reasonableness, seeing there is a problem to be solved, this solution brought forward by people who are supposed to know what they are talking about, should be given a chance. I have an idea, from information supplied to me, that the mere fact that carcases are branded will have the effect of preventing some of the abuses and exploitation that have taken place in the last few years.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Any legislation affecting the food of the people should not be passed without proper consideration and an understanding of what it means. I have very vivid recollections of the egg-candling regulations we passed last session and of the harm they have done to the small producers and to consumers. I suggest to the Minister that no harm can possibly follow if progress is reported.

The Chief Secretary: I have no objection to that but I do object to being ridiculed.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I suggest that progress be reported because I am not altogether satisfied with the wording of this clause.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 11th September, 1941.

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

QUESTION—NATIONAL SECURITY ACT.

War Workers' Housing Trust.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Premier: 1, Has he read the notification in the "West Australian" of the 3rd September, announcing the appointment of a War Workers' Housing Trust under the National Security Regulations, 1939-1940? 2, Is he aware that statutory rules, 1941, Nos. 169-207, under the regulations, authorise the appointment of the Trust, and also provide for the necessary finance to be available for expenditure on the erection of homes in all States where a shortage of houses exists? 3, In view of the increasing employment of married workers at the Midland Junction Workshops and the munition annexes associated therewith, and the consequent shortage of houses in the district, will he make immediate representations to the Federal Minister in control urging that he give consideration to this State's Workers' Homes Board being utilised under the regulations to undertake and supervise the erection of homes for munition workers at Midland Junction and elsewhere?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes. 3, Yes.

QUESTION—EDUCATION.

School Bus Service Insurance.

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Education: 1, Does the Education Department require all drivers of school buses carrying children to centralised country schools, to be fully insured under a comprehensive policy? 2, If not, what provision is made by the department to insure that such children are fully covered by insurance?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied: 1, No. 2, Each contractor for the transport of children to centralised country schools is required to take out and maintain with some reputable public insurance office an insurance policy covering the risk of injury or death to his passengers—the amount of cover to be not less than £100 for each child carried.

QUESTION—CIVIL DEFENCE (EMERGENCY POWERS) ACT.

Government Expenditure.

Hon. N. KEENAN asked the Minister for Mines: 1, When can he make a statement as to the amount which will be made available for A.R.P. purposes in Western Australia? 2, What proportion of such amount is proposed to be contributed, (a) by the Federal Government, (b) by the State Government? 3, Is he aware that owing to no funds being made available to local A.R.P. organisations such organisations are losing interest in their work? 4, Has any scheme for distribution of the amount available (when it is available) amongst the various local A.R.P. organisations, either in the form of material or cash, been determined? 5, If so, will particulars of such scheme be furnished to such organisations?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, As soon as the Federal Government decides the actual amount available. Meanwhile an advance of £125,000 will be made to the States, divided upon a population basis. 2, Pound for pound to the extent eventually approved. 3, No. Their patriotic instincts are proving superior to the many minor difficulties inseparable from implementing Civil Defence, and the Minister for Home Security, the Hon. J. P. Abbott, has expressed his appreciation of this attitude. Moreover legislative power has now been given to local governing bodies to spend funds upon Civil Defence, and several of them are actually taking advantage of this provision. 4, No, as the amount to be made available is dependent upon several considerations yet to be approved by the Federal Government, including their reclassification of vulnerable areas and the necessity for the measures proposed. 5, The organisations and the public will be kept fully informed upon this and all permissable aspects of Civil Defence.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Distress for Rent Abolition Act Amendment.

2, City of Perth Scheme for Superannuation (Amendments Authorisation).

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (Hon. A. A. M. Coverley—Kimberley) [4.38] in moving the second reading said: This is a small and simple Bill. Its object is to bring within the provisions of the Weights and Measures Act all public weighing machines. They are usually the penny-in-slot type, situated in certain arcades and other places in the streets of Perth, and include jockey scales. These weighing machines are not at present subject to the Weights and Measures Act. For that reason they are very erratic. There is no supervision over them and they do not weigh very accurately. They have caused much concern to some members of the general public.

The Minister for Labour: Some people running those machines forget to give you your change.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Some very reputable bodies in the city of Perth, together with individual members of the general public, have made complaints through the City Council and other bodies. For that reason the Government has introduced this amendment. Ample evidence exists to show that these machines are very inaccurate. People who use them for health reasons have complained to the City Council,

and some of the inaccuracies are astounding. We have the evidence of a ticket from one machine giving the weight of a 12-stone person as only 7-stone. The evidence also shows that these scales vary from day to day.

Members of the public use the machines for health purposes and complaints have been received from some of the health centres. Some parents use the machines to weigh their infants daily and have complained of inaccuracies. They have patronised various machines in order to get the right weight, and five or six different machines have been found to vary from 2 lbs. upwards. Obviously, supervision of these machines is necessary, and the Government considers the best way to exercise supervision is under the authority of the Weights and Measures Act. I am sure members will appreciate the need for this amending Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Warner, debate adjourned.

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: This relatively short Bill contains amendments which are of consequence in the very important matters of the maintenance and management of town water supplies under the jurisdiction of the Water Boards Act. Eighteen water supply undertakings functioning under the Act are administered by boards, while the supplies to 26 other towns and townsites are administered by the Minister under the same Act. Altogether the Country Water Supply Department controls the water supplies of 74 towns and townsites, but many of these come within the scope of the Goldfields Water Supply Act, being supplied from the Mundaring reservoir.

Probably the most important amendment in the Bill deals with the subject of the constitution and protection from pollution of catchment areas and water reserves. The principal Act, which has been in force since 1904, provides that the Governor may, by Order-in-Council, place under the temporary management and control of a water board, or may absolutely vest in a water board, any water reserve or catchment area; also that for preventing the pollution of water within such areas, every board shall have all the powers and authority of a local board of health. The Act also gives power to the boards to make by-laws for the prevention of the pollution of water within such areas. The Act, however, does not prescribe the method by which the catchment areas or water reserves are to be constituted. That is one of the weaknesses in the existing law.

That this omission was discovered in the early days of the administration of the Act is demonstrated by the fact that whilst a number of the relevant sections of the Water Boards Act, 1904, were embodied in the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, 1909, an additional section was inserted in the metropolitan Act providing that the Governor may by proclamation constitute and define the boundaries of any water reserve or catchment area, and there was also included a definition of the term "catchment area." This Bill seeks to bring the Water Boards Act into line with the metropolitan water supply Act in this matter. No difficulty arises at present so far as catchment areas or water reserves are concerned if the whole of the areas are Crown lands, as action can then be taken to create water reserves either under the Water Supply Act, 1893, or under the Land Act, but even in these instances it would be preferable to have the authority in the Act under which the undertakings are administered.

In connection with catchment areas or water reserves including alienated land which it is not deemed advisable or necessary to resume, it is essential that the water boards or the Minister should have the powers of a local board of health as contemplated by the present Act for the purpose of making and enforcing by-laws to prevent the pollution of water that finds its way into reservoirs from which the domestic and other requirements of the townspeople are met. In establishing new water schemes, preference is naturally given, all things being equal, to catchment areas consisting solely of Crown lands. Alienated improved properties are included in both the metropolitan and Mundaring catchment areas, and are still being developed, but are subject to by-laws made by the departments concerned to protect the water from pollution.

The last few years of drought have emphasised the paramount need for everything possible being done in this State to conserve and preserve available water supplies, and although no serious difficulties have yet been encountered in this direction, it is considered very desirable that the position be made perfectly clear for the future. The position in the past has been met to some extent in some instances by including the catchment area within the water area. Special provision is made for dual-purpose reservoirs—those to be used for town and irrigation purposes, such as the Harvey reservoir.

The Bill also seeks to authorise water boards to pay interest and principal on loans at periodical intervals in lieu of providing a fixed sinking fund to redeem loans at maturity. This amendment would bring the Water Boards Act into conformity with the Road Districts Act and the Municipal Corporations Act, and has been asked for by a number of water boards. The only other proposal in the Bill is to give water boards power to arrange overdrafts similar to the provisions of the Road Districts Act, and stipulates that pending the collection of any rates, a board may obtain advances from any bank by overdraft provided such overdraft shall not at any time exceed one-third of the ordinary revenue of the board for the preceding year.

Under present conditions, water supply undertakings controlled by road boards use road board funds to tide them over periods of financial shortage. This course is irregular, hence the request of the water boards that this Bill be enacted. These amendments are found to be necessary not only by water boards in the country, but by the department itself. The amendment that will appeal most to members is that which will enable catchment areas to be kept free from pollution. Some people are careless of the public good and consequently it is necessary to have the power in all country districts that is enjoyed in the metropolitan districts, where it is possible to insist upon reasonable sanitary conditions being observed within catchment areas. The other amendments are necessary machinery provisions. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Doney, debate adjourned.

BILL—COLLIE RECREATION AND PARK LANDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [4.52] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to place the racecourse at Collie under the control of the Collie Recreation and Park Lands Board. This board, which came into existence under an Act passed in 1931, consists of five members, a Government nominee, who is the chairman, the Mayor and a councillor of the Collie Municipality and the Chairman and a member of the Collie Road Board. The member of the municipality and the member of the road board are to be nominated by the council and the board respectively. The area of the land in question is 360 acres, forming part of a park lands and beautification scheme for the town and district of Collie. It is one of the most desirable reserves of its kind in our country towns. Members will no doubt recall the surroundings and beautiful conditions of similar reserves in such towns as Narrogin, which do great credit to the municipalities and road districts concerned.

These reserves are in the best interests of our country towns. The project now under consideration is on a fairly generous scale; it has been examined and approved by the Town Planning Commissioner and has also been considered by the Surveyor-General. The scheme is that the land which is surrounded by the present Collie racecourse should be incorporated in this park lands reserve, the whole reserve developed, the racecourse to retain certain rights, and the whole scheme to be under the jurisdiction of the Collie Recreation and Park Lands Board. The area of the racecourse reserve, No. 7685, is 114½ acres; a description of it will be found in the Third Schedule to the Bill. The area outside the racecourse is at present under the control of the board.

In May, 1902, the Executive Council approved of a lease for 99 years of the racecourse to the trustees of the Collie Race Club, of whom all but one is dead. By a deed of appointment made on the 21st July, 1922, the land was vested in John Ewing, Robert Clarence Connell and Frederick Howie. Frederick Howie is the surviving trustee. In 1933 the then Minister for Lands agreed to the Collie Race Club sub-leasing its area to the Collie Golf Club,

subject to the approval of the sub-lease by the Governor. The agreement between the Collie Recreation and Park Lands Board, the surviving trustee of the Collie Race Club and the trustees of the Collie Golf Club will be found in the Fourth Schedule to the Bill. Therefore, all the interests represented will be vested in one authority.

The rental reserved by the sub-lease is £15 per annum and it has been agreed between the parties that it shall be payable to the Collie Race Club by the Collie Golf Club, which will continue to hold the land under the sub-lease. The race club has certain liabilities to guarantors who guaranteed its overdraft. The board, in taking over the whole area, intends to include the racecourse in its scheme of beautification and development and, if necessary, to alter the conditions now obtaining on the racecourse, whilst preserving to the race club its right to use the course in accordance with its original contract. The agreement includes the following conditions:—

1. That the Collie Golf Club shall be recognised by the board.

2. That moneys payable by the Golf Club under its sub-lease shall continue to be paid to the race club.

3. That no charge shall be made by the board for the training of horses using the race track; this condition to apply only to horses registered with the Western Australian Turf Club and owned or leased by members of the Collie Race Club.

4. That the Collie Race Club shall retain the right to use the race course for the purpose of conducting race meetings at all times, subject to its giving reasonable notice in writing of its intention in that regard to the board, and that no charge shall be made to the club for such usage; save and except that the Collie Race Club may be charged a reasonable income or sum on future capital expenditure laid out or incurred to improve the racecourse.

The board has the right to change the layout and design of the whole area. The improvements in the proposed scheme of development will be financed by the board, which was given power to borrow by an amendment Act of 1932. That Act authorises the board to expend moneys and make any financial arrangement necessary for the development of the area. If members refer to the parent Act of 1931 they will find, as I have said, that the Board has authority to borrow and lend. The scheme has the entire approval of all the Collie people, who are anxious to improve a naturally beautiful area and to provide the district with a high-class recreation reserve for the use of the people. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, debate adjourned.

BILLS (3)—RETURNED.

1, Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act Amendment.
2, Baptist Union of Western Australia Lands.
3, Native Administration Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 9th September.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [5.2]: I propose to support the second reading of this measure. From time to time amendments to the workers' compensation laws are brought before this House to deal with some matter or other in connection with workers' compensation that has arisen and requires attention. The result is, I think, that the law at present is somewhat of a piecework or patchwork nature, and it would not be a bad idea if the Minister in charge of it were to give consideration to going completely through it and bringing forward a consolidated measure.

Be that as it may, this proposal is divided into four parts. The first provides that the definition of "worker" shall include persons whose earnings are up to £600 a year in lieu of the present figure of £400. The second provision is that all sub-contractors shall be included in the definition of "worker" rather than that the definition should be limited as at present. The third proposal is that a board should be appointed to control the activities of medical practitioners engaged in workers' compensation cases, and the fourth part of the Bill has reference to hospital fees and an alteration in the method of calculating the weekly compensation to which a worker is entitled.

Whenever one considers the question of workers' compensation one is always obliged to ask what it is going to cost those who have to take out insurance policies covering

their workers. What I am about to say I would not have contemplated saying had the Minister taken the opportunity of adopting the recommendations made by a select committee, of which he was chairman, on one of his State Insurance Office Bills in 1937. That Bill had a good deal to do with workers' compensation because a great part of the discussion that took place at the select committee meetings was in regard to that aspect of insurance. The select committee unanimously recommended that workers' compensation insurance, being compulsory and of a social kind, should not be left in the hands of private enterprise or of an insurance company as such. It was contended at that committee that the cost of the cover required from employers to protect their workers was steadily increasing, and that it was very necessary that as the insurance was intended to be compulsory and of a social kind some effort should be made to put it on a State-wide or national basis and get the cover at the lowest possible rates that could be provided. It was anticipated—perhaps optimistically, perhaps not—by all of the committee I think, inasmuch as they were unanimous in the recommendation, that a scheme of that nature could be put into effect by special legislation, that is to say that some kind of public body could be empowered by statute to carry on the business and do its utmost to reduce—as it was confidently believed was possible—the liability that falls upon employers. The recommendation of the committee was that the matter be referred to a royal commission specifically to make an inquiry on the lines suggested.

Four years have elapsed and all that has happened has been that rises have occurred in many branches of workers' compensation and insurance premiums but no action has been taken to ascertain whether the scheme suggested, or any similar scheme, is practicable. The members of the committee, other than the Minister in charge of the Bill, are not responsible for that. He was the only person equipped with power to have such an inquiry set on foot. When, some 12 months after the report of the select committee, I asked him in this House what were his intentions in that regard, he averred that the matter had been overlooked but would receive his consideration, or something to that effect. I repeat that an interval of some three years has elapsed since that time and nothing has been done. I regret that very much because wherever one goes it is complained that the cost of workers' compensation insurance in this State is greater than it is in any other State in Australia. Nobody—least of all myself—desires for one moment to deprive the worker who has received injury in the course of his employment of the right to receive compensation. Nor do I for one moment desire to minimise the present scale of compensation that he receives. It is because I desire that scale of benefit to be maintained, and because I believe that it can be maintained at less cost to industry than at present, I submit that an inquiry should have taken place. Had that been done we possibly would not have had this legislation before us but would have had machinery enabling us to deal with this complex problem on a State-wide basis.

I believe that the worker who is genuinely injured in the course of his employment is entitled to every consideration that can be given to him. The time has long gone past, as we all realise, when we can ignore that aspect of the matter. We cannot deliberately say to anybody, "Because it is hard to arrange for your compensation you can do without it." We have to recognise on the one hand that the worker is entitled to consideration and on the other hand that the employer is entitled to the same consideration from the point of view of his expenditure in getting the necessary cover to protect his workers in the manner prescribed by law. Every reduction that can be effected in such matters as workers' compensation premiums must to some extent at any rate have its effect upon the cost of the article the public buys, and every reduction in the cost of the article that the public buys must of necessity to some extent—no matter how small it may be—reduce the cost of living for all of us, including the workers. That I think is a very likely corollary to any inquiry we might make on the lines I have indicated. The position is, however, that we have not had an inquiry and now this Bill is before us.

To deal now with the first item, that relating to widening the definition of "worker" to cover a person whose earnings do not exceed £600 a year! We must recognise that a great number of men are engaged in various industries whose remuneration, as was pointed out by the Minister, with

overtime and district and industry allowances, is quite likely to be above the figure of £400. Although they have not in the slightest degree changed their occupation, although there is no less risk of their receiving injury and though they have no guarantee that the amount of money will be available to them over a long period of years, they find themselves at present in receipt of an income greater than £400. I am prepared to meet the Minister in that regard. I recognise that we must exclude from the calculation of that £400 the special allowances and payments that are made for overtime. However, I do not know how many people will be brought in as additional workers covered by workers' compensation insurance and, in consequence, do not know what the increased cost to industry is likely to be. I find that the insurance companies, whenever they get a new class of worker or a new responsibility to be covered by their policies, have a quite natural habit of increasing the premiums payable. What those premium increases, if any, would be, I have not the slightest means of ascertaining, because I have not the least idea how many people—quite apart from those we might include in the gold-mining industry or engaged in munitions making—are likely to come within the ambit of the difference between £400 and £600 a year. To enable this matter to be discussed, in the event of the Bill being taken into Committee, I have placed upon the notice paper amendments having reference to the subject.

I suggest to the Minister that the House is entitled to know just what he is letting it in for by making the bald statement that the figure should be increased from £400 to £600. I have said, and repeat, that I am prepared to make provision for overtime and other allowances, but I am not prepared to grant a blank cheque without having information as to what the effect on industry is going to be in regard to premiums. A little bit here, perhaps, and a little bit somewhere else, and the effect may be considerable. The Minister is very busily engaged, as part of his duty, in trying to encourage the establishment of secondary industries in this State. I have not noticed that his efforts have been crowned with the success they probably deserve. Consequently, I ask myself whether the story I am told—that certain overhead costs, including workers' compensation premiums, are responsible for the fact that those industries are not being started as quickly as we would like—is true. I answer the question for myself by saying that I do not know, but I would very much like to find out.

I do not propose to dwell on the second amendment proposed in relation to subcontractors, because to that I have no objection further than that it will in all probability bring into the ambit of workers' compensation yet another number of workers who have not been in before and consequently the same question has to be asked, namely, what will be the result? Some of those premiums are already excessively high. A few weeks ago I made inquiries at an insurance office about premiums associated with the timber industry and I was advised that they ranged from £25 to £28 per centum. That means to say that for every £1 spent, 5s. or 6s. was disbursed in addition in connection with workers' compensation. It will be readily understood, therefore, why I am so eager to find some method of covering these workers at a reduced rate. I also found with regard to firewood cutters and charcoal burners that, according to the advice I received from the same insurance company, the usual premium rate was £15 15s. per centum, and in that instance there is an additional 3s. 6d. or thereabouts in every pound paid out. That in itself must have an effect on the cost of firewood which even the poorest of us, and perhaps the poorest most of all, require to buy. At any rate, these charges do not tend to make the cost of that commodity any cheaper to the people, and therefore every effort should be made to reduce such charges in respect of such-like industries. As we have some measure of price control in operation, surely the benefit in that respect could be extended to the people generally who have to buy firewood.

Now I will turn to consideration of the medical register committee, which the Minister proposes to appoint. This committee is to be set up to investigate the activities of medical practitioners when dealing with workers' compensation cases. The Minister indicated in very strong language the evils that he seeks to some extent to remedy. I am prepared to accept his say-so that the evil is as bad as he painted it. I did not know that it was, but, even

accepting his statement on the subject, I am by no means satisfied that the proposal he has put forward represents the best way to get over the difficulty. I find that when the investigation committee has looked into the affairs of a medical practitioner and has found that he has been guilty of conduct such as to cause his name to be erased from the register of doctors permitted to undertake workers' compensation business, that doctor will still be permitted to practise on the general public. To my way of thinking that is an extraordinary state of affairs. It seems to me to be on a parallel with the legal practitioner whose conduct in regard to divorce cases has been found to be unsatisfactory for somewhat similar reasons, but who is allowed, notwithstanding his wrongdoings in that regard, to continue to be employed by the public, without any restrictions at all, to do conveyancing and to take cases in the local courts. Surely we already have in existence a Medical Board which, at present, is not equipped, I admit, with very satisfactory powers, that could deal with this particular phase.

Would it not have been better to amend the Medical Act so as to alter, if the Minister likes, the constitution of the Medical Board and place upon it representatives not only of the medical practitioners but of other sections of the community that may come more in contact with the practical application of workers' compensation business than medical men themselves? Would it not have been better, too, to equip the Medical Board with the requisite authority to deal with the aspects covered by the Bill now before us? If that were done, then, if the Medical Board came to the conclusion that a medical practitioner had been guilty of the offences—I cannot find a better word than that— to which reference is made in the Bill, it would be as well that the board should deal with him as a medical practitioner and not merely as a medical practitioner engaged only upon workers' compensation business. It seems to me extraordinary that a man could be struck off the register for workers' compensation cases and yet be allowed to remain on the medical register for every other purpose. I admit that the publicity that might be given to the fact that such a doctor had been struck off the workers' compensation register would hardly attract to him more patients than he previously had.

Mr. Hughes: It might mean an influx.

Mr. WATTS: In rare instances, perhaps that might be so, but in view of what I suggest as likely to happen if we leave the Bill as it stands, we would be well advised to ascertain if we cannot find a better means, either through the Medical Board by way of an amendment to the Medical Act or by the adoption of some other method than that proposed in the Bill.

Curious things will happen in the country districts if the Minister's proposal is agreed to. It is all very well to provide that permission can be given to an unregistered workers' compensation practitioner to take cases in the event of a sudden emergency arising at a time when another medical practitioner is not available. What will that entail? In many country districts doctors are separated by long distances. If we are to bring up the question of the unregistered practitioner, at the moment his services are required we may not know that he has been struck off the register and he may say, "No, I cannot come; you must get Dr. Jones at Gnowangerup."

There are no medical practitioners between Gnowangerup and Katanning, and during the time the discussion is going on as to whether the doctor from Gnowangerup should be rung up or the other man should undertake the case, the patient may probably be dying through lack of medical attention. The Minister's proposal does seem likely to produce in instances of that description an unfortunate and not anticipated state of affairs. I submit very strongly we ought to find some better way in which to deal with this matter. I do not know what publicity is proposed to be given to the striking off of a medical practitioner from the workers' compensation register, but even if it is proposed to give any such publicity, the last ones likely to hear of the action taken will be those residing in country districts. In that event we shall probably find arguments between the registered doctor and the unregistered medical man as to which is to attend to a patient. I say that because I do not know what the Bill means when it says, in proposed new section 20C—

> . . . . in a case of sudden emergency, when the services of a practitioner on the register were not available.

I have not the slightest idea whether that means that the doctor is available on the spot or 40 miles away. We would be well advised to think up

some better proposal than this, even if we admit the evil which the Minister desires to remove, and the desirability of removing it as speedily as possible.

We come to the next proposal which is to alter the system whereby the weekly compensation that the injured worker receives, is calculated. Instead of the old system of 50 per cent. of the average wage with some conditions as set out in the Act, we find the proposal now is that it shall be 50 per cent., under certain circumstances, of the last week's wages. That provision is evidently meant to bring in the casual workers whose payments are not very high, because of the fact that they have much broken time, with the result that those workers will probably find themselves receiving a lower scale of workers' compensation per week than would be justified by their earnings of two or three weeks previously. It is doubtless desired to overcome that difficulty, and I have not the slightest objection to it being overcome in the manner suggested by the Minister; but we may find now, having no data to work on, that the insurance companies concerned may regard this as substantially increasing their likely responsibilities and that the companies will try to pass on the increase in premiums to the general public. Therefore I do not know whether we are justified in agreeing to this proposal, to which I have just referred, straight away, without any further inquiry apart from such information, scanty as it was, as was provided by the Minister.

The question of hospital expenditure is, I know, one of considerable importance to people in the country districts. The Minister told the House that he and his colleague, the Minister for Health, had received a deputation from representatives of country hospitals asking for an increase of the nature outlined. Doubtless they made out a strong case which convinced the Minister of its reasonableness, but I notice that he seeks to make the increase suggested payable only in respect of the first 30 days —whether in succession or not, does not matter—of the treatment required by the worker. I must again submit that personally I have no objection to the proposal, but I would very much like to know what the increased cost is likely to be from the standpoint of workers' compensation expenditure. I have in mind not only the claims likely to be made on the private insurance companies but on the State Government Insurance Office, which, as the result of the recommendations of a select committee, was approved by Parliament and is now able to carry on legally work that it has been undertaking for many years.

My sympathies are, I am afraid, with the workers and to that extent are with the Minister in his desire to ensure that the worker is paid reasonable compensation in respect of any injury he may receive in the course of his employment. At the same time, as I have already explained, there is reason to believe—and I should like to know whether it is true or not—that any further expenditure on workers' compensation insurance will be reflected in the cost of the goods that people require, which will be accordingly increased, as it has steadily in recent years. It is our duty to evolve some system whereby the worker will secure efficient, and sufficient, cover without increasing the burden upon industry, thereby ensuring that the experience of passing on the cost by increasing commodity charges shall be brought to an end.

I believe that the best course the House could adopt—we are in the early stages of the session, and there is ample time ahead of us; we ought to settle this question, in my view, as early and as completely as possible—would be to refer the Bill to a select committee. I suggest that procedure not with any idea—I think I have indicated my attitude already, but I desire to make it perfectly clear to the Minister—of defeating this legislation if it be found to be satisfactory, but with the object of giving the House and myself in particular an opportunity to ascertain what are the answers to the questions I have mentioned during my remarks. With that end in view I propose to ask the House, after the second reading has been passed, to refer the Bill to a select committee.

MR. HUGHES (East Perth) [5.30]: I agree that all workers receiving less than £600 per year should be brought within the scope of this legislation, because there have been numerous workers who, although in receipt of more than the maximum amount prescribed by the Workers' Compensation Act, have never been able to

make provision for injury they might receive, and when they have received injury in connection with their calling have had to bear the cost of the medical expenses. I view with some trepidation, however, any attempt to save money for insurance companies by diminishing the medical aid available to the worker. I have not any sympathy whatever with the insurance companies. In my opinion, anyone who has had experience of workers' compensation litigation could not possibly have any sympathy with them. One has only to deal with them on behalf of an injured worker to learn that they will take every imaginable point to avoid paying the injured worker the compensation due to him.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: The State Government Insurance Office too?

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. That is the worst, because it is the most powerful. I have never known an insurance company that would not fight in order to escape paying a worker his compensation if there was a vestige of a chance of winning. Frequently insurance companies succeed because of their dominant financial position, which enables them to humbug the worker about until finally, in disgust, he takes whatever he is offered. Moreover, the companies are in this position, that if they want to fight an injured worker in respect of his compensation, they can employ three or four doctors to examine him and to discover means of defeating him when the case comes to court. I have actually known a case wherein an injured worker was examined by 11 doctors, one after the other. He was subjected to these examinations because he had a back injury. Therefore if occasionally somebody gets a little bit of excess treatment for which an insurance company has to pay, in my opinion the company should write that expenditure off against the profits made by it in the matter of workers' compensation which they ought to have paid. Even then they would still be on the right side of the ledger.

One of the most pathetic sights to be seen is a worker who has been injured and has to fight an insurance company for his compensation. First of all, the average injured worker after a week or two has no financial resources at all. Sometimes he has no financial reserves in the first week after he is injured. In fact, in the majority of cases the week after his injury occurred he has not the wherewithal to provide bare necessities. He goes along to the insurance company, which sends him to its doctor. The company picks the doctor. I do not know what the reason is, but it is known in Perth, especially among the legal fraternity, that certain doctors are insurance company doctors, because when insurance companies have cases those are the doctors they send the injured workers to and those are the doctors who give evidence. Human nature being what it is, I suppose an insurance company doctor, probably unconsciously, takes the view that his regular employer is in the right. I have seen some highly pathetic cases arising out of those circumstances.

But let us take the case of a worker who has been injured and is compelled to sue for his compensation. He starts off scratch with no money. He has to find a lawyer who will act for him without fees. Time and again when it comes to issuing a summons against an insurance company for the injured worker's compensation, the lawyer has to pay the court fees out of his own pocket. If the injured worker wins in the court and the insurance company has the slightest chance, it will take him to the Appeal Court. A sum of £20 must be lodged before an appeal can be heard. But what is £20 to an insurance company? On the other hand, if the insurance company wins and there is a possibility of successful appeal, the worker similarly is required to lodge a deposit of £20. In nine cases out of ten, of course, he cannot go on, because of the difference in value of £20 to him and to an insurance company, the worker having probably been laid up for 10 or 12 weeks. The difference in the respective values is as great as the distance between the poles. Therefore I think we should go warily before setting up anything that will curtail the medical service available to the injured worker. I remember as far back as 1920, when there was no provision of £100 for medical expenses, those of us who knew something about the business regarded the provision of the £100 for medical expenses as probably the most important advance made in workers' compensation legislation.

The Minister for Mines: So it was!

Mr. HUGHES: We regarded the £100 as even more important than all the other advances made in workers' compensation law. I believe that if a medical practitioner charges fees he should not charge, or charges excessive fees, neither the worker nor the insurance company need pay them; because the doctor is not any more entitled to collect fees for work that he has not performed, than anybody else who enters into a contract. I have been present in court when a medical practitioner has been refused payment of fees for which he sued under the Workers' Compensation Act, because the other side put up the plea that such services were not necessary. The court refused to allow the fees asked for by the doctor. Indeed, the doctor is not in any better position than the grocer. If a doctor charges fees over and above those he is entitled to, the insurance company need not pay. I should like to see a good healthy row between the insurance companies and the doctors. The parties are too friendly for my liking. If a doctor performs his services negligently and then transfers the patient to, say, a specialist, there is no obligation on the insurance company to pay the former. The company's answer to the original doctor would be, "You did not perform your work, or performed it so negligently that we have been obliged to engage another medical practitioner elsewhere; and therefore we will not pay you." In 99 cases out of a hundred the worker cannot pay; so that if the insurance company does not pay, the doctor remains unpaid.

Furthermore, I understand that there is among members of the B.M.A. what amounts to an unwritten law governing the scale of charges to be made in workers' compensation cases. If any person disputes the amount that the doctor proposes to charge him, he can go along to the B.M.A. and obtain a ruling. There is within my knowledge a case where in a dispute between the insurance company and the medical man in regard to his fees, the matter was taken to the B.M.A., and that body suggested that certain charges were fair and that others were not. Thus there is ample protection for insurance companies in the existing state of the law. That, however, is not the reason why I am opposed to the establishment of another board. My main reason is that I fear anything at all that may by any chance whatsoever interfere with the worker getting the full medical treatment to which he is entitled.

I would sooner see ten insurance companies have their profits for the year reduced than that one worker should be deprived of one pound's worth of medical treatment to which he is entitled. We hear a lot about the country doctor who treats a workers' compensation patient and—I deduce this from the Minister's remarks—is practising in a district where people have had financial reverses and cannot pay doctors' bills, and who perhaps charges the insurance company a little more for the services rendered in the workers' compensation case, by way of making up for fees he has not been paid. That is nothing new. Undertakers have been doing that sort of thing since time immemorial. Every person in business has to charge something extra to those who pay in order to compensate for those who do not pay. So, whether we like it or not, in the present commercial system we are all communistically insuring the payment of one another's debts. A butcher told me once that if all his customers paid him he would be able to reduce the price of meat by one-halfpenny per pound, but that he had to get the extra halfpenny to make up for customers who did not pay.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is business generally.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Traders charge the full amount always.

Mr. HUGHES: I understand that if a medical practitioner is guilty of disgraceful conduct, such as charging for services not rendered or attending a patient for the sake of attending him and getting fees rather than for the sake of curing him, he can be prevented from practising and can be struck off the medical register.

The Minister for Mines: That is what is termed unprofessional conduct, but it is extremely difficult to get the B.M.A. to arrive at that finding. It is also very hard to get one doctor to come into court and swear that another doctor treated the patient negligently.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. A doctor will tell you that privately; but when you want to get his evidence in the form of a written statement, he fades away. Thirty years ago, when the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson) was on the goldfields,

it was worse than getting one carpenter to swear against another.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There was no crime then. The carpenters never did wrong.

Mr. HUGHES: No. It is a very difficult thing to determine. After all, there is so much doubt about medical science at present that it becomes an open question whether the previous doctor was wrong. I suppose of all sciences that connected with the medical profession is probably more in its infancy than is any other science.

Hon. N. Keenan: Oh no! What about Esculapius, who is regarded as the founder of medicine years before Christ?

Mr. HUGHES: I am speaking about the advance of knowledge in the medical profession. We had the old medicine man who surrounded himself with mystery to impress the members of his tribe with the fact that he knew something. We still have the medicine man who writes his prescriptions in dog Latin so that neither the patient nor the chemist can read them. We still have, therefore, the old tribal mystery. No doubt some of our city specialists who receive handsome fees for operations are a little too ready with the knife, particularly in workers' compensation cases, although that may apply to other patients who can afford to pay the handsome fees.

The Minister for Mines: There is no provocation today for taking out the appendix.

Mr. HUGHES: Appendix operations are not fashionable today. The most fashionable operation at present is the removal of the joint to which formerly was attached a tail. That is called the coccyx. I understand that operation is preferred to the older one of removing the appendix.

The Minister for Lands: There are ways of removing that which are quite novel.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. So far as I know in workers' compensation cases the most difficult situation arises with regard to the man who claims to have injured his back. Doctors will say they can see no sign of injury, and they have to be guided more or less by what the patient tells them. The patient may say he has pains in the back, and the doctor may claim that he has no pains. On one occasion a magistrate said the patient was in as good a position to say where the pain was as was the doctor. As soon as a man gets a pain in the back as the result of an injury along comes the doctor for the insurance company to examine him. The doctor says he has compensation neurosis, that he imagines he has a bad back. Many workers have been deprived of their compensation because doctors have been prepared to say they are suffering from compensation neurosis, and only think they have a pain in the back. I know of a man who was classified by the Medical Board as fit to return to work. He went to Marquis-street within a week, and by one of the same doctors who had classified him as fit for work he was there classified as belonging to the "C" class, fit only for light work. Another man was classified by the Medical Board as fit for work. Within a fortnight he went to see one of the members of the board and was told by that doctor he was unfit for work The man in the community who needs our care and assistance most of all is the injured worker who is trying to secure compensation.

If a person has money he needs help from no one, for he can get the best professional services in all branches of the profession. It is the man who has no money and who is battling for his compensation that we ought to safeguard. In Committee I shall vote against the clauses dealing with the setting up of a medical board. That board is to consist only of two medical men and three laymen, and I suppose the insurance companies will want at least one representative amongst the laymen. There may be no direct pressure upon medical practitioners to cut down the medical services given to workers, nevertheless there will always be a clamour by the representative of the insurance companies that the medical expenses are too high. Members of the profession will wonder whether if they give workers a certain amount of treatment they will be subject to criticism at the hands of the board. We may do more harm than if we cut down the profits of some of the insurance companies. If the medical expense that have to be paid by insurance companies are reduced what guarantees have we that the reduction will be handed back to the insurers? There is no guarantee that the companies will automatically reduce their rates. I support the Bill with the reservation that I would like the internal part of it dealing with the establishment of a medical board struck out in Committee.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [5.53]: I support the second reading. I confess to

finding myself much in the same position as is the member for Katanning (Mr. Watts), namely that we are called upon to vote on this measure with insufficient information at our disposal. We really know no more than we hear from popular rumour with regard to some of these matters. On the whole general question of what is a fair basis of compensation to an injured worker, we are practically dependent on the history of the past. I suppose that at the back of the Minister's mind is the idea that a reduction in insurance premiums will be made as a consequence of certain provisions contained in the Bill. Many of the remarks of the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) were probably due to wishful thinking. There does not appear to be any ground for supposing that if this provision becomes law there will be any reduction in the premiums charged either by the State Government Insurance Office or any other insurance office compared with what is being charged today.

Desirous as all of us are that secondary industries should be established in Western Australia, I maintain that we must endeavour to reduce overhead costs first. Without a reduction in overhead costs it is scarcely possible to imagine any industrial development of any worth-while importance in this State. We have to bear in mind the colossal competition that comes from the Eastern States. If this State were able to write its own history or if it once gained the right to write its own history—I say that with all due respect to the member for Guildford-Midland (Hon. W. D. Johnson)—and were able to put off the obligations imposed on it by its membership of the Federation, we could make what conditions we liked. We could block out all the competition of the highly-organised Eastern States.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That was all brought about by the vote of the people.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Undoubtedly. I am not referring to the original referendum, but to the attempt which unfortunately failed to revise the result of that referendum. We have to face intense competition from the Eastern States, competition which has forced us to give consideration to the costs associated with secondary industries in this State. The matters with which this Bill deals, such as that referred to by the member for East Perth, namely, the medical costs involved in workers' compensation, become of vital importance. I do not concede that we have anything like the information we should have on either the medical aspect or any other aspect dealing with insurance. We have only the short statement of the Minister when moving the second reading of the Bill and know nothing more than he has been good enough to vouch for. It is the popular belief that the title "Workers' Compensation Act" is the wrong one, and that the legislation should be known as "The Doctors' Compensation Act." That is the talk in the street.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is mutual with regard both to the worker and the doctor.

Mr. W. Hegney: Some people have added the word "lawyer's."

Hon. N. KEENAN: I have never heard this legislation described as "lawyers' compensation" although I have heard it discussed in many ways. Lawyers who relied for their practices upon the workers' compensation basis of it would not do very well.

The Minister for Lands: They would need to see a doctor.

Hon. N. KEENAN: They would not be able to accumulate any credit at the banks or anywhere else. I am prepared to accept the statement of the Minister, because we cannot have such a general belief without there being something behind it, namely that doctors have made a welter of the Workers' Compensation Act. By no means do I say this of all doctors—in this the Minister very properly agreed—nor do I say it of the majority, but only of a certain number. Some doctors have taken the opportunity to use the Act for their own aggrandisement irrespective of a proper consideration for their patients. What can happen, has happened, and what would be most difficult to prevent from happening is that when a case comes in of an injury which is only a simple one to a man who has knowledge, as a doctor has, of the extent of the injury, he can magnify it in any way he likes. He can have that patient come every day, when one visit a week would be ample, and a second visit would be sufficient to tell him to follow a certain prescribed course in his own house.

The experience of all of us who have to call in doctors to deal with our ailments—and we call in a doctor of good standing and repute—is that we find his first desire is to avoid unnecessary visits. He informs us that if we pursue a certain course of treatment, or conduct, which he prescribes, it

will be unnecessary, unless complications of a bad character in health occur, for him to see us further. That, however, is not so in workers' compensation cases. Some doctors, unquestionably, obtain the attendance of a worker until they have exhausted, or as near as possible exhausted, the amount the statute provides for medical attention. Very often then, I have heard—of course it is again hearsay—that when the amount is exhausted they send him to the public hospital.

The Minister for Mines: That is quite right. There is no doubt about that. I know it. We have had a few of them in our hospitals as indigent cases.

Hon. N. KEENAN: We can take the Minister as a man who knows.

The Minister for Mines: I do not know everything, but I do know that.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If accident cases were sent at once to a public hospital the public revenue would gain by it.

The Minister for Mines: They have already been to a private hospital, and when the money cuts out they transfer to a public hospital, such as the Perth Hospital.

Mr. Hughes: Is not the position that the doctor cannot get paid when a patient is in the public hospital?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nedlands may proceed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I will be delighted to. Whether the views interchanged are correct or incorrect, the fact remains that, from the experience of the Minister for Mines, cases come into the hospital which, no doubt, should have come in immediately after the accident occurred, or as soon as possible. The position is, however, that it occurs only after the statutory amount has been exhausted, or only after the patient becomes a charge, and must become a charge, on the public funds. We want to alter that state of affairs, and the only question is whether the proposal made by the Minister is the best one to produce that result.

If the committee proposed to be constituted is to be authorised to hold an inquiry into the conduct of any registered medical practitioner respecting his treatment of a case, I do not think the problem will be solved. Who could honestly tell that a doctor, especially a country doctor, had made an error of judgment of sufficient character to warrant a charge being brought against him? Country doctors are only in the country because they are not in a position, from their medical experience, to face the competition of the city.

The Minister for Labour: That is not necessarily correct.

Mr. Hughes: I think that applies to members of Parliament.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Would the Minister suggest that a doctor in the country has the same standing, knowledge, training and capacity as has a St. George's-terrace expert?

The Minister for Mines: As a general practitioner, yes!

Mr. Seward: They are very often superior.

The Minister for Mines: Not as a specialist, but as a general practitioner.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I should have thought it was the same as in all other professions. In my own profession the men who go to the country are those who know they are not likely to attract a large clientele in the city on account of their youth and the opposition they would meet. When they go to the country they have more or less a monopoly, and can get by reason of that monopoly a practice they would not get in Perth. I mention that to show how difficult it would be to say, for instance, if the doctor—I do not know him—at Moora were to treat the patient in a certain way, that a charge could be brought against him—"Oh, that treatment was not right because the expert in St. George's-terrace to whom we submitted his case says he should have done something entirely different."

A case was mentioned to me personally by a very distinguished professional man in Perth, where a country doctor attended a lady suffering from a very severe pain, as she thought, in her knee. He treated her for some injury, but, in fact, it was not in the knee at all. By some result of nerve action in the body the disease, which was elsewhere, in fact in her spine, produced a sensation of pain in the knee. The country practitioner was not aware of it. He did not produce any results from his treatment of the knee, which was not the seat of the trouble. The patient finally came to this Perth doctor, who told me of the incident. He said that when he saw the case he at once came to the conclusion, from examination which he was able to make with certain plant or instruments not open to all

country practitioners to possess, that the injury was in the spine. That could be the subject of a charge of negligence. Could that be alleged, in the language of this Bill, to be treatment of a patient which was not correct treatment? It bristles with difficulties, and these difficulties are to be solved by a committee of three laymen, as pointed out by the member for East Perth.

The Minister for Labour: Not necessarily three laymen!

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the Bill is passed in its present form it is necessary.

The Minister for Labour: Why?

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Bill suggests that the committee shall consist of a judge of the Supreme Court, or magistrate of a local court, and two representatives to be nominated by the Governor-in-Council, and two medical practitioners.

The Minister for Mines: If the Governor nominated two doctors, that would be four doctors.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If that was the intention the Bill should have said four medical practitioners.

The Minister for Mines: You say the Bill will consist of three laymen. I do not say that is the intention.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not quite follow. If the idea—not intention at all—was that there should be a board consisting of a majority of doctors, why not say so? It is quite possible, without any contradiction, that there could be three laymen and two medical men on this committee, and these three laymen are going to address themselves to a matter which even a highly qualified doctor would find great difficulty in answering.

Mr. Styants: The committee could be guided by the two doctors.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Instead of having this provision in the Act, the Minister should amend the Medical Act and make the Medical Board, which is appointed entirely by the Crown, and not selected by the doctors——

The Minister for Mines: They are all medical men on it.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It is not selected by the doctors, but by the Governor-in-Council. That board should have the necessary power to discipline the profession in the proper manner, and in the particular matter of this Workers' Compensation Act. It would be able to address itself with a complete knowledge of the subject, to the complaints.

Although that board today has very wide powers—perhaps too wide, because they are so wide it would be difficult to put them in force—a complaint has never been made to it. That is an extraordinary thing. It has been in force for a great number of years, and those who had reason to complain could have complained to it. The State Government Insurance Office could have said, "Such and such a doctor has made a lot of unnecessary charges in a particular case," and named the case. The board could then have inquired into it. Although today the scope of its authority is somewhat limited, and requires to be considerably extended to be effective, it has never once been asked to make such inquiry.

The Minister for Labour: Has not the board possessed the power to act on its own initiative?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes, but like all boards, it does not do so. I have never known of a board that did not have to be called upon.

The Minister for Mines: They adopt the attitude that they can only deal with unprofessional conduct.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Act is very clear.

The Minister for Mines: The interpretation is not.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the present board were unsatisfactory, the Governor-in-Council has power to remove each member at any time, and appoint others in their stead. That board would have power to deal with any matter coming before it affecting any practitioner whose conduct was questioned. If, as a result of its inquiry it found that the complaint was justified, it would have the power to strike the practitioner absolutely off the register. I would call the Minister's attention to the fact that that is the right power to have. As the member for Katanning (Mr. Watts) said, an extraordinary position would arise when a medical practitioner would be deemed unworthy of being allowed to practise in a certain part of his profession—that is in matters arising under the Workers' Compensation Act—but still allowed to practise otherwise on the community at large. That is absolutely illogical. If a doctor is of such a character that he is to be debarred from dealing with a particular part of his practice then, un-

questionably, he should be removed from the register.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I was dealing with the position of the public in its relation to a doctor who had been deprived of the right of practice in the case of workers entitled to compensation under the Act. An extraordinary position would arise if a doctor was deprived of the right of treating compensation cases, but there is a further consideration to be taken into account. Assume that a doctor in the country was deprived of the right of treating compensation cases, and a worker went to consult him, how would he know whether it was a compensation case? The worker would go to him suffering from an injury and, until the matter had been determined by a competent tribunal, nobody could say whether it was or was not a worker's compensation case.

The Minister for Mines: That is about the first thing he would ask.

Hon. N. KEENAN: What would the doctor ask?

The Minister for Mines: Whether it was a compensation case.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Would he take the answer of the worker?

The Minister for Mines: Yes.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It might happen that the worker was not entitled to compensation. The doctor would probably say that he would have to treat him as an ordinary patient, and if subsequently it was found that the case was a compensation case, he might recover from the employer. The position would be most difficult to ascertain. Thus, from many points of view, this Bill is one that should be referred to inquiry by a select committee. It is impossible for us to foresee all the difficulties that will arise and it is impossible to determine the facts without a thorough investigation. I hope the Minister will accede to the request already made and will have the Bill referred to a select committee.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [7.33]: The member for Nedlands, in his sympathetic contribution before tea, said it was a pity the House had not more information in support of the statements made by the Minister regarding the doctors that had made a welter of compensation cases. In order to give the hon. member some little evidence, may I mention that last February I attended an important co-operative conference at which there were 100 to 150 delegates drawn from districts extending from Denmark in the south to Northampton and Yuna in the north. The conference was a representative one, and it can be said that the delegates were much more interested in the business side of the farming industry than are those who attend the usual gatherings of farmers. There was an item on the agenda—it was not something sprung on the conference during debate—proposing that the federation investigate the question whether the farming community could not be protected against cases being unduly prolonged by country doctors when the injury, though it might preclude the worker from continuing the task on which he was engaged at the time of the accident, would prevent his being utilised in some other capacity on the farm. Possibly the man himself would prefer to return to some light work on the farm.

To give a practical illustration: an employee operating a harvesting machine gets a finger jambed rather severely. He requires medical attention and is immediately conveyed to the nearest doctor or hospital to have the injury dressed. He has a claim under the Workers' Compensation Act because the farmer, in common with other employers, must insure his employees under the Act. The employee might remain at the hospital for a day or so until the doctor was certain there would be no reaction. The man might be anxious to return to the farm, knowing there was other work he could do. He might not be able to work on the machine and use the spanner and other tools, but he could go through the paddocks and look after the sheep, which would be a congenial change and, besides, it would be necessary work. Possibly the other man husbanding the sheep would take his place on the harvester temporarily. But the doctors will not allow that.

Mr. Triat: Quite right.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The man might not want to stay in town. He might be better cared for at the farm and might prefer to amuse himself by doing a certain amount of casual work that would contribute to the maintenance of the farm operations. The member for Mt. Magnet interjected, "Quite right." It is quite right in a limited sense, but when a worker is

unnecessarily kept in town against his will until the finger has completely healed, it is not right. The worker does not need so much attention, but he is given it because of the interest the doctor has in the man as a compensation case. Numerous other illustrations were given at the conference. There is no question but that, by wilful act, doctors keep cases as long as possible, not because they are doing any service to the injured workers but because the injured workers are of economic value to them. Therefore, as a result of the discussion a resolution was carried unanimously that the federation make representations to the Minister drawing his attention to the need for investigation into these allegations, with a view to protecting both workers and employers against exploitation such as had been exposed at that conference. I know that that resolution was brought under the Minister's notice. That fully representative gathering of farmers' delegates, through the resolution, did something to place the workers' compensation medical section on a more practical and businesslike basis. It is amazing to think that it is possible for one section of the community to exploit in the manner exposed by the Minister—and rightly so—both workers and employers. Certainly it is something that Parliament must take notice of officially. When it has been brought to the Minister's attention not only, as in the case I have illustrated, by one organisation, but by numerous organisations, unquestionably something needs to be done.

I would like to give another illustration. An organisation with which I was associated, a trade union, conducted for years an accident fund; and the fund was always solvent, the contributions being on a scale sufficient to maintain solvency. Thus the fund went on, but after doctors began to realise the asset they had in the Workers' Compensation Act—they did not wake up to their advantage as soon as the measure was passed—and after that knowledge had spread, we found it utterly impossible to run an accident fund in connection with ordinary trade union operations. In one union, within 12 or 18 months of the passing of the Workers' Compensation Act the expenses of the accident fund had exactly doubled. I investigated cases personally, and I could see what was happening. The doctors in the district realised that they could continue the treatment of an injury and thus maintain an income which it was never intended they should receive. When we pass social legislation of this kind it is our duty to protect it against misappropriation—if I may put it that way—by one section using a social reform for the purpose of its own special gain. I know from the same experience that there are a number of doctors for whom this legislation is needed.

The medical profession generally will understand that the Bill is not introduced as something to discipline the medical profession in general, but to assist those medical practitioners who are honest in their endeavours to render service under reasonable and fair conditions, to discipline their organisation so that every member of it will realise that his contribution in a social service of this description must be in the spirit of the legislation that created the service. That co-operation has not been obtained. There has not been that sympathetic touch which there should be from the whole of the medical profession. A section of the doctors has not dealt as fairly with the service and with the legislation as Parliament anticipated.

I regard the section providing for the medical board as one of the most important provisions of the Bill, since it will give the Minister and the administration an opportunity to check up. Then it should not be long before the medical profession realises that there is a reasonable way of giving service, and that if an unreasonable attitude is adopted Parliament will speedily get rid of that kind of practice and create a more general recognition of the needs of this legislation.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [7.45]: Although approving of the extension of all possible benefits to injured workers, I feel that there are weaknesses in our compensation legislation as it stands. There has been quite a deal of discussion on the £100 medical expenses allowed for the medical practitioner. I have always regarded this as a weakness in the Act. To my way of thinking, in most instances the provision, instead of being a benefit to the injured, is only a benefit to the doctor. I know of several cases of the same kind as already indicated here, where, when the £100 for medical expenses was cut out, the injured

person was either sent to the public hospital or discharged as fit to resume his normal occupation. There is another aspect of the matter, that when the medical profession hangs on to a patient until the amount allowed is cut out, the effect in many cases is demoralising to the patient. I feel quite sure that such patients could be discharged probably weeks or months before discharge takes place. It is criminal to allow any person to believe that he is still suffering a disability, or is still in ill-health when in fact he has recovered his health and is fit to resume his occupation. I repeat, such conduct is criminal; and if we can set up a board able to deal efficiently with the evil it will be of great benefit to the worker and to the community in general.

There is yet another aspect. The insurer has practically no say whatever in the matter. When the doctor takes over the patient, that is the end of the picture as far as the insurer is concerned. And what is the final result? One may have knowledge of more than one of these cases where the patient is held by the doctor until the full allowance of £100 has been cut out. The result to the employer is a communication from the insurance company stating, "Owing to the unsatisfactory nature of your businss, it has been found necessary to raise your premium from (say) 60s. per cent. to 70s. per cent." Thus the employer is definitely penalised, and he has no redress. The position is most unfair. I hope that question will be dealt with definitely.

As regards the medical register, some speakers have expressed opinions concerning the country doctor. If he is removed from the register, what is going to happen to injured or sick persons in the country who are entitled to workers' compensation?

Mr. Raphael: Is he going to stop there?

Mr. THORN: My answer is that if in those matters he offends sufficiently to be removed from the medical register, he should be removed from the district altogether.

The Minister for Mines: He would be removed automatically.

Mr. THORN: If that stage is reached, I would not be concerned about what happened to the people of the district; no doubt they would be able to secure another medical practitioner. Owing to the complications that we feel we are up against over these amendments, I agree with previous speakers that the Bill ought to be referred to a select committee, so that we could have a full inquiry into the matter. The Minister has made some very serious statements about the medical profession, and I agree with him to some extent. However, so that the matter may be cleared up and so that reputable, straightforward and honourable medical practitioners may not be branded, we should appoint the suggested select committee to obtain the evidence we need. By such means we shall be able so to amend the Act as to make it workable and satisfactory to all concerned.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [7.52]: I shall support the second reading. The Minister in charge of the Bill usually sticks hard and fast to the measures that he brings down; he does not give away very much. However, I think the request made by members on this side of the House for a select committee has much to justify it. I am aware that sometimes Bills have been lost as the result of the appointment of select committees; but in this instance I am sure members on this side of the House desire that the Minister should not lose this Bill.

The Bill proposes to give a man earning £600 a year workers' compensation benefits. I have no objection to that provision, but members are right when they ask that the House should be given some idea of the extra cost that will be entailed on industry. The Minister did not, as has been pointed out, give any indication of that extra cost. A few other points in the Bill strike me. For instance, why should a worker receiving compensation be charged more when he enters hospital than are ordinary patients? The Bill proposes to pay more for 30 days' hospital attention to a workers' compensation patient than is charged to an ordinary patient.

That appears to me to be exploiting the Act. The member for Katanning (Mr. Watts) said he intended to move an amendment when the Bill reaches the Committee stage in regard to the quorum of the Medical Register Committee, which is to consist of five members, namely, a judge of the Supreme Court or a magistrate as chairman, two members to be nominated by the

Governor and two doctors. Of these members three will constitute a quorum, but I think it only right that a doctor should be present at each meeting of the committee. I hope the Minister will approve of this suggestion. It seems to me that, as the judges of our Supreme Court have at present as much work as they can attend to, it would be better to appoint a magistrate to the position of chairman.

Mr. Raphael: There is a large number of divorce cases being tried.

Mr. McLARTY: I hope the Minister will agree to the appointment of the proposed select committee. All interested in workers' compensation would thus have a chance to put forward their views. In my opinion, it is time they were given such an opportunity, in view of the fact that we are trying to establish secondary industries in this State.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply) [7.56]: The member for Katanning (Mr. Watts) expressed agreement with most of the provisions of this Bill. He then suggested that he was rather nervous about supporting it, because he did not know what effect the provisions, if put into practice, would have upon the insurance companies. He did not know what the insurance companies would do in an attempt to meet the position that might arise if their premium income did not remain sufficiently high to meet the expenses which they might be called upon to pay from time to time. If past Parliaments had refused to do anything about workers' compensation until the members of those Parliaments were sure what the insurance companies would do, there would have been no workers' compensation at all; certainly there would not have been any improvements made to the Act over the last 15 or 16 years. The proposals contained in this Bill are there because the Government feels they are justified. The Government is prepared to have each proposal judged on its merits.

We do not desire the consideration of any proposal to be clouded by the argument—if it be an argument—that no one can be sure what the insurance companies will do if the proposal becomes law. It was suggested that some of the proposals would lead to an increase in the premiums that would have to be collected from industry. Several speakers stressed the point that Western Australia is trying to expand its industries, and it was contended that any action calculated to increase the cost of operating industry would be detrimental to the attempted expansion. A good deal of nonsense is talked about the effect upon industry of the cost of workers' compensation. Most of those actively engaged in industry who indulge in this talk could reduce their workers' compensation costs by 20 per cent tomorrow or when their present policies expire, if they cared to. In the first instance, they could go to the State Government Insurance Office and, generally speaking, obtain rates 20 per cent lower than they are paying today to private insurance companies.

Mr. Thorn: The State Government Insurance Office is just as bad as is any company.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: If their political principles are such as to prevent them from going to the State Government Insurance Office they could go to a non-tariff insurance company and, generally speaking, obtain compensation at rates 20 per cent. lower than those they are paying today.

Hon. N. Keenan: Why do they not do so?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: There are many answers to that question and I think the hon. member knows some of them. One is that some of the biggest men in the industrial world have direct or indirect associations with one or other of the tariff insurance companies.

Mr. Seward: And thereby get reductions in their premiums.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: They may do so but it is doubtful if they do. So there is one field in which there is some opportunity for the cost of workers' compensation to be reduced in this State. If members are vitally concerned about the fact that private insurance companies charge far too much for workers' compensation insurance, there can be no objection to this Parliament being given an opportunity to thrash that question out and to make some effective decision in connection with it.

Mr. Thorn: The bulk of the companies do not charge any more than does the State Government Insurance Office.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: They all do.

Mr. Thorn: They do not.

The Minister for Mines: That is how arguments start.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: My experience has been that it is no good trying to convince the member for Toodyay (Mr. Thorn) because he is incapable of being convinced when he is wrong, and he usually is wrong.

Mr. Thorn: That is cheap talk.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Attempts have been made in this Parliament in the past to establish a situation in which private insurance companies would not have the same liberty to exploit industry in connection with workers' compensation insurance as they have had in the past. The member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) suggested that we should do nothing to curtail the medical services available to workers under the Act. We certainly should not do anything of that kind or even attempt to do it. The Bill does not in any shape or form seek to curtail the medical services available to injured workers. It seeks only to set up a system of supervision that will insure that workers will not be imposed upon, that the best possible treatment will be made available to them and that doctors who are careless or dishonest shall not be allowed to exploit this piece of social legislation that we are seeking to amend. The member for East Perth also suggested that the doctor, in making his charges and collecting them, is in no better position than a grocer. I think the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) made a most effective reply to that contention. The member for East Perth rightly said that he would rather see the profits of ten insurance companies reduced than allow one injured worker to be deprived of one pound's worth of medical attention. We can all thoroughly agree with that.

The Bill will not deprive any worker of one pound's worth of medical service which he requires and to which the Act entitles him. The clause relating to the medical register committee will give to the committee the right of inquiry in regard to the treatment given to an injured worker by a doctor and the fees charged for that treatment. The committee will take decisive action against the doctor only when it is convinced by all the evidence placed before it that the doctor concerned has carelessly or unskilfully or dishonestly treated the worker or unfairly or dishonestly charged for the services made available. The member for Nedlands suggested that difficulties would arise in the work of the committee. Of course they will! Substantial difficulties will arise. But there will at least be in operation a committee with power and ability to deal with the worst phases of the situation. I am of the opinion that the very existence of the committee will have a very good effect. I am positive it will immediately curb the unreasonable activities of some of the worst doctors in the State.

Some fear has been expressed that the deregistration of a doctor in a country town will leave injured workers in that district without a doctor. That is a possibility. But the penalty of deregistration is likely to be imposed only in a most serious case, in a really outrageous case. Any doctor in a country town deregistered in those circumstances would not be likely to remain there very long.

Mr. Warner: His deregistration would be justified.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I think his practice would soon be for sale at a very low rate. In return for his deregistration that country town would probably receive a doctor much better in every way. The hon. member was good enough not merely to state that difficulties would arise in the operations of the committee but also suggested some other method of dealing with the situation. The suggestion as to something being done about the Medical Board which exists under the Medical Act is to have a board consisting entirely of doctors, as is the case today, and that these doctors shall be the judges of the actions of their colleagues in the medical profession.

Mr. Cross: They are all in the one union.

Mr. Sampson: Have you something against unions?

The Premier: Have you?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: This suggestion was placed before the Government when these proposals were under consideration. Many members of this Parliament would suggest that we should have a board composed entirely of doctors to investigate this problem and to give judgments concerning the activities of some of their less reputable colleagues. It would be as unimpressive to suggest that as to suggest that each trade union should appoint a committee consisting only of its own members for the purpose of deciding whether

any strike indulged in by the union at any time was justified.

Mr. Hughes: Do they not do that?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: They do!

Mr. Hughes: They would not accept anyone else's decision on it.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Sometimes they have to.

Mr. Hughes: Only by the force of legislation.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The question of the punishment of workers who indulge in a strike is not decided by a committee of the members of a union. It is decided by some other authority upon which the union has no representation.

Mr. Hughes: They decide whether the strike is right or wrong.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Morally they do; legally, someone else makes the decision. It is not very reasonable to suggest that we should leave to the medical profession itself the policing of the conduct of its members under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act. It is better to have some outside representation——

The Premier: Somebody who suffers.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: —on the committee, otherwise we may as well make no attempt to deal with the situation.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That would be tinkering with it.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The Government would not accept a committee of inquiry the complete personnel of which would be doctors.

The Minister for Mines: That is the position now.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: That is the position under the Medical Act.

Mr. Hughes: You want to make it respectable by putting in a judge who has been a lawyer.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: We want to make it more effective by placing some men, in addition to doctors, upon it. The committee we propose would, in operation, be much more effective than would one consisting only of doctors. The Government will not accept the suggestion to have this Bill sent to a select committee. The proposals in the Bill are clear-cut and easy to understand. The House should be in a position now to decide whether every proposal in the Bill should be passed on to the Legislative Council for its consideration. Merely to say that it may be difficult to operate one or two provisions, and state that some difficulties will arise in connection with the operation of the medical register committee proposal in the Bill is not sufficient justification to have the Bill sent to a select committee. I am sure the Bill will pass the second reading, and I trust it will also be passed through the Committee stage tonight.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

To Refer to Select Committee.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.15]: I move—

That the Bill be referred to a select committee.

In his speech, concluded a few moments ago, the Minister carefully ignored, and no doubt he had every right to do so—although I regret he did it—the references I made on the second reading, to the necessity for an inquiry on the question of turning this work of compensation insurance completely away from insurance companies. It can be done. I will not dwell on that, but merely point out that the select committee which made that recommendation was, I think, primarily responsible for the fact that the State Government Insurance Office has today legal existence. Had that committee, which the Minister was agreeable to appoint on that occasion, not considered the matter and made its recommendations, we might have had today the conditions which existed four or five years ago in regard to the State Government Insurance Office.

It is no good speakers trying to tell me that every recommendation from a select committee is likely to produce a result contrary to the Bill. Nor do I admit for one moment that the schemes proposed in this measure, particularly in regard to the Medical Register Committee, are as good as they might be if the matter were submitted to evidence and careful consideration. The best proposal in the Bill is a clumsy one which could be improved if some care and attention were given to it in the light of evidence which could be brought before a select committee. I point out to the Minister that in the course of my remarks on the second reading I did not suggest, if he was referring to me when he made those remarks, that the

Medical Act should be amended and the Medical Board left——

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is getting away from his motion for a select committee.

Mr. WATTS: No. A select committee is wanted partly for this purpose. I do not say that the Medical Act should be left as at present, but that other sections of the community should be brought in. I am, therefore, not opposed to the matter being dealt with by persons other than medical practitioners. That is not the reason why I moved for this select committee. The reason is because the proposals, among other things for the Medical Register Committee, are clumsy and could be substantially improved. If the House does not want them improved and is prepared to accept that which is before it, well, that is all right. The Minister will be right, and I will be wrong, as he usually is. Much information could be obtained, and the Minister could be given much assistance in working out this matter satisfactorily, if it were referred to a select committee, provided, as it would be, if I had anything to do with it, that it was imbued with a desire not to obstruct his intentions but to assist them to the best of its ability, and to work to the State's advantage.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.19]: I hope the Minister will agree to the request to refer this measure to a select committee. I fail to see on what ground objection can be raised. There is nothing in connection with industry concerning which there has been greater criticism, and I believe well-deserved criticism, than the Workers' Compensation Act.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That would not go to the select committee.

Mr. SAMPSON: The various matters which have been criticised would receive greater consideration from a select committee.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It is only the contents of the Bill which would go to the committee. It would not have a dragnet effect.

Mr. Watts: The proposal is that the committee should cover the whole Act.

Mr. SAMPSON: I hope the motion will be carried. I take it this is not a party measure. Those who wish to get the best possible Act—and that means everybody—should support the request for a select committee. We have heard recently about the importance of a pause during work in industry.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! We are not discussing industry under this motion.

Mr. SAMPSON: We are discussing the worker in industry, and I think you will allow me to proceed, Mr. Speaker, so long as my remarks have direct reference to the subject of the Bill.

Mr. Rodoreda: Well, get on with it.

Mr. SAMPSON: The policy of a pause in industry has recently received a good of consideration.

Mr. Cross: There is nothing about it in the Bill.

Mr. SAMPSON: The matter was brought forward by a leader in industry—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is a long way from the motion. I ask him to confine himself to the question before the Chair.

Mr. SAMPSON: What I am endeavouring to point out is that recommendations come from people other than doctors. That is what I was referring to when I mentioned a pause in industry. On the proposed medical register committee there should be one or more representatives of industry, and a select committee would inquire into that point.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Bill has passed the second reading and is not under consideration now. The motion is that the Bill be referred to a select committee.

Mr. SAMPSON: A select committee would consider the points to which I am referring, and it is very important that the committee should do so.

Mr. SPEAKER: It is very important that you should stick to the motion.

Mr. SAMPSON: The glee being exhibited by members on the Government side seems to indicate that they regard the matter as one for hilarity. This is a serious matter from the standpoint of industry. I support the motion. By having an inquiry we shall get a better measure and there will be wider satisfaction, and the Minister may ultimately live to be blessed; but if he persists in what appears to be a quite unjustifiable belief that the Bill contains everything that is dependable and necessary, he may live to regret his objection—a rather stubborn objection—to the reference of the measure to a select committee.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [8.23]: Most of the arguments advanced in favour of referring the Bill to a select committee could be put forward to have every Bill sent to a select committee. There is no justification whatever for referring this Bill to a select committee. The proposals are clear-cut and easy of understanding, and members can easily and safely reach a decision on them, without incurring the loss of time that would be involved in sending the Bill to a select committee.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And the expense.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I shall not stress that aspect. The only new suggestion that might cause one to consider sending the Bill to a select committee is a bribe of future blessing offered to me by the member for Swan. Well, I resist the bribe and indicate my opposition to the motion.

Question put and negatived.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Labour in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 4:

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (a) be struck out.

This paragraph proposes to increase the amount in respect of the interpretation of the term "worker" from £400 to £600. It is necessary to delete the paragraph to make room for the amendment of which I have given notice which will enable a worker who is in receipt of £400, plus overtime, plus district allowances under any industrial award, still to be a worker, notwithstanding that the total of those amounts considerably exceeds £400, provided that if the amount of overtime and district allowances was deducted from the total, the net sum would not exceed £400. I understand the desire of the Minister and appreciate the position of those who work in areas where the basic wage is greater than in the metropolitan area or the South-West Land Division. While they receive more actual money, they do not receive more purchasing power. Therefore it is not reasonable to weaken their position by using against them the fact that they receive more money per week, because, if the calculations of the Arbitration Court are worth anything, that money has no more real value than the lesser sum. I am not prepared to agree to the insertion of £600 without ascertaining just what the effect would be and the number who would be brought in as workers. I am desirous of bringing under the compensation provision the workers to whom I have referred, but I do not want to see a general increase to £600, especially as we have no data concerning it and as more difficulties might be created than we are led to imagine. The Minister should realise that we are anxious to meet him in the matter and that we are not unreasonable in our attitude to those he is desirous of assisting.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The substitution proposed by the mover of the amendment is one that leaves out of account a highly important factor, and I see no way by which that factor could be included in the subsequent amendment which may be moved by the member for Katanning. The factor is the increases which take place in wages and salaries as the result of increases in the cost of living. Several such increases have already taken place, and wages and salaries of workers coming under Arbitration Court awards and industrial agreements have been increased for the purpose of absorbing the higher cost of living into the wage or salary. As a result of increases which have occurred since the war began, some workers who were under the protection of the Act prior to the war are no longer entitled to that legal protection. It will be agreed that as the war goes on the cost of living is likely to increase further. When the next Commonwealth budget has been loaded upon industry, the cost of living is sure to be pushed up because of that; and wages and salaries will in due course be increased to cover the higher cost of living. With that system operating, and with the war likely to continue for a week or two yet, it is easy to see that the actual wage or the actual salary of a man, not taking into consideration at all any earnings by way of overtime or any income by way of district allowance, will rise and thus tend to put more and more men now covered by the Act outside its provisions.

The position I have described is the most serious phase of the question, and is one that can be dealt with only in the manner proposed by the Bill. That phase would be

entirely missed if the clause were altered as desired by the member for Katanning. On the second reading I said that the amendment in the Bill is aimed mainly at the purpose of restoring the provisions of the Act to men who already have been deprived of them by increased wages and salaries, and also to keep within the protection of the Act numerous other men who will certainly be excluded from the statute, as time goes on, because of increases in wages and salaries due to increases in the cost of living. I admitted in my second reading speech that the proposal in the Bill is likely to bring into the field of workers' compensation a number of new men, men who have never before been covered by the Act. At the same time I emphasised that the new men who would be brought in would not be numerous, and would be very good from the aspect of risk, inasmuch as most men on wages or salaries ranging between £400 and £600 a year were men employed in fairly safe occupations.

Hon. N. Keenan: A lot of them would be bosses.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Supervisors in many instances. The great majority would be men working in occupations that are certainly safe. If the insurance companies do the right thing by the new men whom the proposal of the Bill will admit, there will be very little need to charge industry with additional premiums because of the proposed alteration.

Mr. SEWARD: It is usual for a Minister dealing with a subject like this to give full information. I am surprised that the Minister for Labour has not yet given an indication of how many new men are likely to be admitted if the proposal contained in the Bill is enacted. Would the number be 5,000, or 10,000? If the Minister has not gone into that aspect, he was not justified in opposing the motion to refer the Bill to a select committee.

Mr. Cross: Well under 10 per cent.

Mr. SEWARD: That statement is not authoritative. I want the information in order that I may know which way to vote.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—New sections; Medical Register Committee:

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment:—

That at the end of paragraph (b) of proposed new Section 20A the following words be added:—"neither of whom shall be a representative of any company engaged in workers' compensation insurance."

My reason is that the Medical Register Committee, if it is to be in the form proposed by the Bill, had better be as far as possible detached from those who are concerned in the financial side of workers' compensation insurance. The two representatives will presumably be men who have no medical knowledge. I agree with the member for Nedlands that it is hardly likely there will be more medical representatives than two. It is desirable that the representatives nominated by the Governor-in-Council should be men of knowledge and experience of the practical side.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: My only objection to the amendment is that it would limit the Government's choice of the personnel of the proposed committee. I shall not ask the committee to vote against it.

Hon. N. KEENAN: A representative of an insurance company—if he were reputable—might prove very valuable on the committee. The proposed new section does not make provision for setting the proposed committee in motion; obviously, that is a defect. Will the Minister give the Committee an assurance, although that might be a dangerous thing for him to do, that there are reputable persons carrying on the business of insurance?

The Minister for Labour: There are!

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am afraid the Minister is one of those persons who always say yes. I hope the member for Katanning will not press his amendment.

Mr. STYANTS: I cannot see the necessity for the amendment. The aim of the Committee should be, in appointing a body of this kind, to select persons who will represent the parties interested. It is proposed that two members of the medical profession should be appointed. My idea is that the other two representatives should be respectively a representative of the worker concerned and a representative of the insurance company concerned. Thus all interested parties would be represented and there would be an independent chairman.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of proposed new Sub-section 4 the word "three" be struck out.

The intention plainly is that the Minister may remove a member should he prove to be

unsatisfactory, because the Bill provides that any member appointed to fill any vacancy caused by death, resignation or removal shall hold office so long only as his predecessor would have done if such vacancy had not occurred. No express reason is given for removal, but I assume one is available. In my opinion, three years is hardly long enough to appoint bodies of this nature. By then they would scarcely have settled down and discovered a method of dealing with cases. If we are to have consistency in decisions, then the members of the committee ought to be appointed for a term longer than three years.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I do not propose to accept the amendment. The committee will be an important one and I think it is desirable that the term should be three rather than five years. Three years is a fair time in the life of a committee. It is the time members of Parliament spend in this House after their election.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. HUGHES: I move an amendment—

That proposed new Section 20B be struck out.

I cannot see that there is any need for that section. The further we go the greater the number of people who will have to register and re-register themselves and nearly everybody in the community will be reduced to the level of leading a dog's life. A man has to register his dog. If he is a lawyer or a doctor or a land agent he has to register himself! If a doctor is registered as a medical practitioner I do not see why the committee cannot deal with him without the necessity for his having to make a duplicate registration. The chances are that as soon as the committee is appointed doctors will not only have to register but also re-register every year, because the committee will have a secretary and will make some regulations and there will be the usual building up of the department and re-registration each year. Serious complications are likely to arise if some doctors can treat workers' compensation cases and some cannot.

A doctor may be in a position to say, "I am not going to worry about being registered. I have a good enough practice without this" and he will not bother. When a man goes to a doctor the practitioner frequently does not know whether the patient is a workers' compensation case or not. The man says "I have received an injury arising out of my employment." The insurance company says "No, the injury did not arise out of his employment." Then, in six months' time, some legal tribunal may determine whether or not the injury did arise out of the man's employment. If we have two classes of doctors, one which can treat and one which cannot treat workers' compensation cases the patient will have to be told "You had better have settled by a legal process the point whether or not you are a workers' compensation case and then we will be able to decide who is to treat you."

Mr. Watts: In the meantime he may have a funeral!

Mr. HUGHES: Ultimately his relatives will ascertain by which doctor he ought to have been treated. I was very interested in the information supplied by the member for Nedlands about the lady who had a pain in her knee, according to one doctor, whereas another doctor said it came from the spine and treated her accordingly. I was sorry the hon. member cut short his story because I would have liked to know what the post mortem disclosed.

The Minister for Labour: She probably finished up with a pain in the neck!

Mr. HUGHES: What is to prevent the committee functioning without putting the doctor to the inconvenience of re-registering? I think the debate was a bit harsh on country doctors, who came in for all the criticism. A few suburban doctors should have shared the criticism levelled at country practitioners. I was rather surprised that my friends on my right did not make a spirited defence of country doctors.

Mr. Thorn: They did not criticise them.

Mr. Watts: I think they were out of breath.

Mr. HUGHES: It should be made clear that the country doctor is not the sole offender. There is another point about patients in hospital.

The CHAIRMAN: I draw the hon. member's attention to the amendment, which does not deal with patients but with the creation of a register.

Mr. HUGHES: I will reserve my other remarks.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The hon. member first of all justified his opposition to this new section on the grounds that dogs were registered and it was not fair to ask doctors to register. He could have used the same argument in the opposite

connection. He could have said that if dogs were considered important enough to be registered it was much more reasonable that doctors should be.

Mr. Watts: Doctors are registered. You want to register them twice.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Doctors will be put to no trouble to register. Registration at the beginning will be automatic because every doctor registered under the Medical Act will also be placed on this register.

Mr. Hughes: Will that apply to new registrations?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Yes. Immediately a doctor becomes registered under the Medical Act in this State he will have his name automatically placed on this register. So he will not have to fill in forms, which will probably be a disappointment to the member for East Perth because—

Mr. Hughes: No, they are all amateur lawyers.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: —the filling in of forms would probably have necessitated some doctors going to lawyers to obtain advice on the matter. But the doctors will not be put to any inconvenience. The only time a doctor will be called upon to do anything will be when he has been deregistered. If he wants to be re-registered he will have to take the initiative.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in line 9 of proposed new Section 20C after the word "emergency," the words "when the services of a practitioner on the register were not available" be struck out.

That would make the proposed section read that a doctor, when struck off the register of workers' compensation doctors, will not be entitled to treat a worker suffering from an injury arising out of his employment unless the attendance is a case of sudden emergency. If there is a sudden emergency, it can be established and the doctor take action.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I have no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. WATTS: I propose to move an amendment to insert in line 1 of proposed new Section 20D, after the word "may," the words "upon complaint in writing by the worker or his employer or any near relative of the worker." The proposed new section at present states that the committee may hold an inquiry into the conduct of any registered practitioner. It does not say by what means the committee is to obtain information. It could take a complaint from anybody who cared to make one. The only people entitled to make a complaint are those who have some interest in the condition of the worker, either by reason of the fact that he is the employer or that he is related, which includes those dependent on him. No busybody who happens to think the doctor is not doing what he ought, when the relatives and friends and employers are satisfied, should be allowed to rush to the committee and seek an inquiry. There is nothing here to prevent that.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I will accept the amendment if the hon. member adds the words "or any person authorised by the Minister."

Mr. Watts: Yes, I accept that.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member has not yet moved his amendment. If he includes those words, it will be acceptable.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of proposed new Section 20D, after the word "may," the words "upon complaint in writing by the worker or his employer or any near relative of the worker or any person authorised by the Minister" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in proposed new Section 20D (as amended) after the words "petty sessions" the following words be added: "provided that it shall not be lawful for the committee to hold or continue any inquiry unless at least one of the representatives nominated by the Governor and one of the medical practitioners who are members of the committee are present during the inquiry."

Further back the Bill provides for a quorum of three out of the five. The quorum could consist of the chairman and the two representatives nominated by the Governor, which would not be reasonable. The professional standpoint of the medical practitioner might be lost sight of. On the other hand, it could consist of the chairman and the two medical practitioners, in which case the nominees of the Governor would be out in the cold. The committee could arrange its ordinary sittings and consider its ordinary business and even appoint a time for an inquiry, but it should not be able to hold or continue an inquiry without at least one of the medical practitioners and one of the

Governor's nominees—that is to say, one of each section—being present.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I cannot accept the amendment. Anyone who has had much to do with the functioning of committees can see great opportunities in this amendment to sabotage the proposed committee.

Mr. Hughes: A stay-away strike.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The doctors could decide unofficially, between themselves, that some proposed inquiry is one with which they do not wish to be associated, and the committee would be reduced to the position of being totally ineffective. For all practical purposes it would cease to exist. The two representatives of the Medical Association could hold up the committee on any particular case for any period of time they liked. Great care should be exercised in connection with this amendment. The committee proposed in the Bill is one of five, consisting of a chairman and two representatives appointed by the Governor-in-Council and two medical practitioners. A quorum is provided for. All the members of the committee will have a responsibility to attend the meetings and to carry through the business which comes before the committee for its consideration and decision. We can assume the members of that committee will have a full realisation of their responsibilities, and we ought not to circumscribe the work of that committee by suggesting that, should the two Government representatives be absent, it cannot function; or that should the two representatives of the Medical Association be absent, it cannot function. It would be far more practicable to allow the committee to function whenever a quorum was present.

Mr. McLARTY: I do not think that members of the committee would be likely to absent themselves on the ground that some particular interest was involved, and the Minister would not be likely to appoint members who would act in such a dishonest manner. Nobody's movements are less certain than those of a doctor, who never knows when he might receive an urgent call, and this might happen to both medical members of the committee. The committee could not function satisfactorily if both medical men were absent because it would depend largely upon the advice of the doctors.

The Minister for Labour: On your argument the committee might never be able to meet if the amendment is accepted.

Mr. McLARTY: The Minister's fears are groundless. The amendment is a practical one and should be approved.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In an earlier portion of the section the committee is directed to hold an inquiry, amongst other things, into the treatment of or attendance on any worker by any registered medical practitioner. Later this is explained to mean medical or surgical treatment. How could laymen come to a conclusion on a question of medical or surgical treatment? Obviously it would be impossible. Without the presence of a doctor, the committee could not function satisfactorily.

Mr. WATTS: In the first place I intended to propose that an inquiry could not be held unless a medical practitioner was present because the committee would be considering medical and surgical treatment. Further, it might be possible to have a committee meeting overweighted by doctors. Therefore I concluded that the only fair way was to provide that a doctor and one lay member must be present. If the Minister cannot appoint doctors more reputable than those who would sabotage the committee by staying away, I shall be surprised. If he thinks that the men he would appoint would do that, I suggest that he includes in the Bill a clause giving definite power to remove them at any time. I do not take his view; the appointees will be reputable men not likely to behave in that fashion. We have to consider whether it will be possible for the committee to deal with surgical or medical matters without the presence of a doctor. I say it will not be possible.

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

Ayes	13
Noes	20
Majority against	7

AYES.

Mr. Berry	Mr. Seward
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Warner
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Watts
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Willmott
Mr. North	Mr. Doney
Mr. Sampson	

(Teller.)

Noes.	
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Panton
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Raphael
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Styants
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Triat
Mr. Millington	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Needham	Mr. Wise
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Wilson
	(Teller.)

Pairs.	
Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Stubbs	Mr. Collier
Mr. Patrick	Mr. Fox
Mr. J. H. Smith	Mr. Holman
Mr. Latham	Mr. Withers

Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to proposed new Section 20D:—"and the phrase 'any near relative' means any person who is either the wife, husband, mother, father, sister, brother, or child of the worker and in respect of any child wholly or partly dependent upon the earnings of the worker, the guardian of such child."

The amendment requires no explanation.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. HUGHES: I move an amendment—

That in the last line of paragraph (b) of proposed new Section 20E the word "temporarily" be struck out.

The word might cause complications. The board has power to remove a practitioner's name from the register, and also to reinstate it; but it can only reinstate when the name has been removed temporarily.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I have no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That at the end of paragraph (c) of proposed new Section 20E the following words be added:—"and for the appointment, remuneration, and duties of a secretary or registrar to the committee."

Provision is not made for the appointment of anyone to keep the register or to perform the duties of registrar or secretary. Such an appointment is necessary for the satisfactory functioning of the Medical Register Committee.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The position with which the member for Katanning is concerned is covered by paragraph (e), which empowers the making of regulations for the purpose of generally carrying into effect the functions of the committee. One of those functions is to establish and maintain a register. The amendment is not required.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of proposed new Section 20G the words "pay any claim, suit, action, or demand" be struck out, and the words "any suit or action, or to pay any claim or demand" inserted in lieu.

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

Clauses 4, 5, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 9—agreed to.

New clause:

Mr. DONEY: I should like to move—

That the following be inserted to stand as Clause 8:—Section one hundred and eighty of the principal Act is amended by repealing in subsection (17) the whole of the definition of the term "hawker" immediately following paragraph (f) therein and substituting therefor the following definition:—In this subsection the term "hawker" means any hawker, pedlar or other person who, with or without any horse or other beast bearing or drawing burden, or with or without any vehicle of any kind, travels and trades and goes from town to town or to other men's houses there soliciting orders for or carrying to sell or exposing for sale any goods, wares or merchandise unless the person who owns such goods, wares and merchandise carries on the business of selling similar goods, wares or merchandise in a shop or other permanent place of business situated within the municipality in which such soliciting, carrying to sell or exposing for sale shall have taken place, but the said term shall not include bona fide commercial travellers selling or seeking orders for goods, wares or merchandise to or from persons who are dealers therein.

I submit this amendment on behalf of and at the request of the Country Municipal Councils Association, which held a meeting in Perth yesterday. I am not particularly pleased to submit the amendment and I realise the Minister would have preferred that it found a place on the notice paper in order that he might have an opportunity to consider it. The amendment, which has been extensively debated on previous occasions, is contentious. If the Minister desires to report progress, that would probably please him as much as it would me.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand there is no reference whatever to hawking in the Bill before the Committee. The mover will understand that every amendment must be in accordance with the subject-matter of the Bill. Anything irrelevant cannot possibly be accepted. I am sorry, but I must rule the amendment out of order.

Mr. DONEY: Very well. I will not move for the insertion of the new clause.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 9.34 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 16th September, 1941.

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

QUESTION—BETTING FINES.

Hon. W. J. MANN asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Is the Government aware of the wide disparity in fines inflicted by the Fremantle and Perth Police Courts respectively for betting offences? 2, If so, does the Government consider that such a state of affairs should be permitted to continue? 3, What steps does the Government propose to adopt to remedy this obviously apparent unequal administration of the law? 4, When does the Government intend to introduce legislation for the control of starting price betting?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, The Government is aware that much larger fines are imposed in Perth than in Fremantle with respect to betting offences. 2 and 3, Section 211 of the Criminal Code gives a discretion to the court and allows penalties in betting offences ranging from a caution to a fine of £100. Fines imposed vary in accordance with the discretion exercised by each particular court. The Government does not and cannot contemplate any interference with the discretionary administration of the courts. 4, This is a matter for consideration of the Government.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Hon. C. F. Baxter and the Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment Bill.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [4.35]: I desire, Mr. President, to make a short personal explanation.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member may proceed.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: When moving the second reading of the Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment Bill last week, I unfortunately overlooked, through carelessness, the fact that the third amendment is not in order. As the Bill is worded that provision will be useless. Consequently, I have had placed on the notice paper an amendment that will express my intention. Further than that, on the day following that on which I was aware of the discrepancy, I wrote to the Minister for Mines so that he would not be misled. By telephone, I also informed the Under Secretary for Mines of the mistake. Having read the speech I made, I discovered that I had unfortunately digressed and dealt with electrical winders and motors, which are covered in Section 53 of the Act. What I should have referred to was engine-drivers' certificates. I do not know how I came to use the other words. I certainly did not desire to mislead the House, and in case my speech has been remembered or read in "Hansard," I hasten to correct the error I made. The Mines Regulation Act already contains provisions regarding certificates for winding engine-drivers, but such provisions are not included in the Inspection of Machinery Act, which is the enactment governing such matters. It has always been my practice not to mislead members, and I regret that I should have made the mistakes I did.