fight, and if he was lucky enough to come back from the war he was expected to make an effort to overcome the conditions brought about by the war in which he fought.

I come now to the question of roads surrounding the newer housing areas. I believe the Government should make representations to the Commonwealth Government, in an effort to obtain extra money with which to open up such districts. If sufficient pressure is brought to bear I feel sure the Commonwealth Government will assist in that regard. In my dealings with the State Housing Commission I have had from that body nothing but courtesy and, as far as I can ascertain, nothing in the nature of the charges put forward by the member for East Perth has occurred at Collie.

MR. NIMMO (Mt. Hawthorn) [9.48]: I have rather mixed feelings, Mr. Speaker, on the question of a lady or an ex-Serviceman being appointed as a member of this Commission. It seems to me that under the present set-up the Government is doing the right thing. Those members who have already spoken on this matter seem to have overlooked one point. It is well known that we require 11,000 or more new homes, and the problem is how to get them built. I blame income tax to a great extent for the present position. If such taxation were reduced there would be more incentive for manufacturers, producers, and workers to do a job and produce more. I will go so far

as to say that if a working man continued his labours for five minutes, or ten minutes, two hours or 24 hours, the extra money he earned should be tax free.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What you propose is overtime tax free.

Mr. NIMMO: Yes. We want baths, iron for roofs, more bricks, more timber. In fact, we want more of practically every commodity used in the building trade. I am sure there is not one worker in Australia that would refuse to work overtime, if the extra money he earned was tax free. Who is it that wants houses? It is the working man. Let us devote our time and effort to an endeavour to solve this problem. Unless we make greater progress, we shall, as I said by way of interjection earlier in the debate, be in receipt of the old-age pension before the solution is reached. I am sure that might apply to quite a lot of us. The latest figures I have been able to obtain indicate that there are 1,500 carpenters. If we were to approach any one of them, and say, "Would you work overtime?" the reply received would be, "No; if I work overtime I might get £1 or £2, but it would mean I would go into a higher tax group and what would I get out of it? I would get practically nothing." As a matter of fact, some men might lose by it.

On the other hand, if we were to go to those chaps and ask them whether they would work overtime if the extra money they received were tax free, there would not be one that would refuse to do so. At the end of 1946—the latest figures I could get—there were 387 bricklayers. Today they are putting down daily in the vicinity of 400 or 500 bricks. Previously, when they had the heart to work, they would put down 1,000 bricks. Some time ago I had the experience of watching two houses being erected. The brick-work started on each at almost the same time. On one two men were working on the day labour basis, and on the other two men were engaged on piece work. The latter were putting down 1,000 bricks a day while the contractor told me that the men on day work were laying between 400 and 500 bricks. I spoke to the two lots of men and one chap told me that considering the wages he earned and the tax that he had to pay, it was not worth while putting down 1,000 bricks. The men

who were engaged on what was virtually a weekly wage were satisfied up to a point.

I wonder sometimes whether, when we hear of the £100,000,000 that is involved in the banking proposition, the Commonwealth Government—I am serious about this—would not do a great job for Australia if it devoted a portion of that money to paying for the tax on overtime. I believe it would be a good thing for the Commonwealth because today the No. 1 priority is housing, and we must not forget that 99 per cent. of those desiring homes are workers. That is what applies in my electorate. The member for Collie mentioned that he had 150 instances he could cite, but I can assure him I have many more than that in my electorate. I can show him where two or three families are living in one house. I would like to support the Bill but I would also desire to repeat that if we as a Parliament were to fight for a reduction in taxation and give the workers a chance, they would be prepared to engage in overtime labour and would do a better job than they are today. Let us give them something to work for.

On motion by Mr. Brand, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment (Continuance).

2, The Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act Amendment.

Received from the Council.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 1).

2, Industries Assistance Act Amendment (Continuance).

Without amendment.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 9th September.

MR. KELLY (Yilgarn - Coolgardie) [9.58]: Having had considerable experience in local government work, I feel that the Bill now before the House will meet with the approval of most of the road boards

throughout the State. For a long time past, the impression has been gained in local government circles that great need exists for tightening up various sections of the principal Act, particularly with regard to the conduct of elections. The initialling of ballot papers by returning officers and deputy returning officers will have a beneficial effect. The statutory declaration that will be required when this measure comes into operation will also contribute to tightening up the electoral portion of the Act.

There is provision for a penalty for returning officers and deputy returning officers if they fail to carry out faithfully their duties. An amount of £10 is mentioned in the Bill as the maximum fine to be imposed in a case where a breach has been committed. There are many ways in which such a breach might be committed, and I feel that the amount stated as the maximum should be made the minimum and that the maximum should be advanced to the vicinity of double the amount at present proposed. A low fine of as little as £1 might be inflicted and that would be totally inadequate for a breach of any sort in connection with an election. Further consideration should be given to that provision. The drafting of some of the clauses betrays evidence of haste to get the measure before the House; many important features have been overlooked and there is defective wording in several parts of the Bill. In a number of directions the Act could have been improved if a more careful scrutiny had been made of the whole statute. At the top of page 4 there is a classic example of redundancy, and a great improvement could be effected to the wording of the provision. I propose to read one passage that should receive the close attention of the Minister before the measure is passed. This is the proposal to add a new paragraph as follows:—

(34) establish and maintain by annual appropriations of revenue a fund for replacement of plant and to be called the plant replacement reserve investment fund to be the subject of a separate account and invest the money constituting the fund in manner authorised by the Minister until required for the replacement of plant.

The average person reading that paragraph could not fail to be struck with the long-winded wording and with the lack of connection in the sense it is supposed to convey.

The Minister for Local Government: You might read the principal Act to which it is related and of which it will form a part.

Mr. KELLY: I know the principal Act as well as does the Minister, and I still fail to see how this wording can be clearly read with the Act. When I read it, I perhaps did more justice to the paragraph than it was entitled to receive. Therefore, I propose to re-read it in case its import, or lack of import, has not had the desired effect on members.

(34) establish and maintain by annual appropriations of revenue a fund for replacement of plant and to be called the plant replacement reserve investment fund to be the subject of a separate account and invest the money constituting the fund in manner authorised by the Minister until required for the replacement of plant.

When the Minister brings an amendment of that sort to the House and expects us to receive it with open arms, he is asking too much. I believe that he has not given the matter the full consideration to which it is entitled.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It is rather a bad jumble of words.

Mr. KELLY: Doubtless the Minister's intention is sound, because that portion of the Act is in need of amendment, but to ask the House to accept his amendment in its present form is really doing an injustice. The provision I have read will be applicable to road boards, and I appreciate that the qualifying words "may be" are included. The larger road boards will be entitled to exercise their judgment as to whether they establish such a reserve fund, but the smaller boards will have very little or no chance of becoming financial enough to be able to set aside any moneys whatever for a fund of this description. Therefore the proposal would be of advantage to only a small number of the road boards in the State. At the top of page 5 there is a provision worded thus—

The Minister shall consider the application and the circumstances surrounding the application and the land and if, upon consideration, he is of opinion that the land is owned in such circumstances and is so unsaleable that satisfaction of liability, actual or contingent, for rates in respect of the land is not reasonably probable and that having regard to all the circumstances it would be proper to do so he may grant the application, or if in his opinion

it would not be proper to do so, he may refuse the application.

I believe that any member of this Chamber could frame in probably thirty words all that is conveyed in that proposed new subsection. Therefore, I say I feel that the Minister has not given the measure the full consideration to which it is entitled, or that the Bill has been introduced hastily.

I should like the Minister to give an explanation of the reference to "ratable property." Does that mean that the ratable land would be land that has erected on it a small dwelling or a home of any sort? If it does, the period that has been allowed for the selling of the land, or its reversion to the Crown, is seven years, although the existing Act gives the local authority that discretion at the end of five years. This inclusion of a seven-year period might raise some difficulty that will have to be overcome. For instance, old-age pensioners, if brought under this clause, would perhaps find very great difficulty in being able to meet their commitments. In fact, I know from experience that many old-age pensioners are in arrears with the payment of their rates for a period in excess of seven years. That remark applies to many other people in poor circumstances.

The Minister for Local Government: It would not be vacant land then.

Mr. KELLY: No, but it would be ratable property.

The Minister for Local Government: The land has to be both ratable and vacant in order to come under the clause.

Mr. KELLY: If that is the case, my remarks would not apply to that phase. The provision, however, is not clear. Not only would those people fall into that category, but I point out that many towns in mining districts, because of national policy and gold taking a secondary place during some periods of the war, became ghost towns. If it were left to the discretion of some local authorities to exercise the authority that would be vested in them under this portion of the Bill, a harsh position might arise so far as some of those towns are concerned. I hope the Minister will clarify the position in his reply.

Another glaring instance of cumbersome and interminable wording occurs in another

part of the clause I have just read. I do not propose to read the whole of this portion to the House, but I commend to the notice of members a repetition in two lines where one word is used three times. That would bear close scrutiny by the Minister before we reach a final decision on the Bill. I refer to the word "exercise"; "expressed to be in exercise and in professed exercise and in exercise of the power." If you, Mr. Speaker, or any other member can read sense into that type of wording, I am afraid the particular viewpoint must be a perverted one. I suggest that the Bill be returned to the draftsman, as it is an injustice to him and to the Minister presenting it. There are several other similar passages, including the one referred to by the member for Kalgoorlie. I think he said there were 190 odd words in the Act and 185 in the Bill with no breathing space in any part, except for a comma in one or two instances. I suggest to the Minister, therefore, that he give a great amount of attention to the re-wording of the Bill before serious commitment of it is undertaken by the House. I intend to support the second reading, but I hope that the re-drafting of the measure will take place before the Bill is discussed too far.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. A. F. Watts—Kataning—in reply) [10.15]: I do not propose to say a great deal in reply to the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie because there is little, if anything, in his remarks that appears to me to require a reply, but to what little there was I shall reply. First he made some suggestion, which I was very glad to hear, that it was necessary—and I think desirable—for the question of the re-drafting of the whole of the local authority legislation to be undertaken. I wish to assure him that many things are not included in this measure that might have been included. They had been requested by local authorities in some number through their various groups, but it was thought better to leave them out of the Bill because a committee has been set up; or is in course of being set up, on which the Local Government Branch and the country authorities, as well as the metropolitan local authorities, will be represented. This committee will investigate the question of a complete over-

haul of local Government laws with a view, if its conclusions are as I expect them to be, that that work is very necessary, of introducing legislation of a composite or consolidated form in the middle of next year, if possible. That will explain to the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie why certain matters which I think he had in mind are not included in this measure.

The only other point I wish to make reference to is his question as to the provision for the reversion of land to the Crown after a period of seven years during which no rates had been paid on it. He said in the course of his remarks that the power of re-vestment in the Crown was in the local authority. That is hardly correct, because the local authority merely applies for a certificate, and then follows the investigation and the approval of the Minister as required by the proposal, which I would briefly say, in my opinion, would certainly not be granted where circumstances disclosed that there had been only a temporary abandonment. However, I think the hon. member will agree with me that if no rates have been paid for seven years and if the land is vacant, there is some justification for the belief that nobody is very interested in it and it might be desirable that it should be returned to the Crown. In explanation of the type of circumstances which might arise, I have had a communication the essence of which I will read to the House, as it shows what can happen in cases where no provision is made for control of vacant land, as it were, unratable land, or land on which no rates have been paid. This may interest the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie—

In connection with the Road District Act Amendment Bill, the following may interest you:—

The 2/28th Battalion Association Building Scheme was granted a reservation at South Kalgoorlie for their co-operative home-building plan. The area is one from which most of the houses were pulled down over 20 years ago. Some of the lots are leasehold, but many are freehold. The latter are still registered in the names of the old holders.

The secretary of the Kalgoorlie Road Board informed me that none of the freehold lots has been rated for 15 years and rates due on many before that were written off. Some of the registered owners are known to be dead and, as far as can be ascertained, none is now in the district.

To free the lots, the secretary says he would have to send registered letters to persons he knows to be dead, advertise several times in the Press and finally have the land put up to auction. The process would take months and the probable result would be that speculators would cash in on the appreciation of values arising out of the hard work a few ex-servicemen have done in reclaiming a derelict area.

The "indefeasibility of title" of dead men seems to be more important than helping men who are helping themselves to get homes.

The houses, of which 16 out of 22 are now completed, have had to be built on leasehold blocks, leaving great gaps in the settlement and ruining its community character.

The road board, the Water Supply Department, and other services are at the expense of extending roads and mains past land that looks like remaining vacant, unless the amendment, enabling it to be repossessed by the Crown, is carried.

That was the type of representation which came from the local authorities who were concerned most particularly in asking for a clause of this type to be inserted in the amending road districts legislation.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 10—agreed to.

Clause 11—Amendment of Section 160:

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I think that paragraph (c) of this clause could be better worded. I do not know whether the Minister has had time to consider the criticism voiced against it by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie. I would like all members to read it. I am sure that if they do they will find themselves called upon to exercise a great deal of concentration in order to understand exactly what it is all about. It seems to me that in the one paragraph and in the one sentence there are two or three separate matters dealt with that could be much more clearly set out if two or three separate sentences were used to express what the paragraph now seeks to convey. It may be all very well for members of Parliament to think that it will not be their worry, if the Bill becomes law, to have to know exactly what is meant by any paragraph of the measure.

We might feel that it is sufficient for us to accept the assurance of the Minister that

it is all right and that it does achieve legally what is sought to be achieved. To anyone who would be inclined to adopt that attitude, I would point out that this legislation will become part of the Road Districts Act, which has to be administered throughout the State, to a very large extent by men not necessarily trained in following clearly a tortuously expressed paragraph. Therefore I think it is our duty as a Committee to do the best we possibly can to make the wording as clear cut and as easily understood as possible. The word "and" in line four should be deleted and in line six a separate sentence should be commenced; and to do that two of the words now in the paragraph would have to be deleted and perhaps another word inserted.

If the paragraph passes in its present form I feel convinced it will create a considerable amount of difficulty at least in the early stages on the part of those charged with the administration of the Act as well as the secretaries of road boards and the members of road boards in different parts of the State. I am positive that the Minister, if he applied himself to the wording of the paragraph could improve it immeasurably. I would like to know whether or not he proposes to take some action along those lines; if not, I will have to do my best in that regard.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: It is not my intention to take any action because the paragraph appears to me to be perfectly plain to everybody. I cannot for the life of me comprehend the objections raised to it and I am certain that no local authority will be in the slightest doubt as to what is intended. I can recollect during the course of 11 or 12 sessions in which I sat on the opposite side of the House feeling on a number of occasions exactly as, from his observations, the member for Northam apparently feels this evening. I well recollect a measure which was an amendment to the Water and Irrigation Act, which had such a long parenthesis that three or four hours diligent research was not sufficient to enable one to find the connection between the subject and verb; they were so far apart.

I could have spent a great part of my time in those eleven years uttering statements such as have emanated this evening from the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie,

and the member for Northam. But it seemed to me that the Crown Law officers in those days, in the great majority of cases, probably knew what they were doing, and, therefore, I kept my thoughts to myself. I have the same feeling now. I think that in the main the Crown Law officers know what they are doing and that their amendments are calculated to fit into the Acts as they should, and to be reasonably clearly understood by those who handle them in the great majority of cases, of which this is one. It is a matter of opinion whether the word "and" should remain in the seventh line.

Mr. Kelly: What good does it do?

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: What harm does it do? The intention of this subclause is as clear as can be.

Mr. Kelly: The intention is all right.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: No difficulty should be experienced in understanding what is intended. It follows Section 160.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am sorry the Minister has not decided to make this paragraph more easily readable, and understandable.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Minister is a lawyer.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: It is no doubt easy for the Minister to say that the paragraph is almost perfectly worded.

The Minister for Works: Have you, yourself, some difficulty in apprehending its meaning?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Yes, and if the Minister for Works were to take us completely into his confidence he would say that he does not understand anything about it at all.

The Minister for Works: Quite the contrary.

The Minister for Local Government: My advice to you is to think back over some of your own productions.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The attitude of the Minister in taking us back to last session, or some session of five or ten years ago, does not achieve anything.

The Minister for Local Government: I know, but the good principle still applies.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If Bills then brought before Parliament could have been better worded, the time to discuss that was then. Our duty now is to do the best we can for the Bill before us. I hope we will be practical in our approach to this matter because if we are, we will achieve beneficial results. I propose, in a modest endeavour to improve this paragraph, to move to delete the word "and". I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of proposed new paragraph (34) the word "and" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: It would be advisable to have a full stop after the word "account" in the ninth line and to delete the words "and invest," and to make the balance read, "The moneys constituting the fund shall be invested in manner authorised by the Minister until required for the replacement of plant." That would make it easier to understand. Before I move in this way I would like to know whether the Minister agrees.

The Minister for Local Government: I agree.

The CHAIRMAN: Instead of the member for Northam moving as he has suggested, he can move to delete all words after the word "account" in the ninth line with a view to substituting the words he desires.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Very well. I move an amendment—

That in lines 9 to 12 of proposed new paragraph (34) the words "and invest the money constituting the fund in manner authorised by the Minister until required for the replacement of plant" be struck out with a view to inserting in lieu the words, "The moneys constituting the fund shall be invested in manner authorised by the Minister until required for the replacement of plant."

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Do I understand that the amendment is to delete all words after the word "account"?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Have we been informed of the words to be inserted in lieu of them?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Yes.

Amendment (to strike out words) put and passed.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I move—

That the words proposed to be inserted be inserted.

The principle here is exactly the same. The authority resting with the Minister will be the same, but this will make it much easier for those who will be administering the Act to read and to understand the paragraph.

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

Clause 12—agreed to.

Clause 13—New Section s. 286EA:

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I am sure the Minister must take notice of the comment of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie on the wording of this clause. On examining closely proposed new Subsections (2) and (4), he will see the obvious necessity to make the meaning clear by cutting out a lot of verbiage. In proposed new Subsection (1) there is a prescribed requirement from the local authority to His Majesty following certain conditions applicable to the land. The Minister has clearly set out the reasons for the application, and, therefore, for the consideration of the application. I move an amendment—

That proposed new Subsection (2) be struck out and a new subsection inserted as follows: "(2) The Minister shall consider the application and the circumstances surrounding the application and may grant or refuse such application."

That says, in a dozen words, what otherwise takes 100 words to say. Undoubtedly the Minister has authority to give consideration to the circumstances of the application and of the land, and may grant or refuse such an application.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Had these amendments been on the notice paper my reception of them might have been pleasanter. Where ample time is available, as in this case, it has been the custom for such amendments to appear on the notice paper. I hope that custom will not be departed from in the future. However, as this proposed new subsection has, in my opinion, no great weight in the measure, I propose not to oppose the amendment.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: As to the amendment, now being moved, not appearing on the notice paper, I would point out that in the course of his speech in the

second reading debate the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie brought to the notice of the Minister what he considered to be undesirable wording of portions of the Bill. No one was at that stage to know how the Minister would react to the suggestion of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie that better wording might be sought and obtained. No one could tell with certainty that the Bill would be completed this evening. As it is a Bill dealing with the Road Districts Act, one might have thought there would be several speeches during the second reading stage. Both the Leader of the Opposition and I would have preferred the Minister to undertake the task of wording portions of the Bill in better fashion than that in which they appear at present.

After the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie had spoken I was hopeful that the Minister would give an assurance that he would consider seriously the portions of the Bill objected to, on the ground of wording, and either postpone the Committee stage in this House, or have the wording objected to altered in another place if, after careful consideration, he came to the conclusion that any re-wording was desirable. There has been no intention on the part of either the Leader of the Opposition or myself, as regards the amendments so far moved, to deprive the Minister of any opportunity of knowing what the amendments were or are intended to achieve. We would have been happier had the Minister given an assurance that he would examine the portions of the Bill objected to, in an endeavour to do something about them.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I do not propose to object to this amendment in principle, but it is subject to the same objections as we have recently discussed.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is a bit repetitive, but that is difficult to obviate.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I move—
That progress be reported.

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

Ayes 18

Noes 21

—

Majority against 3

—

AYES.

Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. Hegney
Mr. Hoar
Mr. Kelly
Mr. Leahy
Mr. Marshall
Mr. May
Mr. Nulsen

Mr. Pantou
Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Smith
Mr. Styants
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Triat
Mr. Wise
Mr. Rodoreda
(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Abbott
Mr. Ackland
Mr. Bovell
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver
Mr. Cornell
Mr. Doney
Mr. Hill
Mr. Leslie
Mr. McDonald
Mr. McLarty
Mr. Murray

Mr. Nalder
Mr. Nimmo
Mr. North
Mr. Read
Mr. Seward
Mr. Thorn
Mr. Watts
Mr. Wild
Mr. Yates
Mr. Brand
(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.
Mr. Coverley
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Collier
Mr. Needham

NOES.
Mr. Hall
Mr. Grayden
Mr. Keenan
Mr. Mann

Motion thus negatived.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I desire to deal with proposed new Subsection (4). I am sorry that the Minister wants to stay here till midnight.

The Premier: We do not.

The Minister for Lands: But we are in charge of the business of the House.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: Don't give too much cheek!

The Minister for Lands: I am not.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Then don't bite so much!

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I want to know whether the Minister took any notice of the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie with reference to the repetition of the words "in exercise" that appear in this provision. It would be definitely improved if the words "expressed to be in exercise and in professed exercise and" were deleted from lines 7 and 8. The Minister will see that they are redundant.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I had in mind to ask the Committee to agree to an amendment. There is a legal distinction between "in exercise" and "in professed exercise," and I think those terms should be retained. I can see no reason for the second repetition of the words "in exercise," and if it will meet the ideas of the member for North-East Fremantle, they could come out. I move an amendment—

That in line 8 of proposed new Subsection (4) the words "and in exercise of" be struck out.

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

Clause 14—agreed to.

Clause 15—New Part VIIA.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I draw the attention of the Minister to the proviso to proposed new Section 319C. This matter was discussed by the member for Kalgoorlie in relation to the Bill to amend the State Housing Act during the second reading stage, and the Premier was frank enough to tell us he was completely befogged when he read the proviso and had tried to work out what it was all about. That was probably the experience of every member of the Committee.

The Minister for Local Government: I am prepared to assist you there.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It will mean three sets of amendments.

The Minister for Local Government: That is the trouble, and I will deal with it in a moment.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I intend to throw myself on the mercy of the Minister in the hope that he will do something about the proviso before the Bill leaves the Committee stage or, alternatively, that he will give members an assurance that he will closely examine the wording of it with a view to improving it when the Bill is dealt with in Committee in another place. I think the best way to improve the wording would be to divide the proviso into at least three separate sentences, each dealing with a particular point. Then it would be capable of being more easily understood by all concerned.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I think I can satisfy the hon. member on that point. These two clauses have been based on the provision in the State Housing Act Amendment Bill and all have to run together. The Premier proposes to amend the clause in the housing Bill, and I give an undertaking that, when his amendment has been accepted by this Chamber, a similar amendment will be included in this Bill and in the Municipal Corporations Act Amendment Bill.

The PREMIER: I move—

That progress be reported.

Mr. HEGNEY: On a point of order! Is the Premier in order in moving at this stage that progress be reported?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Motion (progress) put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 17th September, 1947.

	PAGE
Question: Merredin Hospital, as to installation of x-ray plant	733
Bills: Constitution Acts Amendment (Re-election of Ministers), 3R., passed	741
Dentists Act Amendment, 3R.	741
Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment, 3R.	741
Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment (Continuance), 2R., remaining stages	741
Dried Fruits Act, 1926, Re-enactment, Com.	742
Rural Relief Fund Act Amendment, 2R., Com., report	742
Motions: Electricity Act, to disallow radio workers' regulations	733
Electricity Act, to disallow supply authorities' registration fees regulation	738
Electricity Act, to disallow cinematograph operators' regulations	738
Adjournment, special	743

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

QUESTION.

MERREDIN HOSPITAL.

As to Installation of X-Ray Plant.

Hon. A. L. LOTON (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Is the statement, as published in "The West Australian" dated the 8th September, relating to the installation of an x-ray plant for Merredin hospital correct?

(2) What is the total cost of such plant, including installation?

(3) What amount, if any, have local authorities contributed towards such plant?

(4) What amount has the Lotteries Commission contributed towards such plant?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, but there was unavoidable delay in forwarding by suppliers, who sent the

plant to rail for Merredin on the 15th instant.

(2) £500 approximately.

(3) Nil.

(4) 50 per cent. of cost.

MOTION—ELECTRICITY ACT.

To Disallow Radio Workers' Regulations.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East)

[4.37]: I move—

That Regulations Nos. 113, 117, 118, 119, 123, 124, 129, 130, 131, 132, 138, 139 and 142 made under the Electricity Act, 1945, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 27th June, 1945, and laid on the Table of the House on the 5th August, 1947, be and are hereby disallowed.

I move this motion with a certain amount of diffidence, as I am not an electrician and cannot give an unbiased opinion as to the whole of these regulations. We have created an Electricity Commission, and it would be interesting to know what it has cost the State since its inception, by way of the number of employees engaged, and various other expenses, as so far it has done very little work. Objections are being raised through me, by men who are somewhat fearful of the position that is arising, under which they have in many cases to pass examinations even though they have been at a particular trade for a number of years.

Apparently no consideration has been extended to the men who, in answer to their country's call, went away to fight and who now, simply because they are over 21 years of age, are being forced into a position where they have little hope of becoming electricians. It would seem that these regulations as a whole have been framed—whether intentionally or not, though it appears to have been intentional—to make it more difficult for men to obtain a living in the electrical trades, and therefore to reserve the jobs for a select few. I propose briefly to touch on the regulations concerned, in the light of information supplied to me by one who is afraid of what their effect might be.

In reality, a mild form of taxation is contained in the regulations because, even though a man passes the necessary examination, when he applies for a certificate of competency he must pay certain fees. The