

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 9th October, 1956.

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor and Administrator received and read notifying assent to the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement Bill.

QUESTIONS.

ROYAL MINT.

Reduction of Employment.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Is he aware that there is a fear of a reduction of employment in the coinage section of the Royal Mint?

(2) Will he approach the appropriate authorities to ensure that a firm percentage of total coinage is made at the Western Australian mint?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, there is always a possibility of a reduction in employment at the Royal Mint, Perth.

(2) Approaches are made from time to time along the lines suggested.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

Charges, Metropolitan and South-West Power Scheme.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Works:

What are the details of the present scale of charges raised by the State Electricity Commission for—

(a) electricity supplied in the metropolitan area;

(b) electricity supplied by the South-West power scheme?

The MINISTER replied:

The details are as follows:—

Metropolitan Area.

Schedule of Charges for Electric Current.

(a) As from the 15th September, 1953.

Table "A" lighting:

			per unit.
First	100	units per month	6.65d.
Next	500	units per month	6.15d.
Next	4,400	units per month	5.15d.
All over	5,000	units per month	4.15d.

Table "B" industrial power:

First	200	units per month	3.65d.
Next	4,800	units per month	3.15d.
Next	50,000	units per month	2.65d.
All over	55,000	units per month	2.05d.

Table "C" domestic power:

Private residences and purely residential flats only—not hotels, boarding-houses or residences used partly for business	2.65d.
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Table "D" combined domestic lighting and power:

For domestic purposes only—does not include flats, boarding-houses, hotels or residences used partly for business.

For every 100 square feet of basic area $2\frac{1}{2}$ units per quarter ($\frac{3}{4}$ unit per month) are charged at lighting rate; all the balance at the domestic power rate.

A fee of 7s. 6d. for inspecting, making plan and determining the basic area, to be paid on applying for this rate.

Table "E" combined commercial lighting and power:

Lighting and power for shops, offices, warehouses, theatres, public buildings, State and Commonwealth buildings and hospitals, or where light and power mains are not separate.

			per unit.
First 50	units	per	
month	....	....	7.65d.
Next 950	units	per	
month	....	....	6.65d.
Next 1,000	units	per	
month	....	....	5.15d.
Next 3,000	units	per	
month	....	....	4.15d.
Next 50,000	units	per	
month	....	....	3.15d.
All over 55,000	units	per	
month	....	....	2.05d.
Floodlighting	....	....	4.15d.

All consumers to be charged one or another of the above rates. Each and every point of supply shall be taken separately for assessment on the above rates.

No master meter rents charged.
Minimum charge:

A minimum charge of 3s. 4d. per month (10s. per quarter) will be made.

South-West Power Scheme.

(b) As from the 21st September, 1953.	per unit.
First 24 units per month	.... 7.31d.
Next 24 units per month	.... 4.31d.
Next 4,952 units per month	.... 3.31d.
All over 5,000 units per month	.... 2.31d.

Minimum charge: 3s. 4d. per month.

No master meter rents charged.

Submeter rental charge: 6d. per meter per month.

All accounts rendered quarterly.

POTATOES.

Shipment Through Bunbury.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What consideration has the Western Australian Potato Marketing Board given to ensure that potatoes grown in the Bunbury port zone and to be dug in the next few months, will be exported through the port of Bunbury?

(2) If favourable consideration has been given this matter—

- when will the first shipment be made and what is the anticipated tonnage of such first shipment;
- how many shipments of potatoes from the port of Bunbury are contemplated between now and the 31st March, 1957, and what is the anticipated total tonnage of such shipments;
- what tonnage of potatoes does the board expect to export from all Western Australian ports between now and the 31st March, 1957?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied:

(1) The Potato Marketing Board consigns potatoes from Bunbury by boat when buyers are prepared to purchase f.o.b. Bunbury. However, there is no power to enforce this.

(2) (a) and (b) Shipments are dependent on stipulations of buyers. There are no firm sales yet made for shipment of potatoes from Bunbury.

(c) It is unable to estimate the tonnage until the crop is further advanced.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE.

Mullewa Court Conditions.

Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Justice:

(1) Is he aware that the justices of the peace serving the district of Mullewa are finding the conditions under which they hold court very difficult indeed?

(2) Is he also aware that no privacy can be arranged in the present building for cases which should be tried in camera?

(3) Is he further aware that the number of whites and natives before the court in Mullewa was alleged to be as set out hereunder:—

1954—

Whites	....	....	92
Citizenship rights and exemption holders	....	....	26
Natives	....	....	41

1955—

Whites	....	....	64
Citizenship rights and exemption holders	....	....	40
Natives	....	....	88?

(4) Will he state whether plans have been prepared for the Mullewa court house, and, if so, when can the people expect that a start will be made on the building?

(5) If no relief can be given to the justices, the police and citizens of Mullewa in respect to reasonable conditions in which to hold court, will he have the position investigated and provide cooling

fans and improved telephone facilities in order to alleviate the trying summer conditions?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) It is understood that the number of charges dealt with in the Police Court at Mullewa was 163 during 1954 and 223 during 1955. Details of the respective numbers of whites and natives before the court are not available in head office.

(4) Plans have been prepared for the erection of a court house at Mullewa. The position is the same as advised to the hon. member on the 12th April, 1956. The needs at Mullewa will be considered from time to time in the light of the requirements at other country towns and the amount of funds available for works of this nature.

(5) The position will be investigated with a view to alleviating the conditions under which justices sit at Mullewa.

COKE.

Use of Collie Coal.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Mines:

As there is a possibility of a shortage in this State of coke for use by owners of slow combustion stoves, heaters, etc., will he have investigated, and a report submitted, regarding the possibility of using Collie coal and a comparable cost of coal as against the cost of coke?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (for the Minister for Mines) replied:

Yes. When the investigations have been completed, a report will be made available.

FISHERIES.

Development of Prawn Industry and Investigation.

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Fisheries:

With reference to the answers given to my questions on the 3rd October, 1956, dealing with the development of the prawn industry and the examination of the fishing potential in Western Australia, will he advise—

(1) Has the Government applied to the Commonwealth Government for expenditure in Western Australia of part of the funds becoming available from the sale of the Babbage Island whaling station?

(2) If so, on what basis and for what purpose?

(3) (a) Is the Government contemplating any expenditure on capital equipment, plant or buildings for prawn or other fishing, or fishing research?

(b) If so, what is the nature of such contemplated expenditure?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (for the Minister for Fisheries) replied:

(1) A case is at present in course of preparation.

(2) The submission to the Commonwealth Government will contain proposals for technological and biological investigations, as well as experimental fishing operations.

(3) (a) and (b) No capital expenditure is at present contemplated, but research is proceeding in relation to fish-farming in inland areas, to the prawn, tuna and scallop resources, and to the life histories of certain estuarine species of fish.

ONE-DAY STRIKE.

Government Intervention.

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

In view of the decision of the State executive of the Australian Labour Party to support a Commonwealth-wide one-day strike on the 15th November, what action has the Government taken to use its influence to avert such a hold-up?

The MINISTER replied:

The Government reasoned with delegates in an endeavour to have a different decision arrived at and consideration is at present being given as to what steps might be taken to avert a hold-up.

BETTING.

Increased Broadcasting of Eastern States Races.

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

Is it correctly reported that the Government made a request to the A.B.C. or the Commonwealth Government for increased broadcasting of Eastern States racing? If so, what reasons prompted the request and what were the results of the request?

The MINISTER replied:

As the hon. member did not say where it is supposed to be reported, I am unable to answer the question.

TRAFFIC.

Increased Licence Fees.

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

Is there any substance in the report in "The West Australian" of the 5th October, headed "Steep Rise Coming on Diesel Trucks", indicating that there would be a rise in the licence fees of motor-vehicles, particularly on diesel trucks?

The MINISTER replied:

As I think all members are aware, the Government has recently been giving consideration to revised charges for the registration of motor-vehicles and in so doing it has taken into account the procedure

which is followed in other States of the Commonwealth. Certain decisions have been made, legislation is being drafted at present, and it is anticipated that a Bill will be introduced in this Parliament within the course of the next several weeks. It is not customary to supply details of what is contained in a Bill —

Mr. Hearman: I only asked whether there was any substance in the report.

The MINISTER: —prior to the second reading. The report was conjecture on the part of the newspaper reporter and it may or may not be correct. His estimation of the position was no doubt based on the procedure adopted by other States.

NEWSPAPER COMPETITIONS.

Receipts, Expenses and Allocations.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Last week the member for Nedlands asked questions about newspaper competitions and at that time the information was promised to him later. The information is now to hand so I desire to reply to his questions as follows:—

"Timeswords" by "Sunday Times."

	£
Gross receipts	103,664
Less expenses including salaries, disc., P.M.G., miscellaneous etc.	17,158
	<hr/> 86,506
Less prize money	30,314
Net Profit	<hr/> 56,192

This was divided:

£
12,525 to medical school.
43,667 to spastic welfare.

"Find the Ball Contest" by "Weekend Mail."

	£
Gross receipts	35,791
Less expenses	401
	<hr/> 35,390
Less prices paid for prizes	12,841
Net Profit	<hr/> 22,549

This was divided:

£
7,126 National theatre.
1,302 Guide dogs for blind.
1,748 Torchbearers for legacy.
2,730 Medical school appeal.
1,470 Surf Life Saving Association of W.A.
2,447 Red Cross.
1,663 Slow learning children.
1,930 Braille Society.
1,383 Mentally incurable children.
750 R.S.P.C.A.

22,549

SPECIAL UNEMPLOYMENT AID.

(a) *Financial Assistance from Commonwealth.*

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) In view of the reports that a sum of £2,000,000 is forthcoming from the Commonwealth Government to the State of Western Australia, is he in a position to give the House details of how this money is to be expended?

(2) If not, will he undertake to give an informative statement to the House immediately details are known?

The MINISTER replied:

The opportunity has not yet been provided to give a detailed consideration of the various works to be undertaken. It is likely that individual works will be commenced without delay and no full programme will be available in the very near future. The circumstances under which the grant was made leave it to the State to spend the money to the best advantage, with the exception that the Commonwealth took into consideration the State's desire to push on with the comprehensive water scheme when the money was made available to the State.

(b) *Amplification of Reply.*

Mr. BOVELL (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

Further to my question without notice, I would point out that he did not reply to the question in full. I asked him for details to be given to this House immediately the money is granted to the State by the Commonwealth Government. If this is done, this House will have a first-hand knowledge of what is to be done with the £2,000,000. Will he amplify his reply?

The MINISTER replied:

I thought I made myself clear when I replied to the member for Vasse. I said that it would take some time to make available a full programme of the works to be undertaken, but in the meantime some individual projects would be commenced. Obviously, some of the money will have to be retained in hand against the possibility that certain works being undertaken will require more funds and, therefore, it will not be possible to parcel out the whole of the £2,000,000 at this juncture nor would it be wise to do so. However, such information as is available from time to time will be given to the House.

KING EDWARD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL.

(a) *Differences Between Board and Minister.*

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

(1) Is it a fact that there has been a difference of opinion between himself and the board of management of the King Edward Memorial Hospital?

(2) Is it a fact that the board's term of office has expired and the board has not been reappointed?

The MINISTER replied:

The answer is "Yes" to both questions.

(b) Tabling of Papers.

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

Will he lay on the Table of the House the papers relating to the clash between himself and the board of management of the King Edward Memorial Hospital on the subject of the appointment of an administrator and on any other relevant matter on which there has been a difference of opinion?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes.

BILL—PROFITEERING AND UNFAIR TRADING PREVENTION.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 18th September.

MR. O'BRIEN (Murchison) [4.46]: This is a Bill which, if passed, will prove to be of great value to all the people of the State. Some members opposite might say that it is a hardy annual, but, in my opinion, it is a most necessary piece of legislation. When we see large buildings in St. George's Terrace which have been built by insurance companies—

Hon. D. Brand: That would include the State Insurance Office.

Mr. O'BRIEN:—we would say that there is free competition in the insurance world. This is a measure to enable the State Government Insurance Office to enjoy the same privilege, namely, free competition. The object of the Bill is to grant to the State office the right to cater for the needs of those people who wish to take out general insurance policies. At present that office is restricted in its insurance business to the local government pool insurance, school children's insurance, comprehensive motor-vehicle insurance and workers' compensation insurance.

I can see no reason why the State Insurance Office should not issue policies for general insurance, if the people in this State agree with the policy of free competition. At present we have over 60 insurance companies in this State. Over the years they have built, and at the present time are still erecting, large buildings in the City of Perth. It is also true that the building, which is being erected for

the State Government Insurance Office, will be a monument to the Minister and to the present State Government.

The Minister for Transport: What a Government!

Mr. O'BRIEN: It will mean that instead of people, and members of Parliament, having to travel long distances to conduct their business, they will find all the necessary departments housed in the one building. This Bill will also prove a great help to farmers because it will enable them to insure against fire.

Hon. D. Brand: They can insure against fire now.

Mr. O'BRIEN: That is so, but it will provide free competition and will give those farmers who wish to insure with the State Government Insurance Office the opportunity to do so.

Hon. D. Brand: Can you name any?

Mr. O'BRIEN: Approximately two years ago, the State Government Insurance Office accepted the responsibility of insuring school children against accident to and from school. Together with many other fathers, I insured my children under the policy provided, and I have been most grateful for the protection given by the State office. If members are sincere in what they say about free competition and how necessary it is, I would suggest that now is the time for them to show their sincerity by giving this Bill their support. In my opinion, it is an A1 measure because it provides something that is necessary to enable the State Government Insurance Office to fulfil a much needed want in this State. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 18th September.

HON. L. THORN (Toodyay) [4.54]: This amending Bill is somewhat similar to that which the Minister introduced last session. It goes much further, however, and I would suggest that members have a good look at it, because it proposes to bring about several changes which I consider will be rather drastic in their effect.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Are they not necessary changes?

Hon. L. THORN: Not all of them, as I will endeavour to explain.

Hon. D. Brand: They are unnecessary; like the bridge over the river at Fremantle.

Hon. L. THORN: If we look at the provisions of the measure we find that it proposes to enforce major alterations in

premises being used by the hairdressing trade today. I would like to ask the Minister what effect it will have on those people who run hairdressing saloons in their own homes. Does he propose to enforce structural alterations, or will he stop them from carrying out hairdressing in their homes? These people have nothing to sell in the way of cigarettes and the like, which are generally sold at hairdressing saloons, and I would be rather interested to know what the Minister proposes to do about these people.

There is another amendment in the measure which deals with factory workers. It seeks to reduce the normal working week in factories from 44 hours to 40 hours. If the owners of factories wish to carry on and work on Saturday mornings, they will be compelled to pay time and a half for a certain period, and after that double time. This, of course, will mean an increase in overtime rates. Members opposite are always talking about inflation and inflationary moves, and I would point out that a provision such as that can only serve to bring about an increase in the cost of production of factories. There is also a further amendment dealing with meal allowances, which it proposes to increase in some instances from 1s. 6d. to 3s. 6d.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You cannot get a decent meal for 3s. 6d.

Hon. L. THORN: I appreciate that and I do not intend to oppose that provision. I know it is not possible to obtain much for 3s. 6d. today. I daresay that for 1s. 6d. all one could get would be a hot pie and tomato sauce.

It is rather alarming to find that all factories which previously stopped work on Saturday afternoon will now have to cease operating on Friday night. If they want to work on Saturday, it will be necessary for them to pay overtime rates. The measure contains another amendment dealing with ventilation, and it seems to me that it is going to make matters more difficult than ever for factory-owners, because it proposes to force them to find more air space per man. At the moment the air space allowed is 350 square feet but, under the amending Bill, this is to be increased to 400 square feet. This would impose a further hardship on the owners of factories because they will have to provide more air space for the worker and if they have not that extra air space at their disposal, I dare say the factories and shops inspector will be at liberty to compel them to employ fewer men.

Provision is also made in the Bill for the setting aside of luncheon rooms for saw-millers. This will mean that all sawmills will have to provide luncheon rooms. I understand that this has already been done by Bunning Bros. for their workers and I am informed that the luncheon room is

seldom used. The workers prefer to eat their lunches in the open spaces where they have their favourite spots. Under this measure the factories and shops inspector will also be given authority over health matters, and this is already under the control of the Health Department. It will, therefore, mean a duplication of the work done by the health inspectors.

Another important amendment which I strenuously opposed last year, and which is contained in this Bill, is the closing of shops at 5.30 p.m. on week days and at 12 noon on Saturdays. At present they are allowed to trade until 6 p.m. and they also pay overtime rates. The same applies to Saturday when they pay overtime for any extra time that might be worked by the shop assistants. That would include all shops except those under the Fourth Schedule. I cannot understand a Labour Government wanting to impose this hardship.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You would understand if you worked in a shop.

Hon. L. THORN: Let me finish my remarks on the subject. All the big stores will close at 5.30 p.m. However, there is a public need for trading in the outer suburban shops between 5.30 p.m. and 6 p.m. Many of the small shopkeepers in the outer suburbs rose to their present rank because they were thrifty workers and had saved enough money to buy into their businesses. By so doing they made way for other workers to obtain employment, apart from the fact that they also provide employment in their little shops.

Today the small storekeeper is suffering many hardships arising from the competition from self-service stores which are putting many of the small shops out of business. The Bill, if passed, will be a further blow to the small storekeepers who today cannot stand up to the competition financially, and this will help to put them out of business. The small shops fill a need in the community in that they serve people who knock off work after 5 p.m. People on their way home may have forgotten a tin of foodstuff or a lb. of butter, but today they are able to purchase those articles in the suburban shops. The trade between 5.30 and 6 p.m. enables the small storekeepers to do some business.

I am really surprised at a Labour Government desiring to close small shops at the same time as the bigger stores in the city. The small shops should be given a chance by the provision of longer trading hours. The same proposition applies to the beach shops. Their harvest is during week-ends. They have a lean time on week days, but when the crowds flock to the beaches during week-ends, those storekeepers are able to do good business and make a living. I have spoken to one or two small shopkeepers in my area.

The Minister for Labour: What area?

Hon. L. THORN: The Swan. If the hon. member desires the name of one, I can give it. He is I. J. Rakich. Is there any other information the hon. member desires?

The Premier: What is his age?

Hon. L. THORN: He says the provisions in the Bill will have a disastrous effect on him because his trade is always heaviest between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. That man is a well-educated, Australian-born Slav who knows his business as a storekeeper.

There is another amendment in the Bill which affects country members, and that is to deprive country districts of conducting a poll. Country people, under this Bill, will not be able to decide when to hold their half-holidays. The Bill makes it arbitrary for them to shut their shop up at closing time on Saturday, and deletes the provisions for conducting a poll. A further amendment relates to the closing of chemists' shops at 5.30 p.m. on week days and 12 noon on Saturdays.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: When do they close now?

Hon. L. THORN: Many of them trade on after 5.30 p.m. and they pay overtime rates to their employees. I know that in an emergency one can always call on the services of a chemist. It would be a great deal better to leave them alone. They are rendering a service which, at times, is a most urgent one.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Today the chemists do not have to keep open.

Hon. L. THORN: They have been keeping open for business, and by that I take it they want to remain open after 5.30 p.m. They can if they so desire close at 5.30 p.m. Many of these chemists are in a similar predicament to that of the small storekeepers, such as those setting up business in the new areas along Canning Highway. They are generally young chemists, not long qualified, who are most anxious to make headway.

Mr. Ackland: By opening late they are fulfilling a need.

Hon. L. THORN: I am surprised at a Labour Government bringing in such amendments. Quite a few of them can only have an inflationary effect. The Bill will tend to reduce production in a factory by four hours.

There is one point I should have mentioned before and it relates to service stations. Under the Bill they will be compelled to close at 6 p.m. on week days and 12 noon on Saturdays. I do not know what country members will think of that provision. I would point out to the House that the most important and scientific form of transport today is motor transport, and it is giving a service seven days in the week. Every day more and more vehicles are being put on the road.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I have not had trouble in getting petrol before.

Hon. L. THORN: The hon. member did, such as the occasion when he approached me and asked if I had a gallon tin of petrol in my car which I could give him. I told him that I did not but said that he could get petrol at a garage in the Terrace. The occasion was a late sitting of this House and the hon. member was very pleased at being able to get the petrol and not having to walk home.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You should tell a true story.

Hon. L. THORN: I helped the hon. member! I hold him in high respect and I would not try putting anything over him! Today we are moving in a continuous whirl of transport. Garages are prepared to render a service by remaining open after hours, but by this Bill they are to be closed down at 12 noon on Saturdays. Such a restriction would hinder many people and would affect our transport unless some other means could be found of supplying the public with petrol, such as by allowing a number of garages to remain open.

The Minister for Labour: Have you read the present Act in conjunction with this particular amendment?

Hon. L. THORN: The Act lays down a similar provision. As a matter of fact, I approved of the test case being made. I approved of the Factories and Shops Department testing the law on that point, and the department lost the case. I hope that if the legislation is tested again, it will again lose. I oppose the Bill and hope it will not see the light of day.

On motion by Mr. O'Brien, debate adjourned.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. E. Nulsen—Eyre) [5.11] in moving the second reading said: This measure is quite small and is really a Treasury Bill and I hope it is going to help the Treasury. It provides for increases in the rates of percentages used in assessing the annual fees payable by licensees.

For many years, the Grants Commission has penalised the State when determining the amount of the grant to be recommended, as the collections in this State from liquor taxation have been below the average of the non-claimant States. The amount of the unfavourable adjustment for the year 1954-55 was £123,000. It is expected that the additional revenue to be collected under the amended rates will be approximately £120,000. So it will be seen it will not catch up with all the leeway.

The Bill also provides for the percentage rates to follow the practice in other States of having a uniform basis of taxation for all classes of licence. Under the existing legislation, the percentage rate

for clubs, temporary, brewers and spirit merchants is 1 per cent. less than for other licences. Under the Bill the fees for these types of licence will be increased from 5 per cent. to 8½ per cent. Others will be increased from 6 per cent. to 8½ per cent. Now it will be uniform so far as fees are concerned. I think that clearly explains the Bill, and there is not very much in it.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: How much more revenue?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This will give us about £120,000 extra.

Mr. Bovell: Not much in the Bill!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There is still a leeway of about £3,000 between our returns and what we should have in accordance with what the non-claimant States obtain in their collection of fees on liquor licences.

Mr. Bovell: How much more can private industry stand? It should come under the Profiteering and Unfair Trading Prevention Bill.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is not comparable at all.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It is not another tax on beer, is it?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is a tax on liquor, so it must be.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You will have to join the "Taxus Rangers"!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It will not exceed the amount of fees collected by non-claimant States. It will bring us not quite up to their level.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Will it put the price of beer up?

Mr. Bovell: It is a terrific impact.

On motion by Mr. Ross Hutchinson, debate adjourned.

BILL—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 13th September.

HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [5.14]: It is good indeed that we have come back to this piece of contentious legislation.

The Minister for Health: Why contentious?

Hon. D. BRAND: I cannot say; the Minister should know best.

The Minister for Health: I do not know of anything contentious about it.

Hon. D. BRAND: The Minister looks so hopeful that I am sorry to disappoint him by saying that although I support the second reading, there are many features of the Bill which I oppose. There are three or four points in particular which have been conveyed to me by a majority of the local governing bodies throughout

the State as features to be resisted. If the Minister does really believe that it is not a contentious measure, I am afraid he is completely out of touch with the Local Government Department and the correspondence received by it over the years in respect of the proposed measure.

At the outset I would like to know from the Minister whether it is intended to accept any amendments in the Legislative Assembly because I understand that it is the intention of the Government not to accept any in this House, but to allow a very full debate on the amendments moved in another place. Whilst that may be highly desirable, I think it will be necessary for us to know just where the members in this House stand with respect to the clauses in this Bill and the principles embodied in it which local government authorities—both road boards and municipalities—have opposed right from the introduction of the measure by the present Government.

We realise that the Bill is a very big one and costly to reprint. A big job would have to be done in securing a reprint and it would mean further delays. Although it is not a Bill with a great public appeal, it is not a measure of any extremes, but is very important, because it affects local government which is an integral part of the government of this State.

The Minister for Health: The local governing bodies are anxious to get this Bill through in order to have something on which to work.

Hon. D. BRAND: I will agree that local governing bodies are very anxious to get this measure approved by Parliament, but not in its present form, and I am sure the Minister would agree with me on that point. I think I can speak for the Opposition, both the Country Party and the Liberal Party, when I say we wonder why the Labour Government persists in its desire to include such principles as adult franchise, general election of the president in road boards, mandatory unimproved valuations and the like. These points are the main issues on which the local government authorities are contesting and opposing this Bill. If the Government indicates that it is prepared to accept such amendments, I will agree with the Minister.

The history of the Bill is one which goes back over a number of years. The present Leader of the Country Party was the first to tackle this very big problem of consolidating local government legislation. As we all know, when the Bill was originally brought into this House the present Premier vigorously opposed it mainly on the score that the local governing bodies were not agreeable to its provisions. I would repeat what has already been stated by the Leader of the Country Party when he quoted the Premier as having said, "If there is one Bill upon which the Government and people most concerned—and

that would be the local government authorities themselves—should reach almost unanimous agreement, it is a Bill dealing with local authorities.”

One would have to stretch one's imagination in order to accept an assertion that local governing authorities and the State Government are unanimous in respect of this Bill. It will be recalled that, as a result of the criticism offered by some of the members opposite, who were then sitting in Opposition, the Government of the day set up an inquiry by a Royal Commission and was prepared to act on the recommendations of that commission which in general terms—might I say to the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government—were acceptable to road boards and municipalities throughout the State.

Had the present Government been sincere in its desire to place this legislation on the statute book, it would have proceeded along the lines recommended by the Royal Commission, which was composed of representatives of local government—or branches of it—with Mr. White, the assistant secretary of the department, as chairman. It is right to say that the inclusion of the controversial principle of adult franchise stems from party policy.

The Minister for Transport: What is wrong with that?

Hon. D. BRAND: We have no fault to find with that. It is the policy of the Government that adult franchise should apply to local government, and it has included that principle in this Bill. We oppose it because we believe one undesirable feature that would result would be the introduction of party politics into local government. No matter how we look at it, it cannot be a good thing for party politics to enter into this field of government.

The Minister for Transport: Explain how there would be a greater tendency to party politics under the proposed franchise as compared with that which exists at present.

Hon. D. BRAND: In the event of there being adult franchise for local government elections, one could imagine that there would quickly come into being the same state of affairs as obtains in the other States where this system exists, and where small organisations representing their own respective parties have organised, and the whole thing has become party political. That is a fact, and the Minister cannot deny it. He cannot deny, on the other hand, that in Western Australia, with very few exceptions—I know there are one or two; some on the Goldfields—party politics does not enter into local government affairs.

The Minister for Transport: You are afraid that a few good Labourites might get on these local governing bodies, are you?

Hon. D. BRAND: I am not afraid about any good Labourites, or good Liberals, or any other good men getting on these bodies. We are anxious, as a party, to retain good men who are anxious to remain outside the realm of party politics and to represent the people by whom they are elected.

The Minister for Transport: You want them to represent only a small percentage.

Mr. Bovell: They are the ones who pay the money.

The Minister for Transport: Money should not buy a vote.

Hon. D. BRAND: There is no complaint about the existing set-up. There has been no pressure from public opinion—even from those who have not votes under the existing system—for the new set-up to be introduced: none at all. I would say that the Minister for Transport could not produce a single letter from any of his electors. Nor could the Minister for Local Government.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You could get some if you liked.

Hon. D. BRAND: Of course—the same as I got one from the Engine Drivers' Union!

The Minister for Transport: Do they want a vote, too?

Hon. D. BRAND: These things could be arranged. But at present—and I should say that would apply to the future, too—there is no pressure for adult franchise in respect of local government. The people are quite satisfied with the existing situation. For that reason alone, I see no good purpose in granting to all and sundry a vote in respect of local government.

The Minister for Transport: I think it is shocking that they are uninterested. That is because they have not a vote.

Hon. D. BRAND: I do not think that is the position; for, as the Minister knows, in connection with elections for which there is adult franchise, interest has to be stirred up through propaganda and the like. Even political parties find it most difficult during State and Commonwealth elections—very difficult indeed—to persuade people to take an interest in those contests. Is it not better in the interests of a town, or a city, or a district that men should be elected impartially to represent everybody and all interests rather than that a system should be introduced which would result in local government being made, as someone said, a political stamping ground?

The Minister for Health: Don't you think that adult franchise would result in impartiality with regard to road board administration?

Hon. D. BRAND: No. No one can tell me that. Nobody could challenge the statement that eventually there would be

party politics in connection with local government, and that local governing authorities would thus become stepping stones to State and other governments.

Mr. Jamieson: Has any great harm resulted in Great Britain?

Hon. D. BRAND: Not so far as I know. But I do not know that the system has done any good. The question is: Why change the existing situation if there is no proof that it will improve matters and when, in the minds of the people—and local governing authorities themselves—there is a great deal of doubt whether it would do any good at all, and an impression that it might be just the contrary?

The Minister for Transport: In order to avoid party politics, you would deny most of the people of the State the right to vote for the Assembly, would you?

Hon. D. BRAND: That could be the subject of another discussion which the Minister could enter into on another occasion. At present we are dealing with local government, and I am speaking for local governing authorities.

The Minister for Transport: We are speaking for the people; that is the difference.

Hon. D. BRAND: We are speaking for those folk represented by delegates at conferences of local governing authorities.

The Minister for Transport: A fraction of the people.

Hon. D. BRAND: As the Minister knows, this question has been before the people through the Press and at conferences for years, and still there is no pressure for the implementation of, or support for, the policy of the present Government. On the contrary, if one travels through the country, one finds people anxious to retain the existing system, which seems to give them quite satisfactory service.

The Minister for Health: I was speaking to members of a road board in a Liberal area last Friday, and they said they did not think it would make any difference to the personnel of the board if we had adult franchise.

Hon. D. BRAND: What road board was that?

The Minister for Health: In the electorate of the member for Blackwood.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I don't think that will worry the member for Blackwood.

Hon. D. BRAND: Another thing which is being opposed by local governing authorities is the desire of the Minister for Local Government to make it mandatory that a certain system of valuation should be adopted. There could be a case established, I think, for the use of both systems of valuation—that of the unimproved value, and that of the annual rental value. I see no reason why the Government should say

at this stage that, whether they like it or not, local governing bodies must accept one system.

The same contention would apply to the appointment of auditors, this appertaining particularly to municipalities. Why should not the authority be left with the council or the road board? Why should the Minister say that they must do this and do something else when, over the years, a very satisfactory situation has existed by which they had a choice, perhaps, of two alternatives?

These are the points which local governing bodies throughout the country are challenging because they tend to take away the authority that they have at the present time. They resent being directed in this manner under a Bill which they feel is desirable and which they want to see on the statute book in the form recommended by their own Royal Commission. They contest the situation where the Minister makes it mandatory for them to do these various things.

Road boards have for years elected a chairman from their own number but the Bill proposes that he shall be elected separately as is the mayor of a municipality. Therefore, once again I ask: On what grounds is this to be done? Why should we change the system? There is no demand for this change. There may be something to be said for a policy which allows for the election of the mayor, by the ratepayers, in a city or a built-up area, but certainly not in a road district. Whilst the road boards, numbering some 140, throughout the State desire to retain the existing system, Parliament should see that it is retained. No case has been put up in this House—certainly not by the Minister—for a change.

A good deal can be said with regard to the Bill, and most of it can be stated in the Committee stage. I am as anxious as anyone to see the whole question debated and for the Bill to become law, but I say, here and now, that if the measure is to include the features I have mentioned—features which are vigorously opposed by the local authorities themselves—it would be better to delay it until such time as a satisfactory piece of legislation can be presented to the House.

The Minister for Health: There are only four exceptions that you have taken.

Hon. D. BRAND: That is so, but they are vital principles, and we are asking: Why is the Government adamant about the inclusion of these provisions? Is it not anxious, as the Premier indicated when he was sitting on this side of the House, that in regard to this measure there should be unanimity; that there should be a feeling of confidence as between local governing bodies and the Minister or the State Government; that there should be a feeling of goodwill; that they should work together? When all is said and done, local

government is the third estate of government in the Commonwealth and a very important segment in the whole organisation of government.

The Minister for Transport: So important that all the people ought to have the right to vote at local government elections.

Hon. D. BRAND: The Minister has pointed out that all the people over 21 years of age and, I think, resident for six months, should have a vote. Let us try to appreciate the situation of those people electing members who have, to use a well-known term, no particular stake in the country, but who will be able to tax and increase the taxes of the ratepayers who are limited in number.

It was also pointed out by the Minister that not a large percentage of the income of local government these days stems from rates. I think it was he or his colleague who mentioned that a great deal of the income of local government today comes from Crown grants. That is not exactly true. The grants come from petrol moneys derived from taxes on petrol, and that money is spent on the construction of roads and in the provision of other services for motorists, including the improvement of highways. Therefore the motorist, whom I shall call the taxpayer for the time being, is getting a return for the money that he pays as a tax on petrol. He is getting good and improved roads, and he is getting a service. Therefore that is no argument at all for him to be given a vote in this system of the election of local government representatives.

I sincerely hope that the Premier and the Minister will reconsider the whole matter. The Opposition is anxious to co-operate but I think I am right in saying that we are not prepared to accept, at any stage, the principle of the inclusion of adult franchise and the system of rating on unimproved values. I know that when the Bill gets to another place, a great number of amendments will be sought, and I feel sure that another place, in its present mood, will make amendments to exclude the adult franchise provisions. By that time, especially in view of the crowded legislative programme before the Premier at the present time, I trust the Government will see fit to accept the amendments because it would be in the interests of local government that this measure be placed on the statute book so that the local authorities could get on, under the new law, with the voluntary job they are doing. I support the second reading.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [5.38]: At present we know that local government is conducted under the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act and the Road Districts Act. For some considerable time

Parliament has been endeavouring to have a Bill approved in order to amalgamate the two Acts and allow local government to operate under one piece of legislation. I think the time is long overdue when such a measure should come into operation.

The Government, in the last Parliament, brought down a Bill somewhat similar to the one now under discussion, and the McLarty-Watts Government also submitted a measure, but time did not permit of its being passed. It is regretted that during the McLarty-Watts regime time did not allow of the passing of this legislation because, although in the main the legislation before us is acceptable to most of the local authorities, and I believe, to most of the people concerned—in my opinion, the people mostly concerned are the ratepayers—there are, as has been stated by a number of members on this side of the House, several objectionable clauses in the measure before us.

I wish first to refer to the provision regarding adult franchise. I believe local government should be directed by those who pay the rates as it has under its control funds which are provided by property-owners and rent-payers. If those who occupy houses and pay rent wish to do so, they have the right to exercise their votes and I believe that it is the people I have mentioned who should be empowered to elect their local government representatives in order to decide how the funds should be expended.

The Minister for Health: What about those who contribute over 50 per cent. of the money available to local authorities?

Mr. BOVELL: They have a say in the election of this Parliament. If the Government were to agree to the inclusion in this measure of a provision to impose fees on all residents of adult age—as do the Commonwealth and State Governments through their taxation systems—I do not think we could conscientiously oppose the adult franchise system, but under the existing system of paying rates, I believe that those who pay the piper should be allowed to call the tune. I am therefore opposed to this provision for adult franchise.

The second objectionable feature of the measure is the provision that the election of the president, especially in scattered areas, shall be by the people themselves. We know that in the past in the more closely populated areas it has been the custom for the people to elect their mayor apart from the normal election of members of the local council, but from time immemorial it has been the duty and responsibility of members of road boards to select one of their number to be chairman or president, as he will be if this Bill is passed. This legislation would make it mandatory for a district or shire

council—whichever term is decided upon—to elect its president outside of the members of that authority and I do not think that is a desirable feature.

We have been informed that councils elect their mayors and that the custom should be spread to all systems of local government, but I would remind the House that under our parliamentary system it is that section of the Parliament which constitutes the Government that elects the Premier of the State. It may be a round about way of doing it, but, in effect, the Premier of the State is elected by the members of this assembly.

Mr. Moir: Is that what happens in your party?

Mr. BOVELL: It is, in effect, right and if we analyse the present system we find that the Premier is elected by the majority of the members of this House, as is the case with road boards. The Premier and the Cabinet are elected by the majority of members of this House and that privilege is all that the local authorities are asking for; that their members be permitted to elect their leader.

A further provision to which I take exception is that relating to valuations. In the postwar years, at all events, we have seen Taxation Department valuers go through various districts and place fantastic valuations on the properties. Those valuations may be all right in times of buoyancy but I repeat that to be true valuations they would have to be made on a basis such as would retain the assessed value during periods of both buoyancy and depression. Having been a bank officer for a number of years, I know that the banks adopt a much lower system of values so that, should there at any time be a recession, their valuations remain adequate.

In the postwar period the Taxation Department's system has been to base its valuations on buoyant sales which do not truly reflect the value of the land. To arrive at the true value, the valuations must be taken over a great number of years and made on a conservative basis. Land has been in great demand since the end of the war, but any system that would make mandatory the adoption of Taxation Department valuations is wrong, and I oppose that provision.

The Minister for Health: Then the Taxation Department valuations would be uniform and the local authorities could adjust their rates accordingly.

Mr. BOVELL: I have explained that Taxation Department valuations are wrongly based, as they rest on current sales. It was difficult to sell land in the 1930's but a great deal of land then unsaleable is today being sold for perhaps £1,000 per quarter or half-acre in what are now residential areas. A similar financial condition may return to this State—I sincerely hope it does not—and in that

event the values placed on land by the Taxation Department would be completely false. I repeat that in order to be sound, valuations must be based on average sales of comparable land over a period of not less than 25 or 30 years.

The Minister for Health: I know of a local authority in my electorate where the valuations were so low that it could not raise the revenue to carry on the necessary works.

Mr. BOVELL: It would have the right to increase its valuations. I desire to impress on the House that we should give local authorities as much freedom in their activities as possible; otherwise they tend to become simply rubber stamps, which is undesirable. Today we have leaders in the community taking an interest in the affairs of their own districts, but if we legislate to make local authorities simply rubber stamps we will not get the right type of person to come forward and take an interest in the administration of local government.

There is one other matter which some local authorities in my district have requested me to raise and it is in connection with ward balances. The Bill makes mandatory the abolition of ward balances and, in my opinion, that is completely wrong. I ask the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government to allow an amendment to be made so that ward balances may be made optional. This would give local authorities some responsibility in deciding under what system they will exercise their rating powers. I know that the Local Government Department is keen to abolish ward balances, but this system has been the custom in the past, and I feel that the change envisaged in this measure is too sweeping altogether.

This Bill, with the exception of a number of items, some of which I have enumerated, is a worthy effort to consolidate our local government affairs and in the main I believe it meets with the approval not only of the leaders of local government in various districts throughout the State but also of the ratepayers generally. With the reservations I have outlined, I support the second reading and trust that the Government will see the wisdom of allowing local authorities to retain as much authority as possible.

MR. EVANS (Kalgoorlie) [5.52]: I support the second reading of this Bill which is a measure designed to provide one statute for all local authorities in Western Australia. At present the local authorities operate under two statutes, namely, the Municipal Corporations Act of 1906 and the Road Districts Act of 1919. In that one respect the Bill has much to commend it, and there are many provisions which I am sure will strongly appeal to members of both Houses of the State Parliament. When I first read the Bill

I found certain clauses which appealed to me but which will, I am sure, cause more than a mere fluttering among members of the Opposition who live in conservative dovecotes.

Mr. Roberts: Why?

Mr. EVANS: These clauses are aimed at giving a democratic emphasis to local government in Western Australia.

Mr. Bovell: Your eyes are green with envy.

Mr. EVANS: I did not hear that gag. I repeat, these clauses are aimed at giving a democratic emphasis to local government in Western Australia. They will bring local authorities into line with local government in other States of Australia; for example, New South Wales and Queensland.

Mr. Oldfield: Would you say that local authorities in New South Wales were a good example of local government?

Mr. EVANS: I would not say that the interjection was a good example of an interjection. Clauses 42 to 79 inclusive will rouse the Opposition out of its apathetic slumber.

Mr. Hearman: What do the local authorities in Kalgoorlie think about this?

Mr. EVANS: I represent the majority of the people on the Goldfields and in Kalgoorlie and I am proud to do so.

Mr. Hearman: But what do the local authorities think about it?

Mr. EVANS: The people want a measure of this nature. The clauses to which I referred introduce adult franchise to local government. Adult franchise, of course, is the bogey of members opposite; they are frightened of it. They do not want the abolition of plural voting because that is their safeguard. It is that system which members of local authorities—those who have the same political complexion as members opposite—have been hanging on to like a drowning man clasp ing at a straw.

The Minister for Transport: Shaking hands with a cobra.

Mr. EVANS: It is easy to discover the real concern of those who think like members opposite, and to see why they are opposed to the Bill.

Mr. Bovell: We are not opposed to the Bill; only to its objectionable features.

Mr. EVANS: The reason is that this Bill will provide adult franchise for local government. Members opposite say that this will provide an entry for party politics and that local government will become the stamping ground for party politics. Let us blow the top off this argument right away. Party politics have been in local government for a long time; but only one brand of them. Members opposite are concerned because if adult franchise is granted for local government, Labour politics and

policy will also be aired. So long as Liberal politics are not threatened, members opposite are quite happy. Their great crusade is for "the best men for local government." That is only a masquerade. Politics—Liberal politics—have been in local government in this State for years.

Mr. Court: Are you satisfied with the rackets that go on in New South Wales local government under their present system?

Mr. EVANS: If the member for Nedlands had to make a living on his wits, he would make only half a living.

Mr. Court: At least, I would not starve.

Mr. EVANS: Members opposite object to party politics entering into local government but that is only because half their own party is threatened. Why should there be only a one-way traffic in this regard and the Labour Party be denied representation on local government? Members opposite fear that their policy will no longer be effective in local government and that they will not have an opportunity to air their politics. Judging by the success of the Labour administration in the State Government, members opposite have little to fear if Labour politics are allowed to enter, and even dominate, the policy of our local authorities. The people of Western Australia endorsed the Labour administration overwhelmingly at the last elections and they will endorse it for years to come. Certain objections were put forward to the proposal for adult franchise but those objections negate democratic principles. It is doubtful if all the administrative ability for local government is to be found purely among those people who pay rates. I know it is doubtful because I do not get a vote.

Mr. Court: Regardless of whether you think I am a half-wit or not, are you satisfied with the New South Wales local government?

Mr. EVANS: As it is now, the solid body of local government electors is already comprised in—

- (a) Land-owners;
- (b) their dependants;
- (c) occupiers of ratable property,

and that makes groundless any fears that the remainder of the adult population would upset the good sound administration that these local authorities claim they have given to people in the past. It does not seem logical that political parties, such as the Labour Party, which gained an absolute majority of the votes in the last state elections, should be debarred from having Labour politics aired in local government. But the Opposition claim that that is the aim of this Bill. If it is the aim, what is the objection to it?

Earlier this session I asked a question relating to the rates and income of local authorities. I pinpointed authorities on the Goldfields and the figures more than proved that if there is no claim for adult

franchise, at least there is a definite claim for the widening of the franchise. But we say that there is a claim for adult franchise. I would like to quote some of the figures in regard to the questions I submitted.

I asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government whether he would list for a given number of local authorities the income from general and loan rates, and the total of those, then the total of other income and the percentage of the total of other income compared to the total of general rates, including lighting and other sources of income generally placed under the heading of rates. As regards the first authority shown as local authority (a) in the question, the income from other sources represented 62 per cent. of the total income.

The percentage of income from other sources of the total income in local authority (b) was 67 per cent. and in local authority (c) it was 68 per cent. So we go on down the list and in one of these local authorities the percentage of income derived from various sources, other than from ratepayers, was 92 per cent. Therefore, is it just that some people who contribute towards that income derived by local authorities should be barred from voting?

Hon. A. F. Watts: The same principle applies to the petrol tax.

Mr. EVANS: Yes, what about those people who drive motorcars and who pay petrol tax? What about people who support the local shopkeepers? They all subscribe indirectly to the income derived by local authorities, whether they are ratepayers or not. The drivers of motorcars are subject to traffic fines, etc., and therefore, are they not entitled to a vote? Are we living in 1956 or 1901? Judging by the remarks made by the members of the Opposition it would seem that we are living in 1901.

I support the second reading of the Bill. Its purpose is to give democratic emphasis to local government. If members of the Opposition are sincere when they claim that they are democratic, they will support the Bill. If they do not, it seems that the member for Leederville is correct in the claim that he made a few weeks ago when he said that the Liberal Party put the word "mock" in democracy.

MR. W. A. MANNING (Narrogin) [6.21: This is a Bill which is badly needed. It has been called for by local authorities for some considerable time and we should ensure that it passes through this House as quickly as possible. It does seem strange, however, that there are controversial clauses in the Bill which would be better omitted if we are to ensure the passage of the measure.

Firstly, in regard to the rating system: the Bill provides that the rates shall be assessed on the unimproved values only, based on the values made by the Taxation Department. This system may be all right for certain districts and for road boards, but it is doubtful whether it would be satisfactory for municipalities. In any case, it has always been optional for a local governing body to decide whether it should change from one rating system to another.

A local authority should be able to decide what system suits its own particular district. Therefore, is there any need for us to include in a piece of legislation some particular method of assessing the rates? I can see no need for it. If there is no need for such a provision, why insist on it? I am certain that local governing bodies are quite capable of deciding what system is most suitable for their own particular areas, and the decision should be left to them.

The provision relating to the election of the president of a shire council may not be very important in some respects because we find that the mayors of municipalities are always elected by the direct vote of the ratepayers, and they are perfectly satisfied with this system. On the other hand, I think the road boards are unanimous in being perfectly satisfied with the system of electing their chairmen from among their own members. It seems, therefore, that the two systems work quite satisfactorily and if that is so, why should we not let them continue as they are? The reason why road boards adhere to their particular system is that each road board covers a very wide area and a man nominating for the office of president of the shire council could, quite easily, be unknown to many ratepayers in a road board district.

Mr. Hearman: The people in the town ward often outnumber the ratepayers in the rest of the district.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: That is true. Under the present system, however, each member of a road board knows his fellow member and knows his value on the board and what his capabilities would be as a chairman. Those men are perfectly capable of selecting their own chairman because of their experience of him in the past. They would make a better selection than road board electors who may scarcely know the candidate. If this system has worked quite well in the past, why should it not work in the future, and why insist on any alteration?

The most controversial provision in the Bill is that relating to adult franchise. I state definitely that there is no demand whatsoever for it. I think it would be found that every local governing body and every local governing organisation is opposed to this clause.

Mr. Jamieson: Why?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: They are opposing because there is no reason for this provision whatsoever.

Mr. Jamieson: Why?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I will tell the hon. member why. Every local authority obtains its revenue from charges made on the properties in its district.

Mr. Jamieson: Not all of its funds are obtained from that source, and you know it.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: It raises all its funds for municipal affairs.

The Minister for Transport: No.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Firstly, I would like members opposite to tell me from where municipalities get their outside income. They do not receive road grants as do road boards. They do get a certain amount of revenue from their motor-vehicle licences, but with that money they have the responsibility of maintaining the roads in the municipality. What about the other amenities? Nobody but the ratepayers pay for those.

The Minister for Transport: What rot!

Mr. W. A. MANNING: It is not rot.

The Minister for Transport: You run a business in Narrogin and it is your clients who pay the rates, and you know it.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: We assess rates on the property. Some members opposite have told us that property-owners are interested in obtaining voting powers to enable them to control the workings of the municipality. I would like to point out that a property-owner in a municipality could own a dozen houses and still not have a vote. If those houses are let to tenants and every tenant applies to have his name on the municipal roll and is thus given the right to vote, the property-owner would not get one vote in such a case.

Mr. Toms: Does not the owner have to agree?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: No. It is optional for the occupier to have his or her name on the roll, and they usually exercise that right and avail themselves of the opportunity to vote. The owner who is not also an occupier, is generally a nonentity in municipal affairs because it is the occupier who gets the vote.

If these people are assessed on the value of their properties, then they are the ones who should say how the money is to be spent. A person may be staying in a town or living in a hotel and have no real interest in the place at all; he is there for a year or two and knows full well that he will be transferred, and yet he is given the right to vote! What right has he to vote on the finances of the municipality? He has no interest in the place at all. Do members opposite mean to tell me that a person who is merely passing

through a town should have any say whatever in determining the rates other people should pay? The people who are responsible for deciding the financial affairs of the municipality or road board are elected in a democratic manner.

Mr. Jamieson: The same is the case with members of Parliament.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: The whole thing is ridiculous and there is no comparison whatever; because every citizen is liable to be taxed. In a municipality or road board, however, that is not the case and surely those who pay should have the say!

Mr. Bovell: You make everybody liable for rates, and I will agree to adult franchise.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: That is so. It would be different if everybody contributed to the rates, but they do not.

The Minister for Transport: Of course they do.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: They may do so indirectly but, of course, one could apply that to anything.

The Minister for Transport: The rates are a cost item in the selling price of your goods, and you know it.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: I am surprised that the Minister should say a thing like that.

The Minister for Transport: You know it is true.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Members opposite must be hardpressed for suitable arguments if they say things like that. Who is responsible for the loan moneys raised by our municipalities or road boards? They usually commit their ratepayers over a period of 10, 15 or 20 years for moneys raised for works. But who is committed for that money? It is not the bird of passage who flies in and out; it is a charge against the properties in the town and the people interested in that are the owners and occupiers.

Members opposite will never convince me that a person who is not interested in the town, and is merely a bird of passage, should have any say in the matter, because he is not committed at all. If a person reaches mature years and he wishes to let his rates stand, he is not compelled to pay them. His rates become a charge on the property and that applies to anybody who is in arrears with his rates. Members opposite will not convince me that a person who comes to the town for a year or two bears any responsibility for this commitment.

It is absurd for members to suggest that adult franchise is suitable for municipal affairs. We would be well advised to consider this matter fairly carefully. The people who bear the responsibility and carry on local government work do so

willingly. They are elected to carry on that work; they make few demands and receive no payment for the work they do. They are elected from all sections of the community. Members cannot say that they represent the property-owners because they do not; I know too much about that. They represent all sections of the community and are democratically elected. They act in the interests of the whole community and if anybody has any ideas to the contrary, I would like them to put forward a concrete example, because I know too well that these people are imbued with the idea of acting in the best interests of the town or road board area concerned.

I would stress that their opinion is worthy of consideration. I feel that these provisions should be taken out of this Bill in order to enable us to proceed with the very essential matter of making this measure as operative as the local governing people have desired it to be for a very long time. It is a tremendous Bill, and I know that we have to be practical in our approach to it, but, on the other hand, we cannot allow provisions that are unreasonable to be placed on the statute book and so spoil what would otherwise be a good measure.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [7.30]: This Bill, when passed with suitable amendments, will fill a general need of local authorities. The principles contained therein have been discussed and efforts have been made to introduce them since 1947-48. Royal Commissions have been appointed to investigate the position and so on. All local governments are anxious to see the Bill passed because it will confer advantages on them, and it will also tidy up many anomalies in the present Act under which two different forms of local government operate.

Had the Government really stuck to the recommendation of the Royal Commission to introduce this Bill on a non-party basis, then it would have become law possibly a couple of years ago. By persisting in certain clauses which contain principles in the Government's platform, and which are extremely objectionable to a great many people, the Government is holding up the passage of the Bill quite unnecessarily. It could have accepted the recommendations of the Royal Commission, incorporated them into a Bill and had it passed through both Houses of Parliament. If the Government wanted to introduce other matters, there was nothing to prevent it bringing forward amending legislation. In the interim local authorities would have received the benefit of the new legislation for which they are all asking.

I would point out that some of the clauses are extremely objectionable. In relation to one it has been suggested that

adult franchise is democratic, but that depends on how that question is viewed. The member for Kalgoorlie suggested earlier that people who opposed adult franchise in local government were not democratic. It might be just as well to point out to him that when this same Bill came before the House last year, all members received a circular from the Association of Local Authorities in the Goldfields areas, asking members most strenuously to object to this particular clause. I would like to know where some members of the Goldfields stand on this question. Are they trying to represent the view of the local authorities, which presumably is the view of the ratepayers, or are they trying to force on to the people in those areas something for which they have not asked and which they do not want?

Mr. Evans: How do you know they have not asked for it?

Mr. HEARMAN: I know the general public has not asked for it. I know the local authorities on the Goldfields are unanimous in their opposition to this clause, so much so that they circularised all members of Parliament. I consider that the view expressed by the local authorities concerned should be placed before the House.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I think the Premier himself said so.

Mr. HEARMAN: He did. I would expect that any member who really believes in democracy would represent the views of those organisations, even if he was not prepared to openly support them himself. At least those expressions of opinion should be ventilated in this House. The view expressed by the member for Kalgoorlie is not the universal opinion held in that area. The people who are most concerned appear to oppose the clause.

Mr. Evans: You do not know that.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not want to lead the member for Kalgoorlie to reverse his stand and say that the local authorities in this area do not want this Bill. Responsible people generally are very chary about the adult franchise clause. I believe the reason for its introduction is a desire to see party politics injected into local government.

Mr. Evans: What about Liberal Party politics in your road boards?

Mr. HEARMAN: There is no injection of party politics in road boards in my district. As far as the ratepayers in my district are concerned, irrespective of the political views of a ratepayer, he has a chance of being elected. There is no political organisation to help him to win elections. On our road boards there are Labour supporters and Labour candidates. It is quite idle for the member for Kalgoorlie to suggest that under the present franchise system the person who espouses

the socialist outlook has no chance of being elected. That is inconsistent with the facts.

Mr. Evans: What about the capitalistic outlook?

Mr. HEARMAN: That has nothing to do with the matter. The assertion that the present system leads to party political influence is completely erroneous because a number of Labour supporters are members of road boards. That is not a matter of opinion, but a matter of fact. It is idle for the member for Kalgoorlie or anyone else to suggest that is not the case. If he thinks it is not, then I suggest he should make inquiries. He has not been here very long, and little purpose would be served by such an assertion.

The member representing Kalgoorlie in another place was the chairman of a road board for a long time, and everybody knew what his politics were. It is completely untrue for the member for Kalgoorlie to suggest that without adult franchise in local government, no Labour supporter could be elected as a member. It does not worry me if he continues to make these ridiculous assertions. Personally, I have no objection, but he should remember that he must accept the consequences for his statements.

Another fallacious argument put forward is that people other than ratepayers contribute, directly or indirectly, to the finances of local government. That, of course, is true, but the figures as they have been represented are very often misleading. I know that rates may only represent 60 to 70 per cent., or even less than that, of the revenue, but ratepayers also contribute in other indirect means, such as motor-vehicle licences and similar types of taxation. I suggest that per capita they contribute more than the person who is not a ratepayer. To suggest that all the ratepayer contributes are the rates is not consistent with fact. People who put that argument forward in support of adult franchise are on extremely unstable ground.

The other matter which I cannot understand, and which the member for Kalgoorlie pointed out, was this: Why should some people be so anxious to talk about the advantages of injecting party politics into local government? It has been generally accepted here and cannot be disputed even by the Government, that one of the most corrupt local authorities in Australia is the Sydney local authority. The control of that body, of course, has been party political over the years. At the moment investigations are going on in connection with a hotel and a member of Parliament and an ex-member of the municipal council are involved. I feel that the instance of Sydney is a very poor one to quote in support of this measure. Anyone wanting a good argument against it could do no better than quote Sydney. It has led to

internal troubles in the Labour movement there. I fail to see how the argument can be furthered very much by injecting party politics into it and quoting Sydney.

With regard to the question of adult franchise, the Government perhaps, would be a little more deserving of sympathy if the Bill made provision to compile a decent roll, particularly when there is an obvious way in which to do it. It should check the Legislative Assembly roll and take everybody who gives his address in a road board area and put him on their roll for adult franchise. That seems a remarkably obvious way to do it. One has a certain measure of suspicion in view of the fact that that method is not being adopted.

Mr. Evans: Would you agree?

Mr. HEARMAN: No, I did not say so, but it would be better than the proposed system which could only lead to falsification and malpractice. All a person will have to do is to fill in a form—the Fourth Schedule—say he is over 21, and has been resident over three months in the road board area. No witness is required, and furthermore there is no obligation on the part of a shire councillor to investigate the validity of the application. The claimant for enrolment automatically goes on the roll and nothing can be done until someone raises an objection to a false application.

Why it is to be so simple for all sorts of people to get on the roll without any penalty at all for malpractices, I do not know. It will be possible for anybody to give a dozen fictitious names and obviously a dozen complete strangers will be able to vote, and nobody can object. It leaves it wide open. I am simply pointing out that this method of compiling the roll is about the most lax one possible. Funnily enough, there is no penalty for false application for enrolment. However, there is a penalty reduced from that proposed last year when a similar Bill was introduced and it has reference to trivial objections. So the Government apparently thinks it is much more serious to object frivolously to anybody's name being placed on the roll, than to a person being placed on the roll wrongly, which to me seems to be a very serious matter and one which I think no self-respecting Government would tolerate.

This aspect was commented upon last year and why it has been brought down again in the same form this year I do not know. It becomes even more suspicious when it is repeated after being pointed out to the Government. One can only conclude there is an intention on the part of the Government to stack the roll, because it is quite evident it could be easily avoided. I would point out at the same time that in quite a number of cases people could vote in two local authorities' districts without being property-owners in those districts.

People might be sent out to work on a job which might take more than three months to complete and they might be said to be resident in that particular district at that time and so get on the roll. To this there could be no ground for objection inasmuch as they were resident in that area for the greater part of their time, yet they might be on another local government roll miles away because they happened to own houses occupied by their families.

Mr. Evans: What do you think about one man one vote?

Mr. HEARMAN: I have just pointed out that one man could have two votes because he could get on the roll of two different local authorities by virtue of residence in one place and property in another and could therefore vote in two different areas.

Mr. Evans: Under adult franchise it is one man one vote.

Mr. HEARMAN: Under this Bill he could, as I say, get a vote in two different localities. Apart from the use of a fictitious name, which is very easy to do in particular areas which are far-flung, the man concerned might be hundreds of miles from a road board office, and how in the name of fortune could the authorities inspect the roll to see if a particular enrolment was false? That is undemocratic.

Mr. Evans: It is not.

Mr. HEARMAN: A stacked roll is not undemocratic! That is an admission from the member for Kalgoorlie. He thinks it is all right to stack the rolls. Let him say it in public! I am suggesting that where the territory of a local authority might extend for hundreds of miles, the fact that the roll is on a notice board for a month—as the member for Murchison would know—does not mean a thing, so far as a clean roll is concerned. It could contain all sorts of fictitious names on which nobody can check, but the people concerned could record votes in those names and nobody could object.

The Minister for Health: They would be checked up with the electoral rolls.

Mr. HEARMAN: There is no obligation to do that under the Bill. If the Minister is going to use that as a basis, it would be sounder. This position was pointed out before, and nothing has been done about it. One can only conclude that the Minister wants to make the roll an unsatisfactory one.

The Minister for Health: We do not want crook rolls.

Mr. HEARMAN: Then why does not the Minister clean the matter up?

The Minister for Health: It could easily be amended.

Mr. HEARMAN: The Government has had this pointed out before, and if concerned about it, could have done something in that respect when the Bill was

reprinted. If the Minister agrees, I will be pleased to move appropriate amendments. This would not overcome my objection, but would make for cleaner rolls and provide for democratic and properly conducted elections.

The Premier: Democracy!

Mr. HEARMAN: Instead, the Minister continually brings down these objectionable clauses. I know that local authorities do not want adult franchise, and I feel it would be much better to leave the system as it is. If the Government wanted subsequently to alter the conditions, it could bring down an amending Bill. The Government could have had this legislation on the statute book years ago if it had wanted to. There are really valid objections to this clause, and the Minister appears to agree with us to some extent.

Another question that exercises the minds of quite a lot of local authorities—and particularly the chairmen—is that concerning the election of chairmen. As the member for Narrogin said, we have both systems in operation at present, and they are working satisfactorily. If we are to have only one system, it should be the one that would work satisfactorily for both types of local authority. The idea of having a chairman or a mayor elected by the people on the local government roll might work out quite satisfactorily in the case of municipalities, but it does not work out satisfactorily in the case of our present road boards.

I doubt very much whether, in a number of cases, there would be many people offering for the job in those circumstances, because the vote would be very heavily loaded in favour of the man who represented the town ward, as the town ward is generally numerically by far the strongest of the wards in a local authority's area, and by far the most easy to organise in a voluntary poll. In my own electorate, there is not a single chairman representing a town ward. I am not casting any reflection on members representing town wards; but I suggest that, under the present system, there seems to be a preponderance of chairmen elected from country wards. The only road board in my electorate where that would not be true would be Greenbushes, where there is no ward system; but the chairman lives on the boundary of the road board area.

There again it would seem that the present system has given every satisfaction, and there has not been any call for it to be changed that I am aware of; and a change would present real difficulties, inasmuch as, in many cases, we would not find men to take on the job, and the election of a chairman under this system in a widespread country area would be an unfair form of selection because of the ease with which the town vote could be organised. There is a very real need to

retain the present system at least in the bigger country areas, and no useful purpose would be served by changing it.

I am not criticising the proposal so far as municipal elections are concerned. Obviously, where there is an opportunity for everybody to muster his votes and a large number of electors is available to all candidates, there can be no real objection to the system. But if we are to have only one system—which the Government seems to want—and to have it inflicted on country and city local authorities, then I suggest the most desirable system is the one whereby those elected to represent their various wards choose one of their own number as chairman.

In country areas in particular, it is most important that that should be the case, because the problems that confront members of local governing authorities are very considerable, and their duties are onerous and fairly unrewarding. It is consequently most desirable that they should have a chairman who satisfies them; and that can be done only by letting them elect him themselves, rather than have somebody foisted on them from outside who, I think, would almost invariably be somebody from the town ward, and there would be a feeling that country wards had not had an equal chance, which would create certain initial difficulty for the man elected.

The members of the local authority would be mostly from country wards, and they would feel that somebody from town had been foisted on them, which would create difficulties. After all, there are enough difficulties of different kinds—many of them very real and practical, and some of them purely personal—that come to light in local government, without our going out of our way to create additional ones by legislation of this sort.

The third point I want to make is on the question of optional systems of rating. If we are going to insist on the unimproved capital value, I know that there are certain areas, particularly a number of mining areas—and I hope the Goldfields members are listening—which will find it extremely difficult to carry on. There is one road board in my area—the Greenbushes board, to which I have already referred—which has a large area of State forest and mining leases; and if it rated on the unimproved capital value, it would not be able to carry on. It is one of the smallest local governing authorities in the State. It has a struggle to carry on at present and has to raise a great proportion of its rates from out of the town. If the rating were on the unimproved value, and hotels had to pay much the same as private dwellings, that board would not be able to carry on.

I would like to know where the Minister thinks that boards like that are going to obtain the finance to enable them to

survive under this proposal. If the Government brings down a measure which is financially embarrassing to those authorities, it is up to the Minister to give some indication of how he thinks they are going to carry on, where they will get the money from, and how they are to exist. As a matter of fact, the board to which I have referred is helped, at the moment, by grants from other sources available to the department; and it would certainly need very much more assistance in that direction if legislation of this nature, which does not give the option, were enacted.

So far as I can see, no valid reason has been advanced in favour of the system. What is the particular objection to having the annual rental value as a basis for rating? There seems to be no objection to it. There are many members on both sides of the House who have had experience of local government and who know that local authorities must have money to carry on. They cannot do their job without money, and they have to get it. It does not matter what the system of rating is, the money must be obtained from the sources available; and I think the local authorities themselves are the people best able to determine what system is the most equitable and desirable for them, bearing in mind all the circumstances which surround the problems in their district. I do not think the Minister has put forward any valid arguments in support of this insistence that the rating should be on the unimproved capital value.

The Minister for Health: Don't you think the unimproved capital value should be the major means of raising money?

Mr. HEARMAN: I think that in the great majority of boards it is the system used. But there are other boards where it does not work, and I see no objection to their using other systems. If they are to be denied any other system, I want to know from the Minister what he proposes to do to enable them to carry on. He has had experience of local government, and he knows as well as I do the position of the mining areas which in many ways are comparable with the Greenbushes area. He knows what the effect of this proposal would be. Consequently, how does he propose the boards should continue to finance their activities? They are entitled to know that. Naturally the boards in the Goldfields area object to this proposal, and the Minister knows why. I think that personally he is sympathetic to them. I realise he is in the position of having to bring down and support this Bill that the Government has decided upon.

However, although he might privately sympathise with their viewpoint without being able to express it, he has an obligation to produce valid arguments to the contrary, or else be prepared to consider

amendments along the lines I have indicated. Surely the Minister is not just going to take the view, when he knows full well that there are strong exceptions to the clause, that he will do nothing about it! If he has some alternative—even if he suggests that the Government would fork out for those boards that could not carry on—let him put it forward.

The Minister for Health: Would you agree that it is necessary that the annual value should be subject to the approval of the Minister?

Mr. HEARMAN: That is an idea that I have not given a great deal of consideration to, but it does indicate that the Minister sees something in the argument I am putting forward. That would certainly be preferable to the present clause, but, personally, I do not see why it should be necessary.

I see no objection to the present system of leaving the decision to the discretion of the local authority concerned. I do not understand why it should have to refer the matter to the Minister, particularly as in some of these cases, as the Minister well knows, he would have to approve, or he would have a moral obligation to produce the extra money. I do not think the Minister would have any wish to do that. I believe the Minister's suggestion indicates that he agrees with me but is unable to say so in as many words.

However, I do not wish to labour the point, but I would like to say that the Bill contains much that is good and it is a great pity that, because of these purely party political arguments, the local authority should be denied the benefits that could come from the measure. After all is said and done, I think this side of the House would have accepted the recommendations of the Royal Commission, and it is only because of the fact that the Labour Party platform has been written into the Bill that we object.

When the Government does that it knows that we are likely to object, and for that reason it can obviously be charged with the responsibility of any delay in the passage of the measure. Because, year after year, the Government includes this clause, the legislation will be delayed or the Government will lose it. If the Government really wants to give the local authorities the benefit of this legislation, then I suggest there is a very simple way to do it. Let it stick to the recommendations of the Royal Commission, and it will then be on firm ground.

The Minister for Health: The clauses you object to are only a matter of opinion.

Mr. HEARMAN: Of course, they are, but where does that get us? Opinions will vary on all sorts of things. I cannot see any point in the Minister's interjection. I agree with him entirely, if that will help him.

The Minister for Health: Would not your opinion be just as good as yours, or yours as good as ours?

Mr. HEARMAN: I think ours is better than yours.

The Premier: What a modest man this is!

Mr. HEARMAN: I think, also, that the opinion of the Royal Commission should be considered.

Hon. D. Brand: The opinions of the local authorities should count.

Mr. HEARMAN: The local authorities, after all, do know something about this. They have been wrestling with these problems, but the Government, for purely party political reasons rides rough shod over the opinions expressed by the local authorities regardless of whether those local authorities are in the areas represented by this side of the House or the Government side. The Government rides over the opinions of those in the Goldfields areas where it has 100 per cent. representation. In this regard I think complete contempt is shown by the Government and it is deserving of the greatest censure. Those with whom I have discussed the Bill all say the same thing—"We want the Bill, but rather than have these objectionable clauses, we will do without it."

The Minister for Health: The local government authorities suggested to me that we allow the Bill to go through and amend it later.

Mr. HEARMAN: The Minister can tell that to the horse marines!

Mr. Ackland: No local authority wants this Bill.

The Minister for Health: They want the Bill now before the House.

Mr. HEARMAN: I have been informed by the chairman of the Road Board Association, Mr. Guy Thomson, that rather than have these objectionable clauses, the local authorities would sooner lose the Bill. If the Minister can find a person better qualified than Mr. Thomson to speak on the matter, I would like to know who he is. I happen to know Mr. Thomson particularly well because he is chairman of the Greenbushes Road Board, and I have often discussed the matter with him. He has given it a great deal of thought and he is definite in his opinion that, as printed, there is more harm than good in the Bill, but that with one or two alterations a great deal of good could come from it.

To me it seems a great pity that the work of local authorities should be hampered through the determination of the Government to inject party political provisions into the measure whether the local governing authorities want them or not. The Government could be realistic

and give a little consideration to the opinions of those people who are most affected; and this, I believe, would be within the dictates of democracy. It is only fair that the Government should give consideration to them, and if it did, I suggest that the Bill could go through and be of great benefit; but as it stands those people would rather not have it.

I support the second reading in the hope that the Minister will, when we get to the Committee stage, consider some of the suggestions I have put forward.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned till a later stage of the sitting.

(Continued on page 1300.)

BILL—BETTING CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [8.7] in moving the second reading said: It is slightly over a year ago that the new licensing system of starting price bookmaking came into operation in Western Australia. The system has operated with what I would describe as a reasonable degree of satisfaction, and therefore with a reasonable degree of success. It is well known that the move was largely in the nature of an experiment in this State, although a similar system had been in existence for some years in Tasmania.

Experience has shown that the operation of the system has had some effect upon attendances at racecourses and at trotting-courses, particularly in the metropolitan area. No one is able, with any degree of appropriate accuracy to measure that effect. Those associated with racing, or galloping as it is termed in the law, agree that the falling off in economic conditions has also been a factor in the reduced attendances at race and trotting meetings and also a factor in reducing totalisator turnovers and bookmakers' turnovers on the courses.

One, at least, of those associated with trotting in this State, will not admit that. He blames the licensing of off-course betting entirely for the reduced attendances at trotting meetings and for the reduced totalisator turnover and bookmakers' holdings at trotting meetings. He will not admit, publicly at any rate, that hardening economic conditions have also had some influence on the position. However, I think anyone with any reasonable understanding of the situation would agree that economic conditions have also played a part. Possibly it would be idle to discuss this angle of the situation, because no one can measure, with even approximate accuracy, just how much one factor has affected the position, as against another factor.

This Bill proposes to define on-course and off-course turnovers. In the present Act there is no such definition, but one is

necessary in the proposed amendment because this Bill aims to differentiate between the application of the tax to on-course turnover and its application to off-course turnover. In that situation it becomes necessary to define, in this measure, the term "turnover" in regard to on-course operations and in regard also to off-course operations.

The definition of "turnover" in respect of both on- and off-course deals also with the question of what are generally described, in the racing and trotting business, as commissions. As I understand these commissions, they cover, usually, large sums of money which are handed over by individual bettors to individual bookmakers. Because the commissions usually cover large sums of money for investment on particular horses, it is the usual practice among the bookmakers that when one of them receives this money, he holds so much of it himself and distributes the balance among a number of other bookmakers, and consequently the risk is spread over several bookmakers instead of being a risk to be carried by only one of them.

The Commissioner of Stamps has met with some resistance from one off-course bookmaker in regard to the collection of turnover tax on operations of this kind and consequently the definition of "turnover" in the Bill includes commissions. That is done in order to remove a possible legal doubt which exists at the present time with regard to the legal right of the Commissioner of Stamps to collect the tax on these commissions. The Bill also provides for what it describes as a proclamation day which has relationship to this proposed amendment and also that proposed under the tax Act. It is necessary for this provision to go into this Bill, because until the proposed amended Acts are proclaimed and the new rates of tax set out in the next Bill are applied, the existing rate of turnover tax will continue to be collected by the authorities.

As soon as the new legislation is passed and the day proclaimed, the new rates will come legally into operation and the present rate of tax will be superseded by the proposed new rates which will then apply in accordance with the details set out in this Bill and, more particularly, in the following measure. Because it is proposed to differentiate in regard to the rates of tax to be applied on on-course turnover as against off-course turnover, it is necessary to make provision in this Bill for the principle which is to be applied in the differentiation of tax on the course and the figure of £50,000 is included in this measure as the basis for one rate of tax and above £50,000 turnover will, of course, be the basis for the other rate of tax.

In other words, the tax measure will make provision to apply a certain rate of turnover tax on on-course turnover up to £50,000 and a higher rate of tax on all turnover, on-course, in excess of £50,000.

The off-course rate of taxation will be a flat rate and so there is no need in this Bill to differentiate as between the amounts which are handled by way of turnover by off-course bookmakers.

This measure also makes provision, in regard to on-course turnover tax, for the racing and trotting clubs to retain 40 per cent. of the turnover tax collected by them from on-course bookmakers. Most members will know that the present percentage collected by the clubs is 20 per cent. of the turnover tax which is to be collected by them from the bookmakers. I think it is well known, also, that under the present law the clubs have a legal responsibility to collect all the turnover tax from on-course bookmakers. The clubs retain the legal percentage of the total collection to which they are entitled and pay the balance, which is the Government's share, to the Treasury.

As I say, it is proposed, in regard to the turnover tax levied on on-course turnovers by bookmakers, to give the clubs, under the new arrangement, 40 per cent. as against the 20 per cent. which they receive at present. In connection with off-course turnover, the clubs will receive 10 per cent. of the turnover tax on all galloping and trotting meetings conducted within the State and they will share in this 10 per cent. in accordance with the amount of the stake moneys which they have paid out during the year. In connection with turnover tax levied on off-course turnovers by bookmakers on gallops and trotting meetings outside of the State, it is not proposed, under this legislation, to pay any proportion or percentage of that tax to the racing clubs and no percentage to the trotting clubs.

When I am introducing the tax Bill, I will give to members what I hope will be a clear picture of the financial benefits which the racing and trotting clubs will receive in total under the proposed new law as against what was received by them in actual fact under the operation of the old law during the year which ended on the 31st August last. When those figures are presented, members will see quite clearly that the clubs will receive a fairly substantial increase, and I am also pleased to say they will notice that the Government will also receive what I would consider a rather reasonable increase in revenue from this source. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

BILL—BOOKMAKERS BETTING TAX ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE TREASURER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [8.22] in moving the second reading said: This is the tax Bill

and, of course, it is complementary to the one which has just been introduced. The new rate of tax for on-course will be 1½ per cent. up to £50,000—that is the flat rate which now applies to all turnover, whether on-course or off-course—and 1½ per cent. on all turnover in excess of £50,000 where the turnover is related to on-course operations. All off-course turnover is to pay a flat rate tax of 2 per cent. At present the licensing fee, which has to be paid by bookmakers, ranges from £50 a year to £500 a year, according to the locality. It is proposed to vary the licensing fees and to make them £100 per annum in the metropolitan area and £50 a year elsewhere.

No provision is made along those lines in the Bill because the licensing fees are fixed by regulation and the necessary alteration will be made to the appropriate regulations as soon as the two Bills are approved by Parliament. It is admitted that one cannot achieve the perfect condition in relation to one bookmaker in comparison with every other bookmaker; in other words, it is not a perfect licensing fee to charge £100 to every bookmaker in the metropolitan area nor is it a perfect balance to charge a £50 licensing fee to every licensed bookmaker in the country areas. But I think it would be impossible to find any scale of fees which would hold the balance fairly as between one and another either in relation to those operating in the metropolitan area or to those operating in the country areas.

Mr. Court: The board has already decided to change to that scale, has it?

THE TREASURER: This is the proposed alteration which the board will put into operation as soon as these Bills become law. It will be noticed that the off-course rate of tax is to be higher than the on-course rate; and also there is a differentiation as between the on-course bookmakers who handle less than £50,000 a year in turnover and those who handle more. It is thought that the smaller bookmakers on the courses, because they do not operate on as many race meetings per week, on the average, as off-course bookmakers, should have the benefit of the lower rate of tax. It is further thought that the lower rates of tax should apply to on-course bookmakers rather than to off-course bookmakers if only for the reason that on-course bookmakers do make a practical contribution to the business of racing and trotting. In other words, they are on the courses and they are part of the race meetings or trotting meetings as the case may be.

Their presence on the courses, so I am told, brings more people to the race-courses and trotting-courses than would otherwise happen; so it can be argued, with some degree of logic, if not with total logic, that the bookmakers who operate on the courses make some practical

contribution to the business of racing and trotting and are therefore entitled to some consideration as compared with bookmakers who operate off the course. In addition, off-course bookmakers not only do not make any practical contribution to racing and trotting as such, but they take away from the racing and trotting meetings some of the patronage which those meetings would enjoy if bookmakers off the courses were not licensed and therefore were not entitled to operate.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: If the income were £60,000, would the tax be 1½ per cent. on up to £50,000 and 1½ per cent. on the turnover in excess?

The TREASURER: Yes. The rate of 1½ per cent. up to £50,000 would apply even though the total turnover were £200,000 a year. It is intended, under the provisions of this Bill, to give every on-course bookmaker the benefit of the 1½ per cent. on up to £50,000 of his total turnover. In respect to any turnover beyond the £50,000 mark he would, of course, pay 1½ per cent.

In connection with on-course bookmakers I might also say that it has been suggested to the racing and trotting clubs in the metropolitan area that they should give some consideration to reducing what I understand are the very high licence fees which the clubs themselves charge to bookmakers, so that the bookmakers will have the right to operate on metropolitan racecourses and trotting-courses. I have been given to understand that the licence fees which are charged by the clubs to the on-course bookmakers in the metropolitan area are extremely high and consequently constitute a substantial burden on the bookmakers concerned. I understand also that the Western Australian Turf Club will be considering this matter in the near future and I have some reason to believe that the West Australian Trotting Association will give some attention to the matter before long.

I proceed now to explain, in detail, how the proposed new rates of tax will work out. Unfortunately, the details are quite substantial and I will have to ask members to listen carefully and to be patient—if they wish to comprehend what is involved—in my reading of the details. If they are not able to do that they can blame me for not explaining the details with sufficient clearness and when Hansard is produced, they can study them at their leisure.

First of all, I propose to explain in detail the financial return to the Government under the proposals which I have outlined in these two Bills. The Government will receive 60 per cent. of the total turnover tax levied in relation to on-course turnover. On the basis of last year's operations, 60 per cent. of on-course gallops turnover would work out at £49,164 and on the turnover at trotting

meetings would amount to £21,090, making a total return to the Government, on last year's figures of £70,254 from the operation of on-course betting.

In connection with off-course operations, the Government will receive 90 per cent. of the turnover tax collected on races conducted within this State. That will amount to £126,464. Ninety per cent. of the turnover tax collected from trotting meetings within the State will amount to £47,390, making a total of those two amounts of £173,854. Turnover tax levied on off-course operations, in relation to races conducted outside of the State, will give to the Government £140,515. As there is no betting in this State on trotting meetings held outside the State there will, of course—the same as last year—be no return to the Government from that avenue. The total of the amounts I have read out is £384,623. If the amount which the Government received last year is subtracted—£274,839—on that basis, and on the new rates, there is a gain to the Government of £109,784.

There are, however, some substantial subtractions to be made from that total figure. Last year, licence fees returned £80,745 to the Government. In that total there were pre-payments for the current year of £5,745 which reduced to approximately £75,000 the income from licence fees to the Government for last year. The estimate, on the new reduced rates for licence fees, is 95 at £100 in the metropolitan area, making a total of £9,500; 130 outside the metropolitan area at £50, which comes to £6,500, or a total of £16,000 for the whole of the State. In addition, an amount of £5,200 will be collected for the registering of on-course and off-course clerks, for licensing of premises and for other sundry amounts. That gives a figure of £21,200 which has to be subtracted from the £75,000 which the Government received from licence fees last year.

The net figure is £53,800 which will be lost to the Government during the present racing year because of the change in licence fees. If the figure of £53,800 is subtracted from the total amount of £109,784 which I mentioned previously, it gives a net increase to the revenue of the Government of £55,984 under the new proposal. That figure could, of course, be exceeded somewhat in the event of racing and trotting in Western Australia increasing and a greater amount of turnover both on-course and off-course being handled during the present year than was handled during last year.

I come now to a consideration of what will happen in regard to the total collections from on-course betting on gallops and on trotting meetings. This will indicate how the racing clubs and the trotting clubs will fare. The on-course tax

on gallops, on the basis of last year's figures, up to £50,000 and at 1½ per cent. on £3,434,143, gives £42,926. Over £50,000, on-course turnover tax, at 1½ per cent. on £2,600,885, gives an amount of £39,013, or a total of £81,939. The distribution of that total turnover tax on gallops, or on races as we commonly call them, will be—60 per cent. to the Government, or £49,163, and 40 per cent. to the clubs, or £32,776. Last year the clubs received £15,117 on a 20 per cent. share of the taxation. It will be seen, therefore, that under this heading they will receive slightly more than double the amount they obtained last year.

The on-course turnover tax in connection with trotting up to £50,000 at 1½ per cent. on £1,806,372 gives a figure of £22,578. Over £50,000 at 1½ per cent. on £838,143 gives a figure of £12,571, or a total figure, adding those two amounts, of £35,149. The distribution will consist of 60 per cent. to the Government, which amounts to £21,090; and 40 per cent. to the clubs, which amounts to £14,059. Last year the trotting clubs, on the 20 per cent. return basis, received only £6,607. It will be seen therefore that here again the figure of the estimated return to the trotting clubs is more than double the amount they actually received during last year.

The figures for turnover tax for off-course betting, estimated on the basis of last year's actual figures, show a total turnover of £16,684,210. At the proposed new flat rate of 2 per cent., it would give a tax return of £333,684. Of that amount £281,029 would come from gallops or races, and £52,655 would come from trotting meetings. On the basis of races conducted in Western Australia and the Eastern States we find on examination that the figures were about 50-50. In other words, there was wagered off-course in this State just about as much on races within the State as on races outside the State, and the amount was approximately £8,000,000 under each heading.

On the basis of off-course operations on races decided within the State, the racing clubs and the trotting clubs would get 10 per cent. as their share of such turnover tax. For gallops, or races, this would give 10 per cent. to the racing clubs on £140,515, which would mean those clubs receiving £14,051 as their share on that 10 per cent. basis. The trotting clubs would receive 10 per cent. on £52,655, which would give them an amount, under this heading, of £5,265. The final figures show a total amount estimated to be received by the racing clubs and the trotting clubs under the proposed new taxation. Figures are also given of their actual receipts from all sources last year, and the final figures show the net total gain that will come to the racing clubs and the trotting clubs under these proposals.

The racing clubs will receive 40 per cent. of the on-course turnover tax, which will return to them £32,776. They will receive 10 per cent. of the off-course tax on racing meetings decided within the State, and this will give them an amount of £14,051. They will therefore receive a total, under those two headings, of £46,827 for the year based on last year's actual figures. The total amount they received last year was £32,702. The net total increase, therefore, to be received by the racing clubs under these proposals would be approximately £14,125. As I said, last year they received £32,702 and this year, working on the same total taxation as last year, they will receive £46,827. Here again, of course, if the turnover increases—and particularly if it increases on the courses—the racing clubs will benefit additionally to the figure that I have given.

The trotting clubs will receive 40 per cent. of the on-course turnover tax collected, and this will give them £14,059. They will receive 10 per cent. of the turnover tax collected on off-course operations in relation to trotting meetings decided in Western Australia, which will give them an amount of £5,265. The total that trotting clubs would therefore be likely to receive—and I should think this would be a minimum during the year—would be £19,324. Last year their total receipts from turnover tax amounted to £10,147. So the trotting clubs should receive an additional benefit during the present year of approximately £9,177, which will be just about double the amount they received last year.

Mr. Court: You have no idea of the concessions they are likely to make with fees to bookmakers?

The TREASURER: No; I am not in a position to say that the trotting association will give away any concessions at all to bookmakers who operate on their courses. Nor am I in a position to say that the W.A. Turf Club will finish up giving any concession in that direction. As I said earlier on that point, the W.A.T.C. is giving active consideration to the question, and I have been informed that the Trotting Association is likely to give consideration to the matter in the reasonably near future.

Mr. Roberts: What is the amount the Government will receive in increased turnover?

The TREASURER: I hope the member for Bunbury is not going to ask me to re-trace my steps and give all the figures again. I am prepared to tell him what it is, however. The net estimated increase to the Government over last year is £55,984.

Mr. Roberts: Thank you.

The TREASURER: No one can anticipate with certainty how the racing and trotting clubs will receive these proposals. Neither,

I suppose, can anyone anticipate how the on-course bookmaker or the off-course bookmaker will receive them. I suppose it is a natural reaction for anyone, who is called upon to pay more, to complain and to suggest that he or she is being imposed on. I know that it is also rather common for some people in the community to think in their own minds—maybe it is a conscientious thought—that the other person should be slugged all the time. In other words we are unhappy when we ourselves are called upon to pay more; but if we think the other fellow who can afford to pay is being slugged, we are happy, or we think that he should be slugged even more.

There has been a lot of loose talk and thought in relation to the ability of the bookmaker to pay heavy taxation. If this were the only taxation he was called upon to pay, there would possibly be a good deal of merit in the argument. However, bookmakers—just the same as others in business—have to pay more than one type of taxation. They have to meet more than one class of expense. I would suggest to any member of this House or of the public who is likely to get hot under the collar about these proposals on the basis that they do not go nearly far enough, that he might take the trouble at least, before giving vent to his thoughts and feelings, of trying as far as possible to examine the position and find out what are the outgoings of the men in this class of business, as well as becoming acquainted with the amount of their turnover.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Where can one get this advice?

The TREASURER: I understand that the bookmakers are prepared to make that advice available on a confidential basis. I understand they are prepared to do that through qualified public accountants of quite considerable standing and reputation. Some people entertain the fantastic notion that the bookmaker's turnover represents the profit; in other words, that these amounts which appear in the newspapers from time to time giving the total turnover of bookmakers are the profits, and that the bookmakers become the owners of that money. Of course that is quite silly. Punters do sometimes back winners; and when that happens, the bookmakers have to pay out. In addition, bookmakers have to employ staff of various kinds, and they have to meet substantial expenditure. I am not here to advocate their cause. That is not my purpose, and I have no desire to do that; but I think that these people, seeing they operate what is a legal class of business, are entitled to receive fair and impartial consideration of their actual situation.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The newspaper forecast is pretty correct. It would be an average increase of about one quarter per cent. overall.

The TREASURER: If the newspaper forecast is correct, there is nothing unique on this occasion. I have known newspaper forecasts in the past proving to be correct. The people who run newspapers are quite smart.

Mr. Bovell: They are not babes in the woods.

The TREASURER: They pick up a comment here and one somewhere else. They put two and two together and mostly they make the answer to be four, although sometimes it is five and sometimes it is three. Generally they get around the mark. One of these days we ought to conspire together to drop a remark here, a remark there and a remark somewhere else, all of them being false and imaginary, in the hope that the newspapers will pick up the odd remarks and piece them together, and come out on the following day with a startling headline on the front page with a full article. That would be the day we could have a laugh at their expense!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I am not suggesting that you have been dropping any hints of what the increase would be; otherwise you would have to resign, because you would be giving away budget figures.

The TREASURER: It is unnecessary for me to say that I have not dropped the hint anywhere.

Mr. Wild: Doesn't the Premier think that the increase from 1½ per cent. to 1½ per cent. for on-course bookmakers with £50,000 annual turnover is very small, because very few on-course bookmakers would be turning over less than that amount?

The TREASURER: My advice is different from the suggestion put forward by the member for Dale. For instance, most of the bookmakers who operate in the leger do not have a turnover of more than £50,000 a year.

Mr. Wild: I was thinking of the enclosure bookmakers.

The TREASURER: In regard to the enclosure bookmakers on the course, most would handle more than £50,000 a year. There are some who handle less. I do not know what the position is at the trots. Possibly some bookmakers might operate at Fremantle and not at Gloucester Park. If that were so, they would not handle more than £50,000 a year. I notice there have been in the past, even if not at present, some bookmakers in the grandstand enclosure at the gallops who handled less than £50,000 a year. They were, of course, the ones who would not lead the way in offering liberal odds. Consequently they have not done the amount of business which the other grandstand bookmakers have transacted. Anyone who takes the average punter for a goat is making a sad mistake—that is, in regard to the punter who goes to the races. He is a very careful, cautious and shrewd judge.

Mr. Court: And still he loses.

The TREASURER: It is surprising to see the punters walking around the ring, looking at the prices on the boards offered by the bookmakers until they see the prices which they reckon are good value. When that happens they give their money quite gladly to the bookmakers. However, I am not in a position to say how many grandstand bookmakers at the races or at the trots are at present handling bets at the rate of less than £50,000 a year. Those who are will pay at the rate of 1½ per cent. turnover tax.

Mr. Bovell: Are the increases to the trotting and racing clubs adequate?

The TREASURER: I was just coming to that. I think the increase would be regarded as reasonably adequate by the W.A. Turf Club. It probably will think and say that it should receive more. The club will probably say it has a lot of capital works which it is anxious to carry out urgently, and that it wishes to finance some of the more urgent of the capital works out of the proceeds of this.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Does not the Trotting Association say it wants to help the country trotting clubs?

The TREASURER: In regard to the W.A. Trotting Association, I would say it will criticise these proposals very severely.

Mr. Bovell: You must have a guilty conscience!

The TREASURER: That is what I would say of the W.A. Trotting Association. Even if what is proposed here by way of increases for the trotting clubs was to be, as it were, quite a bit more, I think the W.A. Trotting Association would severely condemn the proposals; but there are some people in this life one cannot satisfy.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Is this your last word?

The TREASURER: No Government could satisfy the W.A. Trotting Association under its present control. Furthermore, my assessment of the reaction of the racing clubs is that they will be reasonably satisfied, but certainly not totally satisfied.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Will you go any way?

The TREASURER: I think the Trotting Association will say things in the Press about the Government.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Will you go part of the way to meet the Trotting Association's objection?

The TREASURER: I heard the Leader of the Opposition on each of the four times he said that.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Will you?

The TREASURER: No. This is the limit to which the Government is prepared to go at least this year in regard to this matter. I would say this, however, that it

is now up to the racing clubs and the Trotting Association to do possibly more than they have done during the last year, or perhaps the last several years, to get more people to their racecourses and trotting courses. I think, without desiring to be offensive in any shape or form—in fact, I am desirous of being friendly—that the Trotting Association should stop crying stinking fish, and concentrate so far as it is able to do so on getting more people to go to the trotting meetings, and especially assisting the business of trotting in this State.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: How would you suggest it does that?

The TREASURER: I would not have a clue, as I know nothing about trotting. I think I have been to Gloucester Park three times in 28 years, and only on one occasion did I come away more pleased than when I went to the place.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: But the Trotting Association would not benefit, as you would use your free pass.

The TREASURER: I think the fact that I was present rather raised the tone of Gloucester Park. I am prepared to go this far and say that if the Leader of the Opposition would accompany me, I would be prepared to go once again during the next 12 months, and that would really raise the tone of the place.

Mr. Bovell: The Trotting Association has done a great amount for charitable associations.

The TREASURER: That is an interesting interjection. I think if the hon. member were to discuss this matter privately with the president of the Trotting Association, he would say—even for publication—that the Government made it possible for the Trotting Association to do a great amount for charitable organisations. I am desirous in no way of belittling the efforts of the Trotting Association in this matter, because it has always shown a great willingness and interest to assist in that direction, and I give it full marks for what it has done.

I have dealt with these matters as Treasurer of the State, as the legislation does not come under my jurisdiction in regard to administration but under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Police. I notice that the member for Katanning was interested in what was being said, particularly in relation to the increased amounts racing and trotting clubs would receive, and also in relation to the question whether the racing and trotting clubs could do more to attract more patrons to their race meetings and trotting meetings.

It is not my desire to enter into a discussion on the merits or otherwise of people going to race meetings or trotting meetings. I know there are very strong arguments for and against; and whether, on balance, trotting and racing does more

harm than good is something, I suppose, we could argue to the end of time. I have made an open confession that I have been to the trots on three occasions in 28 years, and must admit I have been on more occasions than that to the races; and my view is that as a business investment, they are on the nose. I move —

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

BILL—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting.

MR. ANDREW (Victoria Park) [9.7]: This Bill has been before Parliament on a number of previous occasions. It is a very large Bill and seems to just peter out towards the end of each session. I hope that on this occasion a special effort will be made, and we will get the Bill through both this House and another place before the House rises for Christmas.

It is just as well that in such a long Bill there are only a few contentious clauses, because if there were many, we would be sitting for quite a long while without any hope of getting it through. I am going to deal with only a few of these clauses and mainly briefly with the exception of one, into which I shall go in more detail. The member for Blackwood brought out the usual statement in regard to some of these contentious clauses that there had been no demand for these particular amendments. I do not think that will cut much ice, and I suggest he look up the big blue folder, where he would find quite a lot of Bills, amendments etc. for which there has been very little public demand. In fact, the same can be said of most Bills which come before this House.

One of the contentious clauses is in regard to the election of a chairman by the whole of the electors of a district. I do not think it would be very important if we had this particular method or the old method; there are certain things that can be said on either side. As a matter of fact, that could be said on most questions. One point in favour of a chairman being elected by the whole of the people of the district is that he would then occupy a somewhat independent position in relation to the members of the local governing authority. If he had to rely on the votes of his fellow board or council members to become chairman, he would have to be careful not to offend them, and not to be too strong in his opposition on occasions when he might have contrary views to theirs. By being elected by the whole of the people of the district, however, he would not have to rely on the votes of his colleagues, and would be independent of them at meetings at which he presided.

Members of the Opposition have stated that the present system has operated very well. That may be so. In fact, I believe they are correct. But I think I have submitted a good reason for an improvement. The fact that something has operated reasonably well does not mean that there is no room for betterment; and, taking all things into consideration, I believe it would be an improvement if the people of a district voted for the chairman of the road board in that district.

There is another clause which is not quite as contentious as others, and that relates to optional spending in wards. In any district there will be certain requirements for the district as a whole. For instance, a district might require an oval; and in such circumstances it is desirable that it should be optional as to whether the income of the local authority should be spent on a requirement of that kind or whether money collected in the wards should be spent on improvements in those wards. I will not deal at length with that aspect of the Bill, but content myself by saying that for the good operation of road boards it is desirable to retain that optional provision.

One aspect of the Bill that has caused a great deal of controversy is the basis of rating; whether it should be on the unimproved or improved value. I am strongly in favour of the unimproved value being that upon which rates should be assessed. If people build fine homes in certain parts of a road board area or a municipality, and the better the homes they build the higher are their rates, that certainly is not an encouragement to them to erect the best type of homes.

There is this aspect, too, and I think it is extremely important: In any area—both in the metropolis and in the country—we will find that a great deal of the district will have been built up. At the same time, there will be quite a lot of vacant land which has been subdivided into building blocks that people are holding for speculation. We discover that those who have built on their blocks are taxed on the improved value; they have to pay a certain rate because of the improvements they have effected. On the other hand, people who are holding land for speculative purposes are let off with a very light tax because they have not improved their property at all but are holding it in an endeavour to make a profit subsequently.

About 18 months or two years ago I passed through a country area in which one of the road board members said the local authority required further land for subdividing. I pointed out that in the district there was a terrific amount of land on which there were no houses. He replied that all the land had been bought, and that young people who wanted to get married could not buy one of the blocks

unless they paid an exorbitant price. I said, "The same thing will occur if you subdivide another area. People who do not require the land, and don't want to use it for their own purposes, will again buy it for speculation, and the genuine home-builder will have to pay an extra sum to the people who have bought the land for speculative purposes."

Rating on the unimproved value would increase rates to those people holding vacant blocks for speculation and would kill that kind of practice to some degree. The higher the rates, the less chance there would be of such people making a profit in that way. I do not see why young people who want to get married should not be able to purchase blocks at reasonable rates in order to build homes. Consequently, I am strongly in favour of rating on the unimproved value.

The most contentious clause in the Bill relates to adult franchise, and we can expect a great deal of discussion in regard to that aspect. The member for Stirling attacked this provision and gave an illustration of customers of a shop or business who, because they kept the enterprise going by their purchases, considered they were justified in claiming a voice in the affairs of the union of employees associated with the business. He said there would be as much justification for that attitude as there was for a person who did not own property to claim a vote in connection with local government elections.

I have always admired the debating ability of the member for Stirling: I believe we all have. He is always well worth listening to, even though we very often do not agree with him. He does usually submit good arguments; and, as the Premier once said, the worse the case he has to put up, the better his argument. Whether that is correct or not, I could not say; but we do admire his debating ability. But his submitting such an illustration as I have mentioned surprised me, because it was actually absurd. I will give an illustration of what people in the street in which I live in Victoria Park would be entitled to vote under adult franchise.

In my case, I have a vote by virtue of the fact that the house in which I live is in my name. The other who would be entitled to a vote would be my wife, and the member for Stirling would equate her with a customer of a shop having something to do with a union. My wife is as interested in the welfare of Victoria Park as I am. In fact she might be more so. Next door to me, the only person who would go on to the roll would also be the wife because the family is only young. In the house further up the street again there would be the wife plus the eldest son who is living at home but is not yet married. He is not much over his majority.

The home immediately below my house—this is, on a face in the street—and we could go anywhere in Victoria Park and find it very much the same—is in the name of the man, and he has the vote. His wife would be added to the roll, and also his married daughter and his son-in-law. The house below that is in the name of both the man and his wife. All the people whom I have mentioned would come on the roll if we got adult franchise; and they are people who are vitally interested. Take the lad who lives in the top house. He is interested in the district because he has lived there for many years. His people own the property in which they live and all his associations are in the district. The wives are just as interested as their rate-paying husbands. The husband and married daughter of the next-door neighbour are interested in the district. But a person who does not live in the district but happens to own a block of land has a vote although he has no interest. He has not as much interest in the district as the people I have just mentioned.

Mr. Court: How do you figure he has not an interest when he pays rates?

Mr. ANDREW: Unless he is a genuine home builder, his interest is purely in making a profit. He holds the land for the purpose of making a good deal for himself.

Mr. Court: That is not necessarily so.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: He pays the rates.

Mr. ANDREW: He might. My wife pays the rates on my house—and other wives do the same thing—but she has not a vote. I know one member of this House who held a block of land for 20 years but did not know where it was. I suppose he did not bother to vote. Plenty of people who own blocks of land are holding them only for the purpose of making a profit. They have not got an interest in the district. Their children are not in football clubs, basketball clubs or other social organisations, as are the children of the people I have mentioned.

Members of the Opposition say that these people are not interested in the district and should not have a vote. I say they are very much interested in the district and are fully entitled to a vote in local government elections. I have given an illustration of the position in the street in which I live. I have looked at other parts of Victoria Park and I should think the situation there would be the same. Hotels would have guests who are not permanent residents. Very few of those people stay for three months, so they would not have the vote. In exceptional circumstances, in some districts, the position might be different. I admit that, but I say that these exceptional circumstances do not outweigh the advantages that will accrue from altering the present method of voting, which I suggest, would be more democratic than it is now.

One aspect mentioned by the member for Kalgoorlie supports my contention and that is that a good deal of the income of local authorities comes from sources other than the ratepayers. We should give consideration to that point in assessing what should be done about the question of adult franchise. I suggest that when this contentious clause is approached in a right and factual manner, as I have endeavoured to approach it, it will be found that there is no danger in it; in fact, it is a great improvement on the present method. All the people that I have mentioned, who would be enrolled because of an enlarged franchise, would be very much interested in the district in which they live and in the majority of cases they would do their best to support any move which would improve the district. If members of the Opposition face up to the question, I think they will find that there is nothing whatever to be afraid of.

The Bill has many other aspects, but I said at the outset I was going to deal with only three or four main points, and I have done so. I hope that we get the Bill through the House so that we will have something finalised this session. I support the second reading.

MR. OWEN (Darling Range) [9.28]: The Bill, which is almost identical with a measure brought to the Chamber some two years ago, will bring many advantages to local government, and members of local governing bodies have looked forward to getting the Act brought up to date in many ways, as the Bill proposes. From that point of view the measure is well worthy of support, and no doubt it will receive it. At the same time it contains those controversial clauses which will delay it considerably. I just cannot make out why the Government insists on these provisions which it knows will hold up the Bill and could, if persisted in, be the means of having it defeated.

The local authorities take part in many kinds of activities which could be questioned under the present Act. It is desirable that this measure should place those activities beyond any legal doubt. A number of the more controversial clauses in the measure have created so much interest on the part of practically all the local governing authorities in the State that they will require the most careful consideration and they should, I believe, be amended.

Perhaps the most contentious of all these provisions is that dealing with adult franchise. The member for Victoria Park criticised the Leader of the Country Party for having made some comparison between adult franchise as envisaged in the Bill and its lack of application to union ballots, the disposal of union funds and so on. I do not think the analogy of the

member for Stirling was out of order, although the member for Victoria Park thought it was and then went on to give his views as to how adult franchise should be applied under this measure.

I mentioned that aspect of the question during the second reading debate on a similar measure two years ago and so far nothing has been said from the Government side of the House to refute my arguments. The customers are vitally interested in the prices charged in a particular shop and might feel that they would be much happier if they had a say in fixing those prices, but obviously the board of management of such an establishment would not welcome its customers if they wished to join in the fixing of the prices of goods or the running of the business in any other regard.

Personally I believe that those who provide the revenue should have the say and although under the law at present the owners of vehicles, who pay registration fees, do not, as vehicle owners, have the right to vote at municipal elections, I think that it will be found on analysis that the majority of them are also ratepayers and therefore take their part in local government elections.

When similar legislation has been before the House previously, I have mentioned one or two points in regard to local government affairs in my own electorate, where, because of the fact that a number of government institutions are situated there, together with many railway employees who do not live on private property but camp on railway reserves or other Government-owned land and pay no rates, if all those people were given the right to vote they would outweigh the others who, under the present Act, are the legitimate voters. These people, most of whom would have no permanent stake in the district, would then be entitled to become members of the local road board and influence the voting and through that the various activities of the district, to an extent I do not think would be warranted. I therefore strongly oppose that particular provision.

Another matter mentioned this evening and during previous debates on this question is the election of the chairman. Admittedly, in the case of municipal councils, the mayor is elected by a popular vote of all the ratepayers of the district and that works reasonably well, because in such instances the ratepayers are usually concentrated in a comparatively small area and have a greater community of interest than would usually exist in the case of road boards whose areas cover enormous distances and embrace perhaps many hundreds of square miles.

Under the present legislation residents in road districts elect a person to represent part of the district—someone they have confidence in—and then he, together with

his colleagues on the board, elect from among their number a person whom they consider suitable to preside over board meetings. If the chairman were to be elected by a vote of all the ratepayers in the district, it is highly probable that the person selected would lack the confidence of the board members and that would tend to lessen the co-operation and harmony of the board.

A further most controversial provision is that which would make mandatory the adoption of unimproved capital values. That system works out very well in my electorate where, as far as is humanly possible, the values fixed by the taxation authorities are uniform. Admittedly, there are some variations and small anomalies but, generally speaking, the valuations are uniform.

I believe that, particularly in areas where the valuations have, if anything, declined—as I believe has happened in many mining towns—the local governing authorities have expressed the desire to be able to rate on the annual rental value. For my part, I see no reason why that should not be done, and I feel that the method should be optional so that a board could adopt whichever system of valuation it desired. To compel these bodies to adopt the unimproved capital value as a basis would not, I feel, be in the best interests of the boards concerned.

This huge Bill, with its many clauses, will, I think, receive the general support of all members, but the controversial provisions will be keenly debated and, in my opinion, must be amended to make the measure a satisfactory one. In addition to the many letters I have received from the local governing bodies in my district, I have received communications from organisations which are doing good work in the district. One in particular was from a progress association. This association represents a good cross section of the people in my area and I was informed by it that its members had unanimously agreed that the clause providing for adult franchise should be opposed.

If an organisation, such as a progress association, which aims to assist local government, although not taking an actual part in it, feels that way about the provision, then I think there is some merit in the argument put forward that adult franchise should be opposed. I propose to speak on several occasions during the Committee stage, particularly in regard to the provisions I have mentioned and I will content myself, at this stage, by supporting the second reading.

MR. CROMMELIN (Claremont) [9.42]: I shall confine my remarks to the few contentious clauses in the measure. I represent an electorate in which the council is in a somewhat unusual position inasmuch as 37 per cent. of the municipality of Claremont is composed of unratable land.

This is brought about because of the fact that there are so many schools, churches, parks and the Royal Agricultural Society within the district of Claremont. The council, as a result, feels that if adult franchise were adopted for local governing bodies extraordinary things could happen. For instance, all the ministers and teachers in the district would be entitled to vote even though they paid no rates.

If the council published a notice of its intention to raise a loan such move could be defeated by a poll. If the adult franchise provision were adopted the council's efforts to raise a loan could be defeated even though the majority of the ratepayers were in favour of it. The principal of unimproved capital values is somewhat different in the metropolitan area and, in fact, it is the exact reverse to the position which obtains in country districts. For example, there are some people who are so anxious to buy land that they will pay fabulous prices such as £4,000, £5,000 or even £6,000 for an unimproved block of land in the metropolitan area. Members can appreciate that those who occupy the nearby blocks, and perhaps have occupied them for a number of years, would get a terrific shock if the Taxation Department adopted a valuation based on the sale prices of similar blocks which have been sold in the last few years.

The Minister for Health: Don't you think that would be the fairest method? Why should not they pay in taxation for unearned increment when people around them have increased the value of their land? They are getting the benefit of the increased value.

Mr. CROMMELIN: The position is somewhat different in Claremont. I do not think there are many vacant blocks of land available in the district. The council has always engaged the services of private auditors and has no complaints whatever to make regarding them. Consequently the council believes that there is no necessity to have Government auditors. I have placed on the notice paper an amendment in regard to the non-taxing of unratable properties because this is something which greatly affects the Claremont municipality. As I said before, 37 per cent. of the total area of the municipality is unratable land.

In this regard the biggest holder of land is the Royal Agricultural Society, which occupies 70 acres of land. Some years ago the council approached the society and asked if it would make a contribution towards the cost of running the municipality. This request was refused. On the other hand, the Commonwealth Government, which has banks in the district, and should be free from paying rates, voluntarily pays the same rate as it would pay if it were liable for assessment.

The council went to the trouble of writing to different authorities in the Eastern States in an endeavour to find out if agricultural societies in other parts of Australia were taxed. Communications were received from several authorities and although I do not intend to read them in full, to make my point clear I wish to quote from one—the City of Unley in South Australia—which advised—

Provision is made by Section 169 (2) of the Local Government Act, 1934-1952, for such part of any land and buildings or land situated in any district or in any municipality other than a metropolitan municipality as is used and occupied by or for the purpose of any agricultural, horticultural, or floricultural show society to be assessed at one half of the amount of the annual value or land value thereof, as the case may be.

Members will see, therefore, that for a country municipality the council would rate the agricultural society on one half the value; but in a metropolitan municipality, such as in Unley, the agricultural society is assessed on the full value and rated accordingly.

There is another short one which has been received from the Department of Local Government in Sydney and which is based on much the same grounds. It reads as follows:—

The question as to whether any land used for showground purposes was ratable would depend upon the circumstances. The responsibility for determining in the first instance whether any such land should be rated would rest upon the council as the rating authority, but within 30 days after notice to pay any rate had been served any person holding any estate or interest in the land could appeal against the levying of the rate thereon on the ground that the land or some part thereof was not ratable or was not ratable to any particular rate. This right is conferred by Section 133 (2) of the Local Government Act, 1919, and any appeal which might be lodged could only be determined by the court.

This letter, from the Department of Public Works in Melbourne, reads as follows:—

Rating on Royal Agricultural Society's Showgrounds.

With reference to your enquiry on this subject, I desire to advise that, neither in the Local Government or other Victorian legislation is any provision for the exemption from rating of land vested in trustees for agricultural show purposes.

Those are three letters which I have read to give the House some indication of the information which the Claremont Municipal Council was able to obtain from other

States. The Royal Agricultural Society owns a total of 70 acres in the municipality of Claremont. Of that total, it is reasonable to assume that the council would require 20 acres to be made into roads, but the other 50 acres could quite easily, in ordinary circumstances, be subdivided and sold as building blocks. This would mean that 200 houses could be built on that tract of land. On a small estimate of the rates obtained from each house of £10, the council would gain a total of £2,000. At the present time, however, the council gets nothing.

Further, at the present time of the year, the Royal Agricultural Society holds the Royal Show and as a result a great deal of work devolves on the Claremont Municipal Council. I am not attacking agricultural societies in any way. I have been a farmer and a member of an agricultural society and I know what they do. According to the provisions contained in Clause 521 of the Bill any road board or municipality, has the right under its 3 per cent. provision, to make donations to an agricultural society and, over and above that, any local governing body has the additional right to make donations to a society because it acts in the general interests of the public.

The point I am making is that even if an agricultural society was rated it is still possible for the municipal authority to refund the rates and even to make donations to the society. In many instances, in the country districts, it will be found that members of an agricultural society are also members of the local authority. However, the position is different in Claremont.

The Royal Agricultural Society, whilst performing a wonderful service to the public of Western Australia, is now developing into a trading concern inasmuch as there are numerous buildings erected on the ground which, in some cases, are occupied as offices not only by the society itself, but also by other people who use various buildings for storage purposes. Up to a fortnight ago the Government of Western Australia was storing its Argentine ant eradication machinery on the showground for repairs. I do not know whether the Government is being forced to pay any rent to the Royal Agricultural Society for the use of its ground.

In addition to the Royal Show activities, during the summer months the residents of the Claremont district suffer from the dreadful noise of racing motorcycles and the crashing of racing cars. By no means could one class motorbike racing and speed car racing as the normal pursuit of an agricultural society. Nevertheless, a great amount of revenue is obtained by the Royal Agricultural Society from the speedway and from other sporting organisations. I instance polo, which is played on the Claremont Showground during the winter

months and many hockey teams also play on that ground and we, who have sons who play in such teams, have to pay an admission fee to watch them.

The Royal Agricultural Society is making it difficult for the Claremont Municipal Council by flatly refusing to make any contribution to the funds of the council. As I have said, at this time of the year the position for the council is even worse. The council's health inspector is employed on the Royal Showground full time before and during the show. He is there for two purposes. One is that the society pays to the council a fee for the erection of buildings, but apart from that many of the stalls for the selling of drink and food-stuffs come under the direct supervision of the health inspector and as a result he is on the ground for four weeks doing nothing else but show work. During the actual Show Week he is assisted by other health inspectors and the Claremont Municipal Council pays his salary during the whole of the time that he is there. The Royal Agricultural Society pays to the council only the amount of overtime that he works.

One can readily imagine the amount of work that is involved in the cleaning up of papers around the streets, etc. during the progress of the show and afterwards. Council employees are engaged for days and weeks cleaning up the aftermath of the Royal Show. The council also maintains the surrounding roads and the subway in good condition for the benefit of the people who use them during Show Week to such a great extent. It will be appreciated, therefore, in considering my proposed amendment, that the Claremont Municipal Council is getting a very raw deal from the Royal Agricultural Society by its refusing to make any donation to the council in the circumstances I have indicated.

In addition to this, the council must strike, during the year, a compulsory Argentine ant rate. This levy is made only on the ratable property in the municipality. It is reasonable to say that from the money we are allocating, we must—if there are ants in the showground or in any school—make sure that they are eradicated. Yet, although unimproved land is generally more affected with Argentine ants, no funds are available from this land because no rate is struck to recoup the council for the expenditure it has incurred in the eradication of the Argentine ant, which has become such a serious problem in the metropolitan area.

I feel I have said enough in regard to this measure. I have been informed by the council, and I know, that it is most anxious to see this very important Bill passed during this session. I do hope that in spite of the Government's approach to some of the contentious clauses in the measure, for the sake of the local governing authorities, the measure will be passed this session.

MR. I. W. MANNING (Harvey) [10.11]: I desire to support the second reading of the Bill, but on behalf of the three road boards in my electorate I wish to offer some opposition to the contentious clauses contained in it. I refer to the clauses dealing with adult franchise, the election of a president and the question of valuations.

It is the wish of those boards that the franchise for the election of such bodies should remain as it is at present. That, of course, is not only the desire of the road boards in my electorate, but of road boards throughout the State. It is also the wish of the municipalities. The road boards feel that, if there were adult franchise, the town area would out-vote the country area; the opposite would apply throughout the metropolitan area. The owners of property and ratepayers would be completely out-voted. If adult franchise applied in the metropolitan area the greater part of the business area of the city would be completely out-voted by the suburban areas.

Turning now to the election of president, I think members will agree that it has clearly been stated from this side of the House that it is the wish of all local authorities that the members of the road boards themselves should choose a chairman or president from the elected members. This system has worked very well in the past, and should work well in the future. There are some country districts, of course, where I believe that under the present method provided in the Bill it is quite possible there would be no candidates for the position at all. From its elected members a road board would select the one most suitable for the position and most qualified for the job, but in some of those country towns I can foresee, under this method, that it is quite possible there would be no one applying for the position of president.

There is also the provision dealing with valuations on which I should like to touch. The road boards feel very strongly on that point, and they think it should be optional for them to decide whether their valuations should be calculated on annual rental values or on an unimproved capital value basis. In some districts it could happen that one system of rating would be applied to the town areas and another to the farming areas. I think it is very necessary that it should be left to the road boards to decide which is more suitable for the districts in which they operate.

Another point which I would like to bring to the notice of the Minister is that concerning regulations, or uniform by-laws, which it is necessary to have prescribed to make this Act workable. These should be prepared and ready to hand the moment the new Act is proclaimed. The new Act could then go into operation immediately. At this stage I would like to appeal to the

Minister to give consideration to the withdrawal of these contentious clauses from the Bill. They are solely responsible for holding up the measure and delaying the legislation.

This is causing quite a deal of confusion throughout the country as the people cannot understand why the Bill is taking so long to go through Parliament. It has not advanced very far when one considers that it has yet to pass through the Committee stage in this Chamber and then be dealt with in another place. Accordingly, I feel that if the Government were prepared to withdraw the unnecessary and contentious clauses contained in the Bill, we would see some real progress which would be far more satisfactory to the whole of the local governing authorities in Western Australia.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [10.61: I would like to add a few remarks to this debate before it concludes, and make one or two observations concerning matters that members of the Opposition feel to be contentious, and which the Minister in charge of the Bill considers to be merely a difference of opinion. I cannot reconcile my views with those expressed by members on that side of the House, and which were reiterated early this evening by the member for Narrogin. I refer to the remarks they made concerning the provision in the measure for adult franchise. At the outset it may perhaps appear that those arguing against it have a just case. But when one considers the types of person in the community who are exempt from being eligible to vote at a local government election under the present set-up, and indeed under the set-up that members opposite would favour, one will realise that it is not a reasonable and just case that they put forward.

In many of these country districts, as members well know, there are, for instance, schoolteachers who may be boarding or living at hotels for a period of some years while they are appointed to those districts. The same applies to bank officers, and probably to two or three other types of person who in the main are responsible, if not very responsible citizens, and many of whom take a full place in the welfare of the community in the centre where they are resident for the time being; they put much time into promoting its wellbeing whether it be as a member of a progress association, or of a parents and citizens' association, or of any other worth-while organisation in the district.

Surely a person such as a president, chairman or secretary of a local association would be a more desirable person, and should be a person more entitled to vote in local government matters—having been there for a qualifying period of three months—than somebody who owns some obscure block of land in the district,

through no fault of his or her own, and who possibly has never seen it! Yet we find under the present set-up and under the provisions which members of the Opposition seek to maintain, the latter type of person would have a prior right to vote in local government elections over the more responsible person who, for the time being at any rate, was a member of the community. Under those circumstances there is a glaring instance where an injustice is done to a citizen who is very much entitled to some say in the local government affairs of that area.

Much has been said in regard to the ratepayer paying the piper and somebody else calling the tune if adult franchise were adopted. Some interesting figures were given by the member for Kalgoorlie in regard to the Eastern Goldfields road boards and municipalities. An examination of the metropolitan municipalities and road boards will indicate that for the nine municipalities, whereas there is £525,651 from general loan revenue, the other income amounts to £629,816, which is an average of 54 per cent. of the total revenue handled by the municipalities in a year. The figures for the road boards are somewhat similar. The 11 metropolitan road boards handle £398,605 from general and loan rates, and from other sources they derive £422,235 which works out at 51 per cent of the moneys they handle.

It has been suggested that additional revenue comes from petrol tax and other impositions. It is interesting to note, in view of answers to the member for Leederville's questions on this matter, the sources from which revenue is derived other than from rates paid on properties. The other sources are principally traffic licences, transport fees, other licence fees including building and dogs, income from property, rents, plant hire etc., contribution to works (half cost), crossings, approaches etc., subdivision of roads, amounts paid by subdividers for road construction, Main Roads Department grant for roads, fines and penalties.

There is quite appreciable scope for revenue outside of the amount paid in rates. Included in the fines and penalties are the amounts derived from persons against whom action had been taken and who had possibly erred. They might not have been ratepayers but had fallen foul of the regulations in the district. Such people are all subject to the by-laws of a district, and, to my mind, they have some moral right to a say in the local government of that district. There is an old saying that no taxation should be imposed without adequate representation. Any person who has the power to impose taxation, whether it be by penalties or other means, should not impose taxation where there is no representation by any stretch of the imagination.

To carry that to a rather absurd conclusion, I would give this illustration. A 14-year-old boy paying a licence fee for a pet would contribute more to a local authority than the owner of a vacant block of land of very low value. The boy would not be entitled to a say by virtue of his age, but he would contribute far more to the funds of the local authority than its smallest ratepayer.

To draw the line that the person in business is not receiving from the people who trade with him some share of the rates he pays is absurd. It is just as absurd to assume that that person has just as much right to belong to a trade union as the person working in such a store. The nearest similar condition to a person in a particular trade union would be membership of an association of various businessmen to which nobody would be entitled to belong unless he was in that particular business or calling. One is in respect of protection in their calling and the other is general administration of the district.

[Mr. Sewell took the Chair.]

Much has been said about the mode of rating, whether it be on the unimproved or annual rental value system. It would appear that whatever method is adopted, a uniform system is desirable in this State. The Government of the day, which I support, favours the unimproved capital value system. Indeed, from my observations there seems to be less detriment in effecting a uniform system than an annual capital value system. Surely we are entitled to uniform rating, as incomes are taxed under a uniform rate whereby the farmer in Geraldton pays under the same as a farmer in Esperance. I cannot see any argument that would be valid except perhaps in the difference of opinion as to which would be the better. Nobody would lose by one or the other method, with the exception that there might be some difficulty in towns and cities. After the initial changeover, such a condition would be tolerated by the people in the areas that were accustomed to the annual valuation system.

In regard to the election of chairman of a road board or president of a shire or district council, in my opinion the proposal in the Bill represents a desirable change in the Local Government Act. I say this because of my observations of the change of the requirements in the principal officer in each district in regard to various forms of administration over the past few years. For instance, regarding the very obvious one of the naturalisation ceremony conducted by the chairman of the road board, or the mayor in the case of a municipality, the individual concerned participates in the ceremony on behalf of all the people of that district and not on behalf of any individual ward.

It would appear according to my calculation that it would be better to have somebody there representing the whole of the district and whether he came from the town ward or from a country ward of a particular shire or district council I do not feel would matter very much. There is a lot to be said in favour of a person in such a position coming from the town ward because he is generally a businessman accessible to the local secretary or chief administration officer for the purpose of advice and various other matters which from time to time involve consultation.

Surely, from the point of view of expediting the work of the local authorities, that is far more desirable than having a person living on the boundary of a particular road district where it would be very hard for the secretary to contact him and secure his opinion in regard to certain matters that arise in connection with the local governing authority. At present, of course, the position in municipalities is much the same as that envisaged in this Bill.

With regard to the election of a mayor, I have not noticed where the mayor of any particular district has been at variance with the opinions of those elected as councillors. He is generally someone who has progressed through the ranks of the council membership and aspired to be its leading light and mayor of the district. However, this is not always the case, and a classic example is the present Lord Mayor of this city.

I doubt whether he had any previous experience in local government, particularly in the Perth City Council. However, he seems to have filled the bill and does not seem to have had any worries with his councillors. Thus, it would appear that the doubts which exist in the minds of the Opposition in regard to such a person not falling into line with the views of the councillors because he was elected by the people, are not as real as they seem to some members to be apparent.

Another provision that appears to be causing a bit of worry is in regard to the various districts and their finances. At present they are allowed to please themselves whether they have finance of a parochial nature for their particular wards or whether the finance is dealt with as affecting the whole of the district. I have not a strong opinion on that matter but I think it would be advisable to have a uniform system so that we would know as we move from one area to another that the system of local government was the same and not something different that we did not understand. It would appear to me that these debatable points are not as contentious as the Opposition would lead us to believe.

What is in the minds of the Opposition is a matter of principle, which is different from the principle we hold on this side of the House in respect of the franchise.

I would prefer to have seen something similar to the New South Wales qualification for an elector rather than that which is envisaged under this Bill, and that is along the lines on which the member for Blackwood spoke in regard to the Legislative Assembly rolls. The actual section in the New South Wales legislation relating to it is rather clear and I think that perhaps the Bill would have been improved had it included a similar provision. It reads as follows:—

(d) He is upon such prescribed day enrolled on the electoral roll for any electoral district and his place of living as described on that roll is within the ward or riding.

That would appear to be a clear indication that anybody on our Assembly roll would be entitled to be enrolled for local government election purposes. As regards the personnel of the board, I feel it would make not one iota of difference whatever the franchise might be. There would be a few small changes but there are changes with every election. In the main if one reads the nominations, one realises in many cases there is a struggle to get an opponent for the sitting member, unless, of course, someone wants to wash dirty linen with the member representing a particular ward. There have been a number of instances where road boards have had to call nominations a second time in order to get a candidate to sit as a ward member.

Hon. D. Brand: That happens in ordinary elections.

Mr. JAMIESON: This is in regard to road board elections.

Hon. D. Brand: It has happened in the State elections.

Mr. JAMIESON: It may have but I doubt whether we would find too many occasions when the Electoral Department called for nominations and did not get any.

Hon. D. Brand: I was talking about pre-selection.

Mr. JAMIESON: That is different. We could enter into quite a debate as to whether it is desirable to have party politics in local government as in State government. However, in my view, despite the fact that reference has been made to the anomalies, apparent graft etc. that exist under the system in Sydney, I feel that there is quite a lot to be said for adult franchise in connection with local government elections and consider it would be worth trying in this State in order to see if improvements could be effected, even if it were merely to try to stimulate the interest of more people in local government matters by giving them a vote. I feel that would be a step forward rather than a step backward. I have much pleasure in supporting this Bill and hope there will not be too much opposition to many of

these clauses, the objections raised to which, as I pointed out earlier, would be more apparent than real, and the adoption of those particular provisions will not be harmful to the public.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The question is—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Those in favour say "Aye"—

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Mr. Acting Speaker—

The ACTING SPEAKER: The Minister for Health may proceed.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You are not replying to the debate, are you?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: There are other members who wish to speak.

The ACTING SPEAKER: I gave the call, and the Minister was the only one to rise.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I thought the debate was going to collapse.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You know that one of your own men rose.

The ACTING SPEAKER: The Minister may proceed.

Point of Order.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: On a point of order, Mr. Acting Speaker, as soon as the member for Beeloo resumed his seat, the Minister rose. He did not give any other member a chance.

The Premier: That is not true. Be fair!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What do you mean by "Be fair"?

The Premier: The Minister did not rise straight away. He waited at least three-quarters of a minute.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: There was no chance of any other member rising.

The Premier: There was. Be fair to the Minister!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I am being fair.

The Premier: You are not!

The Acting Speaker: I had put the question. I was calling for the ayes when the Minister rose to his feet.

The Premier: The Leader of the Opposition was reading some papers.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I was reading the Bill.

Mr. Bovell: The Leader of the Opposition has raised a point of order. When the member for Beeloo rose to speak, the member for Maylands and the member for Nedlands also rose.

The Acting Speaker: Order! My ruling is that there is no point of order.

Mr. Bovell: I think your ruling should be disagreed with.

Dissent from Acting Speaker's Ruling.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I move—

That the House dissent from the Acting Speaker's ruling.

The Premier: You must do it in writing.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I know that. I move this motion because several other members wanted to speak on what is a highly important Bill, but the Minister immediately—or almost immediately—rose to his feet. Other members were prepared to speak, but did not get an opportunity to do so. It has always been the practice in this Chamber, so long as I can remember, that whilst members have been prepared to speak, they have been given an opportunity to do so. In this case quite a number of members are being denied that opportunity, and I think it is only fair that any member who wants to speak on what is a most important Bill should be given a chance to do so.

Mr. Bovell: I support the Leader of the Opposition and disagree with your ruling, Mr. Acting Speaker. The reason the Leader of the Opposition did not rise was that he was discussing with me and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition a certain part of the Bill. The fact that when the member for Beeloo rose to speak, both the member for Nedlands and the member for Maylands also rose, indicated that they wanted to continue the debate; but before many seconds had elapsed after the member for Beeloo sat down, the Minister was on his feet; I thought he was going to move the adjournment of the debate. It was not apparent to me that the Minister had it in mind to apply the gag by closing the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Order! I would point out to the hon. member that the Minister could not move the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. Bovell: It occurred to me that that was the Minister's intention, as he rose with an alacrity which is unusual.

The Premier: That is not correct.

Mr. Bovell: He is usually very fair in his attitude in regard to the conduct of the business of this House, and it surprised me to see him on his feet. As I said, I was in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition over certain matters affecting this Bill about which the Leader of the Opposition was not quite sure. There are 700 clauses in the Bill, and the Leader of the Opposition was discussing a matter he wanted to raise in his speech. In view of the circumstances, I support the motion.

Mr. Jamieson: I must support your ruling, Sir. I do so on these grounds: Quite a time before I sat down, I gave an indication that before I concluded I would say so and so; and earlier in the evening it was most noticeable that the debate was

running out. On several occasions when the Speaker was in the Chair, he had reached the stage of putting the motion for the second reading before anybody rose. I think it is a pretty poor show when the House reaches such a stage that the Speaker has to force people to their feet. When I got up, the member for Nedlands and—I believe—one member behind me rose also; but they did not seem to be very interested in continuing the debate when you, Sir, rose to your feet to put the question. I must support your ruling because you did give members ample time to speak. I had sat down and you were on your feet and putting the question when the Minister rose.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I hope some way can be found out of this apparent impasse, because it is a most unfortunate state of affairs. I saw the member for Nedlands on the move, and the member for Beeloo recognises that the member for Maylands was doing something similar. So it seems obvious that on both sides of the House there is an impression that the debate should have been allowed to proceed. I must confess I was a little surprised, in the circumstances I have mentioned, when I saw the Minister get up. I really thought, like the member for Vasse, that he had some other intention, though I did not know what it was. The circumstances are so unusual that I hope a way out can be found because, while I am not in the least desirous of disagreeing with your ruling, I feel that the circumstances warrant the complaint put before you.

The Minister for Health: I watched you rise from your Chair, Sir, and you were about to put the question. I thought that if I did not rise, the debate would collapse. Nobody seemed to take any notice. I did not desire in any way to hamper the House or prevent members discussing the Bill, and it is unfair of the member for Vasse to say that I got up quickly, I do not know how it would be if I got up slowly.

Mr. Bovell: There was no verbal indication from the Chair.

The Minister for Health: So far as the member for Vasse is concerned, I am surprised at him, because he is usually very fair indeed. I am not here to take advantage of anybody, and have no intention of doing so. But if members are going to read books and take no interest in the debate and take so long to rise—

Mr. Bovell: That is not so. We were discussing the clauses relating to valuation.

The Minister for Health: That does not matter. The hon. member had no right to do it. When the member for Beeloo sat down there was any amount of time for members to rise. Do they expect the Speaker or the Acting Speaker to keep his seat for half an hour before rising to put the question?

Mr. Bovell: It is usual for the Speaker to give a verbal indication—

The Minister for Health: I gave members ample opportunity. If the ruling is not upheld, it will be unfair. If this sort of thing goes on, what will the House come to? Members are not taking any interest in the matter.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is not so.

The Minister for Health: They are moving like snails, and not taking an interest in the debate. Yet when somebody gets up quite innocently and quietly, and quite slowly to reply as I did, they complain. I thought that if I did not rise, somebody would say that I had not even troubled to say a word in reply to the debate, and I did not wish to miss replying. That is why I rose. I did not see anybody else do so. I am sorry if I did not see the member for Nedlands move; but at the time he had not done so, and I got up quietly and the Acting Speaker had uttered a few words before he saw me. If your ruling, Sir, is disallowed, I feel that you will have lost prestige because you gave everyone an opportunity. The Premier wants to see everyone have a fair and square go. We do not want to check or gag anyone.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You have done it tonight.

The Premier: That is ridiculous.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: A sharp trick put over.

The Premier: Do not be absurd. You are childish! The Opposition is childish.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You are not even reasonable. It is a sharp trick!

The Premier: Childish!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I can imagine the show you would put on if you were over here.

The Acting Speaker: Order! Will the Leader of the Opposition keep order, please?

The Premier: Childish; like a spoilt kid!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: More of your dictatorial attitude—a dictator, getting worse as you get older!

The Premier: Childish!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Keep saying it and you will believe it. A sharp trick!

The Minister for Health: The only reason for my rising was so that I could reply.

The Premier: Childish!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do not adopt a superiority complex.

The Acting Speaker: Order!

The Minister for Health: I am sorry this has occurred, and I blame the Opposition for not taking more interest in the debate.

Mr. Heal: I do not think anyone wants to stop the Opposition in the debate on the Bill. I agree with your ruling, Sir. I took special notice when the member for

Beeloo commenced to speak of the fact that the member for Nedlands made a half-hearted effort to rise.

Mr. Court: That is not so.

Mr. Heal: It is so. When the member for Beeloo indicated that he was about to conclude, he went on a little longer and then sat down, and you, Sir, waited for some time before you put the question. You were halfway through before the Minister rose to close the debate. The Minister could easily have remained in his seat and the second reading would have gone through without his making any reply to the debate. I do not think the Opposition has anything to complain about. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that he was talking to members beside him, but he knew the debate was coming to a close.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No, I did not.

Mr. Heal: I do not think the member for Nedlands was in the discussion, and he had ample time to get on his feet and make his contribution to the debate. I agree with the ruling.

Mr. Rodoreda: I am surprised that you, Sir, even accepted this as a point of order. There is no point of order in the objection made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Bovell: This is disagreeing with the Acting Speaker's ruling. There is no point of order in it.

Mr. Rodoreda: There was, for a start. If members of the Opposition are so uninterested in the debate that they miss their opportunity to get up, whom can they blame?

Mr. Court: There was not an opportunity this time and I will explain why when you finish.

Mr. Rodoreda: We have to consider the facts and they are that the Acting Speaker was on his feet, and he got halfway through putting the question before the Minister rose.

Mr. Bovell: The Acting Speaker never said a word.

Mr. Rodoreda: No one can deny what I have said. If the member for Vasse maintains the attitude he has just indicated, I think he will be shown to be wrong. I think that every member will vouch for the fact that the Acting Speaker was on his feet before the Minister got up.

Mr. Bovell: I did not hear the Acting Speaker say a word.

Mr. Rodoreda: The member who rises to his feet has the call from the Chair. Nobody rose from the Opposition, and no one from this side, except the Minister, rose. This action on the part of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Vasse is totally unwarranted. They missed their opportunity; they were so uninterested in the debate that they did not care.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That is not true.

Mr. Rodoreda: The fact that the Leader of the Opposition says it is not true, does not make it so. The facts show that it is true. No one was interested enough to get up. As a matter of fact, the benches of the Opposition were thinly occupied at the time.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Your benches have been thinly occupied, too, tonight.

Mr. Rodoreda: Well, we are not kicking up a row about it, but the Leader of the Opposition is. He missed his chance. He had 10 or 15 seconds, or more in which to rise.

Mr. Court: No.

Mr. Rodoreda: Yes. The Acting Speaker had to get up, and he was on his feet and halfway through putting the question.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Why do you want to gag us?

Mr. Rodoreda: I do not want to do that at all but to show up the silly action of the Leader of the Opposition in trying to make a point of order out of this. There is no point of order involved. The only person in the Chamber who was on his feet was the Minister, and the Acting Speaker rightly called him. How the Leader of the Opposition can attempt to make a point of order out of that is beyond me. In my opinion you, Sir, are quite right in your attitude, and there is no question but that we must uphold your ruling.

Mr. O'Brien: I agree with your ruling, Sir. I have repeatedly noticed that members rise to their feet without even speaking or saying, "Mr. Chairman" or "Mr. Speaker." It was no surprise to me tonight to see the Minister for Health rise, after looking at the Opposition benches, and getting your permission to speak. I cannot see any reason why there should be any disagreement with your ruling.

Mr. Court: I think I should make some explanation. Firstly, I take exception to the remarks of the Minister who said that we were not interested in the debate. I had been listening to the member for Beeloo and I was ready to speak, but there are certain courtesies observed in this Chamber even at this late stage. At the time when I was about to rise, the member for Maylands, who is a fairly new member in this House, rose, and I want to say that I was watching the member for Maylands to give him the opportunity to rise, and quite frankly, Sir, I did not hear you put the question.

I understand the position is that a member can rise to speak between the "aye" and the "no." I was looking at the member for Maylands, and the next thing I saw was the Minister standing on his feet, and for what reason I could not imagine at the time. I feel there was not ample time, and it is of no use the member for Pilbara saying there was a lapse of 10 or

15 seconds. That is a fairly long time between two speakers. To the best of my knowledge, the Minister rose at the same time as the Acting Speaker, and I did not hear you, Sir, put the question.

The Minister for Native Welfare: The Opposition wants to be fair in this matter. The truth is that at the time you, Sir, were about to put the question, there were four members sitting on the Opposition side and one on the Country Party side. The fact remains that this motion has been nearly put and carried, three times, and it has only been after the Acting Speaker had been on his feet for a few seconds that members opposite decided to speak. I think that the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Vasse are only trying to sort of kill time.

Mr. Bovell: What rot!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do not be stupid!

The Minister for Native Welfare: The fact remains that they are only trying to turn up a point of order so that they will redeem themselves from an awkward position.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What position?

The Minister for Native Welfare: The Opposition has not anyone who is prepared to speak on this matter. Members opposite lost their cue and were disorganised but are not prepared to admit it. They have not their forces organised so as to do the job that they should be doing in the interests of those who elected them. I support the ruling.

Mr. Toms: As one of those directly concerned, I wish to state that I think the member for Nedlands may have been a split second ahead of me and that perhaps it was due to my inexperience and courtesy that I allowed him to rise. At all events, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support your ruling.

Mr. Hearman: During this debate there have been several occasions on which the question has been nearly put. Earlier in the evening I caught the Speaker's eye just at the tea suspension and when the House resumed after tea, although I had not risen to my feet, the Speaker immediately gave me the call. I feel that the House may have become a little lax in these matters, as similar things have happened before, and I believe there is a tendency to allow bad habits to develop.

However, this is an important Bill and even if there has been a certain misunderstanding and blame may be attachable, perhaps, to some members, I hope it will be possible for the debate to be continued and I do not think that you, Sir, would lose anything in stature if you allowed that course to be followed, particularly as three members have said they wish to speak.

I believe that a measure such as this should be debated as fully as possible and I hope that you, Mr. Acting Speaker, will see your way clear to allow that to be done. I do not think any useful purpose

would be served by sticking too closely to procedure or the rules of debate on this occasion. I think some warning should be given before procedure is tightened up and feel that you should not insist on your ruling at this juncture.

The Premier: I wish to say at the outset that the Leader of the Opposition is quite wrong and very unfair in suggesting that this was a smart trick on the part of the Minister to prevent further members, who wished to do so, from taking part in the debate. I think all of us, except the Leader of the Opposition, would agree that the Minister in charge of the Bill is the last person in this House who would endeavour to put over any smart trick and I hope the Leader of the Opposition will, on reflection, withdraw his remark and apologise to the Minister. It is clear from what has been said, and from what was seen, that the Leader of the Opposition was engaged in conversation with his colleagues on his right—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Conversation on the Bill.

The Premier: —with the result that he and those of his colleagues with whom he was conversing were not quite aware of what was going on. There might be a lot in what the member for Blackwood said—that proceedings here have become somewhat lax in certain respects but I think that certainly you, Mr. Acting Speaker, did the right thing, beyond any shadow of doubt. I was taking notice of what was occurring and I know that you had expressed, in part, the question that the Bill be read a second time and the Minister rose, because no one else did so.

I do not think anyone would suggest that by the time the Minister had risen anyone else had done so. The Minister could not move that the debate be adjourned as he had already taken part in the debate when introducing the measure, and therefore the only reason for which he could rise at this stage was to reply to the debate. I would be quite happy if some way could be found to get out of the present difficulty but, in my opinion, it is beyond doubt, Sir, that your call on the Minister was absolutely right in the circumstances and that you could not have done otherwise.

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

Ayes	.....	14
Noes	.....	21
Majority against	.....	7

Ayes.

Mr. Bovell	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Court	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Mr. W. Manning	Mr. I. Manning

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Brady	Mr. Molr
Mr. Evans	Mr. Norton
Mr. Graham	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Hall	Mr. Potter
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Heal	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Toms
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Lapham	

(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

Debate Resumed.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. E. Nulsen—Eyre—in reply) [11.0]: I am very sorry for what has happened because there was no thought of applying the gag. I was of the opinion that I had given everybody a fair opportunity of rising to speak. I shall be very brief because as far as the Bill is concerned it has been discussed at length and I do not wish to repeat anything that has been said during the second reading stage. The provision in regard to adult franchise seems to be a contentious one but I believe that it is a matter of opinion. As has been pointed out to me by some local governing bodies, it will not make any difference to the personnel of the boards.

In my opinion adult franchise will give everybody an opportunity to vote and to become a member of a local governing authority. As the members for Leederville and Kalgoorlie pointed out, the figures show that the contributions by ratepayers are less than half the revenue of most local authorities. Consequently, the people who make those contributions should have some say in the framing of the local authority regulations.

Mr. Court: I am afraid I will have to wait for the Committee stage to debunk the theory they put forward because I certainly cannot subscribe to it.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Probably not. I have noticed that those sitting on the other side of the House always try to veto anything new. I do not know how we have been able to make any progress when members opposite have been in power because they will not agree to anything unless it is traditional or orthodox. It is a wonder to me that we have made any progress in Western Australia, or in any part of Australia, when members opposite have been in power.

Hon. D. Brand: You do admit that we made progress.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Very little. The only progress made when the hon. members' Government was in power was by emulation of the action of Labour Governments.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Did you say something about being childish?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: There is nothing childish about that. The member for Bunbury will realise that when he has been here long enough. They have adult franchise in Queensland and New South Wales.

Mr. Perkins: They are not getting on too well in Queensland at the moment.

Hon. D. Brand: Or in New South Wales either.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The majority of the people in Queensland and New South Wales must have agreed to it.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the Minister will address the Chair, he will not get into difficulties.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Very well, Sir, I am only too happy to keep out of difficulties. Unimproved valuations are also a matter of opinion. Personally, I think valuation on the unimproved value of land would be a great improvement. I know, and other members must know too, that people have bought vacant land for as low as £10 or £12, have held on to it and paid peppercorn rates and then sold it for £600, £700 or even £1,500. I can give members instances of it in Dalkeith.

Hon. D. Brand: We are not opposed to rating on the unimproved value in some local governing areas; but we are opposed to the principle that a local governing body must accept it as a mandatory system of valuation. We want it optional.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I am glad of the hon. member's admission that members opposite are not opposed to it. I am not the Minister for Local Government; I only represent him in this House. I might suggest to him, however, that where necessary the Minister for Local Government should have power to allow a local authority to adopt the system of annual rental value. I admit that there might be some places, probably in the back country, where the mines are closing down and such a system might be better than the unimproved valuing system. However, if the unimproved valuation system is adopted the local authorities can regulate their rates accordingly.

Hon. D. Brand: Why not go further and leave the decision to the local authority concerned?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No, I think the Minister concerned should have some control. Let me give members an instance in my own electorate. In Esperance the road board rating was too low and the board found itself in bother. The reason the rates were too low was because most members of the board were owners

of property in Esperance and they would not value their own properties high enough to allow the board sufficient revenue. As a result, the board was dissolved and a commissioner had to be sent to Esperance to take charge. He placed the board in a sound position and in consequence the road board at Esperance is on a good sound financial footing. So I think the Minister should have some power in that regard. I have had a lot of experience in local government. I have been a chairman of road boards and I was an auditor for years, both of a council and boards and so I know a little about it.

Hon. D. Brand: You will never be an auditor again if this Bill is agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Not since 1933 have they had ordinary ratepayers as auditors. The boards objected to that but now they respect and appreciate the advice that Government auditors can give. They realise that these auditors know a good deal about local government affairs; they are experts in the field and, as a consequence, they are a great help to local authorities. The same applies to municipal councils. I feel sure that the local inspectors, as they will be called, will be of great benefit even though the private auditors are highly qualified.

Hon. D. Brand: What advantage would there be?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: It would be of great advantage. These Government auditors would be able to give more advice than outside accountants or auditors who have not had much local government experience.

Mr. Court: I do not think the Perth City Council would agree with that.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I do not think it would want a change but if it were in a position similar to that in which the road boards found themselves in the early days, when they did not want a change from the ordinary ratepayers' auditing, it would probably feel the same as the road boards do now.

Mr. Court: I feel sure that the Perth City Council would not get the same service from a Government auditor that it is getting from its present auditors.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: That remains to be proved. I think it would get just as good if not a better service than it is getting now. Mention was made regarding the election of the president of a shire council. I think some consideration could be given in that direction; but as many speakers pointed out, the president would be independent because he would be elected by the electors and not by the council. That, too, has its advantages and disadvantages but sometimes it is difficult to get people to stand

for election as members of a board. It might be more difficult to get an independent chairman. Also, a man might be elected purely on his popularity rather than on his efficiency. A man could be a jolly good fellow and could buy his way into the confidence of the electors, although he might be entirely unsatisfactory as a chairman. Again, if the members wanted a particular person elected as chairman they could band together to ensure that he was appointed. I know that that has happened on road boards. Therefore, I do not think it will make much difference to the Bill as to how the president of the shire council is to be elected. The only advantage is that the system would become uniform with that employed by road boards.

Mr. Perkins: Could you not provide for a local authority to please itself?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Probably, but I do not think we should give away too much power. However, that point could be considered in Committee. No matter what was provided in the Bill, I do not think that unanimity could be reached. Christ was the best man that was ever on earth and he was crucified. Therefore could anything be introduced that could please everybody?

Hon. D. Brand: We are only taking our lead from what the Premier said previously, namely, that the Government should get the utmost unanimity among the people.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: We are trying to do that.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No, you are not.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The Leader of the Opposition must still be annoyed! I maintain that we are trying to get unanimity, but there is no reason why we should give away all our opinions for the sake of the opinions held by members on the other side of the House.

Mr. Roberts: You could bring in amending legislation later.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: In my opinion, this legislation is acceptable to local authorities who have not been inspired politically in other directions.

Hon. D. Brand: It was inspired in 1938.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: In fact, I remember a person in the electorate of the member for Blackwood saying to me, "If you had adult franchise, I do not know whether it would alter the personnel of the various boards." However, he did say that he did not favour adult franchise. The member for Blackwood cannot deny that. I hope we can get this Bill through. Local authorities have already approached me in regard to an amendment to the Road Districts Act, but I told them to wait because I thought the Bill might be amended and become law soon.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Yes, it will.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: We will not mind any amendments being made to the Bill so long as it is not mutilated. We can get the legislation placed on the statute book and it can be amended later. The representative of one local authority said to me, "Why not get the Bill on the statute book as it is and amend it later?"

Hon. D. Brand: An innocent abroad!

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I am glad I have brought mirth to the House.

Mr. Hearman: How will you get on with the small boards that cannot carry on with rating on capital value?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: We are willing to give and take so long as the whole principle of the Bill is not affected. We all want to get this Bill through and the only way we can do it is that if there are any amendments which we think are commendable, I will suggest to the Minister for Local Government in another place to put them through there.

Hon. D. Brand: What about the amendments on the notice paper at present?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: They will be dealt with by the Minister for Local Government in another place.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What is the use of putting them on the notice paper of this House?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: If the amendments were put here, we could go on discussing the Bill for another two months and still get no further.

Mr. Roberts: But the contentious clauses will go through.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: There is nothing contentious in this Bill. It is only a matter of opinion. This measure is contentious only to those who want to make it so.

Mr. Nalder: There are many local authorities in the State that disagree with several of the clauses contained in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: It would not matter what was introduced; there would still be some people who would disagree. The member for Leederville and the member for Kalgoorlie proved conclusively that it is not the ratepayers of a local governing body that contribute all of the revenue obtained by it. There are dog licences, car licences and other avenues of income available to road boards which have superseded the amounts that are contributed by ratepayers in rating charges. I have the greatest respect for local government because there is no doubt that local authorities throughout the State are performing excellent service. If it were not for local government, the Government of the State would have a far greater

volume of work to perform and more responsibility to shoulder and, further, it could not undertake the degree of work which each local authority carries out in its own particular district.

Hon. D. Brand: Then give the local authorities what they want in this Bill.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: We cannot give them all they want. If the hon. member gave me all that I want, I would want a great deal of money to get out. This is purely a Committee measure and all the clauses can be debated in the Committee stage. I hope that during that stage of the Bill the debate will be fair and that the measure will be passed as soon as possible. I also trust that the Leader of the Opposition will not hold any grudge for the mistake that was made this evening. However, I accept no blame for what happened, although I agree that the move made by the Opposition was not intentional. The Acting Speaker was on his feet and was halfway through putting the question when I rose. I would like to have a few words to say in reply. I can assure the Opposition that the Government had no intention of applying any gag.

The SPEAKER: I would remind the Minister that that question has now been disposed of.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I realise that, Mr. Speaker, but I merely wanted to point out to the Opposition that I accept no blame for what happened. I hope the Bill will pass through Committee without any trouble. I still say it is not contentious and that it is purely a matter of opinion.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.15 p.m. on Thursday next.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 11.20 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 11th October, 1956.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

FISHERIES.

(a) Whaling Industry, Albany.

Mr. HALL asked the Minister for Fisheries:

Will the Government approach the Commonwealth Government for financial assistance for the further development of sperm whaling at Albany, as this industry needs more backing to enable it to be fully exploited?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (for the Minister for Fisheries) replied:

No request has been received from the Cheynes Beach Whaling Co. by either the Fisheries Department or the Department