

The PREMIER: I move—

That progress be reported.

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

The CHAIRMAN: Yes.

Motion (progress) put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 17th September, 1947.

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

QUESTION.

MERREDIN HOSPITAL.

As to Installation of X-Ray Plant.

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

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

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

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

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

The MINISTER replied:

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

plant to rail for Merredin on the 15th instant.

(2) £500 approximately.

(3) Nil.

(4) 50 per cent. of cost.

MOTION—ELECTRICITY ACT.

To Disallow Radio Workers' Regulations.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East)

[4.37]: I move—

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

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

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

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

amazing thing about it is that his license is only for a 12 months' period, after which he has again to make application and pay further fees. We do not ask a bricklayer or a carpenter—if he is a competent man—to pass an examination every 12 months or to pay a yearly fee in order that he may carry out his work and thereby provide a living for himself, his wife and family. I strongly object to that regulation. The first examination fee is to be 10s. and for any supplementary examination the charge will be 2s. 6d. Apprentices, too, will have to pay a fee and they will be licensed for a period of only twelve months. Thus the regulations are making it expensive for these workers. If a man was qualified and competent in 1946, he should be a much better workman in 1947 by virtue of the experience and practice he has since gained. Regulation 110 provides that the board shall meet at such times and places as it decides.

The Minister for Mines: You have not included No. 110 in your motion. You start with No. 113.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is correct; I am expressing the views that have been communicated to me. Mr. Loton yesterday mentioned that four boards had been appointed, and Regulation No. 113 provides that the Commission may at any time remove any member of a board. No provision appears to be made for an appeal against the action of the Commission. If a member of a board has been appointed by the employers or by the workers, some reasonable grounds should be stated before the Commission gives him the sack, but Regulation No. 113 does not suggest that a reasonable excuse shall be given. Regulation 117 reads:—

Application to be examined under this part shall be made on Form No. 21 in the appendix hereto. The examination shall consist of a general knowledge of the section or sections appropriate to the license of which the applicant has made application, and in the cases of applications for licenses for radio servicemen, general servicemen, workshop servicemen, and bench assemblers, a knowledge of the safety principles of electricity.

I agree that the safety of the public must be guarded. The suggestion is that this regulation be amended to provide that the examination shall consist of a good knowledge of the safety principles of electricity and that the examination shall be written or oral as the candidate thinks is best suit-

ed to himself. A biograph operator, I understand, is to be given examination papers on matters that do not come within the scope of his work. He would not be permitted to interfere with wiring, which is a job for a fitter—an expert.

There are men who have been acting as biograph operators for some time and who are unable to pass the examination that is set. This means that a practical man is denied the opportunity of following his avocation and earning a living. I consider that the examination should be so arranged as to enable men to demonstrate that they have a practical knowledge of the work. I have a letter that was sent to a man bearing on this regulation. It reads:—

Your attention is drawn to the Electricity Act Regulations, 1947, and I desire to advise that the regulations now provide that licenses may be issued to persons engaged as (a) radio servicemen or general servicemen, or workshop servicemen; (b) bench assemblers; (c) apprentices or junior workers. Licenses hitherto issued to radio personnel were issued under the provisions of the electrical workers' regulations, but will now be issued in accordance with the radio workers' regulations which empower the board to issue a license with or without examination.

Enclosed are two forms of application* for your use and, for your guidance when applying, I would advise that the board, before issuing a license without examination, will require the applicant to establish at least 12 years' experience—

I want members to note that—twelve years' experience.

—the greater part of which should be practical. Applicant should outline the nature of his experience, establish that he is actively engaged in the trade in any of the categories mentioned above, state the type of certificates he may hold or indicate his membership of any recognised institution, while a certificate covering the applicant's ability to distinguish the colours stated on the enclosed form should also be forwarded.

On receipt of your application together with application fee of 2s. 6d., your papers will be placed before the board for consideration, and I will further advise you.

In order to obtain a certificate or a permit to enable him to follow this calling, a man will have had to be engaged in it for 12 years! He may have been employed in the work for five or six years, but that is not sufficient. The letter I have quoted should give the House cause seriously to consider the rejection of these regulations. Yesterday in reply to a question asked by Mr. Loton

the Minister tabled figures dealing with examinations for cinematograph operators. The hon. member asked how many candidates sat for the last three examinations, and the reply was 18, 23 and 19. The next question asked concerned the number of candidates successful in the examinations and the answer given was—

Passed—3, 1 and 5. Qualified for supplementary examination—5, 8 and 11.

Of 23 candidates, only one passed and of 19 candidates, only five passed.

Hon. E. H. Gray: There were only two failures in the last examination.

Hon. A. THOMSON: With regard to the oral examination, in the electrical section, the failures in the three examinations were 6, 8 and 3 respectively, and in the written examination 9, 16 and 1. I have quoted those figures to show how difficult it is for a man to do an educational examination even though he may have been following the occupation for some considerable time.

Hon. G. Fraser: What do you mean by an educational examination? Is not the examination one on work performed?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is not an educational examination.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I think that the main object should be to protect the public and not to penalise men who are trying to earn a living. The regulations are too severe. For something like 40 odd years I was actively engaged in a particular industry. As far as the practical work is concerned, even now I think I would be able to pass a reasonable test; but if I were asked to sit for an educational examination such as these men have to undergo, then I am afraid that if my entering this House were dependent upon passing that examination, I would not be here.

Hon. G. Fraser: You say that they have to sit for an educational examination. What are the subjects?

Hon. E. H. Gray: Electrical, mechanical and regulations.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Here is one examination paper. It starts with a reference to work in a projection and re-winding room. If a man wants to drive a car, he goes to the Traffic Department and indicates that he is proficient and is given a license.

He is not asked about the electrical equipment or the various working parts of the car.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are not answering the question. What is an educational examination?

Hon. A. THOMSON: These men are failing because they have gone back. Perhaps they never had educational facilities.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are evading the point. What are the educational subjects these men have to sit for?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I will read the examination paper and the hon. member will see what sort of questions they have to answer. First of all, there is this one:

In a projection and re-winding room equipped in accordance with the regulations various appliances are provided for protection against, and use in case of fire. Describe fully the action of each of these appliances, and the reasons for their use.

Hon. G. Fraser: There is nothing educational about that. It is quite a different thing.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. A. THOMSON: The paper also contains these questions:—

3. (a) What would you do in the event of a fire in the upper spool box? What precautions are necessary?

(b) What would you do in case of a film on fire in the re-wind room?

4. Describe method of examining film before screening. What defects are possible and what action would you take to remedy such defects? Should faulty film be reported before screening and to whom?

5. What type of cabinet is required for film actually in use?

6. Assuming you have an assistant who has made accidental contact with a live conductor and remains in contact with same. Describe what measures you would take to free him and having done so, he is unconscious—what would you do to revive him—describe the method of treatment.

7. What precautions are necessary in the transporting of film between distributor and exhibitor and vice versa? Should all film be re-wound before return to the Film Exchange? If not, why not?

Hon. G. Fraser: What educational subjects would you call those?

Hon. A. THOMSON: It is a remarkable thing—

Hon. G. Fraser: It is misleading.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The hon. member is trying to put up a case.

Hon. G. Fraser: Let him use the right term.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Don't be nagging all the time!

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am only reading some of the examination questions these men have to answer. I presume some would find it really difficult to give all those details.

Hon. H. Tuckey: That is one of the easiest papers.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Only one failed out of the last 19 examined.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: How many passed?

Hon. E. H. Gray: Four.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That is a different story.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Here are other questions—

1. Define the following:—Ampere, volt, ohm, conductively, electro-magnet.

2. State several causes of sparking at the brushes on the commutator of a D.C. generator, and the remedy for each.

3. Is there any difference between the current from a D.C. generator and that from a battery? If so, explain why.

4. What is the difference between three-phase and single-phase?

5. If it is required to use a 230 volt A.C. mirror arc, would it be more economical to use resistance or transformer to obtain the correct arc voltage?

6. In what way does A.C. differ from D.C.? Perhaps the hon. member may be able to tell us that.

Hon. G. Fraser: I am not concerned with that at all.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The paper proceeds—

7. Draw a wiring diagram of a D.C. arc lamp circuit, showing all controls.

8. Draw a diagram of wiring and necessary switchboards from a generator to two projector arcs.

9. How would you reverse the direction of rotation of

(i) a 3-phase motor; and

(ii) a single-phase motor?

10. Explain the reason for placing a fuse in an electrical circuit and how the size of fuse wire is determined.

These questions were asked of a man who had to operate a biograph. I am fearful of the result of this sort of thing to men in the country. They are not electricians but are purely operators. They work a projector, and they know exactly what to do with it.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They are supposed to know how to repair the machine if there is a breakdown.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Nothing of the sort! Mr. Gray has a motorcar but he does not do the repair work associated with it.

Hon. E. H. Gray: A cinematograph operator has to do repair work.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am endeavouring to advance reasons why these men should not have to sit for such severe examinations. Once a man receives a license he should not have to go up for renewal every year. Because I am not an expert I am unable to put the position as clearly as I would like. It seems to me that ex-Servicemen have a very poor chance of getting positions of this kind. I know a lad who went to the war, but because he is over 21 now he cannot come under the training scheme. At present he is an electrician's offsider and is doing a certain amount of electrical work under the guidance of his boss.

I cannot see the necessity for these examinations in the case of wiring in a house or putting in conduit. These regulations will serve to make a close preserve for those in the trade. Whilst I am not crossing swords with the Electricity Commission, it seems to me there should be more elasticity in this matter. Experts are greatly needed today, and one of the reasons for the housing problem is the lack of experts. Another tragedy is that a number of men could by reason of their own initiative gain considerable knowledge and experience, but because they do not happen to be unionists they have very little chance of doing so. A man cannot become a unionist unless he has served an apprenticeship.

Hon. G. Fraser: In what trades?

Hon. A. THOMSON: In the electrical trade for one, and other trades as well.

Hon. E. M. Davies: A man has always had to work in the electrical trade for five years before he got a license.

Hon. A. THOMSON: We must not overlook the fact that we have had six years of war when men who might have been serving their apprenticeships were debarred from doing so.

Hon. E. M. Davies: A man does not serve an apprenticeship to become an electrician; he only works in the trade.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Unions might be more generous under present conditions until we catch up with requirements. These regulations render it more difficult for men to get out of the ruck. At the time of the bursting of the boom in Victoria men were fortunate if they received 30s. a week for their work. I could not be apprenticed at that time because there was no opportunity for me, but I learned my trade here, there and everywhere and was an improver. Ultimately I gained knowledge which was more beneficial to me than if I had worked under one boss during the whole time. We have men driving locomotives. They are not required to do the repair work or to have a thorough knowledge of the mechanical operations of the engine.

Hon. G. Bennetts: If an engine breaks down on the road, the crew have to do repair work.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Those railway men do not have to pass an examination.

Hon. G. Bennetts: What for?

Hon. A. THOMSON: They do not have to sit for special examinations, but they go up step by step until they become engine-drivers.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They have to pass a qualifying examination.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It is a practical one. They do not have to take an engine to pieces and draw diagrams and prints of every part of it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They have to do running repairs.

Hon. G. Fraser: They must have a working knowledge of their engines.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If a man is an enginedriver he is not required to be a mechanical engineer. If a nut needs to be tightened up, the driver probably knows how to do that. It would be of advantage to appoint a Select Committee to hear evidence concerning these regulations. I want

to protect those men who have been working in the trade for a certain period.

Hon. G. Fraser: The public is also entitled to protection.

Hon. A. THOMSON: We require to protect the public only from the safety point of view. Wireless parts may be manufactured here but they are guaranteed by the manufacturer. He puts the parts on the market and they are guaranteed. If a person wants to buy a radio set he buys under that guarantee. To ask electricians to pass these examinations is making it very difficult for them.

Hon. H. Tuckey: A man is not allowed to touch wiring unless he knows all about it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is one of the questions these men are asked. But for the good offices of Mr. Loton, the position disclosed in these regulations might not have come under notice. Most members take as read regulations that are laid on the Table, and ordinarily I might have done that, too. A Select Committee would hear all sides of the question and representatives of those interested could give their opinions to the committee. The men I am most concerned about are those who served in the war and have no chance of making headway.

Hon. G. Fraser: Many of these regulations have been in operation for eight or nine years.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That may be so, but by some of these regulations we are asked to give the Electricity Commission more power and control. As five or six years will elapse before all this work is brought under control, I think we should proceed with caution.

Hon. G. Fraser: For the most part the Commission is only given the power that has existed for years.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Increased powers have been given.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Very few!

Hon. H. Tuckey: Most of these regulations have been in force for some time.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The men concerned are likely to suffer under these conditions. An opportunity should be given for a Select Committee to examine these regulations one by one and obtain a full knowledge of their force and effect. The case I am putting up

was submitted to me by men who are already suffering grave disabilities and are likely to suffer more as time goes on. It is not fair that a person should have to serve for 12 years before he gets a certificate.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Without an examination. Do not forget that point!

Hon. A. THOMSON: Quite so. We have passed a Bill to allow dentists who were practising before legislation applicable to them came down, to continue practising. The same principle should apply in this case. More elasticity is required than is shown in these regulations. I have much pleasure in submitting the motion.

On motion by Hon. G. Fraser, debate adjourned.

MOTION—ELECTRICITY ACT.

To Disallow Supply Authorities' Registration Fees Regulation.

HON. F. E. GIBSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.15]: I move—

That Regulation No. 278, made under the Electricity Act, 1945, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 27th June, 1947, and laid on the Table of the House on the 5th August, 1947, be and is hereby disallowed.

Fortunately the regulation that I propose to deal with is not technical and the supply authorities in the metropolitan area have asked me to move for its disallowance. The regulation reads as follows:—

Every supply authority shall pay to the Commission with the return of the registration form on or before the 31st day of August of each year a sum at the rate of 1s. for each individual consumer connected to the mains of the said supply authority on the first day of July preceding the said 31st day of August.

Here is the point to which I desire to draw attention.—

The minimum charge to be paid by any supply authority shall be £5 in respect of any one year, and the maximum charge shall be £1,000 in respect of any one year. The sum collected under this regulation is to be used by the Commission in enforcing all regulations under the Electricity Act concerning the safety of employees of supply authorities, the members of the public generally and property, together with part of the administration costs incurred by the Commission in administering these regulations.

It is, of course, acknowledged as necessary to make regulations for facilitating the

operation of the Electricity Act, 1945, particularly respecting the safety of employees of supply authorities and the public generally. There is also the necessity for fees to cover the cost of enforcing the regulations, but the method of collecting fees as provided in the regulation is not equitable. The rate of 1s. for each consumer connected to the mains of the supply authority with a minimum of £5 and a maximum of £1,000 in respect of any one year, is unfair in its application.

The authority with a small distribution area and with no prospect of reaching the maximum, is required to continue paying 1s. for each consumer whereas the average cost per consumer to the authority with more than 20,000 consumers decreases as additional consumers are connected to the mains. It is possible even where two authorities reach the maximum for the fee per consumer for one to be much greater than that for the other. That position is occurring at the present time when one of the supply authorities has reached its maximum of 20,000 consumers. Another supply authority with far fewer consumers and with a smaller area has to continue paying at the rate of 1s. per capita while the supply authority with the much greater number of consumers pays a considerably smaller sum. Fees such as prescribed are generally levied on a per capita basis and the general opinion of the supply authorities that requested me to move in this matter, is that this principle should apply in respect of Regulation 278. As it is not competent for me to move an amendment to that regulation, I submit the motion.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Davies, debate adjourned.

MOTION—ELECTRICITY ACT.

To Disallow Cinematograph Operators' Regulations.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. A. L. Loton:—

That Regulations Nos. 71, 78, 80, 82, 86, 89, 103, 104 and 162, made under the Electricity Act, 1945, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 27th June, 1947, and laid on the Table of the House on the 5th August, 1947, be and are hereby disallowed.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [5.19]: I am very sorry that Mr. Thomson has quoted from two sets of regulations as the notice of motion dealt with the radio portion of them, whereas the motion now before the House deals with examinations of cinematograph operators by the board appointed under the regulations for that purpose. I am much surprised that Mr. Loton moved such a motion and submitted such a poor case in support of it. The regulations have been in operation for nearly eight years.

Hon. A. L. Loton: That does not say they are any good.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Every member of this House has had ample opportunity from time to time to bring this matter up for debate or to have written to the Minister concerned regarding the regulations. But despite that fact, we have heard nothing at all regarding them over that extended period. The action taken is not fair to the Electricity Commission. I have been informed that the only alteration effected by these regulations to which Mr. Loton takes exception, is, in the main, to transfer administrative authority from the Public Works Department to the Electricity Commission. That is all it amounts to.

I think we should consider the interests of the public and I intend to confine my remarks to that point of view. I shall not refer to the arguments advanced by Mr. Thomson. Let me deal with the regulations that Mr. Loton seeks to disallow. It will be appreciated that if Regulation No. 71 goes by the board the whole object of the regulations is set aside and the public will be at the mercy of unscrupulous picture proprietors, who will be able to employ anyone they like, which would be calculated to cause great danger to the public, and in the country areas in particular would increase the danger from fire with the possible destruction of property belonging to local authorities.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Who has protected the public for the last 30 years?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The board.

Hon. H. Tuckey: It has not been there.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The board has carried out the regulations and done everything possible in the interests of the public. It has extended to all a fair deal and, particularly during the war period, did not create any difficulty on account of the em-

ployment of unskilled operators. The board possessed power to throw them out, but did not do so. On the other hand, it allowed them to hold provisional licenses. True, the results of examinations have been quoted and the percentage of passes was very low. That is readily understood when it is appreciated that a large proportion of the skilled operators joined up with one or the other Fighting Services, with the result that those left behind were not capable of carrying on equally as efficiently. In the circumstances, the authorities did the best possible in the interests of those unskilled operators and endeavoured to train them. As a consequence, there has been a tremendous improvement in the examination results.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You mentioned Regulation No. 71, but you did not tell the House what it dealt with.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That regulation provides for the appointment of a board consisting of three persons, one being a representative of the Electricity Commission, who is to be the chairman; one is to be a representative of the employers of cinematograph operators while the third is to be a representative of the operators themselves.

Hon. A. L. Loton: It says that there is only one member as the representative of the employers.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There are three members, one of them represents the men, one the bosses and the other the Electricity Commission. That is quite plain. That is the principal regulation and if it is discarded, the others do not matter so much. Regulation No. 78 deals with the functions of the board and Regulation No. 80 provides for two years' training of a prospective operator under an experienced man. What is wrong with that? Everyone who engages in industry has to undergo training for a period.

Hon. A. Thomson: How are you going to apply that in the country areas where people run shows in their spare time?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Regulation No. 82 deals with the subjects for examination and Regulation No. 86 specifies that an applicant must be 21 years of age before he can secure his certificate.

Hon. A. Thomson: Why fix that age?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I think it is reasonable. A man has to be trained. Mr. Thomson would expect his carpenters, blacksmiths and other tradesmen to be trained, and the regulation merely provides for the training of these operators. The hon. member asked why, if a young man was allowed to join up at 18 years of age he should not receive his certificate under the Electricity Act when he is 18? The answer to that is that even though a youth was allowed to join up when 18 years of age, he had to be trained subsequently; and it took quite a long time to train him adequately.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Could not a man be trained from the age of 16 years?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Regulation No. 89 provides for the forfeiture of licenses unless renewed within 12 months. That is reasonable enough. If a man goes out of the industry and does not renew his license but later wishes once more to engage in such operations, he must apply for a license. He should be made to prove his bona-fides and capacity, particularly seeing that there may have been many improvements introduced and without experience he might not be able to control a machine.

Hon. A. Thomson: You believe in this as a taxing machine?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I think the regulations are perfectly reasonable.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Of course they are.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Regulation 104 provides for the suspension of a license if it has been obtained by fraud. Would anyone object to that? If a man obtains a license by fraud, the effect might be to expose the public to grave danger. The last regulation the hon. member referred to, No. 162, provides for the cancellation of licenses of electrical contractors, which is just a general regulation and is obviously necessary, if they, too, are obtained by fraud, or the holder is proved to be incompetent or has caused damage or loss to his employer. There again it is a perfectly reasonable and safe provision. There is one point I want to stress. It is that the four big picture firms—Hoyts, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Fuller's Theatres and Western Electric Company—are all in favour of these regulations.

Many of those controlling big pictures stipulate that films must be handled only by licensed operators.

Hon. A. L. Loton: You are looking after the big man today!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am looking after the worker, and that is why I am speaking against the motion to disallow these regulations.

Hon. A. Thomson: I have my doubts about these regulations having the effect of looking after the interests of the workers.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am speaking entirely on behalf of the men working in the industry. Why does not Mr. Loton make a full confession as to his objective? The fact is that if we scrap these regulations, the industry will be left wide open for anyone to be employed and whatever wages a man decides upon will be paid.

Hon. A. Thomson: No.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That is certainly what it does mean, and I defy successful contradiction of that statement. That is the real reason behind this motion for the disallowance of the regulations. We find in the country that young men and youths, some little more than mere boys, will be able to work the machines to the risk of the people attending shows and the possible loss of buildings. There is no chance of that sort of thing happening in Perth, but there will be danger in suburban and country centres. There will be no protection for the public. Employers will be able to put men on at half wages.

Hon. A. Thomson: You are drawing the long bow.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am not exaggerating at all.

Hon. A. Thomson: What about the firms in the country?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I have been speaking about the country position as well.

Hon. A. Thomson: Hoyts does not show in country districts.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am saying that the Suburban Exhibitors' Association is behind the request for the disallowance of these regulations. On that point there can be no doubt. This House should protect the returned soldiers, but are we protecting them by throwing out these regulations and

allowing any Tom, Dick or Harry, whether qualified or not, to take up these positions?

Hon. A. Thomson: These regulations do not give him much of a chance, anyhow.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am confining my remarks to the regulations dealing with the cinematograph industry.

Hon. H. Tuckey: There is no objection to a fair and reasonable examination.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If the regulations are disallowed the men employed in the industry will be subjected to great injustice.

Hon. A. Thomson: The men doing the work in the country will be scrapped.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: First, we have to consider the safety of the public and then the safety of the halls belonging to local authorities throughout the State. We have also to protect the trained men now working in the industry and, consequently, I am of opinion that the House should reject the motion. The Commission is trying to improve the position and, for the benefit of members, I may say that at a recent examination there were 19 candidates, four of whom passed and one failed; those who were successful passed in the subjects "Electrical" and "Regulations." Eleven candidates are to be re-examined in one subject.

The members of the Electricity Commission have been in conference with the Technical College authorities and preparations are being made for the technical training of persons desiring to enter the industry. Everything possible is being done to make the path easy to assist those men who have not yet passed the final examination. The fact that 19 candidates sat for examination at the end of August and only one failed is proof that the Commission is anxious to be fair to the candidates. I ask members to consider carefully what the effect will be if these regulations are disallowed. They have been in force for eight years; and they are in the interests of the industry, the public and the workers concerned.

On motion by Hon. H. Tuckey, debate adjourned.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT (RE-ELECTION OF MINISTERS).

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.35]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

The PRESIDENT: As the Bill requires the assent of an absolute majority of members to pass, I shall divide the House.

Division taken.

The PRESIDENT: There being an absolute majority voting in the affirmative, I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Dentists Act Amendment.

2, Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Assembly.

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

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.39] in moving the second reading said: This is only a short Bill, but very important, and it is essential that it be passed today, as the principal Act expires on the 30th of this month. Members will observe from the notice paper the difficulty that has arisen owing to the expiration of another Act which was not renewed. It is necessary, therefore, to pass this Bill somewhat hurriedly in order to avoid the confusion that otherwise might ensue. The parent Act has been before this Chamber on a number of occasions and there has been a good deal of opposition to its continuance. It was for that reason, I think, that last year it was continued to the 30th September instead of December.

The Bill asks for an extension of this legislation to December next year. The reason is that in the early part of the session it is exceedingly difficult for the Government to bring in legislation, as the Address-in-reply takes so long to dispose of. The parent Act fixes rents as at August, 1939, and that has been the main bone of contention in past years when a continuance of the measure has been sought. I desire to

inform members, however, that a Bill is before another place which will give ample opportunity for discussing the contents of the Act, if the House sees fit to extend it until next year. It is not possible to go into all the details with a view to amending the principal Act; that opportunity will be afforded members when the other Bill is before the House. I think we all agree it is necessary that the principal Act should be amended; but I am not permitted, in presenting this Bill, to state what the amendments should or should not be. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Minister for Mines, resolved:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Bill to pass the third reading at this sitting.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

**BILL—DRIED FRUITS ACT, 1926,
RE-ENACTMENT.**

In Committee.

Hon. G. Fraser in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Re-enactment:

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move an amendment—

That in lines 2 and 3 the words “set out in the Schedule” be struck out and the word “attached” inserted in lieu.

A consequential amendment to strike out the word “Schedule” in the schedule will be necessary.

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

Clauses 3 to 5, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

**BILL—RURAL RELIEF FUND ACT
AMENDMENT.**

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [5.50]: I do not wish to say a great deal on this Bill, but I must raise a protest about the precedent established regarding this relief fund. It became operative, I understand, in 1935, and since then many of those who received advances have striven, at no small sacrifice to themselves and their dependants, to meet their commitments, with the result that £60,643 has been repaid. Although many of those who received advances have made repayments, the trustees can now give approval to repayments of from 5 to 20 per cent. thus allowing over 80 per cent. of the advance to be wiped off. That is most unfair to those who repaid the whole of the money they received. I know the Minister is in agreement with me on this point because I have talked with him, but unfortunately it is not possible for any rebate to be made to those who have made full repayment. I do ask the Minister to see if the State Government could make a rebate. It might be possible to grant rail-freight concessions to those persons who met their commitments in full.

Hon. G. Fraser: You would want an army of accountants.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: We have many armies of accountants these days. I would like the Minister to go into that. The trustees have the power to treat each case on its merits, and nearly all of the accounts should be finalised because of the 5 per cent. to 20 per cent. mentioned. The money repaid is to go into a revolving fund so that it can be used again in the event of flood, drought or other difficulty facing the rural industries. I raise my voice against the precedent that has been established under this Bill.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. G. B. Wood—East—in reply) [5.55]: I have a considerable amount of sympathy with Mr. Loton's suggestion that the farmers who paid into the fund should be given some relief, but unfortunately this Government, or any other State Government, has no jurisdiction in the matter. I propose to read a letter which the then Premier (Mr.

Wise) last year received from the Prime Minister, Mr. Chifley. Mr. Wise had made representations to the Commonwealth Government on this matter, and this is the reply:—

I refer to your letter of 7th October, 1946, elaborating your request for consideration of a remission of debts owing and a refund of repayments made under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Scheme.

I have given careful consideration to your request and the reasons therefor but I should point out that, if your request were granted, embarrassment would be caused to my Government for the following reasons:—

- (1) Amending legislation would be necessary;
- (2) Your State proposes to make your scheme the most generous of all the States since no State has given the whole amount to the farmer as a gift;
- (3) Any amendment of the Commonwealth Act would apply generally and, on account of the circulating nature of the repayment funds in the States, refunds in your State would be followed by similar demands by farmers in other States, necessitating possibly the provision of substantial sums by the Commonwealth to cover all refunds.

I regret that my Government cannot see its way clear to ask Parliament to amend the Act to meet your request.

We may, or may not, agree with the reasons given, but we cannot get away from the last paragraph where Mr. Chifley regretted that his Government could do nothing about it. I suggest we do nothing to hold up this Bill. As the Prime Minister said, we are most generous in what we are setting out to do in Western Australia, and I would be sorry to see anything done to retard that generosity. The proposal that we should make reductions in rail freights could be considered another time, and a further amendment made to the Act if it is possible. But I do suggest that we do not hamper the Bill now. This is a tremendous step forward in connection with the relief to farmers, and I believe that Mr. Loton would be the last person to try to hold up the measure.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban):
I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 23rd September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 17th September, 1947.

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

QUESTION.

POTATOES.

As to Shipping Space and Priority.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (on notice) asked the Honorary Minister:

(1) Is she aware that in order to relieve the acute shortage of potatoes in Western Australia the Australian Potato Committee booked 250 tons of space on the following vessels ex Victoria:—"Inchmay," "Arkaba," and "Momba," which arrived at Fremantle on the 8th August, the 28th August and the 11th September, respectively, and that the space was reduced to "Inchmay," 75 tons; "Arkaba," 50 tons, and "Momba," 80 tons?