

*Votes—Superannuation Board, £3,320; Printing, £76,476; Tourist Bureau, £3,033; Literary and Scientific Grants, etc., £13,050; Miscellaneous Services, £1,130,236—agreed to.*

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Wednesday, 17th October, 1945.*

	PAGE
Question: Fremantle wharves, as to sanitary conveniences .....	1271
Motion: Urgency, hospitals and staff shortages, withdrawn .....	1271
Bills: National Fitness, 2R. ....	1280
Supply (No. 2), £1,800,000, 2R., Com., report ....	1288
State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment, 2R. ....	1290
Soil Conservation, 2R. ....	1292
Builders' Registration Act Amendment, 2R. ....	1293
Closer Settlement Act Amendment, 2R. ....	1294

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

### QUESTION.

#### FREMANTLE WHARVES.

*As to Sanitary Conveniences.*

Hon. G. W. MILES asked the Chief Secretary: Will the Government take immediate action to compel the authorities concerned to instal adequate sanitary conveniences on the Fremantle wharves for the use of both the wharf workers and the general public?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: The sanitary conveniences on the wharves for both sexes are considered to be adequate for normal conditions. A ladies' waiting room with modern conveniences is located in a central position on Victoria Quay, and conveniences for males are situated under the wharves, approximately 500 feet apart, along both quays. The modernisation of the men's conveniences will receive the attention of the Fremantle Harbour Trust in due course.

### MOTION—URGENCY.

*Hospitals and Staff Shortages.*

The PRESIDENT: I have received a letter from Hon. E. H. H. Hall as follows:—

I desire to inform you that at the commencement of the sitting of the Council to-day, it is my intention to move, under Standing Order No. 59, the adjournment of the

House to discuss a matter of urgency, namely, the urgent necessity for the State Government to appeal to the Commonwealth Government to lift the restrictions under National Security Regulations in relation to nursing so as to enable the Government to deal with the existing difficulties in connection with the staffing of hospitals and thereby allay the unrest at present existing.

It will be necessary for four members to rise in their places to support the proposal.

Four members having risen in their places,

**HON. E. H. H. HALL** (Central) [4.38]:

I do not think I need occupy the time of the House to any great extent on this matter because surely it is known to all, not only here in Parliament, but also throughout the length and breadth of the State, what a very dire situation exists in the hospitals in the metropolitan-suburban area and also in the country districts. Yesterday I received a letter asking me to endeavour to get two nursing assistants, as they are called, for the hospital at Three Springs. This is another term for probationers, so the hospital was not asking for fully trained nurses; it wanted two assistants who would be able to minister to the sick in that hospital. I know of my own knowledge that the hospital at Three Springs is only one of many hospitals throughout the State that are seriously short-handed in the matter of trained nurses and short-handed in the matter of what might be termed domestic help.

I have it on good authority that there is at present a shortage of trained nurses to the number of 140 odd. It was 140 about a week ago, and every day word is coming in of an increasing shortage. There is also a shortage of a similar number of nursing assistants, and of 30 to 40 cooks for hospitals. This is not a shortage that has occurred only in recent weeks. It has been gradually getting worse for months and months. In a democracy such as that upon which we pride ourselves, the time has long passed when this matter should engage the attention of the State Parliament. Matters industrially are somewhat confused today by what I can only term an unfortunate intrusion by the Commonwealth.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: In case they have forgotten, I would remind members that the nurses' union in this State—and I am now dealing with trained nurses—is desirous of

coming under a Federal award; which, I suppose, means that in future they will not be subject to the Western Australian Arbitration Court award and, in the event of any dispute, they will approach the Commonwealth Arbitration Court. I am not—and I can prove it—wedded to Western Australian control wholly irrespective of circumstances. In that respect I differ from some of the members of the party to which I belong.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You will be getting expelled, too, Teddy! You had better look out!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: There was a matter that received the attention of this House last night and on which excellent speeches were delivered. I refer to the position of the North-West. Convinced as I am that the State Government is not able to control the North-West—and I would quote the former Premier and Treasurer, Hon. J. C. Willcock, who admitted that we have not the necessary finances to do our duty by that important area—rather than adopt the dog-in-the-manger attitude, I would be willing for the Commonwealth to come in. But in the matter of nurses, I am not willing for the Commonwealth to intrude. We are making the way easy for unions which cannot be attended to locally to apply to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court.

Are we to sit idly by and allow this kind of thing to go on? If we do, it seems to me that the writing is on the wall, and we are going to add to our troubles. May I remind members that it has been found necessary by the State Government to despatch two Cabinet Ministers to Canberra to interview the Prime Minister with a request that National Security Regulations be lifted in order that the local Arbitration Court may get to work and settle the unfortunate disputes which are occurring at Collie? May I go further and remind members that the paralysing strike which occurred there recently would not have happened if the State Government had bestirred itself and had the official sent over here come earlier to adjudicate on the claims that the Collie miners submitted? But the Government dilly-dallied and delayed, until the men became exasperated at the failure of either the State or the Commonwealth Government, or both, to take action to inquire into their grievances and went out on strike, with results of which we are only too well aware. Is the same inaction going to com-

pel these nurses, who have been bravely and unselfishly carrying on their important duties for some time past, to take similar measures? I speak with personal knowledge when I declare that only the humane feelings of this very fine band of women have kept them at their posts and their professional attendance on our sick throughout the State.

We are entitled to ask the State Government, how long it intends to stand idly by. As far as we know, the Government might say it has tried. I shall be very surprised and disappointed if it has not; but at least I cannot remember any ministerial pronouncement to that effect. Has it endeavoured to persuade the Commonwealth Government to lift these regulations which bar the way to the nurses' union approaching the Arbitration Court? It may be said that that is not quite correct. I would refer to yesterday's "The West Australian," in which there is a reference to the hospital employees—I think mostly the domestic staffs—approaching the Arbitration Court. This is what they have to prove: Under the National Security (Economic Organisation) Regulations, it is necessary to establish the existence of anomalies or changed circumstances before rates of remuneration can be altered. I was in touch only this morning with the secretary of the nurses' union. That lady impresses me as being very efficient, and as knowing her job. Only recently, she returned from conferences with sister organisations in the Eastern States. I asked her where was the bar to proving these anomalies? She said, "We have to prove that an anomaly exists in a comparison between Western Australia and the Eastern States. We have to satisfy the judge that there is an anomaly, and we are fearful that we are not able to do that. But why should we have to do it when we know that conditions obtaining here do not nearly approach the favourable conditions under which nurses work in the Eastern States?"

A few weeks ago, in Perth, I was rung up by a lady whom I have known from girlhood. She asked me if she could make an appointment with me. She had been trained at the Perth Hospital, had passed her examinations, and was a sister. She went to a Government hospital—it was not the Geraldton Hospital—as a fully-trained sister; and when she got there, she found that owing to shortage of domestic staff and nursing

assistants, she was called upon to perform the duties of a probationer. She had to wash out pans, etc. I need not enter into further details; I think members will realise the position. She had not been there long when she obtained her leave, and she sought this interview with me when passing through Perth to spend her holidays. She said, "When my holidays are finished I intend seeking a position in a hospital in Victoria, where my qualifications will provide the conditions for which I was trained. I no longer intend to carry out the duties that I started on in the Perth Public Hospital some years ago, such as washing pans, etc. Can you tell me whether manpower can prevent me?" I told her that they would, and advised her to go back to that hospital and carry on for the time being, at the completion of her holidays.

We are in danger of losing that type of nurse, as I understand the regulations that banned nurses moving freely about have ceased to exist. I hope the Chief Secretary, in reply, can assure the House that the Government has made a determined effort to get the Commonwealth Government to lift the regulations which impose a ban on nurses going before the Arbitration Court to obtain what we all know they are entitled to in the way of increased remuneration, better conditions of housing and so on. We know that manpower and materials are scarce, and that the Government had a good reason for its failure to improve the housing conditions, but it had no justification for refusing to grant to the nurses the increased remuneration that they so richly deserve. It is in order to try to get some Ministerial statement on the matter that I have brought it before the Chamber this afternoon. To comply with the Standing Orders I move--

That the House at its rising adjourn till Friday, 19th October, at 2.30 p.m.

I ask members to give me the support that the importance of this matter demands, and thus strengthen the hands of the Government in the representations that I hope and believe the State Government will make to the Commonwealth Government, to have these regulations lifted, so that our nurses may approach the Arbitration Court for the increased remuneration to which, I think we all agree, they are justly entitled.

**HON. G. B. WOOD** (East) [4.55]: I congratulate Mr. Hall on having brought this matter forward. The ventilation of the grievances of the nursing profession regarding conditions and rates of remuneration is long overdue in the State Parliament. I think the Government will be hard pressed indeed to justify to this House the conditions obtaining today, in the shortage of nurses and the failure to increase their remuneration. Representations have been made to the Minister for Health, but all he appears to be able to do is to pass the buck to the Commonwealth Government. I want to know what the Government has done to alleviate the shortage of nurses in Western Australia today. I think that shortage is due to the appalling conditions obtaining, the overtime worked with no redress, and the fact that there is no recourse to any court to get increased remuneration or war loadings, such as exist in other industries. I will refer to the hard conditions of training in a moment. I know something of the people engaged in the nursing profession, and of their training, as three of my daughters trained for that profession, besides many of my friends.

I have asked those girls about the conditions under which they work and I believe that at the Children's Hospital, where some of those girls worked, the conditions are all right. The conditions are not bad at the Fremantle Hospital, and there were no complaints there, but the conditions at the Perth Hospital are not what they should be. There, for the first six months, it seems that the authorities set out to work the girls as hard as they possibly can, so that they are exhausted at the end of the day. The principle there seems to be the survival of the fittest, and those that can stand up to it are kept on, while those that cannot are passed out. That is not the opinion of one girl only, but of many girls who have trained at the Perth Hospital. They enter in drafts of 12, and are taken to their quarters and given afternoon tea with bread and dripping. That does not seem to be necessary. If girls come to the city, perhaps from farms, and are given bread and dripping for afternoon tea, what an extraordinary impression they must gain from that!

I believe on one occasion the girls complained to the person in charge about it, but she said, "You will eat it soon, when

you are hungry." A roster is drawn up, and the girls are given their instructions as to how to get through the work for the day. They are told that the best way to get through the eight hours' work is to start early. They cannot do the work in the eight hours. Things like that contribute to the shortage of nurses. I have asked many girls, and they have all said they did not know how they lived through it. If the conditions of training were made better, I think more girls would enter this profession. Why should the nurses have to prove an anomaly when they go before the court? I think there is an anomaly in the comparison of their rates with those of other professions. A barmaid in Western Australia receives better wages than a trained nurse, and so also does a girl on the domestic staff. These probationers get 12s. 8d. a week. It has been asked why a girl should be paid while she is training, but these girls earn far more than the 12s. 8d. per week. When they got a rise some time ago the cost of their board was raised also. They were charged 29s. 10d. per week for board, compared with £1 per week in Tasmania.

Hon. V. Hamersley: And they are fed on bread and dripping.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: I would not say that they are fed on bread and dripping only, though I know they have been given it for afternoon tea. However, I say that the conditions of training, particularly in the Perth Hospital, are not as easy and as congenial as would make girls anxious to enter that profession. Another anomaly is in regard to W.A.A.F.s., some of whom have been going into the profession. When they do that they receive £2 4s. per week, not 12s. 8d., such as is paid to the other girls. I do not object to that higher payment or to W.A.A.F.s. going out of the Service to train in hospitals, but why should a girl who has done a good job, say, on a farm during the war only receive 12s. 8d. per week, compared with the payment given to a W.A.A.F. who may have had a good job in the city? There is an anomaly. Why one girl should receive £2 4s. per week, and the other 12s. 8d. per week, I do not know. I believe the Government will be hard pressed to answer the arguments that have been advanced on this motion. I would like to know what the Government

has done. So far as I can see it has done very little. I have pleasure in supporting the motion.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.2]: Dealing with the last remark of Mr. Wood, I say straight-away that the Government is not hard-pressed to reply to this motion. Members of the House are just as well aware as I am that from time to time Press statements have been made, ministerial statements have been put forward, and considerable publicity has been given to the position of our hospitals. Mr. Hall asks, "How long does the Government intend to stand idly by?" In reply to that, I would say it is not a question of the Government standing idly by.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: I am glad to hear that.

**The CHIEF SECRETARY:** The Government has made all the representations it is possible for it to make. I should like to ask, in reply to that question, what does the hon. member expect the Government to do?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: To ask that the National Security Regulations be lifted.

**The CHIEF SECRETARY:** I may be forgiven if I draw an analogy between the arguments which have been used this afternoon and those that were used only a week ago when another industrial organisation was faced with the necessity of proving an anomaly but was not able to do so. Does the hon. member consider that in that case the men, who have a very good case from their point of view, should have a right to approach the State Arbitration Court in contravention of the National Security Regulations? Not at all! There was nothing but criticism there. To get back to the question of nurses, I want to tell the House that no-one could be more sympathetic to the profession than the ex-Minister for Health, Hon. A. H. Panton, and our present Minister for Health, Hon. E. Nulsen. When we are discussing the question of the right of approach of this organisation to the State Arbitration Court it may be just as well for me to remind the House that the ex-Minister for Health, Hon. A. H. Panton, is the man whom the nursing profession has to thank for having been able even to approach the Arbitration Court in the first place.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That was a long while ago.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, but it shows his interest in the profession. He can claim credit—whatever credit there is to be claimed—for the fact that he did secure the first Arbitration Court award for nurses, a limitation of their hours and many other concessions of great value. I only mention that in passing and not in reply to any remarks that have been made by Mr. Hall or Mr. Wood. Let me deal with the subject matter of the motion. Members will perhaps agree that in pre-war years we had little difficulty in regard to the staffing of our hospitals. From time to time there may have been in individual cases a difficulty in providing at any particular moment the number required, but generally speaking there was no difficulty. In addition, I think I am correct when I say that for many years there was quite a long waiting list of girls desirous of entering the profession. So the difficulties that we are experiencing today are difficulties which have arisen as the result of the circumstances of the war. During the whole period of the war there has been difficulty which from time to time has become acute, and which, by various means, has been alleviated but as a rule not for very long.

Members must be aware of the publicity that was given only a few months ago to the great efforts made by the manpower authorities. They must also be aware of the approaches made by the Government to the manpower authorities, not only in regard to our public hospitals but hospitals generally. They must be particularly aware of what the Government did or endeavoured to do in connection with our mental hospitals. It seems to me that Mr. Hall and Mr. Wood must at least have some knowledge not only of the difficulties which have faced the hospital administration, but must also have some knowledge of what has been done by the Government from time to time in endeavouring to alleviate the position. Representations have been made from time to time to the manpower authorities, not only here and in the Eastern States, but to the Commonwealth Government direct. Despite all the representations which have been made the position has remained very difficult. No one knows better than our own department the fact that one or two small hospitals have even had to close down on account of the

lack of staff. I refer particularly to two or three small maternity hospitals. Mr. Hall refers to the fact that some of the restrictions have been lifted, that certain National Security Regulations do not now apply, but as a matter of fact I think I am correct when I claim that by the lifting of those restrictions and the cancelling of those regulations, the position has been made worse from the point of view of staff.

I am advised that immediately the withdrawal of manpower authority was announced the position worsened very rapidly, and that on the first day two matrons of Government hospitals, who were married, signified their intention of ceasing duty. The position has rapidly deteriorated since that day. Last Monday the shortages in our country hospitals and in our private hospitals totalled 216. In addition, there are some 270 persons who have given notice of their intention to cease duties for matrimonial or domestic reasons. In the circumstances I ask what can be done. I am sure the Government and the department would be very pleased to have some directive suggestion other than what has already been said, because from time to time we have made very definite representations to the Commonwealth Government direct with a view to allowing the State at least some authority in matters of this kind. I think I advised the House only a little while ago of certain representations that had been made to the Commonwealth Government in order that we might have control in this State in regard to industrial matters of this kind, rather than leave the control where it is, more particularly in view of the grave dissatisfaction that existed not only in the one industry to which I referred at the time, the coalmining industry, but in regard to several other industries as well.

I do not think members expect the Minister for Health to be publishing in the Press every letter he might write or every action he might take in connection with a matter of this kind. I feel that they will pay the present Minister for Health the compliment of recognising that if he believes there is something wrong he will endeavour to put it right. In the very short time at my disposal—I have not had the opportunity to go right through the fairly substantial file which I have here dealing with the subject—I notice from the file that there are several communications of com-

paratively recent date which, if they have not been given Press publicity, I would like to convey to the House. As an indication that all this talk about "How long is the Government going to stand idly by?" can be discounted by a statement of the actual position, I will quote from this file. I do not think I need go beyond the 10th September; indeed I have not gone beyond that date in the file myself, as it was only handed to me as I came into the House. Here is a letter to the Prime Minister—

Following upon the withdrawal of certain vital powers previously exercised by the Manpower Directorate, our staff difficulties have intensified in the past few days. The withdrawal or the non-exercise by the Manpower Authorities of the use of the "directive" means that no-one is compelled to stay in his or her existing position, and there is also no power to compel people to go to vacancies in essential positions. This is already being felt in country hospitals, but very much more so at Wooroloo Sanatorium and in the female section of the Mental Hospital at Claremont. At Wooroloo, for instance, the full complement of trainees is 64: at the moment we have only half the number and by the end of September, because of the necessary transfer of trainees to the next step in their training at other hospitals, the total will be reduced to 21. The Medical Superintendent has had to refuse to admit any more cases and if the position worsens, as it probably will, cases will have to be turned out of the sanatorium. At the Claremont Mental Hospital you may remember that a short-lived strike occurred some 12 or 15 months ago because of the short-staffing conditions. In the last week or so since the Manpower Directorate's powers have been reduced the position has decidedly worsened and we may well have a recrudescence of these real difficulties again. As matters stand at the moment, it is obvious that no improvement will take place in the ordinary way until the shortages in the normal fields of employment have been overcome. This will probably take many months. In the meantime the Wooroloo Sanatorium would have to steadily close down wards and reduce its work, which would be deplorable. I put forward two suggestions and would urge that your Government give serious consideration to the adoption of these and give instructions accordingly. These appear to be the only means we can see of alleviating the situation short of re-imposing those powers in the hands of the Manpower Directorate that have recently been withdrawn—

(a) It is understood that there are approximately 300 Western Australian nurses in the Services. It is urged that this personnel be reviewed so as to release a substantial number of the nurses at the earliest possible moment. In addition, there are some 20 or 30 mental-trained nurses in the

Services. The same recommendation applies with equal strength to the release of these persons.

(b) Some thousands of Western Australian young women are in the various Women's Auxiliary Services. Your Government has set up, through its rehabilitation arrangements, a scheme which operates very favourably towards girls who may desire to take up training as nurses. I would urge that the Women's Auxiliary Services be instructed to at once release all girls who desire to follow that course of training.

Yours faithfully,  
F. J. S. WISE, Premier.

That letter was despatched on the 10th September; and, in view of the circumstances surrounding this position, I think Mr. Hall will agree that it is couched in terms which neither he nor anyone else could improve. It indicates the seriousness of the position and suggests at least two methods whereby it might be possible—not that it will be—to rectify the position in Western Australia.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Have you a reply to that letter?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. On the 18th September the following telegram was sent to the Minister for Health, who at the time was in Canberra:—

Position nurses and domestic employees in hospitals in this State becoming increasingly involved. Strongly urge you approach Hollarway Minister Labour advocating repeal National Security Regulation forcing these workers prove anomaly or change of circumstances before they can approach State Arbitration Court. Wise, Premier.

That telegram I think would comply with the desires of Mr. Hall. On the 25th September there is a long letter to Colonel P. H. G. Cardale, Colonel in Charge of Administration, Headquarters, Western Command, Perth, pointing out that at the moment the shortages of staff were 10 matrons, 57 trained nurses, 3 district nurses and 23 probationers. I do not propose to read the letter, as it is on the lines of the other one. On the 19th September we received a reply from the Commonwealth to the letter dated the 10th September. The reply reads as follows:—

I desire to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 10th September, 1945, in regard to staff shortages of certain hospitals and sanatoria in your State and to inform you that your suggestions for relieving the situation will be given consideration.

Members will note that that is merely an acknowledgment. On the 12th of this month—there are other wires and various

notes which I do not consider it necessary to read—the following urgent telegram was sent to the Prime Minister—

Reference my letter tenth regarding shortage hospital staff. Position rapidly deteriorated and now dangerous. On eighth instant country hospitals and city private hospitals needed 71 nurses and 37 assistant nurses. These hospitals also needed 28 cooks and 108 other domestics. Wooroloo Sanatorium needed 38 probationers. Mental Hospital needed 30 nurses. All these shortages urgently necessary meet today's needs and are not academic shortages compared with normal establishment figures. Following cases specially difficult: Narragin, 22 patients, matron, three nurses, one probationer. Three Springs, 14 patients, matron, two nurses, three assistants. Beverley, 13 patients, matron, one nurse, three assistants. Wongan Hills, 15 patients, matron, one nurse, one assistant. Corrigin, four patients, two babies, matron no other nurses, one assistant. In addition, 37 nurses notified intention withdraw services owing marriage and other domestic reasons. Must stress position desperate and plead immediate reduction and discharge considerable number trained nurses in services as well as rapid demobilisation large numbers young women held in women's services.

I do not think Mr. Hall would complain of that telegram.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Certainly not.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I now come to the most recent communication, dated the 17th October. It is another urgent telegram sent to the Prime Minister, as follows:—

Reference my telegram eleventh and your acknowledgment twelfth regarding dangerous position hospital staff. Mental Hospital position still further deteriorated. With absences without leave and resignations female nursing staff which normally 91 reduced to 53. Housemaids normally five reduced to one. Position similar to that which caused strike of nursing services last year. Again urge immediate discharge all mental-trained nurses and rapid demobilisation women's services or seconding for duty at Mental Hospital of certain number of members of those services. This telegram supplementary to my previous representations the need for which unfortunately still remains with equal force.

Those are the communications that have passed between the State Government and the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The replies are not very satisfactory.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. The only reply is that the matter was receiving consideration. But may I say that, of course, we are not the only people with

these problems. No doubt the Commonwealth Government has its problems both in regard to hospital services and other services. I think sooner or later, however, the Commonwealth Government must recognise that civil requirements ought to receive perhaps more attention than has been given them in the immediate past; but thinking that does not improve the position. Something must be done. I ask Mr. Hall and Mr. Wood, in view of what has already been done by the Government, what suggestion they can make that will assist the Government to do more than it has done to date.

Hon. A. Thomson: You would have this House behind you.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Yes.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not antagonist at all. We all recognise the seriousness of the position, and I think I have indicated that it did not require a motion such as this to set the Government department and the Premier to work with a view to securing some alleviation as early as possible. Mr. Hall suggested that something should be done which would permit the nurses to approach the State Arbitration Court. First of all, we have to recognise that the National Security Regulations apply to the entire Commonwealth. There has been—and probably is at present—an extremely good reason for what has been termed the wage-pegging regulation. This has caused a great deal of trouble and will continue to do so in cases of this kind unless we can find some other solution. If the nurses are given the right, notwithstanding the National Security Regulations, to approach the Arbitration Court, then even on their own showing—according to Mr. Hall—there is no guarantee that they will secure the increased wages which he or any other member may think they are entitled to. The nurses would have to prove their case.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: They want the opportunity.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Hall said that the secretary of the nurses' union had stated that the Union could not prove an anomaly, because the wages here, compared with those of the Eastern States, are pretty well on a par; or, at least, I understood Mr. Hall to say that. What

arguments, then, are the nurses going to use in the State Arbitration Court? Much capital has been made out of the fact that a girl who commences duty as a trainee is only paid 12s. 8d. a week—I think the hon. member said that and I accept that figure.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: It is correct.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But it must be understood that that 12s. 8d. is in addition to board and lodging. I agree with Mr. Hall that the figure is a very low one. I have always thought so, but the nurses would have to satisfy the Arbitration Court about it.

Hon. W. J. Mann: There is no doubt about that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The nurses would have to do that in the same way as other organisations have to prove their cases.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Who fixed that figure—the Commonwealth Arbitration Court?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, the State Arbitration Court. With the limited knowledge which I have been able to gain through handling this subject, I believe that if a comparison were made between that figure and the amount paid in the Eastern States, a discrepancy would be found; but not in the wages paid to the trained nurses. There I do not think any big difference exists at all.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Do you think that the rate of £2 4s. a week paid to the nurses is enough?

Hon. E. M. Heenan: That is not what the Minister said.

Hon. G. Fraser: The Minister is not the Arbitration Court.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That only indicates the position into which we would drift if this Chamber had the responsibility of determining the wages and the conditions which should be offered to any particular section of the community. I do not know enough about the nurses' award at the present time even to discuss the point raised by Mr. Wood; but I do know there are many nurses, even today, who are receiving considerably more than the £2 4s. per week that he mentioned. I know that for a long period there were many nurses who would not accept ordinary employment, simply because

the award provided that they should get £4 4s. or £4 10s. a week on other work. However, it is for the Arbitration Court to decide whether the nurses should receive an increase in wages and whether or not there should be an alteration in the living conditions. We admit there has been considerable difficulty for years past over quarters and such matters. But there again difficulties arise that will take a long time to overcome.

I feel I can say in reply to Mr. Hall that the department and the Government are just as much interested in securing adequate staffs for our hospitals—both nursing and domestic staffs—as any member here. No one could be more interested in providing, for our hospital staffs, the best conditions of employment that are possible. But we are not able to do that at the moment. The accommodation provided at the most recent hospitals built is an indication of the standard that the department thinks should apply. There are many old hospitals throughout the State, and some of them do not lend themselves very easily to being modernised. Some of the quarters occupied by nurses are not nearly as good as we would like, but these things must take their turn and, while the National Security Regulations continue—that is, the wage-pegging regulations—there is little we can do in respect of the wages received by these people. If the wage-pegging regulations were lifted for one organisation, it would be only reasonable to say that they should be lifted for all organisations.

The nurses are not alone in this matter. If the wage-pegging regulations were lifted, one could easily visualise that, for a period at any rate, there would be considerable difficulty in meeting the demands of large sections of employees. The trouble is, as I understand the position from the Commonwealth Treasury, is that we must be exceedingly careful not to snowball this kind of thing and get a state of affairs much worse than it is at present. The biggest difficulty is the matter of staff. As I have pointed out from this correspondence, something like 300 trained nurses who, in peacetime, were in our State service, are in the Armed Forces. We can easily understand the difficult position created as a result. Whether the requirements of the various branches of the Services are such at present that it is necessary to retain all these nurses I do not know, but I imagine that the Common-



wealth would be only too pleased, when circumstances permit, to release as many as possible of them.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It will be a long time before many trained nurses are released.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The time has arrived when it should be quite easy to make available a fairly large proportion of those who are employed in the women's services generally. In the short time at my disposal I have done the best I can to reply to the remarks of Mr. Hall and Mr. Wood. They can rest assured that this Government will not let up in its representations to the Commonwealth.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central—in reply) [5.34]: I thank the Chief Secretary for his reply. The House must feel that he has made out a good case and that the Government has not been idle, as I stated. It has tried to emphasise to the Commonwealth Government the importance of taking some action to ease the position, but the position is worsening. I think the Chief Secretary admitted that. Just imagine these nurses, day after day, performing duties they should not be asked to perform! I cannot visualise their continuing in that way indefinitely. When we are faced with such an acute position, are we to be content with writing letters and sending telegrams to which we get the stereotyped official reply—"The matter is receiving consideration"? Would it not be more consolation, or tend to convince the nurses that some serious attempt was being made to remedy the conditions under which they suffer, if the Minister took a trip to Canberra?

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: He would find the Prime Minister in Queensland!

The Chief Secretary: That is cheap sarcasm.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I was not going to mention that, but surely when Ministers of the Crown go to the expense and trouble of visiting the Prime Minister in the Federal capital on matters of moment to the State, their training at least should ensure that they would take the ordinary precaution of ascertaining that the Prime Minister would be there to receive them. I was astounded the other day when I read that two Ministers had travelled all that distance and that the man they went to see, the Prime Minister, was not at home!

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It is not a laughing matter.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: That is so. It is something of which we should take serious cognisance. We are living in a democracy and, as I journey up and down the State, people continually ask me, "What are you going to do about this?" Not only do they ask me what I am going to do about it, but, "What are you doing about it?" The time has arrived when the members of Parliament, whom we have elected to look after our interests, should do something." One of our sacred duties is to attend to the sick.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: What do you suggest?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: If I have not made it quite plain—and perhaps I have not—in my answer to the Chief Secretary, my suggestion is that we should cease writing letters and sending telegrams, and that the Minister should go to Canberra and remain on the Prime Minister's doorstep until he receives a satisfactory reply.

Hon. A. Thomson: Mr. Panton is there. He should be able to attend to the matter.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I do not know. Mr. Panton is one of the best Ministers for Health that we have had. It was said that Mr. Munsie was one of the best Ministers for Health that we have had; I have said it here, too. Mr. Panton has taken an interest in hospitals and nurses for years. My friend, Mr. Panton, is not in question, and neither is Mr. Nulsen, whom I have known for many years. I also knew his people at Wiluna. I do not doubt the sincerity of these people. The Honorary Minister, too, has a long record in connection with hospitals. Even the Chief Secretary, who is smiling benignly at me—

Hon. L. Craig: Not benignly!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I want to put ourselves right with the people. This matter has got past the time for writing letters or sending urgent telegrams. Whilst the Chief Secretary was speaking, I was asked, "Are we entirely without representation in the Federal sphere?"

Hon. L. Craig: Almost.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: We are not. If ever there was a time when members of all parties should be requested by the Government of this State to wait on the Prime Minister's doorstep, this is it.

Hon. W. J. Mann: We have two Western Australian members in the Commonwealth Cabinet.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: That is so. Federal members representing the State of Western Australia should be asked to bombard the Prime Minister and to keep on bombarding him.

Hon. A. Thomson: What is Senator Fraser doing?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: He is on the other side of the world.

Hon. A. Thomson: He is our direct representative.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: We have our private members and, as has been suggested by interjection, our representatives in the Cabinet. Why not give them an opportunity to do something for us? They must know the dire straits that we are in here. The Chief Secretary said that it should not be difficult to prove an anomaly, or that it was difficult to do so. The wage, whatever it is, for a sister in Western Australia may be the same in Victoria, but if a sister from this State went to a hospital in Victoria, she would carry out her duties there as a sister and not as an assistant scrubbing pans. That is a good point, and I thank the Chief Secretary for allowing me to make it. It is not altogether a question of pounds, shillings and pence.

Hon. G. B. Wood: They are working long hours, too.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Mr. Wood and I happen to know something about this matter because it affects us personally. I do not know the member who is not affected personally.

Hon. L. Craig: I had to scrub a kitchen floor the other day!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The hon. member told us all about what he did yesterday, and I listened attentively. I appreciate a joke, but this has got beyond that stage and we must make some effort to convince nurses that we recognise the plight they are in.

Hon. V. Hamersley: And have been for years; since before the war.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Are we to confess that we cannot do anything in this matter? If that is the position at which we have arrived, the sooner the Commonwealth takes us over, the better! Our Government is charged with the responsibility of adminis-

tering certain departments, of which the Department of Health is one. Owing to some hokey-pokey, the State Government is not able to do its duty by the nurses who are looking after the sick.

Hon. H. Seddon: How would we get on under Commonwealth control?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: That is just the point I made this morning to the union secretary. I said to her, "You want to be taken over by the Commonwealth." She said, "You know perfectly well that by so doing we would considerably improve our position." I said, "As an ex-Commonwealth civil servant, I know what you say is correct, but what you would gain in one direction you would lose in another." She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You would have no say at all in the affairs of your union. You would be swamped by the populous Eastern States members, the same as we are from a State point of view."

Hon. G. B. Wood: The Collie miners found out that.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I reminded the union secretary of the Collie miners. I thank the Chief Secretary for his reply. It is news to members that the Premier has communicated in an emphatic manner with the Prime Minister. But that is not enough. The position is very serious and it is the duty of the State Government to see that either the Premier or the Minister makes personal representations, backed by every Western Australian member of the Commonwealth Parliament. As my motion has served its purpose, I ask leave to withdraw it.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

## **BILL—NATIONAL FITNESS.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. C. F. BAXTER** (East) [5.45]: I am hopeful that more interest will be taken in this very important Bill than appears to have been devoted to it hitherto. Under the measure it is sought to control the most important part of the life of our young people, from the age of 10 years until well after the school-leaving age and after they have left school. In that respect the co-operation of all sections of the community is required if success is to be achieved. One objective is really to form the character of our young people; to put them on the right track through life;

to improve their constitution. In other words, the object is to make thoroughly good citizens of them to a degree that would not be possible if they were left to their own devices.

What the Bill seeks to do is practically to place the whole of the control of the movement in a sub-department of the Education Department. That is entirely wrong and must have had results. It was quite all right in the earlier stages for volunteers, mainly sporting bodies, of which the Amateur Sports Federation is one section, to carry on the national fitness campaign while the subsidy from the Commonwealth Government was only £1,000 a year. But the moment the Commonwealth Government increased the subsidy to all States and this State received approximately £5,500 with a further amount of £2,800 odd which was paid to the Education Department, it was a different matter altogether. Formerly neither the State Government nor the Education Department took any serious interest whatever in the movement, beyond having a representative on the controlling committee. Any interest taken in the matter was merely half-hearted and certainly the State put no effort into it. The moment there was more money available there was a move, possibly influenced by the establishment of the sub-department to which I have referred, and some support was given to the effort.

This move was brought to fruition very cleverly just at the time when the present Minister (Hon. J. T. Tonkin) had taken over the control of the Education Department, and it was sprung on this young Minister. Every effort was made to decry the body that in the past had done good work under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. More than ever it is apparent that if this movement is to succeed it must have the co-operation of outside bodies. If that is not forthcoming, the move cannot be as successful as it should be. I find it necessary to deal with this question rather extensively because there is information that should be in the possession of the House, more especially as the Bill has come to us after very little criticism and discussion.

A National Fitness Committee was formed in 1939 and that organisation carried on for some time. For a long period the Government could not be convinced that something should be done. In 1924 the committee became a body, not a mere name. In the years

1943 and 1944 there were over 70 bodies affiliated with the committee and in the former year 62 voluntary bodies exercised their right to vote. No meeting was held in 1944; the reason for this being that early in 1944 a new council was nominated and appointed by the Minister. The members of the old body who were the most interested in the movement, had the best record of attendances at meetings and were democratic in their constitution, were dropped by the Minister.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Is that so?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is a fact. It will thus be seen that the members who were responsible for what success had been achieved by the movement were not wanted by the Minister. In effect, the Bill provides for the Minister to appoint the council, the council to appoint the committee and the committee to appoint the two members of the co-ordinating committee. Why all this stringing around, I do not know! It is quite obvious that voluntary bodies are to have little or no say at all in the control. Those voluntary bodies have in effect been the national fitness movement for many years. That applies particularly to the amateur sporting bodies represented in the Amateur Sports Federation, which covers all the sports conducted in the city, controls most of the grounds and is in a position to lend great assistance to the movement—as it had proved in the past. Yet that body is, practically speaking, left without any direct representation.

Per medium of the action by the Minister and by the introduction of this Bill in particular, a superior body is to be superimposed over the heads of all these other organisations. This is following on the lines adopted in Germany and Italy where, under the systems adopted there, the voluntary bodies ceased to function. As a matter of fact, they cannot function here; they are not wanted. The council that is to be set up is advisory in its functions only. Thus the bodies which actually spend their own funds and know what should be done with any moneys provided by the Commonwealth, should certainly have some authority with regard to the expenditure of such funds. It will be plain to members that a movement without the co-operation of these sporting bodies constitutes a retrograde step and I have no hesitation in saying that it is doomed to failure—unless the Bill is

amended extensively. In England and the United States of America large sums of money are made available through the local educational authorities, through national and local sporting bodies and through other movements as well. Many millions have been expended in this way in England and America without any regimentation at all.

Why the regimentation here? The national fitness movement when left to democratic bodies to control, has proved a huge success, whereas in Italy and Germany, under bureaucratic control similar to that which is proposed in the Bill, it has served to create a very undesirable state of affairs. Certainly members know how the movement developed in Germany! Furthermore, I claim that the control of the movement in the State should be in the hands of the Health Department, which is the course adopted in Victoria. Better still, the co-ordination of the operations of the health, educational and local authorities with the various sporting and other bodies should be sought. The State Government apparently now contemplates exercising complete control—any member who studies the Bill will agree with me in that statement—over a movement to the support of which it has never made available any funds.

A short sketch of the movement's history in other countries should guide us against pitfalls. An Under Secretary for Physical Culture was appointed in Italy in 1928. In France in 1923 there was an Under Secretary for Physical Education and Sport. Five years later the British Cabinet announced "a health drive." In the same year, 1928, there was "a health week" in Sydney and on the 29th October, 1936, the Minister for Health in New South Wales referred to a "national fitness campaign." The British Minister for Health, Sir Kingsley Wood, announced plans "for dealing with the problem of physical education." By that time Hitler had his planned "Strength through Recreation" movement in full swing. In February, 1937, the British Government announced plans for subsidising local authorities and national voluntary organisations for "recreational purposes." In the same month the Commonwealth Government made public details of its plans for a "keep fit campaign."

Late in 1936 the Melbourne University appointed Dr. Fritz Duras, formerly Professor of Sports Medicine in Freiburg University, Germany, who shortly before that had arrived in Australia, to the position of lecturer in physical education. Under the New Zealand Physical Welfare and Recreational Act, 1937, the Dominion Government makes grants to local authorities and voluntary bodies to "improve physical training, exercise, sport and recreational facilities." Early in 1938 the British expenditure on the movement was made through the National Council of Physical Fitness, which was established in January, 1939. Sessions of that council were held in January, May and July of that year. In Australia the Commonwealth Government requested the State Governments early in 1939 to establish State councils.

In Western Australia the then Minister for Health (Hon. A. Panton) convened a conference of representatives of Government departments, the public and sporting bodies, invitations to which were issued by the Minister himself. That conference was held and on the 14th April, 1939, elected a provisional council. The then Director of Education, Mr. Hadley, said that he doubted if it was worth while going on with the movement unless they were assured of additional funds from the Commonwealth Government. At that time the Commonwealth had provided £1,000 per annum to cover organising expenses. The provisional council consisted of six official representatives—three representing the Education Department, the Health Department and the University, respectively, and three the local governing authorities—together with four representing sporting bodies and two non-sporting bodies. The council drew up a constitution to govern the operations of a permanent council.

A meeting of all bodies interested was held on the 26th September, 1939. Representatives of 19 sporting bodies, 14 non-sporting organisations and six departmental and other delegates attended and the Minister for Health was also present. At that gathering the Western Australian Council of Physical Fitness was established, and a constitution adopted without amendment. The council consisted of one representative from each body. Its principal function

was to elect the executive board which was to carry out the actual work. It consisted of 10 elected members—five sporting and five non-sporting representatives—and this division was advocated by the sporting bodies because as they were the larger section they might otherwise swamp the board. In addition, there were, of course, the seven official members representing the Health, Education and Defence Departments, the British Medical Association, the University of Western Australia and local authorities' organisations, which last mentioned section had two representatives. What is wrong with that constitution?

The board appointed its own chairman and its own vice chairman. Today the Minister exercises that function. At that time the Minister for Health was the president of the Council and Professor Beasley, vice president. The latter was also elected chairman of the board with the then Commissioner of Public Health, Dr. Atkinson, as vice chairman. An officer of the Health Department had acted as secretary, and that arrangement was continued with Mr. G. H. W. Long as honorary treasurer. Mr. J. O'Donoghue of Sydney was appointed organiser as from the 1st April, 1940. For reasons, which were stated at the meeting at which the appointment was made, but which I will not deal with at this stage—the appointment was made only after a strenuous discussion, and was confirmed by seven votes to six—the sporting and other bodies opposed the appointment. Their attitude has proved to have been correct. The State Government did not provide any money at any time and the official attitude seemed to be to do as little as possible. The representatives of the affiliated body became very dissatisfied and said so. Professor Beasley endeavoured to have the Federal vote of £1,000 amalgamated with a vote made to the University—this comprised £1,500 per annum by the Commonwealth Government for physical education purposes and was utilised for providing scholarships to other States—so that a physical education course could be conducted at our University. This was against the Commonwealth's instructions about the grant of £1,000 for the National Fitness Council. After the defeat of this move, Professor Beasley left the movement.

Annual general meetings of the council were held in 1940, 1941 and 1942. Mr. R. L. Halliday, of the Education Department, became chairman of the board in 1940 and continued in the office until 1944. Meetings of the Commonwealth council, consisting of one representative from each State, were held in 1940 and 1941. The Commonwealth National Fitness Act, 1941, came into operation in August of that year. As a result of more or less inactivity and of no support from the State Government, the democratic members of the board became restive and endeavoured to have things done, but did not get very far. In 1942 a change became obviously necessary. It was found requisite to obtain the resignation of the organiser, to whose appointment a substantial majority had objected in the first place, and an elected member was chosen as secretary to the council and the board and headquarters, and other facilities were obtained at the cost of considerable effort. These moves, as may be imagined, met with considerable official opposition. Yet those concerned are trying to take credit for the success achieved.

In June, 1942, the Commonwealth announced an increase to the States. Western Australia was to get £5,500 for the council, and there was also a grant of £2,833 for our Education Department. Mr. M. G. Little, Director of Education, was now vice-president; Mr. Panton had continued as president; Mr. Halliday was still chairman of the board. Until the change in 1942, the chairman and organiser ran the movement. After the change, the board had more control. For six months, until November, 1942, the honorary secretary acted as honorary organiser. It was a spare-time and after-hours' job. Despite this, the greatest activities of the council took place during that period, notwithstanding the opposition from official persons. With the appointment of a member of the State Education Department—he was then in the Army—as organiser, again by a slender margin with most of the democratic votes against the appointment, it became obvious that an all-out effort was under way to take over the movement lock, stock and barrel.

The reason for this is plain. The State Government, previous to the increase of the Federal grant from £1,000 to £5,500 for the National Fitness Council, and the granting

of an additional amount of £2,833 to the Education Department, did not display enough interest to provide any money whatever, but the moment the Federal grant reached a substantial sum, the Education Department became very active, and from then on spared no pains to assume control and supersede the voluntary bodies and, of course, build up another sub-department. That is the usual practice of Government officials. For insisting on business methods and on the grant being used as directed by the Commonwealth, and in other ways advocating democratic procedure in electing sub-committees, etc., the sports and some other members were called obstructionists by official persons. Failure to capture the board elections in 1943—actually there was a swing away and the democratic section was strengthened—was followed by an effort to re-model the council and eliminate the voluntary bodies. This failed, but under this Bill there will be no failure. Other moves were made to eliminate the position of secretary. These moves failed. Attacks made on some members were never followed up. The chairman referred to some members as racketeers, which he failed to prove, and a vote of confidence in the accused was carried.

Other methods were then tried. An officer of the Education Department had been appointed to the Commonwealth Secretariat as one of the two organisers for the Commonwealth. The next Commonwealth council conference was held in September, 1943. No meeting had been held for two years. A few days before the meeting, a report was received in Western Australia containing some drastic recommendations. The local organiser thought that these were to be kept out of sight until presented to the conference, but he knew what they were. A special meeting decided on the casting vote of the chairman—Mr. Little, acting in place of Mr. Halliday who was then in Canberra—to leave the questions to the Commonwealth organiser. As several members—democratic members—had been unable to attend, and as the chairman prevented discussion on matters in the report, there was no alternative but to protest to the Federal Minister.

The Commonwealth council, after having been informed by the Minister that bodies from Western Australia and other States had communicated with him on the matter, upheld all the objections, and the Minister

wrote that it was not intended to carry out the recommendations. The Federal council recommended certain alterations to State councils, etc. The council agreed with these alterations; it had advocated them. The Prime Minister wrote to the State Premiers on the matter and requested that the alterations be given effect to where necessary. That was rather a slap in the face for the officials here. In other States the letter went to the councils for consideration. In Western Australia it was asked for and was promised, but was never presented. Instead, a new Minister for Education, Mr. Tonkin was appointed. In January, 1944, he announced that the State Government had decided to appoint a new council. That was well put up—a new council for a body corporate! Next month the Minister issued invitations to certain people to become members of the new council. Certain democratic members waited by deputation on him and he stated that he had his advisers. These were the representatives of the Education Department who had tried to capture the movement after the additional grants were received.

The old council had certain funds and the Minister for Education and the department have transferred those funds, goodness knows by what statutory authority, from the body corporate that held them, to the new council. This was high-handed action. What authority has any Minister to divert funds from a body corporate? He also said that this body corporate must not meet, that it had been dissolved. I want to know how those funds came to be diverted from a body corporate to the new council in this high-handed fashion. After hesitation the Minister attended a meeting of the board, but not until he had issued invitations to certain people to become members of the new council. The matter was taken up by the "Daily News," which, on the 8th October, 1943, published a leading article under the heading "A Step Back" which contained the following:—

A drastic change is proposed in the composition of the W.A. National Fitness Council, which has been doing excellent work in this State since 1939. It is proposed to wipe out all elective membership of the executive board and to have only members appointed by the State Government. A democratic aspect of the council is to be replaced by a bureaucratic aspect. A broad concept of voluntary co-operation is to be replaced by a narrow concept of departmental control.

Representatives of sporting bodies, who vigorously opposed the move, feel that it will deprive the national fitness ideal of any chance of becoming a people's movement. Boards severely under governmental control can administer, reject and persuade, but they are seldom more inspiring than a ball of red tape.

Why has the change been recommended? The main reason is said to be "constitutional." Published reports do not make the position clear, but if this technical argument is correct, it is surely the constitution and not the democratic content of the whole organisation which should be changed. There seems no reason why the State Government should not recognise the council with its present membership as the correctly constituted body, which would dispense with the constitutional objection.

It was a body corporate. Why should not it be recognised?

A second reason is that the existing board, with its elected members representing sports associations and non-sporting bodies, is too large and clumsy. It is extremely difficult, it is argued, "to determine policy, prepare plans and make quick decisions with a high degree of efficiency."

I say that if 10 members elected as a committee by outside bodies cannot arrive at a decision and reach a sounder decision on matters of this sort than can representatives appointed by the Minister, I do not know anything about the working of committees.

Nevertheless, experience has shown that the advantages of voluntary co-operation more than compensate for that. The higher the degree of voluntary co-operation, the more lasting the enthusiasm, the wider the support. An appointed board trying to run a movement is inevitably isolated from the voluntary component groups which should constitute its strength.

On the 22nd February, 1944, a leading article was published in the "Daily News" headed "Bureaucratic Move," from which I quote the following:—

The national fitness movement in this State will in future be controlled by a State council appointed by the Government. Hitherto, it has been constituted largely on a democratic elective basis, but the democratic content has now been abolished. If the intention is to make national fitness a people's movement, this must be regarded as a retrograde step.

Up to the present about 70 voluntary bodies, including churches, youth and sporting organisations, have had the right on affiliation to send delegates to the National Fitness Council. These delegates elected from their number 10 members to the board which, with seven nominated members, controlled the activities of the movement. This right is now lost to them. The influence they were able to exert by this democratic procedure, and the interest in the movement this procedure evoked within those bodies have now been eliminated.

The organisations which have had the right to send delegates to the council included such organisations as the various churches, the State School Teachers' Union, the Women's Service Guild, the Y.W.C.A., the Amateur Sporting Federation, the W.A. Rowing Association, the Catholic Lawn Tennis Association and other similar groups, representing in aggregate a membership of many thousands.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Before tea I was reading some very important leading articles from "The Daily News." The next that I wish to quote is one that appeared on the 29th February, 1944. The article is headed "Democratic or Bureaucratic"? It reads—

Basically, the current controversy about the control of the National Fitness Movement involves an important question of democratic practice. It is, therefore, of interest to the general public, especially as national fitness is, or should be, the concern of everyone. And of course it is of immediate interest to the 70 organisations which have been affiliated to the National Fitness Council. In brief the position is this: The movement has been run, successfully, by a Board which has been largely elective. A change is being made which wipes out that elective basis and replaces it with one of Ministerial appointments to the controlling body. Apparently as a result of protests, the Minister for Education, Mr. Tonkin, has come forward with a proposal containing some minor elective provisions, which do not, however, touch the control and policy of the movement—and that, of course, is what counts.

The Minister has explained that the change has resulted from a request made by Prime Minister Curtin for the administration of the National Fitness Movement to be brought into conformity with the terms of the Commonwealth National Fitness Act, 1941. This does provide for the appointment of the Council by the State Government, and, as Mr. Tonkin points out, is not of his doing.

The Act, however, does not prohibit elected delegates from voluntary sporting and non-sporting organisations from being represented, with voting powers, on the controlling body. There is nothing to prevent the continuance of such elections and their being confirmed by Cabinet by formal appointment. This would preserve the truly co-operative character of the Council. The change, in its present as yet inconclusive form, would destroy or at any rate gravely weaken that co-operative character. Though that would be the effect of the change, it is probably not the Minister's intention.

I do not think it is either. It is brought about by Government officers who want to build up another department. There was another article on this subject in "The Daily News" of the 29th February, 1944, under

the heading, "Can Fitness Council be Dissolved"? It reads—

Has the Minister for Education power to wind up the National Fitness Council as at present constituted? This question now arises out of the proposals to bring it under the control of a State Council supported by the Government. The National Fitness Council of Western Australia is a body incorporated under The Associations Incorporation Act (1895).

A Perth solicitor today expressed the opinion that the provisions of that Act do not cover the dissolution of any body which is incorporated thereunder. Parliament no doubt decided to leave that question to the body itself. "It does not seem that any power other than the body itself is able to wind up an incorporated body, and in this respect it is doubted whether the Minister can legally decree the dissolution of the association," he said.

The Minister has gone further than that. He has overridden that body and established a new council and has also appropriated funds from the old council. I want to know under what legal authority those funds were appropriated—I think misappropriated would be the better word! The solicitor is reported further as having stated—

"While it continues to carry out the objects for which it was incorporated, no power is given to wind it up."

The article continues—

From inquiries made today it was found that no proposal has yet been made to members to wind themselves up, and if such a proposal were made, there would be plenty of opposition.

The voluntary bodies which are alive to this issue are complaining, not without justice, of the loss of their influence for good as a result of the change, and the effect it will have in dampening enthusiasm among their members, who would naturally prefer a democratic structure to one involving subordination (however polite) to an appointed body.

Moreover, they are perturbed by the fact that, with the movement coming under the control of the Education Department, the all-important 14-18 age group will be to some extent neglected; for the department's normal activities cover few in this age group.

That is so. The activities of the department at present cover children up to 14. The department is allowed £2,883, which will be used to bring some of its teachers to a state of proficiency to handle the youth movement. The department should have enough to do to look after its own business. A great deal of improvement could be effected in the Education Department without its reaching

out for another service, which is what it is doing. We expect more than we are getting at present for the money we are paying for education. Let the department improve its own services. To try to secure another department because there is cheap money coming forward is wrong, and this House should not allow it. The article continues—

Finally, it is well known that Mr. Tonkin's legacy, the Education Department, which has been long starved of funds, cannot even do its present job properly, without taking on additional responsibilities. In this regard it has been pointed out that the awakened interest of the department in National fitness (before Mr. Tonkin became Minister) coincided with the increase of the Commonwealth grant to the movement from £1,500 to £5,500. This has seemingly helped to convert the department to the ideal of national fitness.

For the general public the most serious aspect lies in the trend from a democratic to a bureaucratic approach to what should be a people's movement—what must be a people's movement, if it is to succeed. Mr. Tonkin, a man of broad, liberal views, would regret that trend. In fact, his personal sympathies (like his personal experience in education) presumably lie in the opposite direction.

I have attempted to give the House an insight into what has happened and how public opinion has been stirred in the past. Notwithstanding that, the Minister has gone on, no doubt encouraged by his department, to bring about this bureaucratic control. "The Daily News" took the matter up, and the sports' representatives were quite open and commented truthfully about the matter. The Minister failed to supply any information, although charges were made in the Press. He appointed the new council, despite the fact that the old council was an incorporated body and could not hand over its assets until it was wound up. But the assets have been taken over by the Minister. The Minister decided that a meeting of the old council should not be held. That was very dictatorial on the part of a Minister of the Crown. He also stated that an election of members, or suggested members, could not be held, as no person could say who should be entitled to vote at an election. This is autocratic control. He brought the position about himself by assuming that control. He has taken that responsibility on his own shoulders. The old council worked on an elective basis. He, as a despot, has appointed the new council himself.

Naturally, the council, in order not to cause trouble in the movement, did not go



any further in the matter at that time; but it is necessary, and I hope the House will see to it, that there should be an alteration. I am placing a long list of amendments on the notice paper. I regret that they are of such length, but the Bill must be remodelled if it is to be a success. I say advisedly that if the Bill, as submitted, is passed and becomes an Act, and controls the youth fitness movement, it is goodbye to any success! There must be co-operation from outside bodies. If success is to be achieved, their assistance must be obtained. What occurred on Monday? There were 500 children marching through the streets, and there was nothing more doleful. They were led by two or three kettle drums; and some of the children, realising the position, blushed with shame. Is that a good thing? Instead of the children being led by three fiddling drums, the Amateur Sports Association should have been approached and that body would have had a band to which the children could have marched.

When any sports movement is projected, it should be left to the Amateur Sports Association—not the Sportsmen's Council; there are two different bodies. The Amateur Sports Association has the men and the wherewithal to do this kind of work. It has men who know everything pertaining to youth exercises. The Education Department has representatives on the council, and still will have if my amendments are agreed to; in fact, it will be a very happy combination, and the business will be carried out on sound lines; and it will mean that there will be a big improvement in regard to the most important matter we have to consider, namely, the improvement of the constitution and minds of our young people. They should be taken at the right age, the age of adolescence, from 14 to 24 or 25 years of age. That is when they should be taken in hand, and not by a Government department alone. Outside bodies must assist. The Education Department should attend to its own business and use its money to improve its work in that connection. There should be quite enough money to enable it to train its own teachers and the council should be left to decide what should be done with the other £5,500. If that were done, we would have a happy state of affairs and a successful movement.

I hope members of this House will show more interest in this matter than they have done up to date, and that the amendments will be carried. The main thing is to bring in the organisations that have carried on so successfully in the past. Let us get their co-operation. These people do not get anything out of it, but they want to carry on the movement. I trust that the House, when dealing with my amendments, will approve of them to the extent that we can establish the movement on democratic lines and wipe out autocratic principles. I want to see the national fitness movement free of bureaucratic control. I have, naturally, to support the second reading of the Bill, but will endeavour to have it amended along the lines I have indicated.

**HON. E. H. H. HALL** (Central) [7.46]: I had not intended to contribute to this debate, and were it not for the eloquent speech delivered by Mr. Baxter I would have remained silent. Tonight he has been well worth listening to, and I feel that he has struck a warning note that merits the attention of every member of this Chamber. He has pointed out something I had not thought of but which I agree is a real danger, in view of what we witnessed in connection with the youth movement in other countries during the past few years. I have always been—especially since I have been in this Chamber—a great advocate of enlisting and using the services of people working in an honorary capacity, efficient and enthusiastic: people who work for the love of the game. Since I have taken up residence in the metropolitan area, I have been elected to the executive of the Braille Society for the Blind. There I am surrounded by a body of men and women working in an entirely honorary capacity.

The finances they are dealing with are not on a par with those of the Lotteries Commission, though they run a rest home for the aged blind at Victoria Park, and the social work of this body is such that it does one good to feel that there are such honorary organisations working for the benefit of those who unfortunately have lost their sight. This is not the only such body, but it is the only one in which I have been able to take an active part. Mr. Baxter said tonight that, prior to this Government body operating the national fitness movement, an honorary body ran it, but the only thing

that cramped its efforts was lack of finance. Now that the Commonwealth has supplied the finance, we find, according to Mr. Baxter, that the honorary workers have been quietly dropped and that a lot of Government appointees have replaced them. I join with Mr. Baxter in asking members of the Legislative Council to watch closely the amendments Mr. Baxter is bringing forward, in an effort to prevent the development of a very dangerous trend.

On motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £1,800,000. .**

### *Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [7.48] in moving the second reading said: This is the second Supply Bill introduced this session, and its purpose is to grant Supply pending the passing of the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill. Authority was granted in the No. 1 Supply Act for £2,700,000, which was made up as follows:—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund	2,200,000
General Loan Fund	200,000
Treasurer's Advance	300,000

The expenditure for the first three months of the financial year out of that Supply was—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund	2,314,365
General Loan Fund	225,195
<b>Totalling</b>	<b>£2,539,560</b>

This Bill asks for additional Supply amounting to—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund	1,600,000
General Loan Fund	200,000
	<b>£1,800,000</b>

It is anticipated that this amount will provide the necessary finance until the Appropriation Bill is passed. The expenditure for the first three months of the financial year has been—

	£
Special Acts	1,164,901
Governmental	1,040,485
Public Utilities	1,273,880
	<b>£3,479,266</b>

Interest and sinking fund included in the expenditure under Special Acts totalled

£1,024,025. The revenue collected during the first three months of the financial year amounted to £3,093,052 and included—

	£
Taxation	712,808
Territorial	99,451
Law Courts	14,342
Departmental	284,823
Mint	13,003
Commonwealth	344,359
Public Utilities	1,619,899
State Trading Concerns	4,367
	<b>£3,093,052</b>

This has resulted in a deficit of £386,214 for the three months ended the 30th September, 1945. The arrears of taxation due to the State by the Commonwealth as at the 30th September, 1945, totalled £542,885, made up as follows:—

	£
Income Tax	428,539
Goldmining Profits	7,786
Financial Emergency Tax	47,822
Hospital Fund Contributions	58,738
	<b>£542,885</b>

That is a brief explanation of the Bill, which the Government is anxious should be passed as speedily as possible. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

## **HON. H. SEDDON** (North-East) [7.57]:

This year the Government is budgeting for a deficit of £207,000. One must expect a considerable variation in the finances in a year such as the present, in which we are changing from war to peace. There is no doubt that the Treasurer, in framing his Budget, had that in mind. It has come to be accepted as a recognised policy that Governments may find difficulty in budgeting for and attaining a balance during any particular year. The modern thought is that the Budget should be framed with the idea that the Government will achieve a balance ultimately, over perhaps a longer period. Unfortunately, our experience has been that, until the war years, we had an unedifying record of attaining a consistent series of deficits, year after year. One hopes that this is not the precursor of such another unsatisfactory state of affairs. I wish to refer to some of the figures used in determining the Budget in order to ask the Chief Secretary whether he thinks that due value has been given to some of the items contained in the Budget. In arriving at the deficit of

£207,000, the Treasurer estimated a reduction in revenue of £455,000, and a reduction of £243,000 in expenditure. While the first of those two figures might easily occur, I think the attainment of the second would be a remarkable achievement because, if one looks back through the record of State finance ever since the depression, one cannot find one year in which there has been a reduction in the expenditure.

In each year the expenditure has steadily risen, and therefore any estimate, in a year such as the present, that a reduction in expenditure of £243,000 will be achieved shows, I contend, that the Treasurer has been unduly optimistic or, on the other hand, that he has not made clear the reason for arriving at that most extraordinary figure. I would query some of the items in arriving at that estimated reduction of £455,000 in revenue. Firstly, there is the effect of the transition period on income tax. There is no doubt that disorganisation will take place as a result of the closing of war activities, and the starting of peacetime production must be marked by a period of unemployment owing to the lag in the change-over of machinery from one class of production to another, and in the changing of occupations of men and women, who have been engaged on war work, to peacetime work. There is also the effect of the release of men from the Services.

I think this disorganisation must result in a reduction of the returns obtained by the Government from income tax, to say nothing of the effect of the industrial disputes which seem to be associated with the present period, all of which reduce the earning power of the community. When the Premier estimates that he will receive from the Commonwealth Government the same amount from income tax as he obtained last year, I say he is overlooking a most important factor associated with our experience during the depression. That was that revenue was seriously affected during that period by the reduction of employment throughout the community. I think that experience will repeat itself and that we shall find our revenue seriously down. With the obligations that are on the Commonwealth Government I cannot see how it can be expected to maintain the same return to the State Governments as it has returned in the past from taxation.

Another experience during the depression was that, despite efforts on the part of the Government to reduce expenditure, it was found that expenditure was inelastic and could not be reduced, and there is another argument for clarifying the figure that has been advanced for the reduction in expenditure. Among other items to which I wish to refer is the item Departmental Fees, on the revenue side of the Budget. The Estimates show that these fees are expected to be reduced by about £390,000. I would like the Chief Secretary on some future occasion to explain to the House exactly what factors are expected to influence that item. On the expenditure side I notice an item, Miscellaneous and Refunds. This also is down by £400,000. That is another item requiring elucidation. Unfortunately, last year we again had a deficit on our loan works of £2,300,000 odd. That sum represents 60 per cent. of the total amount received from taxation in that year and 91 per cent. of the amount received from income tax. Members can therefore see that we still have that terrific burden carried forward year by year and placed on the shoulders of the taxpayers of the State, as far as the annual return is concerned.

When we remember that we have written off about £12,000,000 of our public debt as being unproductive, members will appreciate the effect upon the taxpayers of the State. The Chief Secretary referred to the figures for the current year and pointed out that the accumulated deficit to the end of September was £386,000. In looking over the figures for various years, I find that not since 1938 have we attained so high a deficit for the first three months of the financial year. In that year the deficit up to September was £464,000, and that year we finished up with a big deficit. I hope the Treasurer will be able to achieve his estimate; even so, he will finish with a deficit of £200,000, and this is not very encouraging when we consider the bright future we have been led to believe is coming. There is another aspect of State policy which I would like to stress. The Treasurer, when dealing with the Budget, said that he would have to rely on the Commonwealth Grants Commission to assist to make up the deficit. All I can say is that that merely emphasises the unsatisfactory relationship which has existed for so many

years between the Commonwealth and this State. I notice that the Commonwealth Treasurer proposes to make the uniform tax permanent.

Hon. A. Thomson: It will be very disastrous to the State if he does.

Hon. H. SEDDON: It will simply make the State still more dependent upon the Commonwealth Government and make worse the mendicant position which it has occupied for so many years. The time is long overdue when the relationship between the Commonwealth and the State should be overhauled and an attempt made to place the State on a sound basis financially, thus enabling it to recover and safeguard the sovereignty of which we were so proud and which has been so steadily filched from us year by year. Most members will agree with me when I say that the position for this State has become most serious. Until something is done to alter the present relationship between the Commonwealth and the State, the State will simply be occupying the position that was exemplified last week, when we found that two of our Ministers were treated in Canberra in the way they were treated when they sought to deal with a matter of vital importance to the industrial peace of the State. That appears to me simply to be in keeping with the attitude adopted by the Commonwealth year by year. We find that the State Government is being treated—I was going to say with the contempt which it deserves.

Hon. W. J. Mann: It is treated as a poor relation.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Treated as a poor relation is very frequently treated at the hands of those who are better off. I sincerely hope the matter will be taken up by the State Government and some attempt made to restore the State's sovereignty. Western Australia controls one-third of the continent and it has a very small number of people. We have made achievements of which we have every reason to be proud, and it will be a thousand pities if a people with a record like ours, who have developed our State under such conditions, were to continue to be treated as a kind of poor relation of the Commonwealth Government, instead of as a partner in the federation, which is

the basis on which our relationship ought to be established. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

### *In Committee.*

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

## **BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. A. THOMSON** (South-East) [8.11]: The Honorary Minister, when introducing this Bill, informed the House that the measure was brought down in compliance with a request by certain road boards and friendly societies who favoured the formation of an insurance pool. Why we should amend the parent Act for such a purpose seems difficult to understand. The president of the Road Board Association said that the proposal had been discussed at a number of conferences of the association and that the Merredin Road Board had been most insistent on getting this matter through. The executive of the association had written to the 128 road boards of the State on the subject, but did not receive answers. In those circumstances, it seems to me there is no justification for this Bill. I think the Government, ever on the lookout to socialise and sneak a little more, is using this opportunity in an endeavour to expand the operations of the State Insurance Office. For the life of me I cannot see why we should amend the parent Act to enable road boards to establish insurance pools.

I assume that the greater part of the insurance would be against claims under the Workers' Compensation Act. Such insurance is, of course, compulsory. Taking into account the motor vehicles and plant owned by a board, I should say that a board would, on a very low estimate, be paying a premium of about £150 per annum. Of course, the greater part of that sum would be for workers' compensation insurance. As I say, why the road boards should find it necessary to approach the Minister for Works to introduce this Bill—as they say, with the

idea of saving expense—is a puzzle to me. There is nothing in the Road Districts Act to prevent boards from establishing insurance pools should they so desire. I understand some 20 odd boards are seeking this particular privilege. What on earth is there to prevent them from saying, "We will form an insurance pool? Our average expenditure on insurance is £150 a year." I will guarantee that if they went to any insurance company it would grab the business with both hands. I understand that the road boards who are keen on the establishment of a pool entertain the idea of effecting a considerable saving in their annual insurance expenditure.

As far as I can see this Bill provides, in effect, that they can, individually or collectively, insure with the State Insurance Office. There is no guarantee as to what the charges or the saving will be. I draw attention to the finding in the report on third party risk, submitted to the House by a Select Committee. According to that report, in New Zealand the Automobile Club which calls itself the North Island, New Zealand, Motor Union, started with initial pool funds of £250. That sum was subscribed by 40 enthusiasts. They started in 1929 with a net premium of £12,357. In 1938 they had £130,000 in accumulated funds. The unearned premium reserves took 15 per cent. of the net income. When the company commenced underwriting in August, 1928, it achieved a 15 per cent. reduction on the rates then ruling and charged by the insurance companies that had previously done the business. In 1933, five years after being established with a capital of £250, it gave to its policy holders the benefit of a further 10 per cent. reduction, making a total reduction of 25 per cent. In addition it distributed profits among its members, in 1934, of £20,000 and, in 1935, £25,000. I am quoting these figures for the information of the road boards that are anxious to establish a pool. I do not know that there is, in the Road Districts Act, anything contrary to their doing so.

Hon. G. B. Wood: There definitely is. There is no provision for it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: There is no provision for them to do that. Therefore, if the Government had deemed it necessary to enable the road boards to establish an insurance pool one would naturally think that

it would bring down an amendment of the Road Districts Act. Instead of that we find that we are dealing with the State Insurance Office. I now come closer home. We had sworn evidence from the Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia, which established a pool so that its members became entitled to insure with the club's insurance company. I think the club deals with the tariff companies. It was able to achieve a 20 per cent. reduction in the premiums. That is done as well as paying the manager's salary of about £500 a year. It is true that the Automobile Club handles about 600 policies. That shows that the road boards are, possibly, quite justified in their desire to effect a saving. But why they should have to go to the Government and ask for this Act to be amended to enable them to do so, passes my comprehension.

I contend that this is an attempt, or a genuine effort, to increase the business of the State Insurance Office which is in competition with the private companies. We know that when the compulsory third party risk insurance came into operation it was necessary for a person to hold a policy before he could receive his motor license. He had to get a policy from some acceptable company. The State Insurance Office circularised all the road board secretaries throughout the State, so I am credibly informed and I believe it is true, offering them a commission of 5 per cent. on all the business they could secure for the State office.

Hon. V. Hamersley: They were smart Alecks.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It was smart, but there is one aspect that people who are keen on having everything socialised seem to have overlooked. One of the problems that we shall be faced with in Western Australia—if it is not with us at the moment it is not far distant—will be to provide employment. If, with one fell swoop, we abolish all private insurance companies, their employees will be looking for work. While I have no objection to the road boards establishing a pool—they are entitled to do that—I point out that under the scheme proposed not one additional man would be employed by the boards. The whole of the work could be done by the road boards simply communicating with each other and sending the particulars along to the secretary of the Merredin Road Board who would interview the State Insurance Office which would say, "We

will take the £10,000 or £20,000 of insurance, and will be able to give you a reduction of about 20 per cent." That would be quite a profitable deal for the State Insurance Office.

The Honorary Minister: And for the road boards.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The road boards can obtain it at present. At the moment the Royal Automobile Club is able to give its policy-holders a reduction of 20 per cent., and that could be made applicable to the road boards.

Hon. G. B. Wood: There are only 21 road boards. You could not expect 21 boards to do what 600 policy-holders can do. You could not establish an insurance company with 21 policy-holders.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Mr. Wood says it could not be done.

Hon. G. B. Wood: At any rate, you would not do it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I would do it tomorrow. There is nothing to prevent it. If I went to each of the boards and made up a list and presented it to Harvey Trinder, Ltd., or any other insurance company in this town, I will guarantee that I could effect the business tomorrow and get a 20 per cent. or a 25 per cent. reduction in the premiums.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You were suggesting that they should put in a manager as the Royal Automobile Club has done.

Hon. A. THOMSON: No, I instanced what the Royal Automobile Club has done. It has achieved a 25 per cent. reduction by dealing with the Underwriters' Association.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is the difference between tariff and non-tariff charges.

Hon. A. THOMSON: No, they are the association charges.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is because they could get a 20 per cent. reduction from the non-tariff companies.

Hon. A. THOMSON: As far as that is concerned, they can still go to the non-tariff offices. Unless the Minister could give me some satisfaction as to what is intended by this measure I reserve to myself the right to vote against the Bill, or to see if it is possible to amend it in Committee. Personally I favour its being returned to the Government. If the road boards want to establish a pool, let them amend the Road

Districts Act, but I contend that even that is not necessary. The Minister in charge of the Bill here has, naturally enough, given us the information that has been placed at his disposal. He may be able to convince me to the contrary, but I think the State Insurance Office can undertake the bulk of this insurance business without this amendment.

Furthermore, I am not too keen on bringing in the friendly societies. We know that the friendly societies are in the position—they have been in the past, and I presume they will again in the future—of being able to advance money to their members for the purpose of purchasing homes. All those buildings are insured. That insurance is not paid by the friendly societies at all. Should the State Insurance Office make a friendly society its agent it would automatically be doing the business of the State Insurance Office by compelling each owner of these various homes to pay the premium, because that charge is debited against the man who is purchasing or building the house. I would certainly move to have that provision deleted. Seeing that the chairman of the Road Board Association, who is a member of this House, informed us that after circularising the whole of the road boards in the State, the association could not get any satisfactory answer, I think that the Bill should be postponed or held over for further consideration.

On motion by Hon. H. S. W. Parker, debate adjourned.

## BILL—SOIL CONSERVATION.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [8.30]: I commend the Government for the introduction of the Bill which seeks to deal with soil conservation and the mitigation of soil erosion. It is far-reaching in its effects and I hope will accomplish its objective. The committee that is to be set up will comprise mainly departmental officers and others representative of various agricultural districts. It will comprise eight members and the Government may dismiss any member if it considers him guilty of any action that may be deemed to render him unfit to act in that capacity. That is rather drastic. I do not altogether object to that but it might be possible that a country representative on the committee might not agree with the Govern-

ment members and in consequence the Government could dismiss him. Of course I assume that majority opinion would prevail and that course might be rather difficult. The object of the legislation is excellent in many respects. The Minister will be able to exercise great powers and as usual the Government will be adequately protected.

I notice that the Governor by proclamation may regulate or prohibit the use of land for certain purposes. That may be necessary and if the powers are exercised wisely it will prove satisfactory. I am just wondering what position will arise if the Government endeavours to enforce these conditions, direct the use of land in a certain manner and the landholder does not carry out the instructions. There is the right of appeal, but the man is liable to a penalty. The Government has power to resume land under the provisions of the Public Works Act. In the past complaints have been made about the methods adopted in the compulsory resumption of land and I trust that the Government will be generous in dealing with that phase. The Government has taken power to insist upon the planting of shrubs and trees. I quite agree with that as being necessary to assist in preventing erosion by wind or water. I hope the Government will give consideration to the planting of shrubs and trees of an edible nature.

In various parts of the State pines and other types of trees have been planted and they prove efficient breakwinds but they do not provide food for stock. When acting under this provision the Government should consider the planting of wattle and mallet trees. Some years ago I visited Natal and found that on the farms there an area was planted each year with wattle and mallet trees imported from Australia. The significant thing was that they were exporting mallet bark to Australia for tanning purposes. In order to prevent erosion by both wind and water it will be necessary to plant considerable areas throughout Western Australia with suitable trees, and I believe that if the mallet trees were planted they would not only provide firewood but the bark could be made use of in local industries. The same applies to the wattle trees. I congratulate the Government for dealing with this subject. We have plenty of evidence in this State of the effects of erosion, although the problem is not yet serious. In parts of my province there are

signs of erosion and I am glad that there, as well as elsewhere, reafforestation has been started.

On motion by Hon. G. B. Wood, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—BUILDERS' REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

**HON. G. B. WOOD** (East) [8.40] in moving the second reading said: This is a small Bill which seeks to amend Section 10 of the Builders' Registration Act which was assented to in 1939. About that time owing to the outbreak of war many men joined the A.I.F. and other branches of the Fighting Forces for service overseas. Many of them were builders and the Bill now before the House seeks to protect their interests on their return from active service. Originally the Act contained no limitation on the time when a builder could register, but subsequently the Act was amended and a limitation was imposed. At one time a man could be away from the trade for upwards of ten years, but on his return he could still register without having to pass an examination, provided he could prove to the board that he had been a builder or a supervisor of building construction for two years. Those men's interests were safeguarded to that extent.

The Bill seeks to rectify the amendment that was passed in 1940 which imposed the limit for registration purposes to six months after the passing of the amending legislation. Obviously men who had joined the Fighting Forces in the recent war could not comply with that condition, and therefore the Bill safeguards their interests. The amendment will apply not only to soldiers but to others associated with war work. That alters the whole position as envisaged by the parent Act. Now soldiers and others concerned, provided they register within nine months of their return from active service or from the date of cessation of hostilities, will be able to secure the benefits of the Act.

**Hon. W. J. Mann:** What about people who were manpowered? Will they have the same privileges?

**Hon. G. B. WOOD:** Not the man who is manpowered and remains here, because he will have had the opportunity to register. Anyone who went away from Western Aus-

tralia in connection with war work will secure the advantage.

Hon. W. J. Mann: What about men who were placed in munition works?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: They could have registered.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Only by passing an examination.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Not if they could prove that they had been in the building trade for two years prior to 1939.

Hon. G. Fraser: What about men who were sent away on Commonwealth construction works?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: They are definitely covered. Men who went away on Red Cross work would be covered, and I think that is fair and proper.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That does not cover the man who had been in the building trade and went on to a dairy to work during the war.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: That man would not have been doing war work.

Hon. W. J. Mann: But he would have been manpowered for the work he was doing.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Such a man would have been in a position to apply for registration because he was in the State at the time. This Bill is designed to protect men who went away and did not have knowledge of this legislation. Other people who have been away may sit for the examination. If a man has been away from the trade for a long time, it is difficult for him to pass a theoretical examination. However, this Bill merely deals with the people I have mentioned. It does not seek to alter the qualifications in any way; it does not seek to make registration easier. Applicants will still have to prove to the board that they were in the building trade for two years before the outbreak of war. This Bill received favourable consideration in another place, and I trust that members here will deal with it in an equally sympathetic manner. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

## BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. V. HAMERSLEY** (East) [8.47]: We have tried various forms of land legislation in the attempt to get people to settle upon our soil. We have made various attempts to bring about closer settlement, but a new system now seems to be contemplated under this measure. I appreciate that where closer settlement can be brought about under favourable conditions, it is a good thing for the country, but this can be undertaken very much better by private enterprise than by Governments.

Going back in history, I well remember when an agitation was first raised to bring in legislation to impose a land tax on the then poor community of Western Australia. At that time a total of about 15,000,000 acres was all that had been taken up, and there were still 624,000,000 acres available in the State. Much the same thing applies today. Not a great deal of land is privately held. Not more than 30,000,000 acres have been acquired, and there are 600,000,000 acres, or thereabouts still available. Yet the Government seems to be casting greedy eyes upon the few acres that have been taken up and developed by the people occupying them.

There are many areas suitable for subdivision and closer settlement that have not been taken up by private enterprise. It all resolves itself into a question whether there would be markets for the produce that could be raised on the land. Many people tried to develop pastoral areas. Some of them were within reach of a market and started operations in the way of growing vegetables; but the Minister for Lands discovered this and said it was closer settlement work. The occupants of the leases were entitled only to run sheep and cattle, and they were threatened that they would be expelled and their leases would be cancelled if they continued to grow and market vegetables. These are some of the things that have occurred in this State.

The proposal to impose a land tax at that early stage was squelched by a farmer. He learnt that a Bill was being introduced to impose a tax with the object of bursting up



estates, and his idea was that there was not a block of land in the State that was not available for sale. The trouble was there were no buyers. One fairly large property in the heart of York was cut up and I had the pricing of it. Within four miles of York, I put on a price of 4s. per acre, although that amount had been spent on improvements, so that anyone who bought it would have merely paid for the value of the improvements and got the land for nothing.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is as bad as the North-West.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I mention this because it has a bearing on closer settlement and because these are matters about which the general public knows nothing. Some of the land within three miles of York I priced at 8s. per acre, and it had 8s. worth of improvements per acre on it. I would like to tell Mr. Wood that his father was a member of the Government that proposed that early land tax and was in favour of it. At that time my father put a property in the hands of Mr. Barry Wood, who was an auctioneer, for sale. It was show day at York and the Castle Hotel was packed for the sale. Mr. Barry Wood did his best to get a bid, but could not sell a solitary block. The question I was instrumental in putting up to Sir John Forrest was that, in the event of a tax being imposed on the land of people who could not pay because they had not the money, and on the plea that the tax was designed to bring about closer settlement, he was not putting the buyer before the seller. I suggested that a 6d. advertisement should be put in the Press.

Hon. W. J. Mann: What?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: At that time an advertisement cost only 6d. If an advertisement were put in the papers asking for properties, a pile of them would be submitted from one end of the State to the other. It is open to the Government to do the same thing today.

Hon. W. J. Mann: What do you expect for 6d.?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Government should send its agents to the places notified as being available for sale and not worry the rest of the community of landholders as to what might happen to their land. Under the measure a new set of offi-

cers is to be appointed and, from what I can judge, the members of the board will be too busy to give the matter the attention it requires. We already have an Act passed in 1927 that covers the requisite ground.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The Act deals only with unutilised land.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: There are many properties that are unutilised and regarded as useless. I know of one right in Wongan Hills. Nobody would take up that block of land. Then a man arrived from the Old Country; he had a wife and a large family, was anxious to settle on the land, and simply had to take work where he could get it. He was shown this block and he took it up. He started work and presently was growing vegetables in sufficient quantity to supply Wongan Hills and the surrounding districts. On that patch of so-called useless land, he was raising vegetables, melons, pigs, eggs and many other lines, and made such a success of his work that he was able to sell out at a very satisfactory figure. Then he took his wife and family for a trip to the United States of America and England. On his return, he found that the man who had bought the block was prepared to resell it to him, so he started again on the same block, made a great success of his work and finally sold it a second time. I mention this to show what can be done by the right man that has a will to go on the land.

This did not apply to the group settlement scheme that Sir James Mitchell started in the South-West. In spite of all the money that was advanced to those settlers, they still clamoured for more. They said they could not live on 10s. per day; they wanted 12s. 6d. per day, and all of it was coming out of loan money. Some of us went to the South-West to inquire into what was happening. I pointed out at a public meeting that the early settlers had come here with pigs and poultry, and had found that they could live on very much less than 10s. per day. I told them that the taxpayers of the State had guaranteed the money lent to them as group settlers to assist them to develop farms and homes, and that if they would only try to live on 5s. a day, they would have a better chance. They were really squandering much of the 10s. a day and would find that their liability would become too great because they had not been long enough on the land to become established. The reply I received was to this

effect, "As soon as the advances we are receiving are stopped, we do not propose to stay here." They regarded the money that was being lent to them under the group settlement scheme as being in the nature of wages.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Not all of them, only some of them. You must not blame all on account of a few.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I was astounded when business men in one of those centres openly said, "This is going to be a great failure, and the sooner we get out the better." And the people said, "For God's sake, do not say anything about it! We have never done so well in our lives before!"

Hon. W. J. Mann: Yet today it is the richest part of the State. Say that!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It is just as well for us to realise, when we start out with the idea of spending a lot of money to establish people on the land—

Hon. W. J. Mann: It is the most prosperous part of the State!

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: —that we should go carefully. We get all sorts and conditions of men going on the land, and there are all kinds of pitfalls. I cannot understand the attitude of a Government—whether it be Federal or State—in keeping control over land. If anybody wants to sell a piece of land, he cannot do so; he is under the control of some bureaucrat. Somebody comes along and says, "You cannot sell that land for £2 or £4 or £15 an acre." He knows nothing about it; he simply fixes a scale of prices. Lord knows on what he bases it! One man sold land for £15 an acre, and the bureaucrat came along and said, "You cannot do that: the purchaser is not to pay more than £7 10s." So the vendor said, "Very well, I will keep it." The purchaser said, "I could get all the money back out of it from one crop of potatoes." Another man had land for sale at £4 an acre, and the bureaucrat said, "That is too much."

The PRESIDENT: I must ask the hon. member to connect his remarks with the Bill, which deals with closer settlement.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Sir, I should say that those remarks were connected with closer settlement, with more production from the soil. It depends to an extent upon what people pay for their land, whether they make

a success or a failure. We are being asked to make a fresh lot of appointments of people who happen to want billets. What do they know about the matter? I think that more money is likely to be squandered. It would be a very good idea if we could secure closer settlement; but I have seen a lot of unsuccessful attempts made. I know of many areas of land that would be available to the Government. The owners cannot approach anyone with a view to selling them, because they would be blocked. That means that the Government is likely to be the only buyer. Everything is held up, I understand, until this Bill is passed and until these experts decide what moves are to be made. Take my own circumstances. What am I to do? Am I to go on cropping my land or stop?

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: It is time to stop.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I will take the hint. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. E. H. H. Hall, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.4 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Wednesday, 17th October, 1945.*

	PAGE
Questions: Allied victory, as to medal for State school children	1296
Petrol, as to increasing allowance to employers	1297
Leave of absence	1297
Motions: Wool, as to transport to appraisalment centres, defeated	1297
Yampi Sound iron-ore, as to Koolan leases control and local smelting	1307
Vermitt Act, as to adopting Royal Commission's recommendations	1315
Bills: Administration Act Amendment (No. 2), 2A., Com., report	1305
Supreme Court Act Amendment, (No. 2) 2A.	1323

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### ALLIED VICTORY.

*As to Medal for State School Children.*

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Minister for Education:

Is it the intention of the Government to present to State School children a medal to commemorate the Allied Victory?