State. In the canteens of the various forces the same procedure is followed, I am told, in that no-one is questioned about his age. If a policeman has occasion to visit military or naval establishments he does not run around ascertaining if a person has committed a breach of the liquor laws, because there is never any trouble in regard to the consumption of liquor by servicemen under the age of 21 years.

I can assure the members of this House that at no stage was there any trouble in Port Hedland when the Navy was there, and that confirms my opinion that the age restriction on persons drinking in licensed premises should be reduced from 21 to 18. When the time comes I hope the Minister will not insist on transferring, from the customer to the bar attendant, the responsibility of proving a person's age. This responsibility will rest not necessarily upon the bar attendant but on the supplier, who could be a host at a wedding party or a parent serving his children liquor in his own home. A parent would still be liable under the Act if he supplied a glass of beer or sherry to one of his children who is under 21 years of age.

Surely in this day and age our liquor laws are completely outmoded and we should not attempt to place any further restrictions in the legislation. Instead, as the years go by, we should ease the provisions of our liquor laws, and I am sure that if this were done we would see a great improvement in the behaviour of people who drink liquor, and I am certain it would have an appreciable effect in reducing the toll on our roads.

I had a glance at the 1965 report issued by the Commissioner of Police. I was able to peruse it in another place. Unfortunately the report in this House has not been available all day, and therefore I can only speak from memory after having had a quick glance at that report. The Commissioner of Police reported that the northern police district, which runs from Roebourne to Wyndham, and includes Nullagine and Hall's Creek was particularly free of criminal offences. The most serious offence that seemed to be committed in that area was that of persons supplying natives with liquor. That seemed to constitute the greatest crime in a population of 19,000 people.

I mention this because there is such a large number of aborigines in that area who possess citizenship rights which give them the right to consume liquor, and they handle it quite well. One can readily understand how the offence of supplying liquor to natives occurs. A native holding citizenship rights and who is permitted to consume liquor on licensed premises and purchase it at will very often takes it home where it is consumed by other members of his family who do not possess citizenship rights; and this act constitutes an offence against the Licensing Act, the policing of which takes up most of the time of the police stationed in that area.

In reverting to the situation which I have already outlined at Port Hedland, not only do underage naval ratings drink at the hotel in that centre, but also there are many inhabitants of the north under the age of 18 who enjoy a glass of beer with their parents whilst having a meal in their own home.

If members will study the portion of the report I have mentioned and take into consideration the living conditions and the temperature in that area, where little or no attraction is offering to enable the people to fill in their evenings, they will find much to support my suggestion and my opinion that the restriction of the 18 to 21 years age group causes much more trouble than would be the case if the restriction were removed.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. R. H. C. Stubbs.

House adjourned at 11.30 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, the 20th October, 1965

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CONTENTS—*continued*

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (42): ON NOTICE

1. *This question was postponed.*

STANDARD GAUGE RAILWAY

Cost: Original and Amended Estimates

2. Mr. HAWKE asked the Premier:

(1) Does he recollect my question on notice to him on Tuesday, the 10th August, 1965: "What was the amended estimate as to the anticipated total capital cost of the proposed deviation of the 3 ft. 6 in. railway line in the vicinity of Spencers Brook through Northam and Toodyay to Bellevue?"; and his reply: "£9,674,000 (on basis double dual gauge track as agreed by Commonwealth)"?

Deviation through Spencers Brook, Northam, and Bellevue

(2) Has he studied the question by the member for Wembley to the Minister for Railways on the 12th

October, 1965: "Is it correct that almost £10 million is being expended to deviate the narrow gauge railway line from near Spencers Brook through Northam out to Toodyay and down to Bellevue?"; and the Minister's reply: "No. The narrow gauge down to the Avon Valley is only in the form of a third rail superimposed on standard gauge (4 ft. 8½ in.) tracks to give dual gauge. This project cannot properly be referred to as a project to deviate narrow gauge operations. Superimposing of a third rail to permit narrow gauge traffic is the lesser part of and incidental to the standard gauge route down the Avon Valley"?

Minister's Replies: Clarification

(3) Will he clarify the two replies, as there is at least an apparent contradiction?

Mr. BRAND replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) A study of these questions and answers does not show any apparent contradiction.
In each case the answers made it clear that the figures referred to costs including double dual gauge tracks as distinct from the lesser part of the project—namely to 3 ft. 6 in. gauge traffic Spencers Brook through Northam and Toodyay to Bellevue as part of the standard gauge project.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES IN AUSTRALIA

Grants by Commonwealth

3. Mr. HAWKE asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware that large monetary grants have been made available to agricultural colleges in Australia from the Commonwealth Government assistance to science education scheme?

(2) Is he aware a grant of £40,000 has been made to an agricultural college of comparable size to Muresk Agricultural College, in eastern Australia?

Muresk Agricultural College: Applications for Grant

(3) Has the Department of Agriculture in this State made an application for financial assistance under the scheme in connection with the Muresk Agricultural College?

(4) If not, what is the reason for failing to make an application?

(5) If an applicatio.. were made only recently, why was one not made very much earlier?

(6) Does he think it would be a considerable advantage to Western Australia to take action in this matter at an early date, provided no action has yet been taken?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(1) and (2) Unofficial advice has been received recently that grants have been made to agricultural colleges in other States. No official information is available as to the exact purpose or amount of these grants.

(3) No.

(4) Answered by (6).

(5) Answered by (3).

(6) No. The total grant available to Western Australia for the development of technical education has been committed on projects which otherwise would have required expenditure of additional State funds. This has increased the money available from State sources for other developments. A total of £221,000 from General Loan Funds was spent at Muresk in the five years from 1960-61 and 1964-65.

WHEAT

Quantity Available for Export

4. Mr. FLETCHER asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What is the quantity of Western Australian wheat at present available for export?

(2) Does this amount include grain normally kept in reserve for seed wheat?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(1) 110,654 tons as at the 15th October, 1965.

(2) No.

EQUAL PAY FOR THE SEXES

Enabling Legislation: Introduction

5. Mr. FLETCHER asked the Minister for Labour:

In view of repeated statements by the Government of "agreement in principle with equal pay for work of equal value," but that it is a matter for determination by wage fixing authorities and not for Government action, and in the event of the industrial commission finding on appeal that it has no authority or power to deal with this question, is the Government prepared to bring down amending legislation to confer such power on the commission:

(a) this year;
(b) next year; or
(c) the following year as Government election policy?

Mr. O'NEIL replied:

Since the industrial commission has not yet made the determination referred to in the honourable member's question, it is not possible to state when the Government will give consideration to legislative action in the matter.

SERVICE STATION SITES IN WANNEROO

Applications and Locations

6. Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

(1) Has he under consideration any applications for service stations in Wanneroo Road in the Wanneroo Shire Council district?
(2) If so, how many?
(3) Who are the applicants?
(4) When were their respective applications lodged with the local authority?
(5) Where is each site located?

Delay in Allocation

(6) What are the reasons for the delay in arriving at a decision?
(7) When can a decision be expected?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(1) Yes.
(2) Five.
(3) to (5)

Applicant	Date Lodged.	Situation. Mile Peg.
F. A. Antulov	7/7/65	10¼
S. J. Conti	29/4/65	12½
J. J. Bannon	4/6/64	18
G. Staltari	18/5/64	22
C. & A. Genovese	22/3/65	27

(6) Study of the town planning report and the objections received to the proposed new service stations. The seeking of information as to why any new service stations are required in the particular area.
(7) When I have all the available information to make a considered decision.

TRAINEE NURSES: MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

Western Australia

7. Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

(1) What are the minimum qualifications required for acceptance as a trainee nurse, including the specific subjects of any certificate?

States Other Than Western Australia

(2) What is the corresponding position regarding qualifications in each of the other States respectively?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

(1) A Third Year High School Certificate of the Education Department with passes in five subjects selected as follows:

(a) English.
(b) One of:
Arithmetic;
Maths "A" or
Elementary maths.
(c) One of:
History;
Geography;
Social studies "A" or
Social studies "B".
(d) Two other subjects from the following list—
Science A.
Science B.
Physics.
Chemistry.
Biology.
Physiology and hygiene.
Home science.
Art.
A foreign language.
Music.
Algebra.
Geometry.
History.
Geography.
Social studies or
Scripture,

or such other qualifications as the Nurses' Registration Board deems to be an equivalent or higher qualification. Although the above is the minimum acceptable to the Nurses' Registration Board, schools of nursing give preference to applicants with higher educational qualifications.

(2) Minimum educational requirements—

New South Wales: The Intermediate Certificate of the N.S.W. Department of Education.

Queensland: Education Certificate of full eighth grade standard of a State school or its equivalent.

South Australia: Not less than five subjects at the examination for the Intermediate Certificate, to include English and not less than one of the following subjects—namely, Mathematics I, Mathematics II, Arithmetic. (It is believed that this has

been amended, but no official notification has been received.)

Tasmania: A standard that is not lower than the completed eighth grade in a secondary school or its equivalent.

Victoria: 6 subjects of Intermediate level.

Repatriation Hospital Concord and Canberra: Intermediate Certificate.

PAINTERS' REGISTRATION BOARD

Annual Report: Tabling

8. Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Works:

Will he lay on the Table of the House a copy of the annual report of the Painters' Registration Board for the year ended the 31st December, 1964?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

Yes.

The report was tabled.

Rules: Supply

9. Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Works:

Will he make available a copy of the principal rules of the Painters' Registration Board?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

Yes. Copies herewith supplied.

DECEASED PERSONS' ESTATES

Probate: Maximum Value of Exemption

10. Mr. SEWELL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice:

(1) What is the maximum net balance of a deceased estate, consisting entirely of personalty, in respect of which the executor can distribute in accordance with the terms of the will without being required to obtain a grant of probate?

(2) If a deceased estate consists entirely of leasehold property, the net balance of which is below the maximum net balance in (1) above, what provisions of the Administration Act govern the question whether it is obligatory for an executor to obtain a grant of probate?

Mr. COURT replied:

(1) There is no such maximum net balance. The ability of the executor to distribute is governed by his ability to get in the assets. In many cases companies, banks, and insurance offices will not transfer shares, release deposits, or pay out policies without a grant of representation.

(2) There are no such provisions, but in any case, where it is necessary for the purposes of distribution to register a dealing at the Titles Office, a grant is necessary irrespective of value.

11. *This was postponed.*

STANDARD GAUGE RAILWAY

Repair and Maintenance Depot: Establishment at Kalgoorlie

12. Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Would he please refer to a news item appearing in *The West Australian* of date the 14th October, 1965, under the heading "Kalgoorlie Rail Query" where it was stated that Federal Transport Minister Freeth said he was unable to say if a repair and maintenance depot would be established at Kalgoorlie to serve locomotives and rolling stock using standard gauge?

(2) As it is further stated in this news item that the W.A. Railways Commissioner was primarily concerned with this question, would he please indicate—

(a) what steps, if any, have been taken by the W.A. Railways Commission to provide such a depot at Kalgoorlie;

(b) what progress has been reached with the planning for this objective; and

(c) whether the Government will press or continue to press for such a depot at Kalgoorlie?

Mr. COURT replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) (a) A repair and maintenance depot for standard gauge locomotives and rolling stock at Kalgoorlie is not warranted. A servicing depot only is required.

(b) and (c) Standard gauge proposals will isolate the 3 ft. 6 in. gauge branch lines centred on Kalgoorlie and this will require provision of facilities and labour to maintain approximately 500 3 ft. 6 in. gauge wagons and five locomotives.

At present, planning of these facilities is only in the early stages.

SURGICAL BOOTS

Charge for Fitting, and Government Financial Assistance

13. Mr. EVANS asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

(1) Is he aware that the cost of a child's pair of surgical boots supplied by the Red Cross Society to a Kalgoorlie parent was invoiced in April this year at £3 9s. 11d. with an additional charge of £4 18s. for fitting to same a back stop, strap and bar, as illustrated by boots now on display on the Table of the House?

(2) Does his department agree that this additional charge, having regard to the materials used and the work involved in the fitting of these extras, is a reasonable one?

(3) Will his department consider making some financial assistance to parents whose children are required to use surgical boots with such extra fittings?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

(1) I was not aware, but inquiries reveal that the figures quoted by the honourable member are correct.

(2) Inquiries made by the department indicate that the boots were supplied at actual cost by the Institute of Physically Handicapped to the Red Cross Society.

This is not a departmental matter. Both organisations mentioned are non-profit making.

(3) I am advised that policy is to arrange the supply of surgical aids where these are ordered by a patient's doctor. If the parents are indigent, charges are written off. If the parents are able to pay they are expected to do so. This policy is identical with that of the department relating to its hospital services.

WINDY HARBOUR ROAD

Upgrading: Expenditure

14. Mr. ROWBERRY asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What amount will be spent on the Windy Harbour Road in the current year?

(2) Is it intended to expend an annual amount until this road is completely upgraded to the coast?

(3) What is the total amount spent on this road up to date?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

(1) £5,000.

(2) Funds have been allocated each year for the past six years. The amount that can be allocated in future will depend upon relative priorities of all roads and the funds available.

(3) Records from 1951-52 to the 30th June, 1965 show that the department expended £35,770 on this road.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES AT NORTHCLIFFE

Applications for Connections

15. Mr. ROWBERRY asked the Minister for Electricity:

(1) What progress has been made regarding the applications for supply of electricity to the town of Northcliffe and farms in the area received by him some time ago?

(2) Does the number of such applications and the extent of their requirements for current to be supplied compare most favourably with other centres in the State where electricity is now being supplied by the commission?

(3) If this is so, what is the holdup in the case of Northcliffe?

Quinninup Extension: Comparison of Costs

(4) What was the cost of the line extension to Quinninup from nearest possible connecting point?

(5) How does this compare with the estimated probable cost of an extension to Northcliffe from the nearest possible connecting point to the nearest receiving point in the Northcliffe area?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(1) Supply to these areas depends on the use of power by the sawmill in Northcliffe, but so far negotiations with the sawmilling company have not been successful.

(2) The number of applicants and their requirements for current are probably no more unfavourable than other areas supplied by the commission after the main lines to the towns have been established.

(3) See (1).

(4) £14,000.

(5) £20,000.

16. *This question was postponed.*

IRON ORE MINING COMPANIES

Rates: Payments to Local Authorities

17. Mr. BICKERTON asked the Minister for the North-West:

What are the details concerning rates to be paid by the iron ore companies to the various shires

controlling the areas the companies hold and when does payment commence?

Mr. COURT replied:

The only reference to rates in the various iron ore agreement Acts is—

(a) that there shall not be imposed any discriminatory rate, and

(b) valuation of all lands for rating purposes, except land on which a permanent residence is erected shall be on the basis of unimproved value.

The rates to be paid and date from which these commence, is a matter of discussion between the respective shires and the individual companies, and is also related to formal lease and other titles currently being settled between the Government and the several companies.

ROEBOURNE SCHOOL

Classroom Additions

18. Mr. BICKERTON asked the Minister for Education:

What are the details concerning the addition of classrooms at the Roebourne School?

Mr. LEWIS replied:

One additional classroom has been approved for the Roebourne School but it is not expected that work will begin until towards the end of this financial year.

CARNARVON-ROEBOURNE ROAD

Maintenance Cost

19. Mr. BICKERTON asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What is the average cost per mile which has been spent on maintenance to the road from Carnarvon to Roebourne for the following years:—

1961-1962
1962-1963
1963-1964
1964-1965?

(2) What amount per mile has been allotted for the year 1965-1966?

Nanutarra Bridge: Construction Period and Cost

(3) What was the original estimated time for the completion of the bridge at Nanutarra and how does this estimate compare with the actual time taken to date plus the estimated time for completion?

(4) What was the original estimated cost of this bridge and what is expected to be the cost of the completed project?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

(1) The average cost of maintenance for the North-West Coastal Highway between Carnarvon and Roebourne has been:—

1961-1962	....	£22.6 per mile
1962-1963	....	£24.1 per mile
1963-1964	....	£24.4 per mile
1964-1965	....	£24.3 per mile

(2) £31.3 per mile.

(3) The contract period for construction of the Nanutarra Bridge is 18 months, but the contractor is behind schedule. Ten per cent. of the site work has been completed in 30 per cent. of the contract time, so a delay in completion of several months is likely. However, the Main Roads Department imported the steel beams from England, which are being prefabricated in Perth by a subcontractor. This work is on time.

(4) (a) Departmental cost of bridge £138,360

(b) Estimated cost of completed project:

Main contract	£139,346 10s.
Steel beams	£14,281 10s.
	£153,627 10s.

SERVICE STATION LEASE AT MINILYA BRIDGE

Applications and Terms

20. Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) On what date did the land board hear applications for the lease of a service station site at Minilya Bridge?

(2) How many applicants were there for this lease and what were the names and occupations of applicants?

(3) Who was the successful applicant?

(4) On what date was the lease signed?

(5) What are the requirements of the lease?

Land Board: Members and Occupations

(6) Who were the members of the land board and what are, or were, their occupations at the date of the hearing?

Mr. BOVELL replied:

(1) The 10th April, 1964.

(2) Four—F. G. & M. A. Baxter, estate agents and caravan park proprietors; BP Australia Limited, wholesalers and retailers of petroleum products; Minilya Pastoral Company Limited, pastoralists; G. H. and H. Wells, welder and motor fitter and housewife.

(3) Minilya Pastoral Company Pty. Ltd.

(4) The 9th July, 1965.

(5) The lessee is required to commence erection of a road house building within one year of the commencement of the term of the lease and complete within two years. The term of the lease is 21 years from the 1st January, 1965.

(6) R. J. Denton, Chairman, Administrative Officer, Lands and Surveys Department.; E. O'Brien, Chief Inspector, Lands and Surveys Department; M. Killicoat, retired pastoralist, representing the then Gascoyne Minilya Shire Council. To indicate the interest displayed in this matter, the Leader of the Opposition was advised by letter of the 8th June, 1965, details of applicants mentioned in question (2) and of requirements mentioned in question (5).

On the 23rd September, 1965, the member for Gascoyne was given similar information in answer to questions on roadside service stations.

Information on current land board membership was given on the 12th October, 1965, in answer to questions by the member for Balcatta.

MOTOR VEHICLE (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE) ACT

Royal Commission: Appointment

21. Mr. TONKIN asked the Premier:

(1) When on the 10th August last he was reported in the *Daily News* to have said that Cabinet was giving "serious consideration" to the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into third party motor vehicle insurance in Western Australia and that the final decision—and the setting of terms of reference—could be expected within a fortnight, was he correctly reported?

(2) If "Yes," does the fact that no decision has been announced after a lapse of two months signify that the matter has been shelved?

Mr. BRAND replied:

(1) and (2) The Government is continuing its examination of this matter. If agreement can be reached on the various points a further inquiry may not be necessary. It is hoped to announce a decision at an early date. It will be the appointment of a Royal Commission or the introduction of legislation.

COURTHOUSES IN COUNTRY CENTRES

New Structures and Locations

22. Mr. NORTON asked the Minister representing the Minister for Justice:

(1) How many new courthouses have been built in country towns during the past five years?

(2) In what towns were they built?

Cases Heard

(3) How many court cases were heard in each of the towns referred to in (2) by—

(a) justices;
(b) magistrates;
(c) juries?

Carnarvon: Cases Heard, and Date of Construction of Building

(4) How many court cases have been heard in Carnarvon over the past five years by—

(a) justices;
(b) magistrates:
(c) juries?

(5) In what year was the Carnarvon Courthouse built?

Mr. COURT replied:

(1) 28 from and including the year 1959-60. That number includes combined courthouses and police stations, and courtrooms which have been added to existing police stations.

(2) Derby, Port Hedland, Mullewa, Manjimup, Corrigin, Mt. Barker, Katanning, Northampton, Kojonup, Gnowangerup, Harvey, Boyup Brook, Goomalling, Wongan Hills, Mingenew, Moora, Margaret River, Wyalkatchem, Three Springs, Gingin, Kununurra, Rockingham, Ongerup, Dalwallinu, Armadale, Mandurah, Meekatharra, Quairading.

(3) and (4) The particulars will be extracted and furnished to the honourable member personally as soon as possible.

(5) The exact date is uncertain but from available records it would appear that the building would have been completed in 1893.

FISHERIES DEPARTMENT OFFICE AT ALBANY

Period of Occupation

23. Mr. HALL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Fisheries:

(1) For how many years has the Fisheries Department occupied the office building situated in Lower Stirling Terrace and Spencer Street, Albany?

Accommodation: Inadequacy

(2) What are the dimensions of the office building used as office accommodation, respective to the Fisheries Department, Albany?

(3) Does he not agree that the office accommodation provided for the Fisheries Department officers stationed at Albany is completely inadequate and not in keeping with their extended duties?

New Building: Plans

(4) Has the department any plan towards more adequate office accommodation for Fisheries Department officers stationed at Albany, and what is the contemplated action?

(5) If the department has no such plan, will he undertake to have the matter looked into, bearing in mind the changed circumstances of the industry at that centre?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

(1) Upwards of 40 years.

(2) 20 feet by 12 feet.

(3) The existing accommodation is not regarded as adequate.

(4) Plans for construction of a new office next to the proposed new police station are being prepared. It is not expected that funds for the new fisheries building will be provided during the current financial year.

(5) See answer to (4).

BRICK DUMPING AT ALBANY

Transport Regulations: Breaching

24. Mr. HALL asked the Minister for Transport:

As it is alleged that the W.A. Road Transport Association is permitting regulations and charges pertaining to transport of bricks from Hawker Siddeley Industries to Albany to be broken, causing dumping of bricks at that centre at incomparable prices, and affecting industry, can he advise if this is so and what action does he intend to take to prevent such recurrence?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

The W.A. Road Transport Association only controls its own members and has no power to regulate transport.

I am not aware of any bricks being transported illegally.

If a particular carrier chooses to reduce rates in competition with others, it is not the general policy to compel him to increase his charges; nor is the W.A. Road Transport Association empowered to determine cartage rates of carriers generally.

ALBANY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Adequacy of Accommodation

25. Mr. HALL asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

(1) Does he consider that hospital accommodation at the Albany Regional Hospital is adequate to meet the ever-increasing demand?

Pathology and Physiotherapy Sections: Enlargement

(2) Is it the intention of the Government to enlarge the pathology section at Albany Regional Hospital; if so, when?

(3) Has a final decision been made as to enlarging the physiotherapy section at the Albany Regional Hospital; if so, when is it anticipated that work will commence on that section?

Geriatrics Ward: Provision

(4) Is it the intention of the Government to make extensions to the Albany Regional Hospital, respective to accommodation for the geriatrics as a special ward?

Car Park: Enlargement

(5) As the parking area at the Albany Regional Hospital is inadequate to meet demand, what plans has the Government in mind to alleviate parking congestion and disability?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

(1) The hospital is coping with existing needs, but consideration is being given to the planning of extensions having in mind the requirements of geriatric cases.

(2) This is being considered.

(3) No, but the work is involved in planning as in (1). When plans are finalised the availability of finance will determine when work may commence.

(4) Answered by (1).

(5) An officer of the Public Works Department is at present in Albany for discussion with the hospital administration on this matter.

ELECTRICITY METERS

Positioning in Houses

26. Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Electricity:

(1) Will he quote the regulation or order of policy regarding the position in which electricity meters are required to be placed on residences?

(2) Under what circumstances is it permissible to position meters elsewhere than on a front wall of a house?

(3) During the last 12 months, in how many cases has approval been given or meters passed where they have been at the side of dwellings?

(4) What is the furthest distance from the front wall of the dwelling that a meter has been approved?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(1) Regulation 245(a): The Supply Authority shall have the right to decide as to the most suitable position for fuses, circuit-breakers, indicators and meters and termination of service leads.

(2) (a) Where it is structurally impossible to position the meter box on the front wall, or

(b) Where the front door is at the side of the house.

(3) No record kept of numbers, covered by (2).

(4) Eighteen inches except in some cases where 2(b) above applies.

SUPERPHOSPHATE WORKS AT MERREDIN

Railway Freights on Raw Materials: Concessions

27. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Has a decision been reached in reply to the request of the committee for the establishment of a superphosphate works in Merredin that raw materials be carried at a concessional rate?

(2) When a deputation from this committee saw the Minister he stated that the commissioner had power to enter into freight arrangements with large consignees "outside the rate book". Was this question fully investigated by the department and if it cannot be acceded to, what are the reasons therefor?

Mr. COURT replied:

(1) Yes, so far as normal existing methods of consignment and haulage are concerned.

(2) This matter was fully investigated by the interdepartmental committee on superphosphate which recommended that, in view of the low rate applied to raw materials for use in manufacture of fertilisers, further freight concessions would be economically impracticable. However, the commissioner is always open to consider ways and means whereby economies and improved methods can be introduced to enable a special contract rate to be negotiated.

No such ideas have been found to date in respect of this project but the commission is willing to study any proposals which it is felt warrant consideration.

STANDARD GAUGE RAILWAY

Services and Roads: Payment for Alterations and Additions

28. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Railways:

Who defrays the cost of alterations and additions to the following services consequential upon the construction of the standard gauge project:—

(a) G.W.S. conduits;

(b) telephone and telephone lines;

(c) S.E.C. power lines;

(d) roads under control of Main Roads Department;

(e) local authorities' roads?

Mr. COURT replied:

Each case is treated on its merits and the cost is shared as agreed between standard gauge funds, State funds, and the authority or department concerned.

Water Supplies for Contractors: Payment

29. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) Do the contractors for the standard gauge rail project pay for the water used by them from the temporary standpipes installed along the main G.W.S. conduit?

(2) If so, what is the price charged for this water?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) 4s. per 1,000 gallons, which is the by-law price for industrial water.

IRON ORE ROYALTIES

Grants Commission Penalty

30. Mr. CORNELL asked the Premier:

Is any penalising action likely to be taken by the Grants Commission if it is decided, as the Federal Treasurer recently suggested, that the royalties received from iron ore are too low?

Mr. BRAND replied:

I have not seen where the Federal Treasurer made such a suggestion. In any case action as suggested is unlikely in view of the fact that royalties are considered fair

and reasonable having regard for the very heavy developmental capital commitments to be borne by the companies and not by the State or Commonwealth.

SUPERPHOSPHATE DEPOTS

Establishment: Location

31. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Agriculture:

With reference to the recommendation of the interdepartmental committee on superphosphate that two full-scale depots be set up for next season—

(a) have locations for the two depots been determined;

Interdepartmental Committee's Recommendation: Investigation

(b) what further inquiries and/or investigation have been made towards implementing this recommendation; if any, what are they;

(c) if a further investigation has been undertaken, do these disclose any marked deviation from the operating costs arrived at by the interdepartmental committee?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(a) Bruce Rock and Moora have been suggested as suitable sites because of availability of facilities, but a final decision has not been made.

(b) Further inquiries have been made by superphosphate manufacturers.

(c) For comparable throughputs, there are no substantial deviations in costs.

Victoria: Throughput and Deliveries

32. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) From information available to him concerning the operation of bulk superphosphate depots in Victoria, can he give the approximate throughput of these for the 1963-64 and the 1964-65 seasons respectively?

(2) What proportions of these tonnages were delivered to—

(a) spread contractors;

(b) individual users;

for the two seasons mentioned?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(1) No.

(2) The information available indicates that 40 per cent of the superphosphate used in Victoria is consigned to spread contractors at bulk bins. Of this quantity, one-fortieth is taken by individual users and the remainder is used by the contractors.

COUNTRY WATER SUPPLY DEPARTMENT

Rating: Effect of New System on Revenue

33. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What has been the general effect of the new system of rural water rating and charges on the revenue of the Country Water Supply Department, taking into account—

(a) rates raised for the year ending 30/6/1966;

(b) amount owing for water charges on 30/6/1965?

Revenue

(2) What is the estimated revenue of the department for 1965-66?

(3) What were the department's actual revenue receipts for 1964-65?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

(1) As the new system of charges has not been operating for a full financial year, the general effect is not yet known. However, the information as requested is as follows:

(a) £231,296. This figure does not include concerns which are rated 1st January to 31st December, because the rates for these concerns for the financial year ending the 30th June, 1966, will not be raised until January, 1966.

(b) £253,181, which is the total of all water charges including rates owing by consumers.

(2) £1,204,300. This does not include the estimated revenue for sewerage, drainage, or irrigation concerns.

(3) £1,163,668. This does not include receipts for sewerage, irrigation, or drainage.

LIQUOR: GALLON LICENSEES

Prosecutions through Inspections of Records

34. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Police:

(1) How many prosecutions were launched against gallon licensees in each of the three years ended the 30th June, 1965, 1964, and 1963?

(2) Of these prosecutions, what number were directly attributable to inspections of the records obliged to be kept by licensees under the Licensing Act?

Mr. BOVELL (for Mr. Craig) replied:

(1) For the year ended the 30th June, 1965—6.

For the year ended the 30th June, 1964—3.

For the year ended the 30th June, 1963—2.

(2) Nil.

RAILWAY STATION AT KELLERBERRIN

Construction in Conformity with Model

35. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Railways:

Will he assure the House that the new railway station at Kellerberrin will be of the design previously promised by him and in conformity with the architect's model which at his request was on display in the town for some time?

Mr. COURT replied:

I cannot give the categorical assurance the honourable member seeks until I have been able to consider the whole of the new stations' building programme between Northam and Merredin in the light of current discussions with the Commonwealth and exact locations of stations.

It is expected to be able to give a more positive answer in respect of the particular case of Kellerberrin by next Tuesday's sitting day.

BEER: ALCOHOLIC CONTENT

Reduction: Introduction of Legislation

36. Mr. GRAYDEN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

Will he give consideration to the desirability or otherwise of introducing legislation to reduce the alcoholic content of beer in Western Australia and inform the House of the conclusion at which he arrives?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

I have no evidence that reducing the alcoholic content of beer reduces the consumption of alcohol. The alcohol content of Western Australian beer conforms with the alcoholic content of what is known as beer in other countries. I therefore see no reason to consider the alterations of the alcohol content unless good evidence is provided of a benefit that will arise thereby.

37. and 38. *These questions were postponed.*

FRUIT JUICES: CANNING

Firms and Quantities

39. Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) Are any fruit juices, other than tomato juices, canned in Western Australia?

(2) By what firms and in what quantity are such juices canned?

Mr. COURT replied:

(1) Yes. Plaistowe and Company Limited, in addition to tomato juice, also cans a quantity of peach nectar. Official statistics on production are not available as there is only one manufacturer. I should add that the statistical department will not make figures available when there are fewer than three companies in competition.

(2) See answer to (1).

40. *This question was postponed.*

DENTAL FACILITIES

Provision at Kununurra

41. Mr. RHATIGAN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

(1) Has he seen the letters from various associations at Kununurra published in *The West Australian* newspaper of recent date in regard to the deplorable neglect of his department in providing dental treatment to residents of Kununurra?

(2) Did he receive any correspondence from Kununurra on this matter; if so, why did he deny receiving any correspondence?

(3) What action does he contemplate to provide adequate dental facilities to the residents of Kununurra?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes. Because the letter had not been received by him at the time of the Press interview.

(3) A dentist has been working in the East Kimberleys for the past few months. He is at present working in Wyndham and should be in Kununurra shortly.

A dental surgery has been set up in Wyndham and a dentist is being appointed to that town. He will make regular visits to Kununurra.

AIR FREIGHT SUBSIDY ON PERISHABLES

Kimberley Area: Commencement

42. Mr. RHATIGAN asked the Minister for Transport:

Is it the intention of the Government to commence the air freight subsidy on perishables to the Kimberleys from the 1st November, as has been the custom in the past?

Mr. O'CONNOR replied:

Yes.

QUESTIONS (2): WITHOUT NOTICE

SUPERPHOSPHATE: COST

"On-the-Farm" Figures

1. Mr. CORNELL asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has the Department of Agriculture any comparable figures of the "on the farm" cost of superphosphate in Western Australia and Victoria?

(2) If so, what are they and how are they arrived at in each instance?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(1) and (2) The Department of Agriculture has not comparable figures of "on the farm" costs, but an endeavour will be made to obtain them.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES AT NORTHCLIFFE

Provision: Influence of Sawmilling Company

2. Mr. ROWBERRY asked the Minister for Electricity:

Arising out of the answer given by the Minister for Electricity this afternoon to the question I asked as follows:—

> What progress has been made regarding the applications for supply of electricity to the town of Northcliffe and farms in the area received by him some time ago?

and to which the Minister replied—

> Supply to these areas depends on the use of power by the sawmill in Northcliffe, but so far negotiations with the sawmilling company have not been successful;

are we to understand that Northcliffe will be unsuccessful in obtaining electricity as long as the sawmill decides not to use electricity; or until such time as the sawmill agrees to take electric current then Northcliffe will be without electricity?

Mr. NALDER replied:

No, not necessarily. The position is that negotiations have been going on with the sawmilling company for some time in an endeavour to get it to agree to have the electricity supply extended to the mill. This will help a great deal to cover the cost of the extension to this area. Negotiations have not been finalised and we are still hopeful they will be successful in the near future.

BILLS (3): RETURNED

1. Vermin Act Amendment Bill.
2. The City Club (Private) Bill.
3. Supply Bill (No. 2), £23,000,000.

Bills returned from the Council without amendment.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Precedence on all Sitting Days

MR. BRAND (Greenough—Premier) [5.2 p.m.]: I move—

> That on and after Wednesday, the 27th October, Government business shall take precedence of all motions and orders of the day on Wednesdays as on all other days.

In moving the motion, as is done at this time of the session every year, I would like to report to the House that at least another 30 Bills are to come forward.

Mr. Davies: Did you say 30 or 13?

Mr. BRAND: I said 30, and approximately 10 of them are what might be considered major Bills. These will include those measures which have been referred to in the Budget speech, such as amendments to the Stamp Act, and there will also be a major piece of legislation to cover the problems of the conversion to decimal currency in February. I should like to assure the House, however, that we will deal with private members' business as we have always dealt with it if it is on the notice paper at the time this motion is moved.

MR. HAWKE (Northam—Leader of the Opposition) [5.3 p.m.]: I do not propose to offer any opposition to this motion, but I think we would have been in a better position tomorrow to decide what degree of private members' business is likely to suffer a reduction of debate as a result of this motion being carried. At the present time there are only five items, I think, of private members' business on the notice paper. The debate on those items today should mean the making of considerable progress and probably before today's sitting is finished most of them will have been finalised one way or the other.

I was very surprised to hear the Premier say that 30 more Bills are to be introduced during the balance of the session. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we have been going along fairly steadily so far this session and I am at a bit of a loss to know why at least some of the 30 Bills still to come could not have been brought into the House well before now. However, it may appear that the absence of the Deputy Premier from the State for such a long period has slowed down the activities of the Government and we must all join together in hoping his recent return will speed up the consideration of these remaining Bills and cause them to be introduced in the near future.

Mr. Nalder: I thought you were going to take some credit for the smooth way in which things have been going.

Mr. HAWKE: I shall accept the assurance of the Premier that all private members' business which remains on the notice paper after today will receive the same consideration as in the past.

Mr. Brand: As all Governments have given it.

Mr. HAWKE: I am not absolutely certain what the assurance really means in detail. I think the procedure in recent years has been that all private members' business on the notice paper at the date when this particular motion is carried will at least go to the vote. I would hope, in addition, the mover of each item of private member's business not finalised today will have the right of reply to the debate which takes place upon his particular item before it goes to the vote.

Question put and passed.

CLOSING DAYS OF SESSION

Standing Orders Suspension

MR. BRAND (Greenough—Premier) [5.7 p.m.]: I move—

> That until otherwise ordered, the Standing Orders be suspended so far as to enable Bills to be introduced without notice and to be passed through all their remaining stages on the same day, and all messages from the Legislative Council to be taken into consideration on the same day they are received; and to enable resolutions from the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those Committees.

I think this motion is self-explanatory.

MR. HAWKE (Northam—Leader of the Opposition) [5.8 p.m.]: I would like to ask the Premier two questions in connection with this motion. The first is: Has the Government yet decided upon a target finishing date; and the second is: Has the Government decided when, if at all, the House is likely to be called upon to sit after tea on Thursdays?

MR. BICKERTON (Pilbara) [5.9 p.m.]: Mr. Speaker, may I ask a question? If the Premier rises now, does that close the debate on this motion?

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): Yes.

Mr. BICKERTON: Then I would like to make a couple of observations on the motion for the suspension of Standing Orders. Only recently I, with some other members, went through the Standing Orders one by one, more perhaps for the sake of trying to find reasons why some of them existed and also perhaps to find a reason why some of them should cease to exist.

When one studies the Standing Orders one finds that very few of them were drawn up without a great deal of consideration being given to the reasons for their inclusion in our booklet. One must admire the dear old gentlemen who were responsible for these Standing Orders in the dim and distant past. They allow for a very democratic process to operate, as far as Parliament is concerned, but it is rather strange that we should have this overriding suspension of the Standing Orders because, when it comes into operation, it completely overrules the research that has gone into them and the very reason for their existence.

In the early part of the session we seem to have the less important legislation to deal with, but we have adequate time for its consideration. We are told that the reason for the second reading stage being made an order of the day for the next sitting of the House, and the third reading stage being made an order of the day for the next sitting of the House, and so on, is to give members an opportunity properly to study the legislation so that in fact democracy has been carried out. However, when it comes to what appears to be the more important type of legislation it seems to be the general custom, certainly over the last 14 or 15 years, for it to be left to last and when we reach the stage where the Government apparently considers the session should end we have this motion for the suspension of Standing Orders in order to get the legislation through more quickly.

There is nothing unconstitutional about it, or there is nothing about it that is not permitted under the Standing Orders, but we have this move, which means to say that all the previous safeguards we had in the early part of the session are scraped to one side and legislation is introduced and passed through all its stages in the one day. Therefore, either we are wasting time in the early part of the session by carrying out the Standing Orders as they are laid down, or else there is something wrong with the procedure once this motion is moved to suspend the Standing Orders.

The Premier said that there are still 10 Bills to be introduced which, in his opinion, are important measures. Possibly it is a pity that these important measures will be introduced into the Chamber and raced through all stages in the one day. I do not know of anyone who up to date has found a solution to the problem, but if it is to be solved it seems to me that better reasons for the suspension of Standing Orders will have to be given than are being given at the present time. Perhaps the Standing Orders should be looked at with the idea of endeavouring to restrict their suspension unless very good reasons are given for it. The motion should not be used just as a means of terminating the session or with the idea of pushing important legislation through during the latter stages.

However, I readily admit the present Government was not the first to introduce this type of motion; probably it has been done towards the latter stages of every session of Parliament. Personally I feel that while it is a good idea from the point of view of easing the strain on all members during that period it is something that is creeping in perhaps more and more, and I cannot see any reason why, if we have this motion towards the end of the session, when Parliament first meets the first motion to come before the House should not be that Standing Orders be suspended and then we come here just by way of making a token appearance. Therefore I hope that Governments in the future will endeavour to bring down at least their important legislation in the early part of the session so that it will not be restricted by this particular motion.

MR. CORNELL (Mt. Marshall) [5.14 p.m.]: The points raised by the member for Pilbara are extremely interesting and well-founded. However, what he suggests either presupposes longer sessions of Parliament or two sessions in the one year, neither of which suggestions has found favour with this Government or with any of its predecessors. It has been said, and truly so, that all Governments show marked reluctance to open Parliament and an alarming desire to close it, and I am afraid that is happening more and more.

Reference was made recently in the Federal House to legislation by exhaustion, and we are reaching that stage ourselves. I can only suggest—and incidentally I feel I have one supporter on the front bench in the person of the Minister for Lands who, during his period in Opposition, was very fruitful in his proposals for two sessions of Parliament but, since he has been in Government, has remained understandably silent on the point—

Mr. Bovell: We live and learn!

Mr. CORNELL: However, in the fulness of time, if he is still with us when he is again in Opposition, no doubt he will once more trot out this particular skeleton and advocate it again. Nevertheless, I think we need to do something along the lines suggested by the member for Pilbara, and I, for one, am very keen to see introduced two sessions of Parliament each year.

MR. BRADY (Swan) [5.16 p.m.]: As two or three members have given their testimony on the proposed suspension of Standing Orders, I would like to express my viewpoint, which is that the great progress this State is making probably warrants Parliament sitting throughout the whole day rather than starting business for a night shift at 4.30 p.m. I have sat in this House for approximately 16 years—

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Too long!

Mr. BRADY: Some member on the other side of the House has interjected that that is too long, and very often I have a similar feeling and consider that I could do better if I were in some other vocation. However, I have followed the calling of a member of Parliament for the past 16 years and sat in this House every session, and I have seen Ministers who, in my opinion, have aged 10 years in four because of the extreme difficulties under which they have worked, to say nothing of their long hours.

I think it is an inhuman system which calls upon members of Parliament to perform their duties in this way. So if the State is advancing and making such great progress as we are led to believe, I consider that Parliament should sit throughout the day full time, because I am of the opinion that the salaries which members of Parliament receive and the responsibilities they are expected to shoulder are such as to warrant proper consideration being given to legislation introduced into this House and, under the present system, proper consideration is not being given to legislation when it is found that a measure is introduced in this House at 9 p.m. about this stage of the session and passed in another place by 9 o'clock the following evening.

More than casual consideration must be given to this problem and the member for Pilbara is, I feel sure, on the right track. Recently we have heard reports of the sittings of the Commonwealth Parliament and that some Opposition members are complaining that we are losing our right to democratic government under the present system, and to some extent we are losing it in this State because of the new system that is being introduced into our legislative halls.

As a member of Parliament I would prefer to sit in this House from 9 a.m. to about 5 p.m. on three or four days a week rather than sit from 4.30 p.m. to 3 a.m. or 4 a.m. the following morning for three days a week, and sometimes four days a week towards the end of November or early in December.

I am also of the opinion that the salaries which are received by members of Parliament are such as to warrant their giving full time and energy to their duties as the State expects them to do rather than be interested in outside businesses, or performing duties which are extraneous to parliamentary activities, because this is not justice to the community or to the State as a whole.

It is about time we reviewed the whole system of the sittings of this Parliament, and I hope that, as a consequence of the remarks made by the member for Pilbara and other members who have followed him, something will be done by the Government to conduct an early review. As I said before, it is unfair that Ministers, no matter to which party they belong, are required to be present at their respective departments at 9 a.m. and, after attending to their departmental affairs, to be present in this House by 4.30 p.m. and remain here very often until 2 a.m. or 3 a.m. the following morning.

I do not think justice is being done to members of Parliament, to the Ministers of the Crown, or to the State as a whole by working under the present system, and so I want to vote against this motion for the suspension of Standing Orders for the purpose of rushing important legislation through in the last week or fortnight of Parliament.

MR. GAYFER (Avon) [5.20 p.m.]: Somebody has started something, to repeat the little aside I have just heard from a member behind me; and to follow up the remarks that have already been made by other speakers I would like to quote a few words which were spoken by a man who was one of the greatest parliamentarians of all time. The late Sir Winston Churchill had this to say before a committee of the House of Commons in 1931—

> If you wish to say what is wrong with Parliament it is that it sits far too long in the year. I would lay down that except in times of war or great national emergency Parliament should not sit more than five months, with the ordinary short intervals, say, occupying six months of the year. That ought to be the maximum.

Again, in 1944, that same right honourable gentleman said—

> Do not ever suppose that you can strengthen Parliament by wearying it, and by keeping it in almost continuous session. If you want to reduce the power of Parliament, let it sit every day in the year, one-fifth part filled, and then you will find it will be the laughing-stock of the nation, instead of being, as it continues to be, in spite of all the strains of modern life, the citadel as well as the cradle of parliamentary institutions throughout the world; almost the only successful instance of a legislative body with plenary powers, elected on universal suffrage, which is capable of discharging, with restraint and with resolution, all the functions of peace and of war.

I took great interest in the remarks made by the member for Pilbara; the member for Mt. Marshall; and, lastly, the member for Swan. But I would remind the member for Swan that there are many functions which have to be attended to by members representing country electorates, and those members are not permitted the luxury of residing in a house which is within seven miles of the House of Parliament. The duties of a member representing a country district necessitate his travelling sometimes hundreds of miles during the day, following which he has to be present in this House by about 4 p.m. Further, I would point out—

Mr. Cornell interjected.

Mr. GAYFER: —in spite of the interjection at the rear, that a member representing a metropolitan electorate is able to attend by telephone to many matters that are presented to him, which does not cost him anything.

Country members find that it assists them greatly to be able to handle their parliamentary business in the morning and then, if it is humanly possible, to reach Parliament House by 4.30 p.m. I might say that very often a country member of Parliament has to travel 1,000 miles a week in looking after the interests of the people in his electorate, and that, in turn, is to the betterment of Parliament in general.

Mr. Cornell interjected.

Mr. GAYFER: We do not all enjoy the privilege of being able to travel on railways and to use our gold passes.

Mr. Hawke: Thank you, Mr. Winston!

MR. FLETCHER (Fremantle) [5.23 p.m.]: As we have had some comments from the other side of the House I would like to add to the contributions that have already been made from this side, following the suggestion made by the member for Pilbara that two sessions of Parliament be held each year. I think members of the Government will appreicate my quoting this comment which was made by a Liberal Party committee. The Press cutting which I have of the comment that was made does not encourage members of the public to gain a good impression of parliamentarians generally. With the indulgence of the House I will read this Press report for the purpose of demonstrating the public viewpoint on Parliament, because I am sure it will be found to be interesting.

This cutting has been taken from *The West Australian* dated the 24th March, 1964, and reads as follows:—

> Report Says Voters Lack Knowledge.
>
> Many Australian electors believe a Government is an oppressive symbol of organised incompetence and Parliament is an amusing but expensive means of ventilating nonsense.
>
> This is a finding in a report by a Sydney Liberal Party special committee.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): Order! You must confine your remarks to the motion before the Chair which is for the suspension of so much of the Standing Orders as is necessary to enable Bills to be passed through all stages at the one sitting, and not about the general conduct of Parliament in Sydney or any other part of Australia.

Mr. FLETCHER: I believe, Mr. Speaker, that to do as the Premier suggests in his motion will do nothing to improve the image of Parliament in the eyes of the public, and to support my contention I wish to submit evidence that the image of Parliament among members of the public is not good, and I also wish to read corroborative evidence to substantiate this. Am I on safe ground now?

The SPEAKER: I think the reading of a newspaper article probably draws very closely towards what is not allowed.

Mr. Hawke: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, could I move that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the member for Fremantle to read his newspaper extract?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Fremantle will confine himself to the motion.

Mr. FLETCHER: In point of explanation, I have been keeping this newspaper article for just such a purpose since the 24th March, 1964, and it is a pity I cannot read it to the House.

The SPEAKER: Might I suggest that you have already had two or three occasions on which you could have read it to the House, and I do not think this is the appropriate time to read it.

Mr. FLETCHER: This Press report has a bearing on parliamentary processes and, to save time, I will get on with it. It continues—

> The report said that most Australian electors had an inadequate understanding of the nature and importance of politics.
>
> This lack of understanding extended into every aspect of political life and involved a defective appreciation of Government, Parliament, parties and politicians.
>
> The committee made a detailed investigation to examine and analyse the causes of existing public attitudes and to suggest remedial action.

The next heading and the following comment in this article read as follows:—

> No Understanding
>
> The committee's report placed lack of understanding at the top of a list of possible contributing factors in public attitudes on politics.
>
> It said many Australians believed political parties were a collection of self-seeking schemers—

The SPEAKER: Order! You will confine yourself to the motion. There is not a single word in that article which has anything to do with this motion.

Mr. FLETCHER: Very well, Mr. Speaker. I regret I have been denied this opportunity to finish reading that Press article, because I think the comment is appropriate to the occasion.

I am of the opinion that it is unfortunate the Premier has seen fit to move a motion for the suspension of Standing Orders at this stage as it denies us the opportunity to debate various matters in full to the advantage of those we represent. I repeat that if we were permitted to debate important matters in a proper fashion it would greatly improve the image of Parliament in the eyes of the public, and the processes of Parliament would become more democratic in consequence. We would not then find the ridiculous comment on Government and Parliament which I attempted to quote in support of my contentions.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [5.29 p.m.]: I join issue slightly with the member for Fremantle on this motion. We will have had ample opportunity during the course of debate to put forward propositions we may wish to put forward. There is no suggestion at this stage to limit debate or to limit the normal procedure. The motion merely seeks that, if necessary, legislation introduced from now on should pass through all remaining stages on the same day as that on which it is submitted; otherwise I would oppose the motion.

As the member for Pilbara indicated towards the end of his speech, this motion is a regular feature of parliamentary procedure about this time of the session, and the point at issue raised by that honourable member is whether it is desirable that this motion should be moved. It was on this point that the member for Pilbara and I studied the Standing Orders very thoroughly during the year.

Perhaps the reason we get into this state that necessitates the moving of such a motion is that the Standing Orders are badly in need of a thorough overhaul for the purpose of bringing them up to date.

and so enabling the business of the House to be expedited in accordance with normal procedure. For instance, there is no reason, in my opinion, for a Bill to be introduced into this House and to pass through all stages on various days before it goes to another place, if it meets with the general approval of all members of this House, by virtue of our Standing Orders, which normally require the third reading to be taken on the following day. We should give our attention to this sort of thing by bringing the Standing Orders up to date.

Regarding the holding of two sessions of Parliament a year, we are still bound by the Standing Orders, although the proposal is a good one. Of course, Governments like to be out of public focus and beyond the reach of criticism for as long a period each year as possible. The members of the Government, being human beings, are apt to follow the easiest way out. Many items which are of paramount importance to the community often become stale when Parliament reassembles, because of occurrences subsequently, and the Government can thus avoid being criticised severely and being given a reminder that it is part of our democratic system of government.

That matter is far more important than whether a member represents a country or a city electorate, and whether he should attend a bazaar in York, Corrigin, or somewhere else. If one is a member representing a country electorate one is able to get away from the undesirable people in a particular town by going to another town: but it is not easy for a metropolitan member to get away from the people whom he does not wish to meet. Each electorate has its advantages and disadvantages, and we should appreciate this fact.

In considering whether the Standing Orders should be suspended, I think the Premier should give an assurance—which in the past has always been given—that no gag will be applied. I have not known one to be applied in these circumstances in the 13 years I have been in Parliament. On other ocasions it has been applied six times in all, and once by a private member against his own Government. I am sure the Premier will give the assurance that the opportunity for expressing views on legislation, particularly important legislation, which comes before us, will be made available, even if we are to remain in this House until three o'clock in the morning to debate the various features. He should give an assurance that he will not object to such a procedure being adhered to, because it has always been the procedure in the past.

Until we adopt saner and more sensible Standing Orders, and until we review the existing ones—which I understand were adopted from the House of Commons in the middle of the last century—this is probably the only successful method to handle the business of this House in the latter stage of a session.

This matter deserves the attention of the Standing Orders Committee. It is probably through the failure of some member to move a motion that that committee be requested to bring the Standing Orders of this House up to date, that the existing situation has continued. If that were done, and the Standing Orders were reviewed and new ones drawn up, we might not have need for the motion which is before us, and which has been moved each and every year. I support the motion, with the reservations I have outlined.

MR. HALL (Albany) [5.35 p.m.]: I want to add a little to the debate on this motion. I do not think the Premier expected such a lengthy debate.

Mr. Brand: It does not worry me in the slightest.

Mr. HALL: The opportunity to speak on this motion brings into the open some suggestions I wish to place before the House. I would like to see two sessions of Parliament held each year, and for good reason. A country member has to travel a long distance to attend to his duties in the city—

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): Order! The honourable member must confine himself to the motion before the House. It is not a question as to whether or not we have one or two sessions of Parliament.

Mr. HALL: We are now dealing with the Standing Orders and the extension of the hours of sitting.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): Order! We are not dealing with all Standing Orders. We are dealing with such of the Standing Orders as are required to be suspended to enable Bills to be introduced without notice and to be passed through all their remaining stages on the same day. I suggest the honourable member read Standing Order No. 141.

Mr. HALL: I have not got a copy before me.

Mr. Hawke: You could read the motion.

Mr. HALL: The motion is that until otherwise ordered, the Standing Orders be suspended so far as to enable Bills to be introduced without notice, and to be passed through all their remaining stages on the same day. If the motion is agreed to there will definitely be an extension of the hours of sitting, and that was the point I was leading up to. Physical embarrassment would be caused to the Ministers and to the shadow Cabinet on this side of the House in having to attend to their duties. I am sure their medical officers would be very upset with their physical condition, and that is borne out

by the fact that some of our greatest politicians have collapsed under political strain, brought about by stresses, frustration, and hypertension. If we had some means for reducing the tension on the Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, then we could get over the disability.

We should adopt hours of sitting which are more in keeping with commonsense. If we did we could deal with legislation on a saner basis. It is my proposal that the hours of sitting commence earlier—in the morning, instead of late in the afternoon—and that we terminate sittings at a reasonable time in the evening.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): Order! This has nothing to do with the motion, because the motion is not related to the hours of sitting.

Mr. HALL: It refers to ways and means to enable Bills to be passed on the same day as they are introduced.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): The honourable member evidently does not understand the motion.

Mr. HALL: I can only reiterate that I am referring to the hours of sitting to which the motion alludes. Under it resolutions and reports from another place may be adopted on the day they are received. I would point out that the experience of members of Parliament and of Ministers cannot be gained overnight, and the hours of sitting should not be extended too greatly so that they prove to be detrimental to the health of the Ministers and the members of the shadow Cabinet.

MR. BRAND (Greenough—Premier) [5.38 p.m.]: I do not suppose it hurts in any way to discuss these matters when they are raised in the debate on the appropriate motion. You, Mr. Speaker, experienced some difficulty in keeping the debate within the bounds of the motion which I have moved, and which has been moved every year at this stage of the session since I have been here—and that is for 20 years—and, I am sure, for many years before then. Such a motion has been moved at this stage of the session, and for good reason.

Mr. Toms: That does not make it right.

Mr. BRAND: In reply to that interjection, from the comments which have been made one would think this is the first time such a motion has been moved. I agree with the member for Beeloo that the problem we face might very well be found in the out-of-date Standing Orders under which Parliament is run, and by which the debates are regulated. I do not know whether you, Mr. Speaker, will allow me to make a fleeting reply to certain of the issues which have been raised. I do not think the problem can be overcome unless the Standing Orders are brought up to date, and we are able to debate in a reasonable and practical way the various pieces of legislation and motions which are brought forward.

We should not be forced to sit here hour after hour, just because members are entitled to speak on and on, and repeat themselves, and, in fact, to rise every quarter of an hour to keep the Committee stage going. I would be very willing indeed to co-operate in any way I can to bring the Standing Orders up to date; but undoubtedly we must have regard for tradition and custom associated with the Standing Orders by which this Parliament is run.

The member for Beeloo pointed out that the motion before us does not restrict any member; and that it only enables motions and Bills to be passed through the House on the day they are introduced. The various stages—the introduction of a Bill, the second reading debate, the Committee stage, and the third reading—are not being restricted in any way.

Mr. J. Hegney: The only thing is that important legislation can be pushed through within 24 hours of its introduction, and the public will not know anything about it. After all, the public is an important factor to be taken into account in the running of Parliament.

Mr. BRAND: The second reading debate and the Committee stages will not be restricted, in that any member can request a reasonable adjournment. I do not think any such request has been refused in the past during my term in this House. In any case, this is not the first Government, and I am not the first Premier to have moved a motion such as the one which is now before the House, and which seems to have suddenly upset some members.

Mr. Bickerton: Nobody said this is the first occasion this has been moved. We said the opposite.

Mr. BRAND: The member for Pilbara commented on the future procedure. I agree the time has arrived when an overhaul of the Standing Orders should be effected. Comments were made by other speakers; but as you, Mr. Speaker, rightly pointed out, they were beyond the bounds of the motion.

If the motion is agreed to, the Bills which are to come before this House will be dealt with in the same way as they have been dealt with in the later stages of previous sessions. They include major Bills. Although in the real sense they might not be regarded as major, they are important pieces of legislation, some of them being taxation measures. The rest are minor pieces of legislation.

I would point out that during the present session this House passed six Bills in an afternoon, simply because they were not controversial. I assure the House

that the Government does not desire to restrict any member from joining in and making general comment in any debate; but I often wonder whether it is necessary to sit hour after hour hearing one member after another speaking on the same subject. One should be able to get through all one has to say on a subject in half an hour.

Last evening I said that this House would sit on Thursdays after tea, commencing after the 28th October. On that day we will rise at tea-time, but every Thursday thereafter we will sit after tea. The other query raised by the Leader of the Opposition relates to the date on which the Government aims to conclude the session; I think it should conclude at the end of November, but the Government is not opposed to sitting an extra week, if necessary. In view of what has been said today, this House will not necessarily sit through all night to put through a measure.

Question put and passed.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Third Reading

MR. COURT (Nedlands—Minister for Industrial Development) [5.45 p.m.]: I move—

> That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [5.46 p.m.]: I rise on only one point. Yesterday during the Committee stage, just prior to the tea suspension, the Minister was about to reply to suggestions I had made. I believe that small amendments are necessary concerning the possible boundaries between the Metropolitan Area and the Rural, Mining and Pastoral Area, because of the change of local government boundaries on the outskirts of the Metropolitan Area. As I said, the Minister was about to give me his impressions of my suggestions.

Probably only about 50 to 100 people would be affected, but the situation does seem to be absurd. The boundaries of the Belmont Shire have been altered recently because of the railway complex. The people on the other side of the new boundary will come under another municipality and will be classed as being in the country. This is ridiculous when we realise that they will still have the same community interests as those people on the western side.

Even if the Minister is not prepared to go the whole way and give the right to the commissioners to fully amend it, some provision should be made to allow adjustments, made necessary by the changes in the local government boundaries. The railway line would be a good boundary. As I have said, this will make a difference to only about 50 or 60 people, but it is most desirable that the commissioners be given the right to include these people in the area in which they will be most favourably served and associated with others in the same local authority.

MR. COURT (Nedlands—Minister for Industrial Development) [5.48 p.m.]: I am sorry if I did not answer this particular point during the Committee stage. I thought we had canvassed it in a number of ways.

However, the point I was about to make at the time to which the honourable member referred was that we cannot get away from the fact that some members have a multiplicity of municipalities in their electorate. It is not as easy as specifying that certain local government boundaries will be included or that the commissioners shall have this latitude. I have, for instance, in my own particular case, a number of small pieces of local authorities, but this does not cause any great embarrassment.

Mr. Jamieson: I have five. That does not matter. It is the people I am more concerned about.

Mr. COURT: I have several pieces, but this does not cause embarrassment.

Mr. Brady: Different local authorities have different points of view, though.

Mr. COURT: In my case, with four municipalities involved, there are varying points of view, as there are in most electorates; but I do not think it is serious in the administration or handling of an electorate. However, I will undertake to discuss the matter with the Minister for Justice.

I can see great difficulty in providing in a Statute for the discretionary power the honourable member suggests. It is not possible to write into a Statute some power which will be interpreted in a restrictive way unless we can draw some line to which they can go if they want to, but no further. With the changes taking place, it is well-nigh impossible to put elasticity into this that would be safe so far as Parliament is concerned; in other words, so that Parliament would not question the limit of the commissioners' power.

Nevertheless I do give an assurance that I will discuss the matter with the Minister for Justice to see whether an amendment is possible. I am assuming the honourable member is referring only to small pockets involving about 60 people. I will ascertain whether some discretion can be given in that case.

Question put.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): To be carried, this motion requires an absolute majority. I have counted the House; and, there being no dissentient voice, I declare the question carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Third Reading

MR. COURT (Nedlands—Minister for Industrial Development) [5.51 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Question put.

The **SPEAKER** (Mr. Hearman): To be carried, this motion requires an absolute majority. I have counted the House; and, there being no dissentient voice, I declare the question carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (3): THIRD READING

1. Jennacubbine Sports Council (Incorporated) Bill.

   Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr. Lewis (Minister for Education), and transmitted to the Council.

2. Government Railways Act Amendment Bill.

   Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr. Court (Minister for Railways), and transmitted to the Council.

3. Taxi-cars (Co-ordination and Control) Act Amendment Bill.

   Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr. O'Connor (Minister for Transport), and transmitted to the Council.

FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Report

Report of Committee adopted.

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr. Ross Hutchinson (Minister for Works), and passed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Report

Report of Committee adopted.

Third Reading

MR. NALDER (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [5.55 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [5.56 p.m.]: Unfortunately, due to circumstances, I was unable to be here during the second reading stage of this Bill, and there are a few comments I would like to make in connection with three of the provisions contained in it, but mainly the provision requiring a 10 per cent. vote before a poll can be approved. I feel this is rather unjust. If there is to be a percentage, surely it should be a compulsory vote of ratepayers. It should certainly be more than 10 per cent.

In some cases members of a shire council are elected when the poll is as low as five per cent. Looking at the results of the major shire elections in the metropolitan area I find that there was only a 14 per cent. vote to elect these people to their positions as councillors. Therefore to require a percentage on an impersonal matter is rather a bad feature.

I think this was brought about by the fact that the Belmont Shire Council was peeved because it was defeated by the ratepayers in a loan poll. The figures, from memory, were 98 in favour and 190 against. Obviously if there was anyone at fault, it was the councillors themselves in that they did not ensure that more people voted. There was not a great vote against it. As a matter of fact there was little enthusiasm on either side because approximately 8,000 votes were entitled to be cast, but only those few did vote.

It is true that those who voted represented a very small percentage, but then again I repeat that a very small percentage often vote at municipal elections; and if we are to justify the requirement of a certain percentage on one point, morally it is right to require it on another.

The provisions concerning the election of mayor or president are very interesting. If the Minister reads the section he will see the requirements are rather unusual. In the first place before a poll can be taken the request has by a decision of the Shire Council to be submitted to the Minister for approval.

When this has been done enough fervour in the electorate has to be stirred up to change the system of voting for that particular position. This is not a real proposition. The shire councillors themselves would probably have 100 per cent. knowledge of what they consider best for the particular area with which they are dealing, but now they are required also to enter into a campaign to make sure that 10 per cent. vote at a poll to determine the issue.

It is very interesting to note that in *Australian Gallup Polls*, published July-September, 1965, there is an item associated with compulsory voting, and I intend to quote this particular section to indicate the feeling of the people generally in Australia. While the first part does deal with other elections, I must quote the lot in order to give the full context. It is headed, "Compulsory voting is approved" and reads—

Compulsory voting is approved by nearly 7 out of 10 electors for Parliamentary elections, and by nearly 6 out of 10 for municipal elections.

In May the Gallup Poll asked 1,700 people throughout Australia:

"Do you think voting for Parliament should be voluntary or compulsory?"

Of every 100 interviewed:

67 said "Compulsory,"
31 said "Voluntary," and
2 were undecided.

That vote for compulsory voting for Parliament came from 71 per cent. of the men, and 64 per cent. of the women interviewed.

It also came—

this is strange perhaps—

—from 73 per cent. of the L.C.P. voters and 66 per cent. of the Labor voters.

People of all ages gave much the same answers.

In no State was the majority for compulsory voting less than 63 per cent.

Municipal elections.

The same people were also asked whether voting at elections for local Councils should be voluntary or compulsory.

Of every 100 people:

57 said "Compulsory,"
40 said "Voluntary," and
3 were undecided.

In Tasmania and Western Australia opinion was close to 50-50, but in the other States answers were close to the above figures.

Voting is compulsory:

At all Federal elections,

At all State elections for Lower Houses,

At the elections for the Upper Houses in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia,

At all municipal elections in New South Wales and Queensland, and

In Victorian municipalities which want it.

In other words in Victoria the local authorities have the option of applying to the Minister if they want to have compulsory voting.

If a percentage vote is required, the right way to go about getting it is to force a compulsory vote. It might be a bit difficult to force a compulsory vote on any people other than the ratepayers. After all, most loan polls are only subject to the vote of the ratepayers as distinct from those who vote at an election. Power was included in the Act so that when a poll was held the ratepayers would be nominally fined, or penalised, as is the case with the Electoral Department. The local authority could include a charge of 10s. on the rate notice of a ratepayer if there was an unsatisfactory reason for not voting at a shire election.

It should not be done generally. We should provide for the vote to be a vote of the ratepayers, because they have to be registered. It is not compulsory for the other people to enrol even though they might have the right to do so. Therefore it would be difficult to compel them to vote; and this matter would have to be applied only to polls associated with ratepayers. I suggest that would probably be a better proposition at this juncture.

Passing from that issue there is another matter that I wish to raise, and that is the provision allowing various local authorities to make special by-laws which would have the effect of permitting a standard of building requirements lower than those generally applying in particular areas.

I do not see why the Shire of Mandurah, or other shires down the coast, should have the right, when buildings are being put up for holiday purposes, to allow any structures of a lower standard than the structures, generally, in the district. Local authorities already have the right to make special by-laws dealing with caravan parks, which is probably most desirable But when it comes to permanent buildings, it is a different proposition, and it is doubtful whether Parliament should give them the right to permit lower building standards for holiday houses than are required for the permanent homes of the local inhabitants.

I can see many problems associated with this provision. I feel that people when erecting holiday homes could indulge in a far greater degree of simplicity in respect of the buildings than they do when building normal cottages. At the same time they should build to the standard that the by-laws require, generally, for the district, and not be subject to some more or less slum type of by-law that would allow any sort of a shack to go up. I do not think that is desirable. We should encourage our municipalities to have sufficient pride to require that holiday homes be built to the same standard as the other buildings in their area.

There are already instances where people have, on more or less broad acres, built a number of holiday cottages; and they have built them with a view to the future, so that if the cottages do not, as a whole, become a payable proposition, then the land can be subdivided and sold as allotments with these structures already on them. As that sort of thing has taken place, we already have substandard structures on building lots.

This is not, in my opinion, a reasonable propostion, and I suggest that before the Minister for Local Government allows any such by-laws to be gazetted he review the position and require very strong reasons before allowing the building requirements to be less than they are under the present by-laws—probably the model building by-laws—that apply in the particular areas.

This appears to me to be a very bad move; again it has probably been sponsored by several shires in whose areas holiday camps are established. The other shires have, perhaps, not been particularly interested in the matter, and this provision has got through the department and through the Minister into the Bill. If this provision could mean the lowering of the standards of accommodation in any area, then it is a bad one.

The last of the three points I wish to raise is a rather humorous one and it concerns the provision which will allow a council to confer upon any person the title of "honorary Freeman of the municipality."

The Minister, in his introductory speech, indicated that this would allow a council to confer a titular honour by making an honorary freeman of the municipality one who is an outstanding citizen, or a distinguished visitor, such as a member of the Royal Family or the head of a State. "This is similar to an honorary degree conferred by the University," he said.

The humour of this appears to me to arise from the fact that there could be a rush to curry favour with certain important people; and I can imagine the very long title that some people could have. A title could, perhaps, be something like this: The Hon. Dr. David Brand, M.L.A., Freeman of the City and Shire of Wyndham, East Kimberley, Freeman of the Shire of Trayning-Kununoppin-Yelbeni, and a dozen others; and we would have to have a number of cars to carry his titles around the country.

Whilst I might agree with this provision, I think the Minister should have said, "For goodness' sake, confine it to some of the cities and other places that would be of a reasonable size!" The Premier might laugh about this, but what I am suggesting is something that could happen. The Premier could visit one of these places or do something for one of them—Tambellup, Tableland, or anywhere else—and find himself a freeman of that place. He might do something for other places, and I cannot see any reason why they should not be entitled to confer the same honour on him, and he would have to accept those titles. He could acquire a greater string of titles than he would know what to do with.

Even at this juncture I suggest that this is a ludicrous provision, to say the least about it. I feel that the right to confer this honour should have been confined to those areas that have been created cities; or at least to the more important centres in the State such as, perhaps, Kalgoorlie; but if I start to name some I will probably leave others out. I do not think it is desirable that shires that have half a dozen or so electors—and there are such shires well out in the country—should have the right to confer this honour. Many of the more remote shires like the Shark Bay Shire, and other similar ones, on occasions cannot hold council meetings and on occasions are controlled by an administrator.

The point is that it will become a rather stupid situation when people who are on the scene from time to time are created freeman of these areas; and the Local Government Act having, by law, permitted this to be done, the people on whom the honour is conferred will be obliged to accept it whether they like it or not. After all, if the honour is offered to a Minister—whether the Minister for Local Government or the Premier—he is not liable to upset the shire by saying, "No; I decline the honour", when he has already accepted it from some other municipality or shire.

So I say it looks as if this provision has been included without having received the consideration it justly deserved. It is to be hoped this proposition does not get out of hand.

I again say that I prefer the advent of compulsory voting by the ratepayers, when they are called upon to make a decision, rather than the provision for 10 per cent. to vote on the poll; I do not like the idea of lessening the building requirements, be they even for holiday camps and suchlike; and I certainly do not like the overall provision to allow all municipalities to create freemen of their municipalities.

MR. NALDER (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [6.12 p.m.]: I assure the honourable member that the comments he has made with reference to the percentage requirement was fully discussed during the second reading yesterday. The Minister in another place did agree to increase the percentage, and after discussion he stated he did not at all mind amendments being made in this place; and amendments were carried in this Chamber. The matter will have to be referred to another place for consideration. It will be debated again, and a decision will have to be made. I do not intend to suggest what is likely to happen when it is referred back to the members in another place.

With reference to the building by-laws mentioned by the honourable member, I can assure him I will take this matter up with the Minister concerned, and, as we are now debating the third reading,

he will perhaps make some communication to the honourable member on the point he has raised.

In respect of the last point dealt with by the honourable member, I am pretty certain that the local authorities will not abuse this provision which has been included in the legislation. I am not sure just where the recommendation came from, but no doubt it has been considered by the local authorities, not only in the country but in the city, and I think we can give it a trial. I do not think we will find the situation will develop as the honourable member has suggested; and I do not know whether he is too sure himself that it is likely to get out of hand.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. NALDER: Prior to the tea suspension I was concluding my remarks on the comments made by the member for Beeloo. I said that I felt the comments he had made with reference to allowing local authorities to give the freedom of their city to any visitor were not altogether well founded. I feel sure this will not be abused. I will even go so far as to say that within the next 10 years probably only half a dozen local authorities will take advantage of the amendment in the Bill. All we can do is to allow this matter to proceed and see what the results are.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

CONDITIONAL PURCHASE LAND AND SALE OF LEASES

Inquiry by Select Committee: Motion —Defeated

Debate resumed, from the 6th October, on the following motion by Mr. Norton:—

> That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report on—
>
> (1) the allocation of conditional purchase land, its development, and the sale of leases prior to the issuance of a Crown grant for such land, and any other relevant matters which the committee may consider necessary, and
>
> (2) to examine the relevant Acts and regulations appertaining to the granting of leases, including pastoral leases, the development and sale of conditional purchase land, and make such recommendations as are considered in the interest and development of the State and the administration of the Act.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse—Minister for Lands) [7.33 p.m.]: I desire to thank the member for Gascoyne for his courtesy in agreeing to have this motion postponed for discussion until I was able to return to the House. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, I was unwell last week, and I was not able to reply to the motion on behalf of the Government.

As members know, the motion has regard to the allocation of conditional purchase land. I daresay that Western Australia's history, as it is being recorded, will show that land development in this State has been its greatest venture and adventure. We can go back to the time in the early part of this century when the late Sir James Mitchell, as Minister for Lands, opened up the eastern wheatbelt at a time—and I think I am correct in saying this—when Western Australia did not provide enough wheat for the few inhabitants of the State. This year, however, we hope to reach the 100,000,000 bushel mark in our production of wheat.

Land has been developed over the years, and each phase of its development has brought its own problems. Today, of course, is no exception. We have our problems with land development despite the fact that it is going ahead at an unprecedented rate. As I have said, Sir James Mitchell opened up the eastern wheatbelt, and later we had his project for the development of the dairying industry. We also know that Mr. M. F. Troy and Mr. W. C. Angwin, who were Ministers in the Labor Government of the day, opened up the fringe areas. I think Mr. Troy was primarily responsible for opening up the Beacon and the Bonnie Rock areas.

In more recent times the development of Esperance has been a notable achievement. When he was moving his motion the honourable member did refer to Esperance. Conditions change very quickly. It is now 6½ years since I became Minister for Lands, and I remember that in 1959 there was not the demand for Crown land for agricultural development that there is today. As a matter of fact, one of my first responsibilities was to withdraw 40 farm-sized unit blocks which were made available for selection in the Esperance area. These had to be withdrawn from selection because there were barely enough applicants, numerically, for the 40 blocks. Some applicants who were interested in these blocks were not considered suitable.

As I have said, each phase of land development brings its own problems. In the earlier days it was necessary, when establishing the primary industries of Western Australia, for the Government, through the Agricultural Bank, to make certain advances to farmers of the day who were developing land. Today conditions are entirely different. Primary industry has been firmly established. It is, and has always been—and, I believe, will continue to be—the basis of our State's economy, despite the fact that industrial development and various phases of mining

activity are in progress at the present time. We must continue to rely for our stable economy on the production from the soil.

But in the Esperance region the demand for land there 6½ years ago was very limited indeed. The demand for land today anywhere where it can be economically used is so great that, of course, it is impossible to meet it. This is the problem of the Government of the day.

The honourable member referred to the method of allocation. At a later stage in my address I will deal with the various forms used in other States. I do believe that Western Australia enjoys the best system of land allocation in the whole of Australia. Now, of course, we have applications for land at the rate of 10 to 15 for each block that might be made available for selection and, naturally, there are many disappointed applicants from all sections of the community.

Applications come from people in the country, from people engaged in primary industry, from professional men, and from businessmen, all of whom want to develop land for agriculture. This, of course, brings the problem of the day: that we cannot possibly satisfy the demands at the moment. It is not possible to develop more land with our resources than we are doing at the present time. Present-day land development is different from what it was 10, 20, 30, or 40 years ago. Land development today must be planned; and the normal services which are required, such as schools, hospitals, and roads must be available to those who are prepared to go out and develop the land for agricultural production.

The Government is mindful of these problems, and already this session action has been taken to remedy, or to endeavour to remedy some of the problems that are before us. As members will recall, I introduced a Bill and I was most gratified with the reception it received. This Bill raised the time from two years to five years during which a transfer of conditional purchase leases could be approved by the Minister, unless there were special circumstances.

The special circumstances referred to would be in the event of the death of the breadwinner. The family might perhaps need to discontinue their activities, or there might be some other such circumstances, making it essential that such provision be included in the Act. However, I believe this will at least assist genuine farmers in their desire to develop land, and it will also curb speculators.

I do not close my eyes to the fact that there are would-be speculators about today, because of the opportunity land development offers. We have released land at a nominal price for the purpose of allowing those who are to develop it the available finance to put into the development of that land, and to prevent their necessarily having to pay a high price for the land which may be allotted to them.

During his speech to the Bill to which I have referred, the member for Merredin-Yilgarn, who is a former Minister for Lands himself—and I think the only former Minister for Lands at present in Parliament—gave instances where sales of conditional purchase land had been advertised for a consideration which appeared to be unreasonable. In my reply on that occasion I intimated that the Government was giving consideration to measures which would endeavour to prevent trafficking in land. Only today I gave notice of a Bill which, when it is presented to the House, will, I think, provide further curbs to speculators or would-be speculators in land that is being made available today. This Bill would probably have been introduced had I not been forced to be away from the House during the past two weeks.

When moving his motion, the member for Gascoyne referred to absentee owners. To my knowledge there are no such persons as absentee owners. In my opinion people who take up land and who cannot immediately reside upon it because the circumstances there do not enable them to reside on that land, cannot be classed as absentee owners.

Mr. Moir: What about those who have their properties developed?

Mr. BOVELL: They must be allowed to develop the land to a degree which will enable them to at least produce some livelihood from the land and make a reasonable home for themselves.

Mr. Moir: I think the Minister is not well acquainted with what is going on at Esperance.

Mr. BOVELL: The present residential condition, which has been in the Act for as far back as I can remember—the six-monthly period—is unrealistic, and in the Bill to be presented to the House, of which I have given notice, a reasonable period will be given to allow a successful applicant time to establish himself on his land. It will then be possible to perhaps enforce the residential conditions to a greater degree than they have been enforced in the past.

No Government to my knowledge has rigidly enforced the residential conditions, because they are not practicable at present and, as I said before, the Government is taking action to provide some reasonable period to allow the successful applicant for virgin land to at least derive some livelihood from that land and establish a reasonable residence.

Mr. Moir: What is a reasonable period?

Mr. BOVELL: The member for Boulder-Eyre will learn about that when I introduce the appropriate measure. The member for Gascoyne also referred to the need for inspection of properties to see that improvements were being maintained. He questioned the method of allocation of land which, I would say, has stood the test of time for many years. These matters have been given attention and I propose to make some reference to them.

Conditional purchase leases are approved under the provisions of section 47 of the Land Act and very few are now approved under section 49. When speaking to his motion the member for Gascoyne referred to both of these sections. Double the amount of improvements in lieu of a residence on the lease is necessary; and during the last three years only three leases have been approved under section 49. Previously it was considered that companies were eligible to select conditional purchase land, and every government until now has allowed companies to be allotted land for agricultural development.

The Lands Department at present employs 10 land inspectors. These inspectors, apart from checking on the improvement conditions, undertake soil classification surveys and inspect reserves and foreshore lands. As an indication of the scope of the inspections, the number has risen from 3,900 for the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1962, to 5,000 in the same period to the 30th June, 1965.

Since the 1st July this year, 62 conditional purchase leases were forfeited for non-compliance with the conditions of the lease. This is apart from those forfeited for non-payment of rent. Since the 1st July, 1965—that was only a few months ago—16 leases have been forfeited. This would, I think, indicate that action is being taken over the whole of the State to see that people are complying with the improvement conditions.

Dealing with the comments made by the member for Gascoyne on the land board, I propose to explain the Western Australian system and then, as I indicated earlier, compare this with those operating in the Eastern States. A number of questions have been asked in recent weeks about the land board. I notice that during my temporary absence the Deputy Premier and Minister for Agriculture gave a reply to a question asked, I think, by the member for Balcatta, listing members of the land board during the present year. There is a closely typed list occupying 1¼ columns in *Hansard* of the 13th October, 1965, page 1431.

The present Government has inaugurated a system of including a local identity —usually the president of the shire— if he has farming experience, as a member of the land board. That was not customary before the present Government assumed office; and this list which the Deputy Premier supplied the House in reply to the question I referred to, shows that farmers from practically all over the agricultural districts of Western Australia have served on land boards, even in the last 12 months. The list indicates that the composition of the boards is one which I think most creditable.

The Western Australian Land Board, which is constituted under the Land Act, normally comprises three members; and the president usually appointed is a departmental officer, and the other two are selected for their qualifications; and we have included, as I have said, in the three since the Government has been in office a local representative with a wide knowledge of farming conditions in his district. For the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1965, the board sat in the country on 15 occasions; and since July, 1965, it has held 10 hearings in the country. This is a custom which the present Government has fostered by sending the land board to hear applications, not only in the city, but in the area where the land is being released for selection.

All these innovations have been created by the present Government to allow greater facilities for those who are interested in the land. It may be more costly, but it is of great convenience to local people, particularly where a subdivision of land is being made available for selection, for the land board to go to that district and allow the people to give evidence to the board in the district where the land is being allotted. Each applicant is required to appear before the board and give sworn evidence. It covers such matters as the applicant's financial position, farming experience, personal equation, the family unit, other land held, need for land for farmers' sons, how the land is developed, as well as detailed examination of bank statements and accounts. A statutory declaration is required to be filed by each applicant prior to the board's sitting; and questions are asked on this statement and the applicant is given an opportunity of submitting further evidence beyond that if he so desires.

Now let us look at what happens in the other States. In Victoria two departmental officers are appointed to form a land board which selects the most successful applicant and makes a recommendation to the Minister. The applicant may appeal to the Minister within seven days of the board's recommendation. The land board in South Australia consists of five departmental officers, who select the most successful applicant, and there is no appeal from the board's decision. The normal practice in New South Wales is that the Minister has absolute power to grant applications. I am glad that those conditions do not prevail in Western Australia, because whatever trouble I might be in

now, I would never be able to get out of if I were given the authority to grant applications in Western Australia.

The Minister in New South Wales must be very wise because he refers applications to a local land board which consists of an officer of the department and two local farmers and graziers. An appeal is allowed to the Land and Valuation Court. Queensland uses a selective method which involves a ballot of the land after applicants prove their experience and ability. Those successful appear before a committee of review, the chairman of which is an officer of the Land Administration, and two others experienced in farming. Tasmania does not have a land board. The system there provides for—

Mr. Bickerton: Is there any land?

Mr. BOVELL: —a selection by purchase at a value to be determined. The public auction method is also used in Tasmania.

So all in all, when we compare our system of land allocation in Western Australia with what applies in all the other States, we can say we have the best system. Nothing is perfect and if it can be improved upon we are always looking for that improvement, and I will investigate any proposals that might be forthcoming from time to time.

Mr. Bickerton: How does our Minister compare with the Ministers in the other States?

Mr. Brand: Very well indeed.

Mr. BOVELL: That is a question which I prefer not to answer at the present time.

The SPEAKER (Mr. Hearman): The Minister has a personal interest in that question.

Mr. BOVELL: The member for Pilbara in his usual kindly way endeavoured to get me to become not quite as modest as I would like to be. I will say this: whilst it has not been my pleasure to meet all the Ministers for Lands in other States, because they change from time to time, I have had the pleasure of being acquainted particularly with the Minister for Lands in Queensland (Mr. Fletcher) who has been kind to me on my many visits to that State. He has also been here and had a look at Esperance; and he has also looked at our system of land allocation. I will say with all modesty they compare more than favourably with the Minister in Western Australia.

Members may also be interested in comparing agricultural land released in the Eastern States in Australia with that released in Western Australia. The land board in this State dealt with 3,477 applications for the year ended the 30th June, 1965. The previous year the number of applications was 2,589. If the House will bear with me I will quote some further figures for Western Australia and the other States. They are as follows:—

Year	Tasmania Acres	Victoria Acres	N.S.W. Acres	Queensland Acres	S.A. Acres	W.A. Acres
1959-60	4,057	32,789	84,013	Not available	437,196	1,099,256
1960-61	11,992	27,076	37,260	30.020	152,685	1,072,436
1961-62	5,457	24,672	36,174	47,062	262,757	1,194,042
1962-63	14,478	30,651	90,130	5,261	171,742	1,227,898
1963-64	33,518	19,537	97,611	14,545	203,030	902,514
1964-65	22,454	11,660	73,171	3,177	110,450	814,430
Total acreage made available	91,956	146,385	418,359	100,065	1,338,724	6,310,576
				Total for 5 years		

The total for all the States in Australia, other than Western Australia, if my mathematics are correct, is 2,095,489 acres, as compared with the total from Western Australia of 6,310,576 acres.

That will convey to the House the magnitude of Western Australian land development at the present time. I repeat that with such magnitude, problems must arise, but I contend that they are adequately dealt with by the Government department. Here I wish to say that the member for Gascoyne did not at any time reflect on the land board's integrity. I thank him for that because the personnel of the board are beyond reproach.

When he introduced the motion, the honourable member quoted in detail from newspaper articles, which mainly came from the *Countryman* and which related to the Dandaragan district. He went on to illustrate the complaints of a farmer there in the person of Mr. W. H. Slee. No doubt the intention was to highlight the number of conditional purchase farms in the Dandaragan district which were not being developed. I might say that the president of the Dandaragan Shire, whose family has been farming there for many years, has been a member of the land board on the bigger subdivisions in that area. So we have had local advice in regard to allocations in the Dandaragan area.

It is quite true that a number of persons in the Dandaragan area were not in residence on their farms at the time. It must be remembered, however, that it takes at least two years to bring a farm to a point where it can support a resi-

dent manager. The member for Boulder-Eyre interjected earlier and asked what the period was that we were going to include in the Bill of which I have given notice. I said that he might wait and hear what I have to say when I introduce the Bill. The members of the House might get some idea of the intention of the Government when I say it is considered that at least two years should elapse before it can be expected that a person should take up residence.

I have not had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Slee, but I have no doubt he is a most estimable gentleman. He is a member of the Dandaragan Shire Council and must therefore be held in high esteem in his own district. It is interesting to note some details of Mr. Slee taking up land. He holds a conditional purchase lease in the Badgingarra area, which was granted to him by the land board in 1954. That was when Mr. Hoar was the Minister for Lands. The then Minister for Lands, unlike the New South Wales Minister, had no authority to allocate land and, of course, the Minister today has no responsibility in the allocations—only to see that the land board discharges its duties in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Getting back to Mr. Slee, I am informed that during the following years he worked and improved the conditional purchase land but did not reside on it until 1963. For some years prior to this he was a share farmer at Buntine. It can be seen, therefore, that Mr. Slee had not resided in the Dandaragan district for the first nine years of his lease. I do not criticise him for that. So long as the land is developed and produce is coming from it, adding to the State's prosperity, I think that is something attempted and something achieved.

I mentioned at the outset that there are many people who are interested in selecting agricultural land and Crown land for agricultural development. The applications are not always from farmers—they come from professional people: doctors, dentists, architects, accountants, business people, and so on.

I propose to illustrate the type of correspondence which I, as Minister have to deal with. Letters are received; volumes of letters. After a land board allocation I am inundated with correspondence from disappointed applicants. It is only natural when there are cases such as the recent release of 26 blocks. For these there were 464 applicants. Therefore there were 438 disappointed applicants. Naturally, the great majority of them consider that they should have been allocated the land. So I get volumes of correspondence which I endeavour to reply to. Without quoting the name of this person, I will read the first part of a letter I received which was dated the 31st May, 1965. It is addressed to the Minister for Lands, and reads as follows:

> Dear Sir,
>
> I am a Perth businessman and a C.P. Land applicant. Having endeavoured to determine the constitution of the department's land disposal section, I find it has some anomalies on which I will comment. If my observations are correct, I would appreciate being informed regarding same.

That is very polite, and courteous. To continue the letter—

> From an outsider's point of view, some one's integrity, perhaps, has wilted in the face of adverse publicity regarding recent allocation of land in the Lancelin Badgingara area. The results being biassed in favour of the farming community. Farmers should be recognised as likely to be investors as any others. I would point out that all members of the Board have been, and still are involved to a greater or lesser account with the rural community.

That is the type of correspondence I receive and to the best of my ability I have to reply and be as courteous as possible. I will read my reply to this applicant, which is dated the 28th June, 1965. I emphasise the date because the letter I received was dated the 31st May, and I endeavour to reply to correspondence as soon as possible. My letter reads as follows:—

> I thank you for your letter of the 31st ultimo which was received in my office on the 22nd instant, and I have read your submissions carefully.

Mr. Hawke: No "Dear Sir?"

Mr. BOVELL: Yes. "Dear Sir." To continue—

> The system of allocation of Crown land for agricultural development in Western Australia is acknowledged as one of the fairest methods in Australia, or elsewhere, and I would say one of the main qualifications required is that the land will be farmed by the successful applicant as a family unit.
>
> It is the general policy of the Land Board to consider every application on its merits, taking into account agricultural experience, assets and financial backing, existing land holdings, the need for more land and the location of the subject land in relation thereto, the personal equation, the family unit and future provision for sons, etc. These are some of the many factors which are considered, not in any strict order of priority, but rather to assess the overall respective merits of the applicants.

There is an unprecedented demand for land at present, and although an area of approximately one million acres is being made available for selection each year, applications greatly exceed the number of locations made available. For instance, there were 464 applicants for 26 blocks in the Lancelin area in which release you were one of the unsuccessful applicants. Therefore, you will understand the difficulty in satisfying all applications.

In serial releases the membership of the Land Board is varied by inclusion of a citizen with practical farming experience, usually the Local Shire President.

Yours faithfully,
Stewart Bovell,
Minister for Lands.

That is the reply I made to the letter, and I do not think there is any purpose in disclosing the name of the person concerned. I feel that that correspondence will indicate to some extent, without wasting the time of the House, the problems that confront the Government and the Minister of the day because of the unprecedented demand for land.

Such letters are received from disappointed applicants, and I repeat: The present system being used by the land board is fair and reasonable and above suspicion. I have referred to the fact, and I appreciate it, that the member for Gascoyne never accused the land board of any graft; because it is composed of citizens of very high repute.

Mr. Norton: Nor anybody else, either.

Mr. BOVELL: I mentioned previously that because of the acceptance by the House of the recent Bill amending the Land Act an opportunity will be given to consider further amendments later in the session; and, as I have already stated, I gave notice of a Bill today which will be introduced further to amend the Land Act. Whether the Bill has been printed and is at the House now, I do not know; but it would have been introduced before this motion had been placed on the notice paper had I not become ill some three or four weeks ago. This had the effect of curtailing my ministerial and parliamentary duties, and that is the reason for the delay in the introduction of that Bill.

I think I have submitted to the House a good case to show that the Government, the land board, and all associated with the allocation of land are doing everything possible to provide for a fair allocation. As far as possible inspectors from the Lands Department are carrying out inspections and I have quoted the number of forfeitures. We on this side of the House are fortunate in having so many members with practical farming experience and they know the problems that arise from day to day. We must also take into consideration the fact that if we make the conditions too rigid they are likely to impose hardships on some people who are genuinely endeavouring to develop the land which has been allotted to them. For those reasons careful consideration must be given to any amendments.

The Government has already taken action this session and notice of a Bill further to improve the position under existing conditions has been given. Conditions could alter tomorrow; they could revert to the position which obtained at the time when I became Minister and there was less demand for land. Blocks had to be withdrawn and we could not get sufficient applicants. But, as I said, the position changes from day to day.

I would be hesitant to amend the Land Act drastically without a thorough investigation. I have the benefit of the advice of members who support the Government, who have had a lifelong experience in farming operations, and who have lived in country districts all their lives. The same could be said of some members on the Opposition side of the House; and although, I suppose, if I asked them they might readily extend any assistance possible, they are not always ready to give it. However, as I said, I have had the benefit of the experience of practical farmers and that has helped me considerably with my duties in this exercise of trying to get people who are allocated land to develop it as a family unit.

That, of course, is the desire of the Government. We want people to go out into the country and live there, raise their families there, and have those families continue to reside in the country. I am also the Minister for Immigration, and those members of the Opposition who have been to naturalisation ceremonies over the several years since I have held this portfolio will know that one of my stock phrases, in welcoming those who are being naturalised, goes something like this: I extend on behalf of the Government, and the people of Western Australia, appreciation that they have decided to become naturalised Australian citizens. I thank them for coming to Western Australia to help us develop this State, and I further thank them for settling in Western Australia. I also advise them that, this being a free country, if it suits their convenience they can live wherever they wish, but I advise them to give serious consideration to the idea of going out into the country to help us develop the great resources of Western Australia instead of remaining within the confines of the G.P.O., Perth. I tell them that in the great open spaces there is adventure and there is opportunity everywhere.

Mr. Hawke: Could I have a copy of that speech?

Mr. BOVELL: I know the Leader of the Opposition pays great attention to his duties and responsibilities, but I would suggest he attend a naturalisation ceremony in the city on some occasion—

Mr. Hawke: And hear the Minister.

Mr. BOVELL:—and hear me give my address. He has only to ask a number of his colleagues about it. The member for Victoria Park, and the former member for Perth, have heard me over and over again, and—I say this with some diffidence—have congratulated me afterwards.

Mr. Hawke: I thought you were leading up to that.

Mr. BOVELL: I submit there are problems, and I can understand the concern not only of the Opposition but also of all members of Parliament and the community generally to see that there is no undue trafficking in land. However, I would refer again to the Bill which was recently passed and is now law and which is aimed at curtailing the activities of investors—if I may term them such. That Bill came forward because I, as Minister, refused, or I was about to refuse, a transfer—and they all have to be submitted to me—because I felt a consideration in the transfer was excessive.

I was advised by the Crown Law authorities that it was their opinion I had a duty to approve of the transfer provided the conditions of the Act were complied with and the conditions of the Act did not include any consideration. When members have a look at the Bill I shall be introducing in the near future I think they will find there will be some safeguards about this question. Had the Government not taken any action I could have understood the concern not only of the Opposition but also of the people generally in Western Australia. However, we have taken action to meet the circumstances as they apply today, and those circumstances have arisen only in the past couple of years, and they have not been evident until the last 12 months.

This is the first opportunity the Government has had to consider the matter. We will continue to consider the position and try to ensure that those who are allotted Crown land reside on it; develop it; make their homes there; and, as I previously said, assist us in developing our great resources, not within the confines of the G.P.O., Perth, but within the million square miles that for the time being this Government has the responsibility of administering.

I cannot agree to the motion because I feel it is not the time to appoint a Select Committee. A Select Committee would receive many complaints from disappointed applicants, naturally, but I do not think it would serve any useful purpose at the moment. Therefore I must oppose its appointment.

MR. KELLY (Merredin-Yilgarn) [8.25 p.m.]: After listening very closely to the member for Gascoyne when he introduced the motion I was fully convinced that there was a great need for a Select Committee to be appointed to inquire into many of the angles and facets, not of the administration side of the Lands Department, nor any member of the staff of the Lands Department, but into the many expressions of dissatisfaction of which we have heard for some time.

Tonight we listened to a very sincere and soulful address by the Minister for Lands designed, of course, to shake the belief that the matter was an urgent one. His address was such that we were in danger of becoming a little bit addled with it, although I would not say that my thoughts are addled in regard to the motion. I am sure members enjoyed the Minister's exposition regarding the things that have gone wrong, and his speech was made in such a nice way that he succeeded in allaying the suspicions of those who naturally wanted to believe exactly what the Minister was saying.

There was one statement the Minister made with which I could not under any circumstances agree. He said that when this Government took office there was not the demand for land that there is today. I must disagree with that statement because time and again there were more applicants than there were advertised blocks: and let us make no mistake about the amount of land being released at that time. It was very similar to the amount which at the present time the Government boasts it releases annually. For several years prior to going out of office the Labor Government released at least 1,000,000 acres annually; and, on one occasion, several hundred thousand acres over the million were released. It was nothing new for the Government of that day to be inundated with applications. I think that, on one occasion, some five or six months prior to its going out of office, there were approximately 340 applications for 44 blocks.

The amount of capital behind the people applying for blocks on that occasion was in the vicinity of £3,250,000. They were the implied assets from questions asked regarding capital available. So it is wrong for the Minister to create the impression that this great demand for land has taken place only during the period of years of striding ahead. That is not quite so.

Mr. Bovell: I said circumstances changed from time to time and that was the position. A total of 40 blocks were withdrawn in the Esperance area in April or May of 1959 because there were not sufficient suitable applicants. There were only about 40 applications.

Mr. KELLY: There must have been good reason for that, because, if I remember correctly, there were five or seven applicants for every block of land to be released.

Mr. Bovell: At that period that was the position.

Mr. KELLY: We have before us the motion moved by the member for Gascoyne, and during his speech in introducing it he outlined many cases which he considered were on the borderline and which, in a manner of speaking, should not have passed the censor. The member for Gascoyne gave an excellent explanation of many of the land transactions which appeared to be on the borderline, and some of them were regarded by him as having involved absentee owners. The Minister must have placed a different construction on the meaning of an absentee owner, compared with the interpretation that has been arrived at during investigations which have been made by those on this side of the House.

These investigations were conducted only as a result of many approaches from people who, as the Minister said a moment ago, must be included among the disappointed applicants. If the ratio of disappointed applicants to the number of successful applicants is nine, seven, or five to one, the number of disappointed applicants must be legion. Imaginary or real, some of the reasons that were advanced by disappointed applicants must have been fairly stable, because not all people who are fairly responsible make assertions that are not true unless they have some ulterior motive for making such allegations.

Over the last 18 months or two years on many occasions people have complained personally, have forwarded correspondence setting out their complaints, and have had letters published in the Press in order to convey to many members of Parliament their dissatisfaction about not being allocated blocks of land. It is only natural that if a member of Parliament continues to receive such complaints he will begin to look around for the reasons and the shortcomings which must exist in view of the widespread dissatisfaction, and when there is a diverse number of reasons given for the allegations that are made from time to time.

Not for one moment do I think we should have to make any apology to any other State for the methods we adopt in allocating land in Western Australia. I consider the Western Australian system has been, and is still, operating very satisfactorily. I do not altogether agree with the local flavour that has been infused into the personnel of the land board. I do not altogether agree that that is the correct way to face up to the responsibilities that exist in various districts when land is released in certain areas.

My reason for not agreeing to the infusion of a local flavour in the personnel of the land board is that no matter how unbiased a man may be in giving his decision on the allocation of any piece of land, and no matter how many applications are submitted for blocks of land in certain areas, with certain people a tendency can develop whereby it is considered that the merits of an application submitted by one person are better than those set out in the application of somebody else, and no doubt he could possibly substantiate his reasons for thinking in that way.

Nevertheless, I think we should avoid, as much as possible, introducing local flavour when a question of land allocation is being considered. If there are five or six blocks to be allocated within a certain area, and the local man on the board arrives at a certain decision he is immediately placed in an invidious position. No matter what decision he makes, all the applicants within that area will be on the local man's neck, because he has not acted in a way they think he should have acted.

Therefore I think the Government should continue the present method of land allocation as it has been carried out over the years whereby the personnel of the board are not influenced one way or the other and are charged with the responsibility of coming to a decision purely on the merits of the applications submitted to them. In my opinion we should leave the position as it is. I know of two men, of my own personal knowledge, who have been accosted by disappointed applicants and told in pure Australian by those applicants that they were not happy with the decision that was made, and those two men who were on the board were members of shire councils. Both of them consider that their task is a thankless one: that it is no sinecure to be on a panel of that kind when there are so many deserving cases and so few blocks available in any particular area.

So whilst on the surface it might appear to be advantageous to have the local element entering the discussions on land allocations, or of local men acting in an advisory or in an informative capacity, I think that men who are placed in that position have to face up to repercussions to which they should not be subjected.

In the course of citing many illustrations, the member for Gascoyne outlined a number of cases of absentee owners being allowed to continue to be in control of large areas of land in some instances without even residing in Western Australia. The original intention of the legislation was that an owner should reside on the land allocated to him within a specified time, despite the fact that the Minister has indicated that one man was allocated a piece of land before he did anything in the way of erecting a residence on it, or living on it.

There are many owners who have not resided on their properties after a reasonable period has elapsed from the date the property was allocated to them to the date, very often, when they have disposed of it.

I have been told that in the list of absentee owners there was one man—a widower, I believe, from Canberra—who was not only a speculator, but also an agent and an attorney of some kind. I am led to believe that he and his six or seven relatives are holding 22,000 acres of land. This man who is the head of an Eastern States' organisation has visited the State twice since he has been allocated that property.

Mr. Bovell: How long has he had it?

Mr. KELLY: I understand he has held it from 3½ years to four years, but I would not be sure of that. The assumption is that this man, with all his interests in Canberra, has never become a resident on the farm that has been allocated to him, and this includes his relatives because, as I have said, he is a widower and he has three grown daughters in the Eastern States where his interests are. As far as is known he has no intention of settling in Western Australia. I admit that I am speaking from hearsay, but I understand that that is the position. There are other cases of absentee owners regarding whom the member for Gascoyne outlined various details.

The Minister has indicated that he believes as much leniency as possible should be shown to those people who are allocated land and I agree that every opportunity must be given to people who are making every endeavour to settle on the land, but who, through some circumstance or other —such as seasonal or financial circumstances—are unable to settle on the property immediately, or at an early date. I thought this was very evident from the resolutions that were made by the land board. Knowing that six months was the qualifying period during which an applicant should take up residence, one of the questions put to all applicants for land was: "How long would it take you to reside on the property?" and invariably each applicant agreed that he should be on the property within the time specified. The Minister has told the House of his understanding of the source from which the data came. Some of it did emanate from that source, but part of it is extraneous, and there is no doubt that the Minister's generosity towards the necessary resident qualifications must have been severely strained from time to time because of the various difficulties with which he has been confronted.

Mr. Bovell: I followed the example of some of my illustrious predecessors.

Mr. KELLY: As long as the Minister did not go too far back, I think he was acting correctly. Possibly, in view of the explanation given by the Minister for the amendment that was moved by him several weeks ago, together with other amendments which he has indicated will be placed before the House during the coming week, something will be done to overcome a few of the urgent difficulties that have arisen. I think the Minister has beaten the gun, as it were, by taking the sting out of this motion.

Mr. Bovell: I think the member for Gascoyne was generous enough to indicate that whilst he was speaking.

Mr. KELLY: That is very patent, but the reason behind the suggested appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into this problem was raised during the early part of this year and, to, a lesser degree, at the latter end of 1964, because it was then that dissatisfaction by disappointed applicants was at its highest peak. Naturally, we are extremely happy about the legislation which is foreshadowed and which could overcome the difficulties, but I still think that even with the possibility of the existing conditions being improved, there is a good reason for a Select Committee to be appointed.

I support that contention on the ground that irrespective of the foreshadowed legislation and irrespective of the Minister's knowledge of many of these cases, I consider that the innuendoes that have been made by various people throughout the State in the last 18 months or two years warrant some action being taken to allay the doubts that have arisen in the minds of many disappointed applicants.

It is possible, perhaps, that the Minister has not come in contact with many of these disgruntled applicants. He says he has received a great deal of correspondence from people who are dissatisfied, but I wonder if they are as emphatic in their letters to the Minister as they are when they meet members of Parliament face to face in the particular areas represented by them, especially just after a meeting of the land board has been held. Because of their associations within the district, they know very well the financial circumstances of many people who apply for blocks of land.

They realise that their cases, which in their own minds were watertight, were overlooked; and that they were disadvantaged as compared with others who received better treatment. These people are most uncomplimentary in their remarks about the Minister and the land board, and they pass many innuendoes in bars and other places. If the proposed Select Committee were to delve into the statements which have been made there is no reason why the assertions could not be refuted, with the whole matter being ventilated. It will take some time before the Bill which the Minister has indicated will be introduced, becomes law, and before any effect is felt. In the meantime a number of matters should be mentioned more specifically.

One is in relation to the pastoral industry, on which I desire to express a few comments. Some time ago a number of questions were asked by the member for Kimberley and replies were given by the Minister. These questions related to certain pastoral properties of which the member for Kimberley has considerable knowledge. The department apparently extended lenient treatment in these cases, instead of observing the strict letter of the law.

The information supplied by the Minister included a list showing the names of the stations, the areas involved, the names of the lessees, residential lessees, absentee holders, and stock numbers. The Minister indicated a number of cancellations of leases had been effected, but I think he referred mainly to the cancellation of rural leases rather than pastoral leases. Possibly many more lease cancellations could be effected, because the areas involved are very large—not 2,000 or 3,000 acres, but up to 1,000,000 acres. This is the area embraced by some of the leases, and the land has been held for an unnecessary, lengthy period without the proposition of development being tackled.

The list shows the number of stock on each property. Notwithstanding the fact that the department should have very up-to-date knowledge of the stock potential on these properties, we find that in a number of cases the Minister has absolutely no knowledge of the stock numbers. I shall not refer to the properties by name, but the Minister should be able to identify them from my remarks. In one case the property covers over 980,000 acres, the owner is resident on it, but the stock information is not available. This is a condition which must be complied with under the Act, and the onus is on the lessee to disclose the number of stock.

In another case a property of 940,000-odd acres is run by a station manager, and owned by a person living in a distant area. On it are only 261 cattle. The position is even worse, because this property is linked with another, and the total area held is 1,239,000 acres, but the total stock numbers on both properties is 1,183. I am mentioning these instances, because the lenient treatment extended by the Minister has not paid off; but in other cases the treatment has been severe.

There is another instance where a property of 165,000 acres is involved, but again the information on stock numbers is not available. In yet another case there is a property of 430,000 acres, which I understand is a fairly recent lease, and the obligation on the lessee will not be so heavy; but there is no cattle on this property at all. On a property of 5,164,000 acres there is in the vicinity of 60,000 head of stock. Probably it can justify, to some extent, the cattle position, although under no circumstances can the acreage be justified.

Another area of 990,000 acres is held under a shareholding system by one of the largest companies advertising the sale of land in Western Australia, and the information on cattle numbers is not available. In my book it is a very serious breach if the department is not kept fully appraised of the stock numbers on the property.

There are also other properties included in the list. One of 742,000 acres has no cattle on it; another of 507,000 acres has also no cattle; and yet another of 181,000 acres has no cattle.

The Minister cannot say these are not good reasons for further investigations to be made. The department might already be making investigations, but I do not know. These conditions to which I have just referred have existed for well over 12 months. The member for Kimberley has been trying to do something about the position for a long time, but it was only in this session of Parliament after questions had been put to the department that the information was supplied.

Mr. Bovell: All these pastoral leases are in a state of conversion. It was only on the 30th June last that applications under the new conditions applied, and the department is in the process of considering the new conditions which Parliament considered in 1963.

Mr. KELLY: These conditions might be new, but the ownership of the property has not changed hands for some years; therefore the information on stock numbers which the lessees have to supply to the department should be complete. There is no excuse for properties of 1,000,000 acres not having any cattle.

Mr. Norton: The stocking conditions have been in force for years.

Mr. KELLY: We cannot let the Minister get away with what he has said.

Mr. Bovell: The conditions have applied for more than 6½ years.

Mr. Norton: They came into force in 1959.

Mr. KELLY: I referred only down to the ninth case on the list, and there are 19 in all. In respect of a property of 640,000 acres, the information on stock numbers is not available, and so it goes on in the same vein through the list. There are 10 to 12 further instances where the information on stock numbers is not available.

In one instance several properties are bracketed together, because they are owned by three separate persons. The information supplied gives the names of the lessees, but not the names of the absentee owners. The department seems to be very remiss in this regard, and the information which it possesses should be more up to date. One of these properties consists of 670,000

acres, another of 12,000 acres, and another of 795,000 acres. All show the stock numbers as being nil, while the absentee owners are not even known by the department.

These properties represent only a small section of the pastoral holding in Western Australia, and if similar cases are rife in the rest of the State I wonder what is the total situation, if the cases are multiplied in proportion to those which exist in the Kimberley! The proposed Select Committee would naturally look into such cases very fully, and someone would have to face up to the responsibility of doing something about the position.

In contrast to the lenient treatment which has been extended for quite some time, I now refer to one case where the Minister or his department adopted a rather severe frame of mind. The person concerned has been subjected to an undue amount of harassment in respect of a property he holds. This person transferred all his interests from the Eastern States—which were very considerable—because he was a man of some vision and was desirous of making some money for himself. He brought all his financial assets to Western Australia, and they totalled well into six figures. He interested himself in many undertakings, some of which were not as successful as he hoped. On some he spent more cash than he could afford, and to finance most of his holdings he had to lean heavily on bank overdraft. He was caught up by the famous credit squeeze, and overnight his huge overdraft was reduced to practically nil, and he got into financial difficulties.

In regard to the station property which had been allocated to him, the department did not get off his back, and this is very regrettable. I think I have most of the correspondence on this matter, and it indicates the total amount involved was £341, which is a very small amount. It was contended by the department that this person had not lived up to the stock conditions, although I understand at one stage he had 2,500 to 3,000 head of sheep on the property, had reached an advanced stage of development, and was endeavouring to place more stock on the property. He was unfortunate, because the property was plagued with dingoes, and the drought conditions were not conducive to much progress. Finally the manager on the property, who was a part-owner under some arrangement, died and thus threw the whole matter into a turmoil.

These are some of the things the department told this man he had to do. First of all those concerned told him the number of sheep and/or the number of cattle that should be on the area he held. Then letters came forward one after the other. I suppose they are letters sent to people who are behind or in arrears with some of the conditions necessary; but the following is the type of letter he received:—

> The statutory declaration supplied with your letter disclosed that sufficient improvements have been effected to comply with the terms of selection, but that the area was deficient in regard to stocking. The full requirements for this purpose are that the land should, by now, be carrying 8,340 sheep or 1,668 head of large stock.

He had had this land for four or five years. I do not think any leniency was extended to this man at all, because the department was down on him very firmly in this regard. Another letter read—

> It is desired to point out once more that this lease is required to be stocked under the terms of selection . . .

If the rest of Western Australia was being treated in the same way, I would have no complaints. But we know, of course, that that is not the case. There was another long reminder telling him he had fallen behind with regard to the conditions. The letter, from the Under-Secretary for Lands, concludes—

> It is my intention to proceed with the forfeiture of this lease 30 days from the date of this letter.

There was no leniency in this case. That letter was written in April. Exactly one month later the following letter was received:—

> Further to my letter of the 27th ult., I have to advise that the Pastoral Lease 395/1066 has this day been forfeited to the Crown for non-compliance with the improvement and stocking conditions.

Mr. Bovell: Did he reply to any of those letters?

Mr. KELLY: He has replied to some of them. I do not know whether the officers in the department did not believe what he was telling them or whether they did not want to believe him. Apparently he was not given a great deal of help in overcoming his difficulty.

I think on one occasion he wrote to the department apologising for his non-compliance with the conditions. He had had a rather serious illness and he attributed his not having replied to that fact. I am aware that he did let other letters go without replying to them; but that is not the point. Many people have been unable to comply with the conditions, but in most cases the department has been generous enough to tide these people over their difficulties, enabling them to carry on.

In this particular case I understand the man was considering disposing of the property, and he had made some arrangements with some people in the south-west. These people told him that when they went to the department to make inquiries

about the proposition. they were told they would be taking on something he was not in a position to sell—he may not have been; I do not know—and that the best thing they could do was to hold off. I understand those people have been given the lease of this particular country; and this is a very wrong principle if we are going to allow conditions of that kind to usurp the better judgment that should be exercised in cases of that nature.

I feel that many of these matters submitted by the member for Gascoyne in all truth and seriousness should be given ventilation. There should be a means of exonerating those who are being wrongfully accused of doing certain things. If a motion such as this were put into effect, at least the *bona fides* of the activities of the department and those concerned in it would be established. There should be no stigma whatever levelled at any department of this kind dealing as it does in a huge amount of land. A Select Committee would enable us to clear the atmosphere in this regard.

MR. HART (Roe) [9.6 p.m.]: The motion of the member for Gascoyne reads—

> That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report on—
>
> (1) the allocation of Conditional Purchase land, its development, and the sale of leases prior to the issuance of a Crown Grant for such land, and any other relevant matters which the Committee may consider necessary, and
>
> (2) to examine the relevant Acts and regulations appertaining to the granting of leases, including pastoral leases, the development and sale of Conditional Purchase land, and make such recommendations as are considered in the interest and development of the State and the administration of the Act.

I would like to briefly add something to this debate. I feel the Minister for Lands has replied rather completely on this matter, bearing in mind the various actions that have been taken and the amendment which has already been made this year and which has been very well received.

I can appreciate quite a lot of the thinking the member for Gascoyne has put into his submission and also what has been added by the member for Merredin-Yilgarn. I feel that most of the problems arise from the terrific demand for land which has been experienced over the last few years; and that demand has shown up certain weaknesses that have caused great concern to a lot of people, as outlined by the mover and supporter of the motion.

I have discussed these problems with a lot of people and some have been critical of the Government and have asked why certain provisions have not been tightened up. The first one, with which we have dealt a little previously this session, is the transfer of C.P. land; and the other is the allocation of land through the land board.

This board has been criticised to some extent and that has been discussed tonight, and previously, and the criticism has been answered by the Minister. I have found when talking to most of these people who have criticised the board that when I have asked them their suggestion for a remedy, without exception they have failed to submit anything clear-cut.

When there are about 20 men seeking the one block, it is very hard to know who is the right man to whom to allot it. Often there are six or seven, or even more, who are equally qualified. In discussions with people over the last few years I have been told by many of them that the land board should lay down some more hard-and-fast rules—if we can use the word "rules"—and that it should perhaps go more deeply into the *bona fides* of the applicants; and so on, and so forth. We must bear in mind that we can, of course, get much too hard.

Over the years this system has been in operation it has worked pretty well; but the last few years have revealed certain weaknesses. However, these are being attended to. We must bear in mind that this land has been thrown open to all applicants and the land board has the job of picking out those whom it thinks most suitable. We must also bear in mind that no financial aid is being offered and the successful applicant has to battle on himself. We have found that some successful applicants, after a year or so, have fallen by the wayside and have been unable to carry on; and that has led in the past to the selling of the land.

We could try to establish a policy under which the land board would have a cut-and-dried basis on which to work. Then it could stipulate that unless certain conditions were complied with the block would not be allotted to a particular person. If we did that we would not be able to open this field to everyone as we are doing at present.

I understand that the Minister has in mind some amendments, and he has touched on these a little tonight. I would like to refer to one which has been passed this year and which has been dealt with in the right spirit. I agree that previously C.P. land was changing hands much too easily. As the Minister has told us, he did not solely have the power to stop it. The amended provision dealing with this situation reads—

> Except in a special case to be approved by the Minister, no holding under Part V shall be transferred or

> sublet until after the expiration of five years from the commencement of the lease or occupation certificate, and then only if the holder has himself expended on the land, in prescribed improvements, the full amount required to be expended during that period.

In other words, no transfer can be made within five years unless improvements have been effected. Then, of course, it still has to have the Minister's approval. That is considerably tightening up the previous provision, under which a person had only to do two years' improvements.

It has been said to me that the provision has not been tightened up enough. We could have gone to the full extent and said that under no conditions under five years can the land be transferred, even if improvements are done. We must bear in mind the large financial strain on young men these days. I am quite sure that young farmers who have perhaps put large sums of money into the land and have been forced to sell, sometimes for reasons beyond their control—perhaps ill-health, lack of finance, or seasonal failures—should have the Minister's special consideration.

Under the new provision the situation has been left in the hands of the Minister, and I think that is a very good improvement. I feel that if we continue to very considerably tighten up the other sections in the same spirit we will be doing the right thing. If those sections which show signs of weakness are tightened up by the Government in consultation with the various officers of the Lands Department—for whom I have a pretty high regard—we will be going in the right direction, and I think we will get an answer that will be better than a Select Committee could give. I think it will be better to continue as we are.

Getting back to the land board itself, the Minister has given a complete picture of the personnel, history, and background of the board, and of what is being done. The people who comprise the land board work under certain directions. If we are not satisfied and feel there should be further instructions given to them, then it is up to us to come forward and suggest what should be done. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, that is difficult to do. I have asked many people what they would suggest, and they have stumbled a bit. I do not think many members could lay down a hard-and-fast instruction for the land board that would, in the light of practice, be entirely satisfactory. I think it is too difficult to evolve further instructions, and for that reason I must support the Minister and be against the suggestion of a Select Committee.

Dealing with the pastoral lease question and the need to tighten up in that regard, I can again, to some extent, go along with the ideas put forward by the member for Gascoyne. But here again we must bear in mind that in 1963 we laid down new conditions in respect of these leases, and the leases are being changed over to those new conditions. In the future we will see how the pastoral lease conditions work out, and, if necessary, they can be further tightened up.

That brings me back to the point that while I agree that we have had certain anomalies, a change, as has been indicated tonight, must come about. I support the Minister, and cannot support the move of the member for Gascoyne.

MR. HALL (Albany) [9.18 p.m.]: I commend the member for Gascoyne for bringing this matter before the House. The appointment of a Select Committee could do no harm, because the committee would be appointed from the members of this Chamber. It would investigate the position and return here with its findings. I can see nothing wrong with that. That is a fair and equitable way in which to find out any faults or errors in regard to conditional purchase land, or the allocation of it. We have nothing against the board. The members of the land board are trying to do an honest and sincere job, and probably the Minister feels the same way. It is possible that no hardship would follow the report of the Select Committee, but we would have a chance to look into the speculation that occurs in C.P. Land.

The Minister drew comparisons with other States. Ours is probably one of the last States—indeed probably one of the last places in the white man's world—where C.P. land, or any land for that matter, is available. It will not be many years before the value of our land is £30 or £40 an acre. The member for Gascoyne has that in mind, I think. We cannot do much about what has actually happened. The Government has introduced some measures to prevent Crown land or C.P. land, being disposed of within five years. That provides some protection, but it is not enough.

The member for Gascoyne has sparked off this motion for many reasons. On the 15th September of this year, dealing with the Albany zone, I asked the Minister this question concerning conditional purchase land—

> (1) Can he advise the anticipated movement relevant to acreage of land to be thrown open for selection as conditional purchase land in the southern agricultural division for the years 1965, 1966, 1967?
>
> (2) In what areas will land be thrown open for selection in each of the above years and what acreages will be released each year?

The Minister replied—

(1) and (2). There is no official division known as the southern agricultural division—

I shall remind the Minister that a regional planning committee was dealing with this, and the members of that committee referred to the southern agricultural zone in most of their planning, and those were the areas I was referring to when I mentioned the southern part of the State. The Minister's answer continues—

—unless it is in the new State which the member for Albany advocates.

Planning for the release of Crown land under conditional purchase covers the whole of the South-West Land Division of the State.

Land releases in the Hay and Plantagenet district over the last six years total about half a million acres.

That is quite a large area that has been opened up, and I would say it has been opened up for the benefit of the State; but when we know of the transactions that are taking place and of the vast acreages that are held by one or two settlers, we wonder just what is going on.

When people from outside the State first came here, we had some extra capital wealth brought into Western Australia as a stimulant to our agricultural development. The conditional purchase conditions prevent the formulating of companies to hold this land, but in actual fact that is what actually happened in many cases with fathers and sons, and so on.

The member for Gascoyne is alarmed at the position, and I support him. He wants to give the settler every chance to purchase C.P. land. Many farmers' sons have applied for this land; and it is not always easy to get the finance to match the larger organisations that have come in from other States and, in fact, from other countries. I think he is alarmed at that position, too.

The fact that we do not have the owners as residents on the farms means that we do not have amenities such as social atmosphere, roads, schools, shopping centres, and other things we would like to evolve around conditional purchase land settlement areas. The absentee owners have vast financial resources available to them and can employ managers on their farms. That is quite admirable, but it does not help the other people who are developing farms to get the amenities they would desire.

They have to go to other centres to do their shopping and for sporting recreation. They also lack roads, and the progress associations go backwards, or they do not even get formed. So the absentee owners are quite detrimental to the advancement of an area, although they might help in regard to the advancement of the assets of the State in so far as farm production is concerned.

I again refer to the fact that Western Australia offers the last opportunity for land development, and it offers almost the last opportunity of any of what we call the white man's land for development. We have to face that position squarely. We have land in an equitable rainfall area, with light clearing costs, and it provides an admirable opportunity for C.P. purchase development; but we must make sure that the development of the land goes hand in glove with community development of the area concerned.

I would make some comparisons of costs here. These figures were given to me by a man who is well up in the agricultural world, and they show; and I refer to the southern zone—

Value of the land and its potential that is selling too cheaply. Over the next 10 years, which is a relatively short period, the area cleared will increase from 6,500,000 acres to 10,000,000, and the sheep population from 5,000,000 to 21,500,000, which is slightly more than the total sheep population of Western Australia (excluding the pastoral areas) at the present time.

That information is arrived at by this man, and others, who have done a tremendous amount of research. He says that atmosphere will change the value of the land. That brings me back again to the action of the member for Gascoyne. If this land is going to be so valuable to the State we have to prevent these investors from coming in and taking the cream, with the Western Australians and the smaller people from the other States being left out. This man goes on to deal with the cost of development and he says—

When C.P. land is cleared it carries 2½ sheep per acre. Capitalised at £12 per sheep to conform to W.A. standards the value per acre would be £30 over 10,000,000 cleared acres, which would be then worth £300,000,000, but by then it would be proportionate dollars.

Similarly productive land in the Eastern States varies from £60 to £90 per acre. In England it is £250 per acre, and in America it is $1,000 per acre.

That brings us back to the reason why these speculators or investors from the Eastern States are so anxious to take up this land at something like 10s. to 12s. an acre. They can see the potential financial advantage to them over the period because of the sheep-carrying capacity and the reduced clearing costs. This man goes on to say—

With distances disappearing and overseas markets estranged and only financially comparative levels, it is obvious that the local values of land must find a comparative level with other States.

We can return to the article which shows us the feelings of the member for Gascoyne in regard to the dangers of our rural land policy. This article appeared in *The West Australian* on the 1st April, as follows:—

> There is evidence that a high-level investigation is needed into the fate of all that new land we're opening up.
>
> The State is proud of its record of land openings. We have allocated more than 1,000,000 acres a year in the past five years. But has it all been taken up by men who sincerely hope to farm it?
>
> We recently carried a story on absentee farmers in the Badgingarra area, after Dandaragan Shire Councillor W. A. Slee had claimed, at the Farmer and Scientists' Conference, that 60 per cent. of the farms in his area were held by non-residents.

I do not want to weary members by reading more of this, because it is more or less a repetition of the member for Gascoyne's statement.

I know the honourable member's fears of the dangers that go hand in glove with what happens if we allow this valuable land to get into the hands of one of these investors or speculators. That brings me back to the reason for a Select Committee. I see no harm in it whatever. I have here the conditions that have to be adhered to in regard to conditional purchase—

General

> Conditional Purchase is the normal method of disposal of agricultural land by the Crown. Under this system, the selector undertakes to develop the land for agricultural purposes and to pay for it over a period ranging from 25 to 30 years, receiving at the conclusion a Crown Grant (freehold title). Under certain conditions, accelerated purchase is available.

The Government has moved in on that one and checked it by legislation that was introduced last session. This land was very attractive to the investor. I have given a comparison of costs with those of the other States, and I have shown the value of the land and its sheep-carrying capacity.

People who want to set up a young farmer in the Eastern States have to find £40,000 or £50,000. I do not know what it costs to establish a farm on C.P. land in this State but I would say £10,000 or £15,000 anyhow. People from the other States are buying the cheaper land here; and no-one would disparage them for that; but I say that large tracts of our land should not fall into the hands of one or two speculators. The member for Gascoyne has, however, shown that that has already happened. To continue with this document dealing with Conditional Purchase land—

Eligibility

> Any person over the age of 16 years may apply for Crown land, but the applicant may be called upon to establish to the satisfaction of the Minister, the fact that he is in a position to develop the land.

We have had cases, without a doubt, of persons who have taken up this land and been more or less squeezed off it. They have stayed for a period, until approached by someone, and have then said, "We will sell if you will pay for carrying out the conditions".

They have drawn up some sort of legal agreement which is actually illegal as the Minister knows. It is outside the ambit of the Act, and eventually the conditions get adhered to and the transaction takes place. The Minister was aware of that when he introduced legislation to extend the period to five years. But nevertheless the eligibility is there and these squatters have sat, and in the past have exploited this position to the greatest limit.

This is one feature which the Select Committee would have great powers to investigate before it brought back its findings to the House. I feel sure by research we will find that many transactions have taken place where the original lessee did not develop the land according to the conditions. It has in fact been privately developed and then transferred under clause 47 of the Act.

The maximum area is 2,000 to 5,000 acres. I would say that 2,000 to 2,500 acres in light land would be adequate for an income. Five thousand acres would bring in the other party, and this is where we have the formation of small companies and groups. The expansion of the land is far too much for one person and he brings in a partner, and before long we have the formation of a company which is not allowed under the conditions. I continue to quote—

> Each location is individually priced, such factors as soil quality, rainfall, distance from transport, centres, etc., being taken into account when fixing a price.
>
> A high proportion of land is at present priced between 10s. and 20s. per acre.

That would be a gift for anyone who wants to be a speculator. We see something of the Government's action in connection with land on the rural fringes. The Government feels that land speculation on the rural fringes must stop. If that is how the Government feels about the rural fringes then surely there is a good case for a Select Committee to inquire into conditional purchase leases. The member for Gascoyne

should be commended for his efforts in trying to secure the appointment of a Select Committee to investigate just what is wrong with the position; to see whether the rights of the small purchaser need protecting, and also whether there is need for the provision of community amenities, such as roads, schools, shopping centres, and the progressive organisations which are in your area, Mr. Speaker.

The south-west corner of the State has been developed brilliantly over the years. It is something I would like to see in my own area. The rural areas are vast areas and it would mean the introduction of progressive organisations, and we would eventually find something along the lines that is in existence in Merredin, which is a perfect example. This would in turn develop a better town atmosphere and social atmosphere. The object of the member for Gascoyne is a commendable one, and he should be congratulated for trying to secure the appointment of a Select Committee. I support the motion.

MR. W. A. MANNING (Narrogin) [9.35 p.m.]: I intend to add a few words to this debate. The subject is a very important one and of great interest to me. If I thought the member for Gascoyne had the right idea in suggesting the appointment of a Select Committee I would be right behind him. But I believe the appointment of a Select Committee will not fulfil what he desires.

I certainly cannot follow the suggestion of the member for Albany when he says that he thinks the motion should be supported because the appointment of a committee will do no harm. It might not do any harm; but I see no reason why a committee should be appointed merely because it will do no harm. The point is how much good will it do. The member for Albany followed up his argument and pointed out the conditions of settlement on conditional purchase land. He said what was happening now justified the appointment of a Select Committee.

The development of this land is very important in many aspects. First of all it is important to the State. Although the Minister has said we are allocating millions of acres every year, this will be of no value whatever unless the land is developed. The prime purpose of allotting that land is to have it developed; to have money to put into its development. It is important both to the State and to the district, because it opens up land throughout the country for development.

The allocation of land is important from the point of view of neighbours. We have had instances where people have not developed their land, and on the other hand there have been those in isolated areas who have developed the land allotted to them. So we have land which is undeveloped lying alongside land which has been developed, thus hindering the progressive development of amenities.

The Minister said that land development must be planned because of the provision of roads, schools, etc. I heartily agree with the Minister's views that the development of land should be planned so that roads and schools can follow in orderly sequence. This emphasises the importance of the grantee going ahead first of all with his development and secondly fulfilling the residential requirements of the Act.

I would suggest that without supervision all these things would fall by the wayside, and the whole plan, as indicated by the Minister, would collapse. Over the last year or two, however, there has been a stiffening in inspections by the department. The inspectors of the department seem to be very active; they are watching what has been done and seeing that the regulations are carried out, with reasonable allowances. This has made a tremendous difference. Years ago there is no doubt that an inquiry would have been necessary but today the situation is quite different.

Added to the fact that the inspectors are fulfilling their duties to a much greater extent together with the amendments that the Minister has already brought to the House and those which he has indicated, it is hard to see how a Select Committee can do any better than what is being done at the present time, both from the point of view of the inspection of the land allocated, and the amendments which have been carried and those which are proposed.

Unless we can achieve over and above what is being done at the moment there is no ground for the appointment of a Select Committee, because the matter is so completely in hand at the present time. I admit that a few years ago it was doubtful whether we were doing sufficient in this respect. I am satisfied we are now on the right track; and provided the Minister keeps things moving, as he is doing, and provided he watches to see that the regulations are carried out, together with the improvements required under the Act, I feel we will be doing the right thing to improve the position from that which existed over a number of years. For that reason I do not think we can support the appointment of a Select Committee.

Such a committee would take a tremendous amount of time, and it would be involved in a great deal of detail, particularly if it were to hear the cases of dissatisfied applicants who appeared before it. The committee would be faced with all the problems of the land board over again, and it still would not be able to make a decision, because that would not be in its jurisdiction.

The Minister is taking a grip of the position, and I think we should support him. If we back him up with more stringent application of the legislation, we will be doing the right thing. Accordingly I can see no reason for the appointment of a Select Committee.

MR. GRAYDEN (South Perth) [9.40 p.m.]: Like the member for Roe, who spoke earlier, I appreciate the motives of the member for Gascoyne in introducting this motion for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into conditional purchase land. But I cannot agree that the appointment of a Select Committee is the best course to adopt in the present circumstances. Its appointment would, of course, be desirable if it were able to elicit facts not already known to its members, or to the members of this House.

All the facts of conditional purchase land, and of the undesirable aspects associated with it have been given a great deal of publicity already; they are extremely well known. In those circumstances I do not think there is any justification for the appointment of a Select Committee. On the other hand if a member should feel that any breaches of the Act are being committed at the moment, and he feels it necessary to draw up amendments to the existing Act, I feel sure the House would give them every consideration.

The main theme of the member for Gascoyne when he introduced the motion was the undesirability of allocating conditional purchase land to applicants without ensuring that those applicants reside on the property. That was the theme of his speech. It was the point he emphasised again and again. It is one with which I disagree. To do what the member for Gascoyne has suggested would not only be impossible but also undesirable. When the honourable member spoke he obviously glossed over one aspect of this question of the allocation of conditional purchase land.

In many of the lower rainfall areas of Western Australia, such as those that exist in the northern wheatbelt, in the Yilgarn, and in the Great Southern, there are countless numbers of conditional purchase blocks of only 1,000 acres. Most of these blocks were allocated in the 1920s when it was considered that 1,000 acres was adequate for a farm. In those days the soil was tilled with horses. The Lands Department went out of its way to obtain 1,000 acres of reasonable soil, in order that the person concerned might plant a crop of 300 acres every three years leaving the remainder of the land for spelling and fallow.

As a consequence of this the farmers who were allocated these blocks went up and worked them with the help of horses. But later, with the introduction of tractors and other forms of mechanisation, larger crops were produced. But because of this mechanisation, 1,000 acres was not considered a sufficiently economic proposition, particularly when it came to using the larger machinery required for growing wheat in the lighter rainfall areas.

The position that exists at the present time in the areas to which I have referred is that many of these farms continue as farms, even though they are only 1,000 acres and in some cases 1,500 acres. The farmers have been struggling ever since they went on to these blocks, and in those circumstances the only way they can improve their conditions is to obtain conditional purchase land.

They look around for an adjacent block; another one of those 1,000 or 1,500-acre blocks. The block they select may be more than 20 miles away from their home farm, and obviously in these circumstances, when allocating blocks of 1,000 and 1,500 acres in the lighter rainfall areas, we cannot enforce a residential qualification. If they were forced to live on these blocks under any circumstances it would be an absurd proposition. There are literally dozens of these places in the northern wheatbelt. Without question they are in the Yilgarn district and in other districts of Western Australia.

The trend now in the northern wheatbelt is for 5,000-acre farms. In these circumstances quite often one individual has several blocks that are separated by many miles. He obviously cannot live on each one and therefore there must be a provision in the Act which allows the Minister to waive the residential qualifications in certain circumstances. This provision already exists in the Act. As the member for Gascoyne so ably pointed out, the Act lays down that when a block is taken up the lessee must reside on it within a short period. Actually, the provision in the Act reads as follows:—

> The lessee shall, within six months from the date of the lease, take in his own person possession of the land, and shall reside upon it and make it his usual home without any other habitual residence, during at least six months in each year for the first five years from the commencement of the lease, and if possession is not taken as aforesaid the lease shall be forfeited.

In other words, here we have a provision in the Act to ensure that when C.P. blocks are allotted, the person has to reside on them. Later on there is a qualifying section in the Act—section 49—which reads as follows:—

> Any lessee of conditional purchase land subject to the condition of residence may, on application to the Minister, and on payment of a fee of twenty shillings, be relieved of the

condition of residence provided that in such case the improvements shall be of the value of double the amount of the purchase money.

I repeat that at present in the Act there is a section which requires an applicant to take up residence within six months; and there is another section which provides that in certain circumstances the Minister may waive that residential qualification. A Select Committee could sit as long as it liked, but it must still come up with the conclusion that there be such a qualifying provision in the Act to cover circumstances I have mentioned. The number of small blocks is innumerable. One only has to look at weekly publications like *The Countryman* and other magazines that are published, either weekly or monthly, showing lists of blocks that are thrown open for conditional purchase. These publications are widely circulated; and on looking at the advertisements one would see many of the blocks are only 1,000 acres in extent.

If we are going to tighten up the Land Act to ensure that when a person is allocated land he has to live on it—live on a 1,000-acre block—no-one, under any circumstances, will apply for the blocks because it would not be an economic proposition to live on a block like that. A block of 5,000 acres in the northern wheatbelt and eastern goldfields would probably be the equivalent of 500 acres in a more favourable situation such as Williams, Kojonup, or areas of that kind. That is the first point I wish to make. I have been emphasising that it would be impossible to tighten up the Land Act to ensure that people, when allocated these blocks, immediately go on to them.

The second point is this: It is undesirable that they should. When a person is allocated a block of, say, 3,000 acres—blocks have recently been thrown open in the Badgingarra, Eneabba, and Jerramungup areas—it is possibly to a young married person with a family. Do we want that person to immediately take up residence and live in a tent and force the Education Department to provide a school bus service so that the children might go to school in the town? If suitable accommodation were obtainable in the nearest town, would not that be infinitely more preferable?

He could reside in the town and go out each day and work his block over a period of years until it became an economic proposition. By that time he would probably have erected a house so that he could reside on his property. Another factor comes into this: There is a marked trend elsewhere in the world to concentrate in the country towns and farm the properties from those towns. A farmer could reside on a 600-acre property in the south-west and look over his land each day and could keep one eye on his sheep and possibly examine them every day, but it is a different proposition on a property at, say, Yilgarn. There, the property may comprise 10,000 acres. That is a common size there now. It could even be 1,200 acres, or 1,500 acres. If it were 2,500 acres it could be approximately three miles long and one mile wide. If a farmer lived at one end of the block he would have no chance of seeing what was happening at the other end of the block, bearing in mind that it is necessary to have belts of trees and uncleared areas on a property to prevent wind erosion. So it frequently happens in the lower rainfall areas to which I have referred, that a farmer, because he lives on the property, seldom sees the other end of his property, notwithstanding the fact that he may have sheep or crops.

On the other hand, take the case of a person who lives in a nearby town. He goes out each day to work his farm. He probably leaves at eight in the morning and returns home at five in the evening. Possibly it would be only a 10-minute run in a modern car; but his family is able to reside in the town and enjoy all the amenities that are available. They would have the convenience of electric light and his wife would be able to shop in the mornings. In addition, the children would not have to walk two miles to the gate to wait for a school bus to take them 40 miles or 20 miles to school. Because they live in the town they would simply walk to school. The family would be able to join in all the social activities of the town and each day, I repeat, the farmer would get in his motorcar and travel, say, 20 miles from the town to his farm.

This is a trend that is taking place throughout the wheat areas in Western Australia. I went to Merredin last year and was astounded at the number of farmers who deliberately built houses in the town and ran their farms from that point, because they felt that was infinitely more desirable than living on the farm and having their family in the wilderness in a dry and arid region.

Mr. Norton: Your ideas are different from those of the Minister.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I do not care. I am indicating that this trend is taking place in many country towns. Let us take what is happening in Morawa. Iron ore is being mined at Koolanooka and 56 homes have been built in the town. What will happen in four years' time when the iron ore deposits have cut out? Will it not be desirable to enable farmers to purchase those homes so their families might enjoy the communal life available in the town rather than have their children out in the far-flung areas completely dependent on, say, the school bus service?

The trend I have mentioned is happening in many parts of Western Australia; and it must continue to happen. It has been the trend in the United States of America for many years. In 1942 when I was in Palestine I went to some of the communal farms there which were run on a communistic basis. I also went to another type of settlement, where the individuals owned their own farms, but they did not build a residence on them. They built their houses together in a form of township and each day they would leave their families in the village while they went out to work their properties. That was widespread in Palestine in 1942. Since 1942 this trend has swept across America.

To give an indication of what is happening there—and it must follow here—let me say this: There are farmers in America now who do not own machinery to take off their crops, because they are able to employ huge contractors who start working in South America and who work their way north right across the United States of America taking off the crops on a contract basis for farmers. They also have contracting firms there that will plough ground and fallow if necessary—that is, if they do fallow there. Possibly they have got away from it.

Mr. Bickerton: What do they need the farm for?

Mr. GRAYDEN: As a consequence, there is now little need for the farmer to live on his farm.

Mr. Bickerton: That is the end of the Country Party.

Mr. GRAYDEN: Strangely enough, one often finds that a farmer does a great deal more work in most cases when he lives in the town than if he resides on the property. In many cases if the farmer resides on the property he may see something that he should do today—but decides he will do it tomorrow; but if he lives in the town he realises he is doing nothing and he goes out to work.

Mr. Brand: What is the strange thing you are talking about?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I want to emphasise this particular trend that is taking place in the United States and which has proved so successful there. What happens in a place such as Yilgarn these days? The farmer has a limited time in which to put in his crop so he does not work on a contract basis. However, if his crop is thick with weeds, what does he do? He rings the nearest town and out comes a plane which aerial sprays his crop. He does not use the old laborious method of boom sprays and so on. He gets a contractor who comes in and sprays for him.

In almost every one of our farming towns, when harvesting time arrives, some farmers employ contractors to take the crop off and are relieved of that particular responsibility. If a farmer has sheep, what does he do? If he wants to jet the sheep, he calls in a contractor. When he wants to shear, he always calls in a contractor. When he wants to crutch sheep, again he calls in a contractor.

Mr. J. Hegney: He has the game by the throat.

Mr. GRAYDEN: When he wants to dip them, he contacts the nearest dipping plant contractor and he dips the sheep. This is a typical example and I could name 20 farms in the Morawa area where the sheep are dipped by contract, jetted by contract, crutched by contract, shorn by contract; the crops are taken off by contract; and the crops are sprayed by contract.

Mr. Bickerton: The only work on the farm is being done by the ram.

Mr. GRAYDEN: Are we not getting to the stage in the country where it is desirable that farmers should live in nearby towns? I only mention this to illustrate that when the member for Gascoyne pleads that we should have a Select Committee into the Land Act, particularly with a view to tightening the provisions relating to residential qualifications, then I must disagree on the grounds I have mentioned.

Earlier, the member for Merredin-Yilgarn—the ex-Minister for Lands—was speaking and I would bring to his notice that in his own electorate there are many Italian families who have blocks which are terribly widespread. Those farmers originally started on conditonal purchase land, and I would mention the Panizza family. Some of their thousand-acre blocks are separated by 20 or more miles. Another family I have in mind is now farming on a very big basis and they are no longer eligible for conditional purchase blocks. When they started their block was small but they succeeded in obtaining additional conditional purchase blocks and later on succeeded in buying others. Their blocks are widely separated and on that account is would be impossible to insist on the residential qualification.

Another point which was mentioned by the member for Avon—and he gave an actual instance—relates to national service trainees. A young man aged 20 years could have been allocated a block. Under the Land Act, of course, he is eligible to obtain a block after turning 16 years of age. In the case of national service trainees we have young people of 20 years being called up; and are we to insist that they should reside on the farm or, alternatively, lose the farm because they failed to abide by the residential qualification? That, of course, would be nonsense. That is an instance of what is happening and there would be many cases like that in Western Australia.

Another matter which was mentioned by the member for Albany was the question of interested people coming from the other States and obtaining conditional purchase

blocks. I think that is quite desirable and I can recall one case in particular. The man concerned was a contractor in the Eastern States and I understand that he was contracting on about the same scale as Bell Bros. in Western Australia. He was most interested in the land at Esperance and he acquired a small block of 2,500 acres. He continually travelled backwards and forwards to farm that property, which he has now developed. I think it is desirable that Eastern States people should come to this State. They are imbued with what they see and this, of course, attracts settlers to Western Australia and brings capital to our State.

The next matter I wish to discuss relates to pastoral leases. There has been a lot of criticism that pastoral leases, in some cases, are understocked, and in many cases are not stocked at all. The member for Kimberley asked a question and was rather surprised at the answers he received. Some of the large areas have no stock on them at all. One has to take into consideration that this state of affairs has always existed and, of course, always will exist. This is because some of those properties are not worth stocking.

Mr. Norton: Why pay rent for them?

Mr. GRAYDEN: I do not know. Possibly the owners hope that the country will be rehabilitated in the future. I do not know the Kimberley area and would not be an authority. I have been through the area, of course, but I do not know the stations to which the member for Kimberley referred. If the member for Pilbara liked to ask how many stations were abandoned in the Pilbara, the House would be surprised at the answer.

Mr. Bickerton: I already know; there are 13.

Mr. GRAYDEN: I will dispute that figure; it is quite wrong. If somebody in this House, not necessarily the member for Pilbara, liked to ask the question, "How many stations in the Pilbara area have no stock?" I repeat, the members of this House would be surprised. I can recall, as early as 1949, travelling hundreds of miles through stations, any one of which could be purchased for £20. One could go through those stations and there was no stock of any kind. Those stations once carried 20,000 or 30,000 head of stock. The same position exists today. One can see areas around Marble Bar and further south where the iron ore is being mined, where there is no stock.

Take Silvania station, which was worked prior to 1922. It has recently been taken over and changed hands at a high figure, but in 1949 one could have had it virtually for nothing because it held no stock. One could have gone south from that point as far as Meekatharra and few of the stations had any stock on them. It is a situation which has always existed. The time I am referring to particularly was around 1954 when one often had to go a long way indeed to find stock in the north. This was at the time the member for Merredin-Yilgarn was the Minister for Lands. That was the position then and I daresay the same position exists today. It will always exist until such time as we have some sort of rehabilitation programme so that the stations can be restored to the position they were in before they were overstocked at the beginning of the century.

There are the two points I particularly want to emphasise. The first is that it is impossible to rigidly enforce the residential qualification on conditional purchase blocks. I have only given one reason, but there are many other reasons. The second point I want to emphasise is that it is not necessarily desirable, and in some cases can definitely be undesirable.

MR. MOIR (Boulder-Eyre) [10.9 p.m.]: I desire to make a few comments on this motion moved by the member for Gascoyne. I support it wholeheartedly because I believe it is very necessary. I listened to the Minister's speech, and it is quite obvious that he had his mind made up from the start, irrespective of the substantial case which the member for Gascoyne put before the House in support of this motion. Likewise, the supporters on the Minister's side of the House have opposed the motion and supported the Minister.

The member for Narrogin evidently knew what we on this side of the House have known for some time. He knew by virtue of questions he has asked from time to time on this very subject and it is rather interesting to know that he is opposed to this Select Committee.

The member for South Perth could be expected to take the line which he did because he has quite a degree of self-interest in what he said. I want to deal with one of the statements made by him in support of non-residents on blocks. He said that farmers should not be required to take families on to their blocks and then leave it to the Government to maintain a school bus run so that the children can be taken to the schools. That is exactly what the people are complaining about: absentee ownership. Blocks of land are owned by absentee owners and there is no doubt about that. Those owners are not subscribing to the district and the welfare of the people in it. As we know, school buses are not provided unless there is a certain number of children in an area to be catered for. Likewise, a school is not built in an area unless there is a certain number of children who will attend it.

When absentee owners reside in other States—and, indeed, in other countries—one can well understand the feelings of the people who live in these areas and are complying with the laws of the country

and developing their properties. They are residing on the blocks and not trafficking in them and I can understand their being disconcerted when they find that some people can evade the law with impunity.

The member for Roe mentioned that one of the Bills dealt with this session makes provision for the extension of the minimum requirement of two years' residence to five years' residence. We know that the trafficking which has taken place with certain blocks has been done with the Minister's approval. It would not matter if we made the period 10 years, the provision is still in the Act to allow the Minister to transfer land at his own discretion. We find that the portion of the Land Act which was amended was subsection (3) of section 143 and it states—

> Except in special cases to be approved by the Minister, no holding under Part V. shall be transferred or sublet until after the expiration of two years from the commencement of the lease or occupation certificate, unless the holder has expended on the land, in prescribed improvements, the full amount required to be expended during such period.

That has been amended to provide that five years must elapse. However, when we look at subsection (5), which is still in the Act, we find that it reads as follows:—

> The special cases which may be approved of by the Minister and which are referred to respectively in subsection (3) and in subsection (4) of this section may be so approved notwithstanding that none of the conditions for a transfer or subletting set out respectively in subsection (3) and in subsection (4) of this section has occurred, been complied with or performed.

So we see that, despite the Minister's assurance, the whole matter is wide open. There is no possible doubt at all that in the Esperance area there has been wilful evasion of the provisions of the Land Act. When people have gone before the land board they have known of the residential qualifications. One of the questions asked by the land board of an applicant is whether, if he is granted a block, he will be prepared to reside on it, and I take it that in all these cases where blocks are allocated the answer by the applicant must be in the affirmative; otherwise he would not have been granted the block.

However, many people who have been allocated blocks have no intention of residing on them and do not reside on them. They carry out improvements on the properties in varying degrees. Some have effected few improvements, and others, in turn, have made substantial improvements. They have developed pastures and they run stock. In some instances absentee owners enter into an arrangement with a neighbouring farmer in the district to carry out these operations for them.

I have had such instances brought to my notice in the Esperance area on various occasions not only by individuals, but also by members of the farmers' organisations: and when some of the speakers on the other side of the House maintain that they know nothing of such instances it completely puzzles me and makes me doubt whether they know what is really going on in the country districts. I have had these blocks pointed out to me whilst being taken through the district by various local farmers to view work that has been done on roads, or to be shown the lack of work on roads.

One block that was pointed out to me was fairly well developed, and at the time I saw it several sheep were being run on it, and it had fencing improvements. The owner of that block was a Government officer who had no intention of residing on it despite the fact that he had owned it for eight years. At the time I saw it he did not even have a shed erected on the property. The owner was well known, and it was also well known that another farmer in the area was carrying out the operations on the property on his behalf on some type of share basis.

I was also told of another absentee owner who was living in New South Wales. He owned one section of a block, and his brother, who resided in South Africa, owned another section, and neither of them, to the knowledge of the people in the district, had ever visited Esperance. The only work that had been done on the block was that some scrub had been rolled and a small area of pasture sown.

The block had been held by those two brothers for many years, and evidently the Lands Department was not concerned about forcing them to comply with the provisions of the Act. Another case was brought to my notice by the individual concerned in the block. He wanted to purchase a block of land owned by another farmer upon which very few improvements had been effected. Evidently he was afraid the Lands Department would not agree to the transfer, and so he approached me to see if I could do something for him. I might say here and now that I did not take any steps in any way to assist that gentleman, but I afterwards discovered he went to a lawyer; and although I do not know what transpired, I do know the block changed hands. It was transferred to this man who held the block for a little over two years and after making very few improvements he eventually sold it to an overseas investor. That was blatant trafficking in two blocks, and I know a great deal about the details of them.

Only on a few occasions have I visited Esperance when there have not been some complaints about absentee ownership. One man—who is a very good farmer and who has a large family—has, for some years, endeavoured to obtain blocks of land in order to settle his sons on them as farmers. He has four sons, and some of them are married. They have assisted their father to develop the home property to a very good standard, because it is quite a flourishing property, although it is not sufficient to provide a living for himself and all his sons. As a result, these lads have to obtain work in and around the district. Naturally the father of those boys is anxious to obtain farms for them so they can settle down. I understand they have applied for land on several occasions when areas have been thrown open, but without success.

These are the right type of people who should be allocated blocks in this area, and one can understand the feelings of the local people when a man can come from the Eastern States, or even from a country outside Australia, and be allocated a block of land in Esperance without his being ever seen on the property that has been allocated to him and when apparently he conducts the activities of the property from afar.

Another factor which creates concern in the minds of the people in the Esperance district is that Esperance is an area which is subject to rust disease in wheat which can be carried over from one season to another in the self-sown crop that appears after the grain which has been subject to rust has been harvested. One of the methods used to combat rust is to burn immediately all stubble in any self-sown crop that appears and plough it in. That is the method used to combat rust in the Esperance area.

However, on the blocks held by absentee owners naturally this method to prevent rust is not followed, and consequently on visiting the Esperance area one can often see one property on which there is a good crop, but in the adjoining property held by an absentee owner there is a self-sown crop which is heavily infested with rust. In view of the fact that rust is wind-borne one can understand the feelings of a farmer who has a healthy crop adjoining the property of an absentee owner who has neglected to take steps to combat rust.

In my opinion it is not wise to have local people acting on any land board. No doubt many such men honestly try to do the best they can in the circumstances and perform stirling work in the allocation of land, but I believe it is a task which should not be assigned to a local man. I have been in Esperance when blocks have been thrown open, and numerous people have approached me to act on their behalf to obtain a block of land, so one can understand what happens to a man who is a member of a land board and who is also president of the local shire council in the area in which the land board is concerned. He must be subjected to all types of pressure and I consider that it is not fair on him. Further, if a friend of a man who is a member of a land board is successful with his application for a block of land, other people—especially unsuccessful applicants—are very ready to say that favouritism has been shown by that member of the board towards his friend, and I admit that at times there has been some justification in coming to that conclusion.

I can recall a local man being on one of these land boards some years ago and two members of his family were successful in obtaining blocks of land. The ultimate result was that three blocks of land were held by members of the same family, and I think the local people would have been justified in thinking that such an allocation was very unfair, particularly as two of his sons were quite young and could not have cared less whether they obtained the block of land or not. Yet there were other people who badly needed land and who would have made good farmers but who were unsuccessful in their applications. Situations such as those I have outlined could easily have been avoided if a local man had not been a member of the land board. I think a land board should comprise only men who are, preferably, officers of the Lands Department, who have no association with the district involved, and who cannot be accused of showing favouritism towards any applicant.

From my observations in the Esperance area, trafficking in land has definitely occurred. There is no doubt that some people seem to be able to obtain blocks without any difficulty, while others are unsuccessful time and again. I know of one man who holds two blocks of land. He still owns them and he does not farm one of them. When I asked him the reason he said, "I cannot put a dam down because the ground is salty, and the salt is too close to the surface, and therefore it is a dud block." I suppose that was his bad luck in being allocated the dud block, but the important point is that, having been allocated that block, he was successful in being granted another one. That is not the only instance that has been brought to my attention.

I know another absentee owner who is living over 200 miles from Esperance. He was successful in obtaining a block in the coastal belt. The soil was made up of deep sand and, at the time, was regarded as being worthless. It is now regarded as being good country because attempts at sowing lucerne on it were successful. Because of its deep-rooting qualities the lucerne has been successfully established and the block has been worked as a grazing property. The man who was granted the block that was considered to be a dud is very active and he has obtained another property. He is developing both, but he

is a man of considerable means. The point is that he should not be allowed to hold two blocks and develop them when there are other people in the district who cannot obtain one block and who would be quite capable of developing a block if one were allocated to them.

So it would appear that some favouritism is being shown in certain instances by some means or other. I have cited one instance of where trafficking in land is going on, and I know beyond any shadow of doubt that there have been other cases of trafficking in blocks of land in the Esperance district. Although I have no proof to substantiate my statement, I have been shown sufficient evidence to convince me that the trafficking definitely goes on. However, I will not mention the details here. I am quite sure that if any member visited Esperance and raised the question of absentee owners with any of the local people, and the question of non-compliance with the provisions relating to conditional purchase land, he would hear many stories that could be substantiated. He would be told those stories by responsible people and by members of the local farmers' union.

Even those who do not require any more land at present deplore this trafficking in blocks, because they consider that this practice is bad for the progress of the district. The Esperance people are extremely proud of the progress that has already been made in that area, and they do not require other people to tell them of its potential. However, when they see absentee owners neglecting their properties year after year, naturally they become very concerned and resentful. One can appreciate what the Minister has said in regard to successful applicants for land; namely, that one does not expect an applicant to reside on a block immediately after it has been allocated to him, but he must be given a reasonable time. However, the question is: What is a reasonable time? The Minister has indicated a measure will be introduced which will take care of this point. I have my doubts whether it will close the loophole which exists in the Act.

The motion before us is well justified, and no serious objection can be raised to the appointment of a Select Committee. After all, it will have to report to Parliament, and if there is no substance in what we on this side are alleging then we will be made to look silly.

The motion has served a good purpose, and has been the means of stirring the Minister into introducing legislation to overcome some of the shortcomings in the Act, and the misdemeanours which have taken place. The Minister must be aware of them, and he should recognise the need to tighten the legislation. I support the motion.

MR. NORTON (Gascoyne) [10.32 p.m.]: First of all I wish to thank members who have taken part in this debate. Their contributions have been very interesting, and have brought to light pertinent facts in relation to conditional purchase land. In moving the motion I had no intention of slighting anyone or making inferences about their ability. The loopholes which exist in the Act and the trafficking in conditional purchase land have been brought to my notice by a number of people.

I wish to refer to what the Minister has said. In the first place he did not in any way challenge the statements which I made in substantiation of the case I put forward. That being the position he must have regarded them as substantially correct, and capable of being verified. Although I did not give the locations or the names, I did give evidence which can be substantiated.

The Minister said that I used the report of Mr. Slee as the basis of my argument. By and large that is true, but I did couple the report of Mr. Slee with other parts of the State, and I proved that Badgingarra was not the only district in which trafficking was taking place, or in which absentee owners were trying to develop their holdings—and not too successfully.

The Minister went through the history of the development of agricultural land in Western Australia, most of which we know. The history of our land development is certainly very interesting. He said the greater the demand for anything the greater are the weaknesses in the Act which controls it. That is what has happened in respect of conditional purchase land. With extensive development taking place, the weaknesses in the Act have become evident, and the purpose of my motion is to correct those weaknesses.

The Minister told us that he will introduce a Bill which contains a large number of amendments to the Land Act, in order to close the loopholes. We hope it will. Earlier this year he introduced an amendment to section 143 of the Act, which sought to stop the trafficking in conditional purchase land; but there is still a loophole in section 143(5) which gives the Minister the discretion under certain circumstances to make a transfer, should he consider it to be necessary. Even with that alteration to the Act the trafficking in conditional purchase land will not be stopped.

What will happen is this: The speculator will offer to the holder of a conditional purchase lease payment in the form of key money. He will make this offer to the leaseholder so that he can obtain a transfer of the land when the right time comes. The speculator will pay for all the improvements and the leaseholder will be bought off. No matter what alteration is made to section 143 of the Act attempts

will be made to get around it. It will be very hard to tighten this provision and stop the trafficking.

It was stated by the Minister that absentee owners must be given time to develop their properties. Probably he has a case, and he suggested that in the forthcoming Bill the time allowed for the taking up of residence on the property be two years. Perhaps the period of six months is too short, but I intended to leave that aspect to the Select Committee to investigate. If the Act prescribes a period of six months, the owner could live on the property for six months during the off-season, and share-farm another property over the rest of the year. So the condition of residence is not as difficult to overcome as the Minister would have us believe.

I have given instances of properties being owned by people living in practically every State of the Commonwealth, except Queensland. One of these cases concerns a company owning some land in the Nelson location, the directors of which live in England. I have given instances where the owners develop their properties by remote control.

The Minister pointed out that the best way to develop the country was by the family unit. I heartily agree. That is a very successful way. If the country is to be developed by remote control we will not have the establishment of the requisite services in the respective districts, such as schools, post offices, hospitals, and roads. These are urgently needed for the development of the outback.

The Minister said the Lands Department was doing an excellent job in inspecting conditional purchase areas. I have no doubt the inspectors are doing their utmost. The Minister gave the actual figures as to the number of inspectors employed, and the number of inspections which they made each year. He said 10 inspectors have been employed, and last year they inspected 5,000 properties. That meant on an average each inspector inspected 500 properties in the year. He has to travel over long distances, if he resides in Perth.

Mr. Bovell: The inspectors live in the districts in which they work.

Mr. NORTON: They still have to travel over great distances from the centres in which they live. In a 5-day week—allowing for a fortnight off each year—an inspector would have to make two complete inspections each day, in addition to submitting reports and travelling. If 10 inspectors can each cover 500 inspections in one year then they do not have much time to waste. The department could probably engage double the existing number of inspectors, in view of the large amount of conditional purchase land being released.

The Minister referred to the methods used by the land boards in the various States. I have no quarrel with their methods, but I think the methods used by the land boards in this State are quite satisfactory. The job which they have to undertake should not be hurried. When a large number of applications are received, each applicant has to give evidence. By the time the evidence is recorded and analysed, the members of the board become somewhat weary. I know, because I can speak from personal experience.

The Minister told us that prior to 1959 local representatives were not appointed to land boards, and that land boards did not sit in country areas. For his information I would point out that I was a member of a land board in Carnarvon from 1946 until I was elected to Parliament. On a number of occasions I sat on the board with the late Harry Francis, who was chairman of the board for many years. I gained much experience from his leadership. One other member of the Lands Department came up to Carnarvon with him on a couple of occasions. After that he, an officer of the Agriculture Department, and I sat on the board at Carnarvon.

Mr. Bovell: There might have been isolated cases, but it was not the general policy.

Mr. NORTON: The Minister supplied figures showing the tremendous amount of allocations of land in the various States. They were very interesting, but they had nothing to do with the motion. One thing which surprises me is that Victoria and Tasmania still have land in a virgin state belonging to the Crown. He went on to say that the family unit was the best method to develop the land.

The Minister probably put up the best argument that has been put up in support of the motion, because he said he would not amend the Act without having a thorough investigation made. Here is a method of bringing about a thorough investigation and obtaining recommendations from five members of this House who, no doubt, would have had experience in agriculture—and experience not only of one section of agriculture. With five such members we would have a wide representation of the agricultural interests.

As I mentioned before, trafficking in land can still go on irrespective of the amendment which we passed earlier this year. That amendment has had a very quick effect which we would realise on reference to the various journals which advertise conditional purchase land. There is only about one a week now and in that one there is always the phrase, "by consent of the Minister."

The other Government members who spoke on this motion said they could not support it at present, but indicated that if the motion had been moved 12 months earlier they would have considered it absolutely necessary. They said they felt

that over the past 12 months the need for an investigation had disappeared. I cannot agree with them on that point, because in the speech I made when introducing the motion I showed very clearly the necessity for this motion because the conditions were still existing.

When he was speaking, the member for South Perth thought he was submitting a case against the motion, but he pointed out the urgent necessity for the Land Act to be altered, particularly in connection with the residential qualifications, and he was particularly concerned with the area in which he has just acquired land. That was the only point upon which he dwelt. Although he might not know it, he lent very strong support to my motion in that respect.

While I do not know what is in the Minister's Bill which could be introduced this week, I still consider that a committee of this sort would do a lot of good and be of tremendous help to the Minister and to his department. It would ascertain quite an amount of information that would never be brought to their notice otherwise.

The member for Merredin-Yilgarn touched on the pastoral leases, and there are quite a number of aspects which still could be looked into, although the redrafted legislation of 1963 did do a good job. However, when we study the questions asked by the member for Kimberley recently, and the answers supplied, we find that there are quite a number of stations which were allocated their leases in 1959—in fact, five of them—which have not a bit of stock on them despite the fact that at present they should have either 20 head of sheep or four head of cattle per 1,000 acres.

I could go on for a long time on the various aspects which could be investigated by a committee, but I feel that on the conditional purchase side I have submitted sufficient evidence to warrant the passing of this motion.

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

Ayes—18	
Mr. Bickerton	Mr. Jamieson
Mr. Brady	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Evans	Mr. Moir
Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Graham	Mr. Rowberry
Mr. Hall	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Toms
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Norton *(Teller)*

Noes—25	
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. Brand	Mr. Lewis
Mr. Burt	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Court	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Dunn	Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Durack	Mr. O'Neil
Mr. Elliott	Mr. Runciman
Mr. Gayfer	Mr. Rushton
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Williams
Mr. Hart	Mr. I. W. Manning
Dr. Henn	*(Teller)*

Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Mr. Davies	Mr. Craig
Mr. May	Mr. W. A. Manning
Mr. Curran	Mr. Grayden

Majority against—7.

Question thus negatived.

Motion defeated.

ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2)

Second Reading: Defeated

Debate resumed, from the 13th October, on the following motion by Mr. Toms:—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. COURT (Nedlands—Minister for Industrial Development) [10.54 p.m.]: The Bill introduced by the member for Bayswater seeks to amend sections 92 and 94 of the Act, dealing with postal voting.

Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section 92 requires an elector to, *inter alia*, complete before an authorised witness the declaration to accompany the postal ballot paper. Paragraph (b) of that subsection provides that the authorised witness shall sign his name in his own handwriting on the declaration in the space supplied for that purpose, and shall add the date he so signs.

Section 94 of the Act defines the following authorised witnesses within the meaning of division (3), dealing with postal voting, as—

(a) within the State, any person who is enrolled as an elector on a roll for a district;

(b) outside the State and within the Commonwealth of Australia, any person who is enrolled as an elector on a roll for a district; any justice of the peace for any State of the Commonwealth (and other defined persons);

(c) outside the Commonwealth, any person who is enrolled as an elector on a roll for a district; any justice of the peace for any State of the Commonwealth (and other defined persons);

To explain the effect of the measure under consideration, I refer, firstly, to the amendments contained in clause 3 of the Bill, which substitutes a new paragraph for paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section 94, and inserts an additional paragraph to be designated as (aa).

The replacement paragraph (a) provides that an authorised witness within a province or district, to which section 93 of the Act applies, shall be any person who is enrolled as an elector on a roll for a district. The new paragraph (aa) requires

that elsewhere within the State an authorised witness shall be one of the following:—

(a) an officer of the Public Service of the State employed in the Electoral Department;

(b) any temporary assistant appointed under section 15 of the Electoral Act;

(c) any officer of the Public Service of the State (other than an officer employed in the Electoral Department) who is appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer by instrument in writing to be an authorised witness.

Paragraph (a) of clause 2 of the Bill proposes to amend subparagraph (i) of paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section 92, so that an authorised witness on any declaration to accompany a postal ballot paper made within a province or district to which section 93 applies may be "any person enrolled as an elector on a roll for a district."

Section 93 refers to the registration of general postal voters, and the districts or provinces to which the provision of the section refers are those situated within the north-west area, as defined in the Electoral Districts Act, 1947, or to any province or district which is wholly or partly in any other portion of the State declared by proclamation to be a remote area. The districts comprised in the existing north-west area are Gascoyne, Kimberley, and Pilbara, and the districts which have been proclaimed to be remote areas are Boulder-Eyre, Merredin-Yilgarn, and Murchison.

The contents of the Bill would, so far as I can see, effect no alterations in regard to the qualifications of authorised witnesses to the declarations of postal voters in the provinces and districts referred to in section 93. I think the honourable member conveyed this point when he introduced this Bill.

Paragraph (b) of clause 2 of the Bill is to amend subparagraph (ii) of paragraph (b) of subsection (2) of section 92. The existing provisions in the subparagraph are that if the declaration is made out of the State, the authorised witness shall, in addition, add immediately below where he signs his name on the declaration, the title by which he qualifies as an authorised witness, together with his then place of residence. The alteration sought in the amendment will not alter the provisions in regard to authorised witnesses out of the State, but will require the information, in regard to qualification and address, to be inserted in every declaration to accompany a postal ballot paper made within the State, except in the provinces or districts referred to in section 93.

At present an authorised witness to a declaration to accompany a postal ballot paper completed anywhere within the State may be any person who is enrolled as an elector on a roll for a district. That person is required to insert in the declaration the date he signs and the address in respect of which he is enrolled as an elector for the Legislative Assembly.

The foregoing is a resume of the effect of the amendments on the particular sections of the Act and I only give it for reference purposes for record in respect of this particular measure because on a previous occasion I was accused of not having analysed a Bill. I hope the foregoing does effectively analyse what the honourable member intends under this Bill.

The comments on the Bill are as follows: The effect of the measure would be that, in districts other than Gascoyne, Kimberley, Pilbara, Murchison, Merredin-Yilgarn, and Boulder-Eyre, an authorised witness to a declaration accompanying a postal ballot paper would have to be either an officer of the Electoral Department—and there are none outside the metropolitan area—a temporary assistant appointed under the Electoral Act, or a public servant appointed by the Chief Electoral Officer as an authorised witness.

Secondly, should the definition of "public servant" be construed as the same as that under the Public Service Act, persons who are issuing officers for the purpose of issuing postal ballot papers in those districts, such as town and shire clerks and police officers, could not be authorised witnesses to postal voting papers issued by them even in their own offices. A husband who was not a temporary assistant appointed under the Electoral Act, or a public servant especially appointed as an authorised witness could not witness his wife's signature on the declaration, and *vice versa*.

In any case, even if it could be contended that the authorisation to act as an authorised witness should be extended to all issuing officers, those officers are required to post the postal voting papers to an elector, or deliver them to him at the place of issue, and they are precluded from visiting any person for the purpose of taking his postal vote, except for a period of seven days before the close of the time for the receipt of applications for postal ballot papers; that is, the day before polling day.

The honourable member referred to alleged abuses in relation to postal voting, particularly in regard to the inmates of "C"-class hospitals and institutions, and to a Bill which he introduced in 1964 in this regard. As members know, that Bill was defeated.

The intention of the Bill now under consideration is, no doubt, to ensure that the only persons who could act as authorised witnesses at any of these hospitals or institutions would be officers of the

Electoral Department, temporary assistants under the Electoral Act, or public servants especially authorised in that behalf. This may be considered to have some merit, but the proposals in the Bill are all-embracing and cover applications for postal votes made on any of the prescribed grounds wherever those persons may be throughout the State, outside the districts which have been referred to.

The amendments would certainly present administrative difficulties, and in this regard I think the main weakness of the Bill is disclosed. In matters of this kind it is desirable to have the electoral machinery as simple as possible and to avoid as many administrative difficulties as possible. Also, we must remember that in these elections there is a compulsory vote. It is on adult franchise and we should do everything possible to make voting as reasonably easy as is practicable. I am assured by those who have experience in the administration of the Act that this Bill would present some administrative difficulties.

Expressed another way, we should make the facilities as readily available as possible and as easy as possible for people to register their votes. But, at the same time, if we know of any abuses it is up to those responsible to police the machinery and minimise, if not completely eliminate, those abuses.

Many requests could be expected to be made to the Electoral Department for authorised witnesses by persons desirous of completing postal ballot papers, particularly the sick and infirm both in and out of hospitals and institutions. In the metropolitan area alone it would be difficult to cope with those requirements even with a greatly augmented staff of temporary assistants. In fact, it is considered to be almost impossible. Outside the metropolitan area it would be even worse, and the question of the availability of public servants for appointment as authorised witnesses, their means of transport, and the payment for their services would also be factors to consider.

In view of this it is the intention of the Government to oppose the measure; but I would add, by way of an observation, that there may be other ways of overcoming the particular problems which the honourable member has mentioned. I refer to the taking of votes of electors who are sick or infirm and who are not in hospitals or institutions at which polling places are appointed and mobile portable ballot boxes operate. I think there is some provision in New South Wales that covers some form of electoral visitor, but even that is very restricted and is used only in the heavily populated areas. Outside of that another type of machinery has to apply. I am not quite clear about the exact form; but as I understand the type of electoral visitor system that prevails there, it is applicable only in the closely populated areas and outside of that a postal system applies in New South Wales.

As far as I am aware the Commonwealth Electoral Act, and the Acts of other States, apart from New South Wales, contain no provisions for electoral visitors or any person in that category. I also believe that if the honourable member's Bill were made law we would have even more administrative problems than we had in the old days when we had postal vote officers, and they presented many problems of administration during election time. For those reasons I oppose the Bill.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [11.7 p.m.]: The Minister, in replying to the proposals put forward by the member for Bayswater in his Bill, indicated he did agree there was some possibility of collusion existing in regard to voting at the present time. I do not think he needs to go far to get an abundance of proof that this collusion does exist; and surely it is not beyond the means of man, in this day and age, even if this Bill is not the ultimate in this regard, to come up with a proposition to cover all the situations that are not now served by a mobile polling booth.

The difficulty under the Electoral Act at present, as I see it, is that a particular hospital has to be declared as a polling booth in a district before it can become a centre for a mobile polling booth. That provision in itself is foolish because a hospital may not be in a suitable position anyway to function as a polling booth for the district. All that is required in the hospital is the taking of the votes of the patients who are there. That having been done the booth could quite justifiably be closed down or taken somewhere else. So I feel there is a need for more to be done by the Electoral Department than is being done now. It could start on the Wednesday before an election and its officers could take votes from these places. There is no reason why that could not be done. The Government's officers could proceed to these institutions and take the votes. There are not many of them in the metropolitan area and they could all be covered before election day.

Mr. Court: But then you could have some coming in between Wednesday and Saturday.

Mr. JAMIESON: That happens now. That sort of thing is always likely to happen. If a person has an attack of appendicitis on the Friday night before an election he has no chance of voting because he is unconscious for most of the Saturday, and he could not be expected to vote. The Minister always throws it back, as he did on a previous electoral Bill, that all circumstances cannot be met. I think

everybody realises that, and I suppose the best way to overcome the problem would be to say that only those who can get to a polling booth are those who should vote. But by doing that we disfranchise a number of people and we would get hysterical outbursts from those who wanted to vote and from those who wanted to vote on behalf of somebody else.

Let us be honest with ourselves. In many cases where people are sick, aged, or infirm they do not record the votes they desire to make; they record votes in a way which is decided for them. I think it is high time we all agreed that the votes of these people were not being truly recorded but that only a reflected vote was being recorded, such as that of a canvasser. There are several obnoxious features about this type of voting as I pointed out earlier in the session. I quoted a case where a paraplegic was canvassed by a Liberal canvasser. This was at the earliest time when votes could be taken by post and no doubt a comprehensive list was procured from somewhere and this canvasser was canvassing for votes.

Unfortunately the person concerned informed the canvasser that he was a Labor voter and his application was never sent in to the department, or at least it had not arrived there on the day before the election. However, because he had not received the paper this man complained and arrangements were made for a second application to be forwarded to him. After the second application had been serviced and his vote had been recorded the first application turned up, but it was not until after many weeks and it had obviously been held for the purpose of avoiding a vote being recorded.

If this is the sort of thing that is going on under the present Act—and I am sure it is—we should try to do something to overcome it. Whether the proposals in the Bill are the ultimate I would not like to say, but I would far rather hear the Minister say that while the Government did not agree with the proposition it would give some firm consideration to it. That would be better than saying straight out that the Government opposed the Bill. There being no election imminent in the near future the Minister could have said some proposals were being brought forward during the next session of Parliament. That would have been an argument in favour of voting against the proposals at this stage.

The Bill is an attempt to get over the problems at "C"-class hospitals and rest homes where this sort of thing is going on. Naturally the person running this type of institution generally has a great influence on the inmates and in the way they vote. The only way to overcome this is to have some official going from bed to bed with a box recording the votes; and, if necessary, scrutineers from the respective parties could attend as well to ensure that the game was played fair.

I understand that is how the mobile boxes operate and I would suggest it is probably a better method than the one which is used at present. According to the Minister's explanation this would present some difficulties and I imagine the department would have closely examined the proposal. However, I repeat, there is no general election imminent, and I think the Minister could have said that the complaints which have been made would be looked into with a view to introducing amending legislation.

There is no doubt that the present method adopted for the taking of votes at these institutions needs to be cleaned up. It is a festering sore and it should not be allowed to remain without some treatment by this Parliament. There is compulsory voting on an adult franchise basis for both Houses of Parliament now and far more attention needs to be given to the system of postal voting or voting away from polling booths.

All political parties would endeavour to do what they could to overcome any votes being cast against them, but that is not the prime business of Parliament, which is to give people the opportunity to vote the way they want to vote and not the way in which a political canvasser wants them to vote, because the son of some old lady happens to send the officer along to her while in hospital.

The Bill has some degree of merit and deserves support, even if at a later stage the Minister were prepared during the process of this Bill, or in the next year or two, to propose further amendments to the Electoral Act.

Mr. Court: I should have mentioned that this question of the electoral visitor system is being examined to see whether there are any practical methods that could be adopted without any excessive administrative problems. I understand the honourable member's problem would be administratively impossible.

Mr. JAMIESON: That could be the case: but if the Minister is having this examined it is something that we will see in the future. In the meantime the only positive move is the attempt of the member for Bayswater. If this Bill did become part of the electoral law and it contained any particularly obnoxious feature there would no doubt be a scurry to amend it at the first opportunity. That would not be a problem beyond the capacity of the present Government.

MR. FLETCHER (Fremantle) [11.17 p.m.]: Had the Minister not said it was administratively impossible I would not have argued the point. I do believe that it is administratively possible to achieve a maximum vote, if not a 100 per cent.

vote in such places as "C"-class hospitals. Offhand I do not know how many "C"-class hospitals there are in Fremantle, but let us assume there are half a dozen. I submit that an officer of the Electoral Department, or an appointed person, could leave Perth on the one day and fill in the requisite applications at every institution in Fremantle, and his counterpart could do the same in the various other electorates of Mt. Lawley, Midland, and so on. This could be done on the one day. He could return subsequently when the ballot papers had been posted out and collect them. It is not as insurmountable as the Minister made it appear.

To illustrate my point, I would say that I had a request from a relative in relation to a "C"-class hospital. I went there to oblige that person with an application, and I finished up filling out applications for every person in that hospital who was capable of voting. I admit that some of them were not. If I could do that in one morning, surely an officer of the department could do it in every such institution in the Fremantle area. I did this work in less than one hour. That was in one hospital, and it could be repeated elsewere.

Mr. O'Connor: How many people were involved?

Mr. FLETCHER: Offhand I would say I filled in about a dozen applications in approximately one hour. On that basis and with an eight-hour working day I assume that eight hospitals could be covered. Some of them would be bigger than others. The whole purpose of the Bill is to stop any malpractices that are indulged in, and to satisfy not only the elector but the elector's relatives.

Many people have complained to me that their aged relations have been subject to pressure either from one party or the other. It would have been possible for me to go back to that particular hospital and help with ballot papers those whose applications I had assisted with. But I played the game and did not do so. I know this does happen with other helpers in certain hospitals.

An officer appointed for that purpose could achieve the work to the satisfaction not only of the electors but also of the relatives of the electors. It would also be of benefit to the electoral system and do away with any prospect of the abuses that have been mentioned. I support the Bill, even if the Minister does not.

MR. TOMS (Bayswater) [11.22 p.m.]: I would like to thank the Minister on this occasion because it would seem that the departmental officers have gone into the Bill pretty closely, and have not just given it the scanty attention similar legislation received last year. I also want to thank the members on this side of the House who have given me their support.

Members may recall that when I introduced the Bill I indicated that if a person had a conscience he could recount the abuses that take place under the electoral system. I am afraid I cannot accept what the Minister has said as reasons for not supporting the Bill; rather do I consider what he has said as an excuse.

The Minister's main complaint and that of the department seems to be that the administrative side of this would be impossible. If we are going to adopt that attitude we might as well give the game away altogether. If we are going to show concern for the strain that might be felt by the administrative sections of a Government department rather than try to eliminate some of the abuses that have been mentioned, I think we are reaching a pretty farce.

When I introduced the Bill I said that its only purpose was to prevent the abuses that have been taking place in respect of the aged and sick people incapable of voting. While the Minister gave a very lucid explanation of the Bill, he came up with the sole excuse that administratively it would be impossible.

I suggest there would be very little administrative difficulty involved; because, as members are aware, on election day we find there are poll clerks, presiding officers, and goodness knows how many other people appointed to take the vote. Would it be difficult to appoint these people two or three days before and get them to clean up the sick and postal votes? I think it would be a simple matter. I admit it could be an extra charge on the Crown, and I might have expected some repercussion from that direction, because it would have been an extra cost to the Electoral Department. But when I come up against the only excuse that the carrying out of this amendment would be administratively impossible I feel it is time we gave the game away altogether.

Mr. Graham: We should give the Government away altogether.

Mr. TOMS: Unfortunately, we cannot do that. We can only hope that the electors will see the light eventually.

Mr. O'Connor: They saw it six years ago.

Mr. TOMS: I was a little hopeful that possibly there might have been some ray of light shining through when the Minister indicated that consideration was being given to means of overcoming this problem. This is an admission that the department and the Government know as well as we do on this side of the House that these abuses are taking place. Even if the Bill I have presented is not perfect, it could at least be given a trial in order to help eliminate the unnecessary worry and hardship which is inflicted on some of the people in "C"-class hospitals and other institutions. I believe this could be done.

I will not be put off by being told that it cannot happen. I would prefer to see the administration strained rather than to see abuses being practised in what we regard as a democracy. I hope members on the other side of the House will examine their conscience and give me their support on the Bill I have introduced.

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

Ayes—17

Mr. Bickerton	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Brady	Mr. Moir
Mr. Evans	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Rowberry
Mr. Graham	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Hall	Mr. Toms
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Norton
Mr. Jamieson	*(Teller.)*

Noes—24

Mr. Bovell	Mr. Lewis
Mr. Brand	Mr. W. A. Manning
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Court	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Dunn	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Durack	Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Elliott	Mr. O'Neil
Mr. Gayfer	Mr. Runciman
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Rushton
Mr. Hart	Mr. Williams
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. I. W. Manning
	(Teller.)

Pairs

Ayes	Noes
Mr. May	Mr. Craig
Mr. Curran	Mr. Grayden
Mr. Davies	Mr. Burt
Mr. J. Hegney	Dr. Henn

Majority against—7.

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

House adjourned at 11.30 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 21st October, 1965

CONTENTS

The PRESIDENT (The Hon. L. C. Diver) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (2): WITHOUT NOTICE

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Thursday Nights and Suspension of Standing Orders

1. The Hon. F. J. S. WISE asked the Minister for Mines:

   (1) What are the Minister's intentions in regard to the likely length of sittings, and sitting days, from now to the end of the session?

   (2) As it is customary about this time of the parliamentary session to suspend Standing Orders to facilitate business, will he advise the House what he intends to do?

   The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

   (1) and (2) I propose to give notice of the customary motions next week asking for the suspension of Standing Orders. I also propose that the House shall sit on Thursday evening from next Thursday onwards.

   The Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Inclusive?