

but I am not in a position to know that. I only know what the Act provides, and it does set out that if they so desire they can exercise a vote in each province where they possess the requisite qualification.

Hon. F. R. Welsh: That cannot be described as plural voting.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: The hon. member may have some other definition for it, but I would express it that way. If I can be informed that there is some other name for it, I might be prepared to adopt it. However, the practice is so much regarded as such that on two occasions the Government has introduced Bills in the Legislative Assembly to make provision for the broadening of the Legislative Council franchise. Of course when those Bills came to this Chamber, for some reason or other members decided to oppose them and accordingly the measures did not become law.

This is another occasion on which members in this Chamber will have an opportunity to express their opinions and record their votes as to whether they agree that this Chamber should be elected on a more democratic franchise. Every member knows the contents of the Bill and I will not take up any more time as I am not sufficiently confident of my ability to be able to impress on members the need for changing their opinions. All I can do is to leave it to them to give a just vote on this occasion, and I hope that at least in this instance they will see the light of day.

On motion by Hon. J. A. Dimmitt, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.19 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 22nd November, 1950.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### EDUCATION.

#### (a) *As to Pre-fabricated School, Cunderdin.*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Education:

What stage has been reached regarding the intention of the department to have a pre-fabricated school building, consisting of two classrooms, erected at Cunderdin in time for the building to be ready for occupation by February, 1951?

The MINISTER replied:

When Cunderdin was placed on the department's list of schools to be enlarged by the erection of pre-fabricated classrooms, it was anticipated that the buildings would be available for erection before February, 1951.

Unforeseen delays have occurred in the arrival of the buildings from England. However, the first consignment of pre-fabricated units will arrive next month and the remainder progressively in succeeding months.

It is hoped to have all buildings erected by the end of the first half of 1951.

#### (b) *As to Eastern Goldfields High School.*

Mr. OLIVER asked the Minister for Education:

Has the Government any intention of re-building the Eastern Goldfields High School, or alternatively has the Government any intention of building a new high school at Kalgoorlie?

The MINISTER replied:

The Government has no present intention of taking such action.

### RAILWAYS.

#### (a) *As to Living Quarters, Spencers Brook Refreshment Rooms.*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

What is the present position regarding the provision of new living quarters for the manager and staff of the Railway Refreshment Rooms at Spencers Brook?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

Tenders closing on the 11th December have been called for the erection of living quarters, the material to be supplied by the department.

#### (b) *As to State Battery Connection, Kalgoorlie.*

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) Will he give consideration to the construction of 18 chains of railway which would connect the Kalgoorlie State Battery

with the Kalgoorlie-Boulder railway system, thereby avoiding double handling of prospectors' ore which has been consigned by rail?

(2) If the reply to (1) is in the affirmative, when is it proposed to complete the work?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) Consideration has been given to this request on several occasions but the amount of traffic does not at present justify the expenditure involved. The position will continue to be watched.

(2) Answered by (1).

### HOSPITALS.

#### *As to Staff Quarters and Overall Plan, Cunderdin.*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is it intended to build quarters at the Cunderdin District Hospital for the domestic staff and nursing assistants?

(2) Have any steps yet been taken to develop an overall master plan for this hospital to enable new buildings constructed from time to time to be fitted in with the overall plan?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. The Principal Architect was requested on the 25th May, 1950, to prepare plans and estimates. These have not been received in this department.

(2) No. The recent pressure on accommodation at the Cunderdin Hospital has been relieved by new arrangements made by the Commonwealth for the care elsewhere of patients from the Immigration Department Camp. There is no urgent need for additional beds at Cunderdin.

### MIGRANTS.

#### *As to Holden Camp Inmates and Employment.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Approximately how many people are at present accommodated at Holden Immigration Camp?

(2) What is the number of persons employed in all capacities at the camp?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Holden Immigration Centre is not controlled by the State.

(2) Answered by No. 1.

### HEALTH.

#### *As to Temporary Sanitary Conveniences for Building Employees.*

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is she aware of the dangerous, insanitary conditions of many temporary conveniences provided for workmen erecting new houses?

(2) Is she aware that they are a danger not only to the health of the workmen engaged in building operations but to all people in the immediate vicinity?

(3) If so, will she take immediate action to see that all hygienic laws are observed, and every precaution taken to safeguard the health of the community?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, in some instances.

(2) Yes. Remedial action is taken whenever defects are reported.

(3) The control of sanitation is the responsibility of the local authorities. Their attention was specially drawn to this question in November, 1949, and January, 1950. A model bylaw was gazetted on the 10th January, 1950. During the last two years the department has knowledge of 22 prosecutions for failure to provide suitable conveniences, and since the 13th October, 1950, the department has notified local authorities of 56 cases and requested them to take action.

#### TRAFFIC.

##### (a) As to Congestion on Routes to Northern Suburbs.

Mr. SHEARN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is he aware that considerable inconvenience and economic loss is being occasioned to an increasing volume of vehicular traffic between the city and northern suburban districts due to time loss through the Beaufort-street traffic bridge bottleneck and frequent closure of protection gates at Lord-street railway level crossing?

(2) Has this matter received urgent departmental consideration?

(3) If so, in view of the importance of the problem, what remedial action or alleviation is contemplated?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) A bottleneck is caused to vehicular traffic by the existence of only two permanent bridges giving access from the south to the north of the railway.

(2) I have already appointed a committee of senior departmental officers to prepare proposals for future railway operation in the metropolitan area.

(3) The plans now under consideration provide, inter alia, for frequent vehicular crossings from the south to the north of the line between East Perth and West Perth.

##### (b) As to Statistics of Taxi Accidents.

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Police:

Arising out of his assertion that statistics of traffic accidents in which taxicars are involved are not kept, will he inform the House when this practice was discarded, and why?

The MINISTER replied:

It has at no time been the practice to record accidents involving taxi-cars separately from accidents involving motor cars generally in the statistical records maintained at the Traffic Branch of the Police Department.

#### EAST PERTH CEMETERY.

##### As to Report of Committee.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Premier:

(1) Has he yet received the further report of the committee dealing with the East Perth Cemetery?

(2) If so, has he considered it and what decision has he made?

(3) If not, when does he anticipate receiving the report?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) and (3) The matter is under consideration and it is expected an early decision will be made.

#### HOUSING.

##### (a) As to Glendalough Homes, Cost and Prices.

Mr. W. HEGNEY asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) When was the first house in the Glendalough Estate area completed?

(2) When was the last house in the Glendalough Estate area completed?

(3) Are there houses of other than four rooms and five rooms in the above area?

(4) What is the average cost of erection of—

(a) houses of four rooms;

(b) houses of five rooms;

(c) houses in each of the other types referred to in the above question in the above area for the years ended—

The 31st December, 1946;

The 31st December, 1947;

The 31st December, 1948;

The 31st December, 1949?

(5) What is the sub-Treasury value of land comprising the whole of the Glendalough Estate area in which the 146 houses are erected and referred to by the Minister on the 15th November, 1950?

(6) Are prices being asked tenants in Commonwealth-State houses in the Glendalough Estate area the average cost of each type of house referred to in (4) above?

(7) If the answer to (6) is in the negative is the price being asked the actual cost of the dwelling at date of completion?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 3/2/47.

(2) 16/8/48.

(3) Yes; 17 houses containing six rooms each.

(4)

	Average Cost.		
	Four rooms.	Five rooms.	Six rooms.
The 31st Dec., 1946	—	—	—
The 31st Dec., 1947	£1,103	£1,252	£1,310
The 31st Dec., 1948	£1,209	£1,378	£1,426
The 31st Dec., 1949	—	—	—

(5) Sub-Treasury valuations are obtained only in cases where tenants have made application to purchase.

(6) Prices being asked represent the average cost under each contract as distinct from the average cost for houses completed in any one year.

(7) Answered by (6).

*(b) As to Commonwealth-State Homes Rented and Sold.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What is the total number of dwellings which have been erected in this State under the Commonwealth-State Rental Homes Scheme?

(2) In what number of instances have the tenants of these homes exercised their right to purchase them?

(3) In how many instances have tenants who secured priority on the grounds of hardship, and who exercised their right to purchase subsequently sold such houses?

(4) How many Commonwealth-State rental homes have been erected in Federal-street, Cottesloe?

(5) Of the total number erected in that street, how many are still occupied on a strictly rental basis?

(6) Of the houses erected in Federal-street and in connection with which the tenants have exercised their rights to purchase, how many have been re-sold?

(7) Is it a fact that there are instances where Commonwealth-State rental homes have been re-sold within 12 months of original occupation?

(8) Is it a fact that some Commonwealth-State rental homes have been re-sold at substantial profit which, in certain cases, exceeds £1,500?

(9) What action does the Government propose to take to ensure that the Commonwealth-State Housing Scheme will properly meet its objective of housing people instead of providing a means of enabling some of those who secure houses under the scheme to use them in order to make money?

The MINISTER replied:

(2) 1,681 tenants have indicated a desire to purchase; 234 had completed purchase up to 30/9/50; 320 have been given firm offers for completion of purchase by 31/12/50.

(3) Not known to the State Housing Commission.

(4) Fifteen.

(5) Four at present—three of these will complete purchase this quarter.

(6) Not known.

(7) Not known.

(8) Yes—one case is known to the State Housing Commission.

(9) Restrictions as to re-sale of properties by purchasers are not provided for in the Commonwealth-State agreement. The Commission decided that on purchase of a home, the purchaser has all the rights of house ownership. This view was shared by both Commonwealth and State Governments.

Reasons for subsequent re-sale are not known to the Commission, but in some instances sellers have stated that sales were due to their transfer to other States.

*(c) As to Co-operative Scheme.*

Mr. READ asked the Minister for Housing:

In view of the high standard of the work of the architectural section at the Technical College which produced an unique co-operative housing scheme, for which Commonwealth-wide recognition has been given, will he take an early opportunity of seeing the same?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes—I have made necessary arrangements to visit the school.

**KALGOORLIE ABATTOIRS.**

*As to Renovations and Freezing Plant.*

Mr. OLIVER asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

Is it a fact that because of the complaints from the master butchers of Kalgoorlie and Boulder on the condition of the abattoirs at Kalgoorlie, the Government has spent approximately £70,000 on renovations and the installation of freezing plant?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

The Government has spent £45,000 on the Kalgoorlie Abattoirs. The abattoirs and cooling chambers are now thoroughly up to date.

**SWAN RIVER.**

*As to Reclamation and Use of Land.*

Mr. READ asked the Minister for Works:

As it is proposed to reclaim about 200 acres from the river north of the Causeway on the Victoria Park side, will the land reclaimed be used for beautification and recreation purposes?

The MINISTER replied:

No decision has yet been made in this matter.

**BILLS (8)—FIRST READING.**

- 1, Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation).

Introduced by the Minister for Works.

- 2, Lotteries (Control) Act Continuance.

Introduced by the Chief Secretary.

- 3, Road Closure.

- 4, Seeds.

- 5, Land Act Amendment.

- 6, Reserves.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

- 7, Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Housing.

- 8, Timber Industry Regulation Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Forests.

**MEAT SUPPLIES SELECT COMMITTEE.***Report Presented.*

Mr. Perkins brought up the report of the Select Committee, together with a type-written copy of the evidence referred to in the report.

Ordered: That the report be printed and its consideration made an Order of the Day for the next sitting of the House.

**BILLS (6)—THIRD READING.**

- 1, Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment (No. 2).

- 2, Milk Act Amendment.

- 3, Physiotherapists.

- 4, Rural and Industries Bank Act Amendment.

- 5, Judges' Salaries and Pensions.

- 6, Legal Practitioners Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

**BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (LAND ACT APPLICATION) ACT AMENDMENT.***Third Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [4.50]: I move—

That the Bill be read a third time.

**MR. MARSHALL** (Murchison) [4.51]: I much regret that the Minister treated very lightly the comments I made upon this measure when speaking to the second reading.

**Hon. J. B. Sleeman**: You did not make any impression upon him.

**MR. MARSHALL**: No, because evidently the Minister has no knowledge of what he is actually doing.

The Minister for Lands: That is what you think.

**MR. MARSHALL**: I am positive of it.

The Minister for Lands: You have tickets on yourself.

**MR. MARSHALL**: Conclusive evidence of that is the statement the Minister made that up to 1898 the Crown at all times reserved for itself gold and other precious metals. That is absolutely incorrect. I commented upon that aspect and reminded the Minister of it, but he briefly brushed it aside in reply. I could not catch what he said because his utterances were not altogether—

**Hon. F. J. S. Wise**: Intelligible or audible.

**MR. MARSHALL**:—distinct to me, but they prove quite conclusively that the Minister has no knowledge of what the Bill actually means apart from the fact that the Government is going to acquire land for soldier settlement; that is all he knows about it. The fact remains, Mr. Speaker, and we have it now in evidence, that the Hampton Plains Crown grant did not reserve to the Crown gold and precious metal because the Hampton Plains area is now operating and has full right to the gold within that Crown grant. I sought to guide the Minister on this matter and pointed out that the Bill should have been submitted to the Mines Department at least out of courtesy, because what does the Lands Department know of minerals and precious metals?

The Minister for Lands: How do you know it was not submitted to the Mines Department?

**MR. MARSHALL**: During the second reading debate I told the Minister that I naturally thought the Under Secretary for Mines would know all about the Bill but when I rang him up, strange to relate, he knew nothing more about it than I did, having only seen the report in "The West Australian," that morning. I was astonished to know that that was the position.

The Minister for Lands: Where did you get your information from?

**MR. MARSHALL**: All the information I have acquired is from what the Minister gave out on the second reading, and I then had to look up past records in an endeavour to ascertain what was done.

The Minister for Lands: No, you did not; you got the information from the Lands Department.

**MR. MARSHALL**: I rang the Under Secretary for Lands when I could not get the information from the Under Secretary for Mines.

The Minister for Lands: That is where you got it; from the department that is dealing with the Bill.

**MR. MARSHALL**: Yes, that is where I got it and I obtained more information from the department than I did from the

Minister. In fact, the Minister gave no information. The position is that today, notwithstanding the conditions which were in the Crown grants given to the Midland Railway Company, certain minerals that were practically unknown 85 or 86 years ago can now probably be discovered within those Crown grants and there is every prospect that they will be. I think this was an excellent opportunity for the Lands Department to confer with the Mines Department and, if it had, this position would not have arisen.

These lesser minerals would have been grouped and minerals that were known to the authorities of those days would have been reserved for the Midland Railway Company, but any minerals which have sprung into prominence over the last few years and were practically unknown 80-odd years ago, would have been reserved to the Crown. For example, alkaline earth minerals are now almost as valuable as gold. It was never intended that alkaline earth minerals should be reserved to the Midland Railway Company under the Crown grant now held by it. If we pass this measure as it is now we will be condoning the fact that the company is entitled to those minerals by law. If the company, which I understand is proposing to operate in Western Australia in the near future on some of this land held by the Midland Railway Company under a Crown grant, discovers deposits of alkaline earth minerals, the Government will get nothing out of it whatsoever and they will be left for negotiation between the two companies and I do not know whether the Midland Railway Company will be generous about it, either. It could easily be that what might be a prosperous mining centre could go overboard because no arrangement could be made between the Midland Railway Company and the company which, it is proposed, will be operating for the exploration of alkaline earth minerals.

From the "Government Gazette" of 1886 it is quite evident that in those days each and every Crown grant could have varied as to what the Crown could reserve unto itself and would in turn, grant to the recipient of the Crown grant, and special reference is made to gold, precious metals and lesser minerals. Each and every Crown grant reserved unto the recipient all the varied material in it, gold and all, in the same way as happened with the Hampton Plains area. It was not until 1898 that the Crown reserved unto itself all rights in gold and precious metals. Whether the ground had been alienated or not, or whether it was in fee simple or not, the Crown took unto itself all that mineral wealth below and even on the surface. But the Minister would pay no heed to my reference in that matter and still held to the conviction he enunciated when he introduced the Bill, that the Crown, prior to 1898, reserved unto itself

all rights in gold and precious metals. Section 138 of the Mining Act is headed and reads as follows:—

**Crown Ownership of Gold and Minerals.**

Subject to the provisions of this Act and the regulations—

- (1) gold, silver and other precious metals on or below the surface on all lands in Western Australia, whether alienated or not alienated from the Crown, and if alienated whensoever alienated, are the property of the Crown.

It was not until then that that point was made clear, and obviously the Hampton Plains people could not have obtained the rights to gold and precious metals if they were not specifically set down by the Governor in Council when the Crown grant was made. What I am worried about is that, in my humble judgment, the Government did not consult the Mines Department and permit it to group the lesser minerals, and ascertain those that were known and were intended to belong to the Midland Railway Company and return them to it, but we have no right, at this late stage when science has discovered valuable minerals, to hand those rights over to the company.

The Minister is unfair in not making it possible for the Mines Department to offer some comment before this particular Bill was introduced. Under it we now hand over to the Midland Railway Company probably extremely valuable deposits of minerals which were unknown when the Crown grants were made and to which, by law, I do not think it is entitled. However, if we pass this Bill tonight without recognising that fact it will be an indication that we did so with our eyes open and gave deposits to the Midland Railway Company, irrespective of how much it costs the State at some future time.

I subscribe to the other provisions of the Bill wholeheartedly and also to that relating to the retention of gold and other precious metals by the Crown when the soldier takes over the land. They are now to be reserved to the Crown under that particular provision in the Mining Act, but it is not fair to ignore those who have experience of the mining industry and a knowledge of mining laws, and are dealing with a matter referring to precious metals and minerals. It is our job to watch what is being done with them.

The Lands Department would have been well advised to have consulted with the Mines Department and endeavoured to come to some arrangement with the company. By the Bill we are now passing, we shall permanently transfer all minerals under the Crown grant that will be issued to it. I am sorry the Minister did not give some heed to the quotations I made from

the "Government Gazette" of so many years ago. I think the action taken is unfair. Everyone approves of the acquisition of land for soldier settlement, but the anomalies to which I have drawn attention have cropped up. I shall not oppose the third reading of the Bill.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay—in reply) [5.2]:** One would think when listening to the member for Murchison that the Government was giving away something to the company that it did not already possess. When the company was granted its rights under the Crown grant made available in the very early days, the mineral rights were reserved, as I indicated when moving the second reading. To get over the legal difficulty that has arisen, the company has been asked to re-vest in the Crown the rights it possesses so that the titles can be cleared for the purpose of issuing leases for the properties that have been allotted to soldier settlers. In return, the Crown has promised the Midland Railway Co. to restore the rights it holds. According to the member for Murchison, I should have gone back through the early mining regulations, but that is all beside the point. The whole object of the measure is to get over a legal difficulty. It was not necessary to consult the Mines Department, otherwise that course would have been adopted. The man who advised me advised the member for Murchison, and I do not see how I could have misled the House when I acted on the advice of one of the most capable officers in the Lands Department.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

#### **BILL—CITY OF PERTH (LEEDERVILLE PARK LANDS).**

##### *Second Reading.*

**MR. NEEDHAM (North Perth) [5.5]** in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to authorise the Perth City Council to lease certain land it holds in trust for purposes other than that for which it is now held. Under the City of Perth Endowment Lands Act, the council is authorised to administer certain lands for municipal purposes only, and the area that the Bill deals with is not such as could be used for any municipal purpose whatever. Consequently, Parliament is being approached to authorise the leasing of the land in question. The reason for the council's action is that when Jersey-street was extended in a southerly direction from Salvado-road, it caused the severance of a small section of land held subject to certain endowment trust requirements. The severed land comprises two acres, or thereabouts, and is not required for the purpose of a reserve.

It has been thought desirable that the council should obtain the discharge of its trust in respect of the land, and be allowed discretion to lease the area. The land in question is portion of Swan Location 2124. When I received the original draft from the council, it contained a provision that would enable the area in question to be sold or leased. After giving that portion of the Bill consideration, I came to the conclusion that I did not think Parliament would consent to the City Council selling any such land.

Mr. Marshall: You were right, too.

Mr. Totterdell: We do not want to sell such land.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I suggested to the City Council that it might review the position with the object of deleting from the Bill the reference to selling the land, leaving it to deal merely with the leasing aspect. That suggestion was agreed to and the Bill now before the House simply seeks to authorise the City Council to lease the land. The council has in mind the leasing of the whole block, or portions of it, to community organisations, such as the Boy Scouts' Association, police boys' clubs, or suchlike bodies. The experience of community organisations is that it is difficult to get for their purposes land that is adjacent to reserves, and the piece of land in question fulfils that requirement.

After I gave notice of my intention to introduce the Bill, I was told that the State Housing Commission was desirous of securing the area for building blocks of houses. I had a conversation with the Town Planning Commissioner, to get his opinion, and subsequently interviewed the Town Clerk, to ascertain the position in that regard. I was advised that the City Council had communicated with the State Housing Commission in 1948 asking whether it wanted this piece of land for building purposes. No reply was received to that communication, and in July of this year the council again communicated with the Commission, asking the same question. It was informed that an immediate reply would be despatched, but to date no word has been received from the Commission. In the circumstances, I think it can be claimed that the department is no longer interested in this block of land. I have since learned that, on the 10th November, the Commission approached the Town Planning Commissioner—this was after the Bill was actually before Parliament—and asked him to cut the block up into building allotments. We know that that action could not be taken unless Parliament authorised that course by a procedure similar to the one I am adopting.

In conversation with the Chief Secretary regarding the matter, I was advised that I should obtain an assurance from the Perth City Council that the firm intention was to lease the land for the pur-

poses I have stated. I again got in touch with the Town Clerk, Mr. Green, with the result that I received a communication from him this morning. I think I should read the letter to the House to let members know that the City Council is acting in all good faith.

Mr. TOTTERDELL: It always does.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The letter is addressed to me, and reads—

I refer to my discussion yesterday regarding the terms of the Bill which you were good enough to undertake to introduce to Parliament concerning the Council's request in respect to the discharging of the conditions of trust on the small section of land adjacent to Jersey-street, and to your request that the Council intimate specifically that if Parliament agrees to permit the Council to lease the area referred to, such leases will be confined to societies and organisations such as the Boy Scouts, Youth Leagues, or any other community interests which may be organised within the municipality and which are approved by the Council.

I have pleasure in confirming that the Council has no other intention to make use of its powers to lease, if granted by Parliament, than those outlined above, and it is the sole desire of the Council to have the right to make available on lease areas on which such organisations may establish centres and erect buildings in connection therewith, particularly in view of the fact that the major portion of this class of endowment lands is already developed in the recreation reserve of Henderson Park immediately adjacent to this land.

In respect to your advice that the Town Planning Commissioner has stated that the State Housing Commission has a priority claim on this trip of land, I wish to advise that the council communicated with the State Housing Commission on the 3rd December, 1948, advising them that, provided the necessary legal authority could be obtained for the sale and that a subdivisional plan was approved by the Town Planning Board, the Council would agree to negotiate with them in respect to the subdivision of these two acres of land or thereabouts for housing purposes. The Council received no reply to that communication, and in July, 1950, as the result of a telephonic reminder, the Housing Commission advised the Council that the matter would be gone into and that they would advise us promptly in the matter. I have received no further communication from the Housing Commission in respect to this land since that date, and I have therefore had every reason to think that they were not further interested.

It should also be realised, of course, that even if the negotiations with the State Housing Commission were to be further pursued at this stage, the Council would not be able to sell the land without the consent of Parliament in the form of the Bill which is in your hands.

You will recollect from your earlier conversation with me in respect to the Bill that you considered it was most unlikely that Parliament would agree to the Council having the right to sell this land, and I agreed to the excision from the preliminary draft of the term "sell" and the retention only of the term "to lease."

I trust that you will be able to obtain the consent of Parliament to the leasing of this land, as it will undoubtedly help the community organisations in this area.

The result is the Bill now before the House in its present form. I should like at this stage to make a personal explanation to remove any misunderstanding that might exist in the minds of some members, and particularly in the mind of the member for Wembley Beaches. I understand that that hon. member is interested in the measure, and I wish to assure him and the House generally that, by introducing the Bill, I have not encroached upon the hon. member's electorate. In all my public life I have carefully refrained from doing anything of that nature, and I do not intend to start doing it now.

The position is this: When I was elected to the State Parliament, I represented the City of Perth and, on various occasions I was requested to introduce legislation on behalf of the Perth City Council. After the Redistribution of Seats Bill became effective I was elected to North Perth and, in the course of conversation with the Town Clerk, I pointed out that fact to him. However, I was requested to proceed with the introduction of this measure, but I wish to assure the hon. member that I had no intention of trespassing upon his electorate. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT** (Hon. V. Doney—Narrogin) [5.20]: The hon. member's explanation of the Bill is quite satisfactory to me. Short of one amendment that I propose to submit in the Committee stage, I see no reason for impeding the passage of the measure. I had been given to understand, apparently not from a very authoritative source, that it was the intention of the Perth City Council to sell a certain portion of the land referred to. I could not believe that that could be contemplated, and I am glad that the hon. member has cleared up the point. That is all I need say on the second reading.



I am sure that the amendment I propose to move will be acceptable to the hon. member.

**MR. NIMMO** (Wembley Beaches) [5.22]: I can assure the member for North Perth that I have no ill-feeling in this matter. He is too well respected for anyone to think he would do anything underhand, but at first I felt a little put out because this land in Jersey-street really borders a factory area where at the present time the Air Force camp is located. One day I thought it would be a good idea to get a row of small houses built there, because transport, gas, electric light and water services were already established. I brought the matter to the notice of the housing authorities, who displayed interest, so much so that within an hour, two resumption officers were on the spot. They considered the site a good one for a few small houses, especially as it would make a buffer for the factories.

The Town Planning Commissioner, in discussing the matter, expressed the opinion that it would be preferable to retain the land as a park, but when it was suggested that the Perth City Council might lease the land to the boy scout and other organisations, he considered that that would be a far better idea. The housing authorities seemed to be so interested in the project that I cannot understand why they should have been lax in replying to the letter of the Perth City Council. However, that is a matter which the Minister for Housing might take up with the Commission, because the Perth City Council is a body that ought to receive a certain amount of respect.

**Mr. Graham:** Only a certain amount?

**Mr. NIMMO:** I wish to assure the member for North Perth that I have no ill-feeling in the matter and I support the second reading of the Bill.

**MR. TOTTERDELL** (West Perth) [5.25]: As one who is a little interested in this small piece of land—a few acres in Jersey-street—I assure the House that the Perth City Council has at all times played the game properly. The object of the Bill is to obtain permission to grant a lease to police boys, boy scout and infant health organisations for the erection of buildings, and it is an excellent site for those purposes. There is no question of the Perth City Council ever wishing to sell the land. Our desire is to assist organisations such as those I have indicated.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

**Mr. Hill** in the Chair; **Mr. Needham** in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Power to lease:

The **CHIEF SECRETARY:** I move an amendment—

That after the word “discretion” in line 5 the words “subject to any obligation under the Municipal Corporations Act” be inserted.

Without the amendment, the clause would imply an attempt to amend some other statute. The amendment is, therefore, in the interests of clarity. Section 211 of the Municipal Corporations Act provides that any municipality may from time to time let on lease any land purchased or acquired for any term and at such rent and subject to such conditions as the council may deem expedient, but that no such lease shall be granted for a term exceeding three years without the consent in writing of the Governor. That provision is not new to the member for North Perth, who realises that the measure must be subject to the section.

**Mr. NEEDHAM:** The amendment will not in any way affect the principle contained in the Bill or hamper the Perth City Council in giving effect to its intention. Therefore I support the amendment.

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

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

## **BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

**HON. J. T. TONKIN** (Melville) [5.30] in moving the second reading said: I first of all desire to express my appreciation to the Premier for giving me this opportunity to introduce the Bill, and so permit of its having a better chance of securing a passage than if its introduction were delayed. The Bill is a short one designed to effect an amendment to the Administration Act in order to extend to people of today a privilege or benefit which was intended when the Act was passed in 1903. The Administration Act at that time, by Section 53—Section 55 of the present consolidated Act—provided—

In all cases where a person dies leaving property not exceeding five hundred pounds in value, application for probate or administration may be made direct to the Master; or if the fixed abode of the deceased at the time of his death has been more than thirty miles from Perth, then to the district agent for the Master nearest to such place of abode.

Section 54 of the 1903 Act—now Section 56—provided—

The Master or district agent shall, upon being satisfied as to the identity of the applicant, and his right to administer the estate of the deceased, and the value of such estate, furnish him,

free of cost, with all necessary information for the purpose of enabling him to fill up the affidavits and documents necessary for obtaining probate or administration as the case may be.

It will be clear to members that the intention of the legislature in those days was to make it possible for persons who were called upon to administer small estates to have the assistance of the Master of the Supreme Court, without being obliged to incur the expense of engaging a lawyer for what was a simple matter. Most of such estates comprised a dwelling only. It was felt that in those circumstances it should not be necessary for people to engage a solicitor to do the work for them. In 1903 the sum of £500 was, to a working man, almost a fortune. A house which in those days cost £500 was quite a substantial dwelling, but today that sum would purchase a house of only a very poor type. The purpose of my Bill is to amend the Act so that we can take cognisance of the alteration in the value of money, and provide, under existing values, for the same privilege as applied in 1903. To illustrate the position clearly I propose to use certain figures.

When the Workers' Homes Act was passed in 1912, it provided that the maximum amount which could be advanced for the erection of a dwelling was £550. But over the years we have at times amended the Act, and the most recent amendment, which was passed this session, has increased the sum to £2,000. So, whereas it was felt that £550 was a sufficiently large loan in 1912, we now think it necessary to provide £2,000. The latter sum is more than three times what was provided for in 1912; and even the 1912 values had changed from those of 1903. I obtained from the Arbitration Court some figures relating to wages which were paid in 1903 and the wages paid now for similar work, and they clearly demonstrate the difference that exists.

According to an industrial agreement dated the 4th August, 1902, coastal painters and paperhangers, engaged on a 48-hour week, had a rate of 1s. 3d. per hour which gave them a total wage of £3 per week. The operative painters' award, dated the 18th October last, provides for a 40-hour week and a rate of pay of £10 8s. 9d.—more than three times the 1903 amount. Under an award dated the 17th June, 1904, carters and drivers on a 48-hour week received the following rates of pay:—

Man in charge of tip dray £2 6s. a week.

Man carting firewood, £1 19s. per week.

Others (in charge of one horse), £2 2s. a week.

Others (in charge of two horses), £2 6s. a week.

The comparable award today, for road transport workers, dated the 18th October, 1950, provides for a 40-hour week, and horse drivers driving one horse receive £7 19s. a week; driving two horses £8 6s. 6d.; and driving three horses £8 8s. 6d. In every instance that I have quoted the increase is more than treble the amount provided in 1902 or 1904. Wages are usually taken as a guide to costs because they enter so largely into costs. If it was considered reasonable to provide £500 when wages were such as I have quoted, surely my Bill, in providing for an increase to £1,500—three times the amount—is not unreasonable when wages today are more than three times what they were when the Administration Act was first passed.

If we have some regard to the value of property, apart from wages, then the illustration I propose to use is a good one. I recently came across a case where a property was purchased in 1941 for less than £600. Shortly after it was bought one room was added to it. The total additions came to less than £100, but suppose we take £100 as a round figure, that makes the total cost £650. Recently I was handling the estate for the widow who happened to be a joint tenant of the property and so it was not necessary to get administration of it, but of course stamp duty had to be paid on the value of the house, and it was valued at £1,820. Therefore, stamp duty had to be paid on half that amount.

Mr. Griffith: Was that Sub-Treasury valuation?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Yes. So a place that cost £550 in 1941, having less than £100 spent on it, was valued at three times the total amount within nine years, and the Treasury expected duty to be paid on the present value. Had the person who owned the house died in 1903, the value of the property would have been less than £500, and had it been necessary to obtain probate, the necessary services would have been provided by the Master. But, because the man died in 1950, it would have been necessary to engage a solicitor to put the estate through, even though it did not consist of anything more than the dwelling. It is to meet that position that the Bill has been introduced, and for no other purpose. It is so that we can take cognisance of the altered value of money and try to place the circumstances for widows and widowers today as they were intended to be when the Administration Act was first passed.

There is one other point. The Administration Act of 1903 makes use of the words "not exceeding five hundred pounds in value." I propose to make it net value so that the provision will be "not exceeding in net value the sum of one thousand five hundred pounds." The reason is that frequently working people who are attempting to buy a house find it necessary to mortgage it, in order

to meet, in some cases, doctors' expenses which can be substantial if the husband or wife happens to contract a serious disease such as cancer, or some disability which requires a big operation or series of operations. In such circumstances, it is quite easy to run up a debt of several hundreds of pounds. In order to meet that position, people have been obliged to mortgage their homes, so that when one or other of the persons concerned has died there has been the mortgage debt on the property.

It is only reasonable and fair that we should be permitted to deduct such a debt from the value of a property which is being sworn for probate, or in connection with which administration is being sought. So I am providing that the figure shall be £1,500 net value as against the wording in the Act at present which just deals with the value. There is nothing more to the Bill than I have said. It is an attempt to provide for people to have the assistance which it was intended they should have when the Administration Act was first passed but which, because of the alteration in the value of money, they are now denied. There are many fewer people who could get this service today, not because their estates are any larger but because in monetary terms the amounts are larger. There being no alteration in the figure in the Act, people are precluded from getting the advantage, which it was intended they should have, because when estates are calculated it is found that the values exceed the £500 mentioned.

I do not think the point requires any further emphasis. We are well aware of the alteration in the value of money. As a final example one need only quote the salaries paid to members of Parliament in the early years and those which are paid now. They show the substantial change which has taken place because values have changed, and money does not buy today what it bought in 1903. I hope that the principle of the Bill will commend itself to members and the Government will see fit to give the matter its support. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Attorney General, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—BANKRUPTCY ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

**HON. E. NULSEN** (Eyre) [5.47] in moving the second reading said: This is a small but important Bill and deals with people who have suffered bankruptcy extending as far back as 1892. The Bill is intended to amend the Bankruptcy Act, 1892, and probably some members will be wondering why I am seeking the amendment, because the Commonwealth Act supersedes the State Act. But, the provisions of the State Act still apply in winding up all bank-

ruptcies which occurred and were pending before the proclamation of the Commonwealth Act on the 1st August, 1928. Therefore, the provisions of the State Act had to continue in operation and I am seeking to amend some of them.

There are only two small amendments, one of which is to Section 26 which deals with the discharge of bankrupts. The judge has to refuse or suspend a discharge for a period of not less than two years. Sometimes that is hard on those who are seeking discharges and because of the technicalities—known as “facts”—in Section 26, people are prevented from getting discharges. The court, shall, on proof of any of the facts either—

(i) refuse the discharge;

(ii) suspend the discharge for a period of not less than two years.

The facts hereinbefore referred to—I shall give members two or three of them—are—

That the bankrupt has omitted to keep such books of account as are usual and proper in the business carried on by him, and has sufficiently disclosed his business transactions and financial position within the three years immediately preceding his bankruptcy.

That the bankrupt has continued to trade after knowing himself to be insolvent.

That the bankrupt has contracted any debt provable in the bankruptcy without having at the time of contracting it any reasonable or probable ground of expectation (proof whereof shall lie on him) of being able to pay it.

That the bankrupt has put any of his creditors to unnecessary expense by a frivolous or vexatious defence to any action properly brought against him.

They are some of the facts that are sufficient to prevent a judge or court having discretion in regard to a discharge. I feel that the discharge should be left to the court because the Official Receiver, when making his report, goes into the matter thoroughly, and the judge should be able to make up his mind whether the discharge should be made immediately or for some set period—such as a week, a month, 12 months or three or four years, depending upon the circumstances. That report should be *prima facie* evidence and should enable the court to make up its mind about a discharge.

Because of the facts set out in Section 26 the judge is not allowed to use his discretion in regard to a discharge. We should have confidence that the Official Receiver's report will be studied by the judge, and that should be sufficient to justify his using his own discretion whether the discharge should be granted immediately or suspended for a certain period. In the Bill I am seeking to amend Section 26 of the

principal Act by deleting the words "for a period of not less than two years" in paragraph (ii) of Subsection (2) and substituting the words "for a specified period." If the amendment is agreed to it will enable the court to use its discretion and specify the period required for a discharge.

Section 38, Subsection (6) demands that the court must impose a charge of 8 per cent. on any surplus. That subsection states—

If there is any surplus after payment of the foregoing debts—

I want members to note this.

—it shall be applied in payment of interest from the date of the receiving order at the rate of Eight Pounds per centum per annum on all debts proved in the bankruptcy.

That means that if there is a surplus the court has no jurisdiction other than to impose eight per cent. In these days, eight per cent. is too high and the figure should be considerably less. I have made provision in this Bill to amend Section 38 of the principal Act by deleting the words "Eight Pounds" in Subsection (6) and substituting therefore the words "Three Pounds Two Shillings and Sixpence." Some members may wonder where I got that figure of three pounds two shillings and sixpence. Any person who has money invested in war loans, or Commonwealth loans, will know that the interest rate is  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. I thought it would be quite sufficient, under this Act, if a person received  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

I have a number of cases—and I intend to quote two or three—where the interest has imposed hardship on the dependants or children of bankrupts. In some cases the principals involved have died and the interest dates as far back as 1903. In the case of Cook the balance of debt to pay 20s. in the £ was £231 7s. 4d. under the provisions of Subsection (6) of Section 38. As it exists now, the interest on the debt, from 1907 to 1950, amounts to £859 2s. 11d. I want members to note that that figure is only on £231 7s. 4d. The interest amounts to £859 2s. 11d. making a total of £1,090 10s. 3d. That is very unfair. In some instances, as members probably know, property on the Goldfields, at one time, was worth practically nothing at all but, through the revival of the Goldfields—and this could apply in other places as well—blocks of land and other property have increased in value; sometimes through the unearned increment. If creditors get Commonwealth loan interest it should be quite sufficient.

Most business people make provision for bad debts and they allow 1 or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Here we have an Act which is nearly 60 years old, and makes it mandatory for the court to charge 8 per cent. That seems very hard. I have another case from my home town—a Mr. H. Webse, 144 Princeps-street. His father went bankrupt in 1909

but the children did not know anything about his insolvency. In his will he left the children a block of land at Norseman, and other things. There was a time when I lived at Norseman and I had about a dozen blocks. They were not worth very much but, owing to the gold boom, and the town going ahead because of the prospects of pyrites, the land has increased in value.

At that time, in 1909, the debt was £511 9s. 4d. Since then the interest accumulation has been considerably over £2,000. As members know, when a will is to be settled the Public Trustee makes application to the Bankruptcy Court to see whether it is unencumbered. In this instance it was encumbered. Consequently, instead of the Public Trustee selling that property for the benefit of the children, as the father intended, it is to be used for the benefit of those creditors who at the present time are non-existent. There may be one or two of them, but I have made several inquiries and I have not been able to locate one. Nevertheless, the Official Receiver has a job to do and he has ordered the Public Trustee to sell the property and, of course, to forward the proceeds to him for distribution. I have quite a number of cases like that but I do not intend to quote any more.

I think I have successfully proved to the House that the mandatory part of the 1892 Bankruptcy Act, that is the old Western Australian Act which specifies eight per cent. interest, provides for a ridiculously high rate and I feel it ought to be put on a fair basis. If the creditors were to get enough loan interest at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., that should be quite sufficient. As a matter of fact I feel I should have made that the maximum, and left it to the discretion of the judge whether he pays interest or not to the creditors, because, when an amount of money has been owing as long as that and the creditors have all passed on, I think if they were to get the amount owing they would be lucky. I have a few thousand pounds owing to me and I should be very willing to pay the interest even if I could get it, let alone receive interest in this instance. I commend the Bill to the House and hope the Minister will take a reasonable view and agree that we do not want the present position to continue. The Act is nearly 60 years old, is out of date and consequently does need amending.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Nearly as old as the Minister!

Hon. E. NULSEN: I am not going to say that, because I do not know. But he does not look that age! I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—Mt. Lawley) [6.4]: This Bill appears to be reasonable. Under the existing law relating to bankruptcies that have

taken place since 1928 no interest is provided for, although the court has held that where a debt is an interest-bearing debt at the date of the bankruptcy it will award to that creditor interest before a bankrupt can get discharge. But on these debts on which no interest is payable at the date of the bankruptcy, no interest is allowed to the creditor under the Bankruptcy Act. Allowing this amount, and having in view that bankruptcy must have taken place during a year prior to 1928, I think it is not unreasonable that the interest payable should be limited to £3 2s. 6d. per cent.

The other provision gives discretion to the court as to the period of suspension to apply for neglect with the ordinary trading precautions that are insisted upon under the Bankruptcy Act. There again, under the existing bankruptcy law it is left to the discretion of the judge as to the period of suspension. He may suspend an application for discharge and he may suspend for neglect, such as not keeping proper books, for any period he thinks fit—it may be for a week or it may be for two years, according to the degree of neglect. But under the old State Act, which, of course, is many years old, there was a maximum of two years provided. This amendment is quite a sensible one.

There is only one point about which I would like to ask the hon. member before I vote on this Bill and that is: is he quite sure that these amendments will not be retrospective in respect to estates that have been fully administered, because it would be very awkward if persons suddenly had a right to a refund of moneys that they had paid to the Official Receiver under the provisions of the old Act?

**HON. E. NULSEN** (Eyre—in reply) [6.8]: My advice is that the Bill is not retrospective.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; Hon. E. Nulsen in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 26:

The **MINISTER FOR EDUCATION**: I was interested in the point raised by the Attorney General. I subscribe quite naturally to the proposal which the member for Eyre has made in regard to these interest rates, and also to the views expressed by the Attorney General concerning them. But I am not satisfied in my mind with the reply of the member for Eyre that the possibility of retrospective difficulty is as clear as he indicated in the few words he said. As I understand the position, this Bill amends Section 26 of the principal Act by striking out two sets of words, one of which has reference to interest and

the other to a period dealing with the time that a court may impose as a limit to the handing out of a discharge to the debtor.

I suggest that these two things taken in conjunction with the phraseology of the section of the Act it is intended to amend, particularly Section 38, can only indicate that interest will have ceased in regard to all debts under the Bankruptcy Act at the rate of 8 per cent., and that £3 2s. 6d. per cent. will be substituted therefor. Accordingly there seems to be a considerable risk to my mind that an application for a refund might be made. My attitude is this: I am not anxious to hold up the hon. member here, but I was not satisfied that he had given the matter sufficient consideration. If he would undertake to say that he would have the matter further gone into when the Bill reaches another place, so that if there was any doubt at all words could be inserted providing that no order for a refund could be made, I would be satisfied.

**HON. E. NULSEN**: I would be quite agreeable to undertake to do that. I understood that in the case of a bankruptcy that had been completed, in which the interest had been paid and the matter had been settled, then it was not retrospective. But if bankruptcy was not settled and the property under consideration, then this clause would be brought into operation. However, I am quite prepared to have the matter investigated.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

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

## **BILL—STATE (WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ALUNITE INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT.**

*In Committee.*

Resumed from the previous day. Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Industrial Development in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 9:

The **CHAIRMAN**: Progress was reported on Clause 3, to which Hon. A. R. G. Hawke had moved an amendment as follows:—

That in lines 3 and 4 of proposed new paragraph (d) of Subsection (1) the words "the Minister shall think fit" be struck out.

The **MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**: I have given careful consideration to the concluding remarks of the member for Northam yesterday, and I can see no necessity for two clauses to be inserted in the Bill. The amendment I propose to add to the existing clause, if agreed to, would settle the question of sale as a going concern by providing that it shall only be with the consent of Par-

liament. The balance of the paragraph has relation to leasing and hire, and I know of no sufficient reason why they should not be linked together in this clause in the manner suggested in the clause, plus the amendment I have on the notice paper. Therefore, as the hon. member apparently does not intend to withdraw his amendment, all I can do is to ask the Committee to oppose it; and, if it is defeated, I shall move my proviso appearing on the notice paper.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am sorry the Minister has not been able to see his way to agree to this part of the clause being amended in such a manner as to separate the matter of selling the assets at Chandler and the matter of leasing those assets. The two matters are entirely separate, and should be dealt with separately. It is conceivable members might have different views regarding the sale of these assets and upon the leasing of the assets. However, the Minister seems to be determined to throw the two matters together and to keep them linked and thus put some members in a rather difficult situation, which is really unnecessary. In the circumstances, I have no option but to refuse to withdraw the amendment. To refresh the minds of members of the Committee, I point out that the amendment has for its object the inclusion in the clause of the principle of having referred to Parliament for discussion and decision any proposal to sell, lease or let on hire the assets established and owned by the Government at Wundowie. The principle of my amendment is sound, and I appeal to members to vote for it.

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

Ayes	....	....	20
Noes	....	....	24
Majority against			4

## Ayes.

Mr. Brady	Mr. Needham
Mr. Fox	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Graham	Mr. Oliver
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sewell
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Styants
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. May	Mr. Wise
Mr. McCulloch	Mr. Kelly

(Teller.)

## Noes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nimmo
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. North
Mr. Doney	Mr. Owen
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Read
Mr. Griffith	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hill	Mr. Totterdell
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Watts
Mr. Mann	Mr. Wild
Mr. Manning	Mr. Yates
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Bovell

(Teller.)

## Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Panton	Mr. Abbott
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Cornell

Amendment thus negatived.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: As I cannot go back in the clause beyond the words which have just recently been retained, I can move only the third of the amendments I have on the notice paper. I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added to proposed new paragraph (d) of Subsection (1):—

“Provided that none of such property shall be sold without the approval of Parliament to the sale and terms and conditions thereof if, as the result of the sale, the Minister would be unable to maintain and carry on works, plant and undertakings for the purpose of producing products.”

I have already explained the amendment. Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added to proposed new paragraph (d) of Subsection (1):—

“Provided further that possession shall not be given to an intended lessee or hirer agreement for lease or agreement for hire until the approval of Parliament has been obtained.”

In accordance with the opinion I expressed last night, I believe that no Government should be in the position to hand over State assets to others, whether under agreement for sale, agreement for hire, or agreement for lease until Parliament has had an opportunity of knowing the proposed terms. While the Bill will enable the Minister to enter into negotiations with regard to sales or leases or agreements for hire, my proviso, if agreed to, will ensure that Parliament shall be able, before the matter becomes an accomplished fact, to know what it is proposed to do and will be in a position to exercise a veto.

I intend to indicate to the Independent members, whose vote will decide this question, just what I think should be done in connection with matters of this kind. Surely, if an Independent has a function in this place at all, it is to ensure that, whenever possible, representatives of the people shall be given an opportunity to express views on what the Government proposes to do. An Independent should not exercise his vote to prevent Parliament from having a chance to express an opinion upon proposed Government action. Any Independent who takes such an attitude as that, ultimately lines himself up with a party and drops his independence. If there can be any justification for Independents under party government, it must be that they will take such a line as will enable Parliament from time to time to express opinions on what is proposed to be done.

The Minister for Lands: If they were both for one side of the House would they not be lining themselves up with a party?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No, they do not line up with a party if they vote to ensure that questions can be decided by a majority of members of the House, but only if they cast a vote that provides that, without reference to Parliament, a particular party in power can do what it likes with State assets. That is entirely different from what the Minister suggested.

Mr. Manning: In that case the Government would not have any responsibility at all.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The responsibility of the Government is to Parliament. If agreed to, my amendment would prevent the Government allowing a prospective purchaser, hirer or lessee of Government property from taking possession before Parliament was made aware of the terms and conditions of the proposal.

The Premier: If Parliament was not sitting we could then do nothing about the matter.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: That applies to many things the Government would like to do. If the Government was really anxious it could call Parliament together. Nothing prevented the Premier calling Parliament together earlier than usual a short while ago in order to get out of his difficulties when certain of his supporters wanted to enter Federal politics. I am surprised at the Premier raising that question.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There was not even an Address-in-reply debate on that occasion.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: No. The Government often shelters behind the fact that Parliament is not sitting. On one occasion the Speaker did not declare vacancies that existed when members had resigned, because Parliament was not sitting.

The Premier: You are getting away from the amendment.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier introduced this aspect. If approval of the Government's intention to sell, let or hire were withheld, as it might be by Parliament, is it intended that the Government should be allowed to proceed? I say it definitely should not be allowed so to proceed. The amendment would not take from the Government power to enter into an agreement, and I believe it should receive the support of the Committee.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: All the amendment would do, if agreed to, would be to cancel the decision reached by the Committee a few minutes ago when it rejected the amendment moved by the member for Northam who desired to strike out the words "as the Minister thinks fit" and insert in lieu "with the approval of

Parliament." The Committee rejected that amendment and has therefore decided that leasing or letting on hire shall be at the discretion of the Minister, which means the Government. I must ask the Committee to oppose the amendment. I was touched by the remarks of the member for Melville with regard to the two Independent members. At no stage have I made any appeal to them because I believe that as responsible men they will vote as they think right. Last evening and again tonight the member for Melville has seen fit to address remarks to them in the name of democracy, but I am prepared to leave this matter to the Committee, including the two Independent members.

Mr. READ: I think the amendment should be ruled out of order as it deals exactly with what the Committee discussed a few minutes ago. There is doubt as to whether the Government has power to lease the alunite works and this Bill has been brought down to ratify what has been done. The Committee has agreed that the Government shall not have power to sell without the approval of Parliament, but it is absurd to say that Parliament shall be called together before such an asset may be leased. The question of selling this Government trading concern has already been dealt with. I oppose the amendment.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I have succeeded in getting the member for Victoria Park to declare himself in connection with this matter and his views on certain aspects of it. If the amendment were out of order I assume that the Chairman would quickly have told me so and as he did not do that I presume the amendment is not out of order. If proof is needed, I will quote from the State Trading Concerns Act of 1917, Section 25 of which states—

Subject as hereinafter provided the Minister may sell or lease any trading concern for such amount and upon such terms and conditions as may be approved by the Governor-in-Council provided that possession shall not be given to an intended purchaser or lessee under a contract of sale or agreement to lease until the approval of Parliament has been obtained.

That is what my proviso does and, if the proviso in Section 25 of that Act is in order, my amendment must be in order. The member for Victoria Park said the purpose of the Bill was to validate a lease already entered into, but it is also to give the Government authority to enter into any other lease at the expiry of the existing lease—for any length of time—without reference to Parliament. Such power to lease might more effectively tie up a State asset than would power to sell, and with greater disadvantage to the State. The existing agreement has a currency of two or three years at the outside but the Bill,

if passed in its present form, would enable the Government a few minutes before going out of office to enter into an agreement to lease for 50 or 100 years, thus effectively preventing an incoming Government from implementing its policy with regard to the works. If the member for Victoria Park thinks that procedure would be democratic he will vote for it, but I do not think it is democratic.

When big deals of this nature are to be put through I believe in ensuring, at every opportunity, that the representatives of the people have a perfect right to know what is proposed, and to be in a position to give an expression of opinion before it becomes an accomplished fact and cannot be altered. We are tending more and more every day to a dictatorship. That is the form of government that suits some people, where there is no need to refer a matter to Parliament, but where an oligarchy can be put in charge and allowed to do what it likes irrespective of what the people think about it. So the purport of my proviso is not to prevent the validation of this lease, but to ensure that with all proposals, whether to sell, lease or let on hire, Parliament will be advised of what is proposed and shall be given the opportunity to approve of it or not. If that is too much for some members to swallow I am sorry for their brand of democracy. I hope the amendment will be agreed to.

**THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** The hon. member has been endeavouring for about three months to prove mala fide of the Government in this matter.

**Hon. J. T. Tonkin:** I would have done if there had been an inquiry.

**THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** The hon. member would not have done so; in my opinion it would have proved to the contrary.

**Hon. J. T. Tonkin:** That is why you stopped the inquiry.

**THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** I do not think I need answer that, because the answer is obvious. As I was saying, the hon. member has been trying to prove that the Government has acted in bad faith, and now he is endeavouring to prove that the Government contemplates a lease for 90 years or some such period. I have said time and again in this House that a decision must be reached in this matter when the Commonwealth has completed its investigations which, we understand, would take between two and three years, and in that period we anticipate that the premises will be in the hands of the Australian Plaster Industries under the document we have discussed ad infinitum over the last few weeks.

At the end of that time, if the Commonwealth Government decides that nothing shall be done as to the continuance of this

industry under the proposal which I am asking the Committee to support, it must be returned to Parliament itself if we want to lease it because it cannot be carried on for the purpose for which it was originally intended, and it will then be the business of the Government to use it in the best interests of the State. But to lease it for a period of 50 years or anything like such a period has never been contemplated. Therefore, it is of no use dragging red herrings across the trail because the situation is as plain as a pikestaff. All I ask the Committee to do is to come to a verdict on this matter.

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

Ayes	....	....	....	21
Noes	....	....	....	23
Majority against				2

**Ayes.**

Mr. Brady	Mr. Needham
Mr. Fox	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Graham	Mr. Oliver
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sewell
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Styants
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wise
Mr. May	Mr. Kelly
Mr. McCulloch	

(Teller.)

**Noes.**

Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Brand	Mr. Nimmo
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Owen
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Read
Mr. Doney	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Griffith	Mr. Totterdell
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hill	Mr. Wild
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Yates
Mr. Manning	Mr. Bovell
Mr. McLarty	

(Teller.)

**Pairs.**

<b>Ayes.</b>	<b>Noes.</b>
Mr. Pantou	Mr. Abbott
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Mann

Amendment thus negated.

**Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:** I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of Subclause (2) after the figure "1", in brackets, the letter "a" be inserted.

**The Minister for Industrial Development:** Do I understand that that is all you intend to move to this subclause?

**Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:** Yes.

**The Minister for Industrial Development:** I accept the amendment.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

**THE MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT:** I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, but I have made a slight error. I thought the hon. member was moving something else. When speaking I misinterpreted him so, if he will continue with his remarks as to the amendment, I can deal with his observations later.



Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I move this amendment because in my opinion the proper thing for the Government to do with the lease it has made with the Australian Plaster Industries, and for which it has not had sufficient legal backing, is that it should have been brought to Parliament in specific form and considered and decided clause by clause in this House. If we do not pass the amendment the lease already drawn between the Government and Australian Plaster Industries will, upon the passing of this Bill, immediately have the full force of law. That is an undesirable way of obtaining from Parliament its approval to a lease or agreement about which it is not well informed on the clauses in detail.

It is true that some members of Parliament know this lease backwards, but I should say that less than 10 per cent. of all the members know the contents of the lease well, and I would go further and say that half of them know very little about the lease and its contents. I am surprised that this Bill did not contain a provision specifically to have the lease approved by Parliament. The Bill shows a most shabby piece of drafting because a copy of the lease could have been included in it as a schedule. Every member of Parliament would, in those circumstances, have had the lease in black and white before him, and an opportunity of studying the agreement in the lease and every clause in it. The Government would thereby have in a straightforward fashion obtained a clear-cut approval by Parliament for the lease.

The method chosen by the Government in this Bill is to obtain a blanket approval for leasing or letting on hire and then, as part of the same clause, to obtain from Parliament approval to make retrospective in its application to the date on which the principal Act commences to operate the provision in this Bill giving the Minister the right to let on hire the works on such terms and conditions as he shall think fit. Then beyond any shadow of doubt, Parliament would have been able to deal with the agreement and arrive at a decision one way or the other. I move the amendment to prevent the Bill providing legal approval to an agreement that has been made and any retrospective application to it.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: As soon as I understood fully the purport of the amendment I became opposed to it. It has the same effect as the other two amendments we originally dealt with. The fact that it takes power to date back to the commencement of the principal Act does not matter except insofar as the negotiations for the lease commenced before the passing of this amending Act are concerned. There were no negotiations between 1946 and 1950 and

therefore the retrospectivity could apply only to the negotiations by the Government with Australian Plaster Industries.

From what I have already stated, it must be clear to the Committee that the intention is to remove any legal doubt about the agreement. We have already defeated two amendments in this Committee and to accept the suggestion that paragraph (a) of this particular provision should be deemed to have retrospectivity would be to say that the negotiations with Australian Plaster Industries would have to start all over again, which would be obviously impossible and would land the Government in having to accept the same conditions, which would be a sheer waste of time, or involve it in a legal conflict. I ask the Committee to reject the amendment.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Two statements made by the Minister are both misleading and incorrect. The Committee has not in its previous decisions decided this point.

The Minister for Industrial Development: No, but it has decided that we can lease, with the full knowledge of the fact that it involves this lease.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The question of giving the Government power to lease or let on hire or, with the approval of Parliament, to sell, is entirely different from the retrospective principle contained in Subclause (2). It is misleading and incorrect for the Minister to endeavour to establish that this amendment is the same as the two amendments we previously dealt with. This one is entirely different. It concerns the principle of making legislation retrospective. The Minister knows perhaps better than most members, that Parliament always hesitates to give approval to retrospective legislation unless an exceptionally good case can be made out in favour of it or unless some urgent necessity for it has been established. Neither the Minister nor anyone else who supports him in connection with the Bill has sought to establish any necessity to give general retrospective approval in law to the agreement made between the Government and Australian Plaster Industries. There is no necessity for Parliament to do so, because the Minister and his Government are in a position where it would be the easiest thing in the world to have included the agreement as part of the Bill.

Mr. Marshall: Which is usually done.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Surely the Minister would not argue that there would have been the slightest difficulty in including the agreement as part of the Bill in the form of a schedule. That practice has been followed in this and other Parliaments on several occasions when the necessity has arisen for giving approval to some agreement that has been entered into. I am at a loss to understand why the Gov-

ernment did not do that in this instance and ask Parliament to approve of the lease. It is for the Minister to explain why the Government did not do that in view of the fact that it would have been not only the easiest but the right thing to do. The other statement made by the Minister was also incorrect and misleading. He said that if the amendment were carried the question of the Government leasing the Chandler works to Australian Plaster Industries would be thrown completely into the melting pot and the negotiations would have to start all over again.

There is no justification for the Minister's statement. If the amendment is agreed to all the Minister will have to do is to have a short Bill drafted providing for the agreement between the Government and Australian Plaster Industries to be approved by Parliament, the agreement being attached to the Bill in the form of a schedule. Does the Minister suggest that that would be throwing the whole thing into the melting pot or that it would involve the commencement of the negotiations and the carrying out of them all over again? Does the Minister suggest that he would have any difficulty in passing the Bill, seeing that he knows how the numbers in this House are distributed? He knows in advance how the majority of members will vote on this matter.

The Minister for Industrial Development: Then why make two bites at the cherry?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am not suggesting that but that the right, proper, honest and correct bite be made. Surely the Minister will admit that the proper constitutional procedure regarding this important lease is to bring it specifically before Parliament.

The Minister for Industrial Development: I do not admit it at all.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am sorry the Minister has seen fit to say that. Members will agree that it is the proper and most desirable and straightforward procedure to obtain parliamentary approval for something that is already an accomplished fact. It is strange how the Minister and the Government muck about with agreements. There was the water supply agreement which was not brought to Parliament but was covered up and kept almost 100 per cent. secret until someone stumbled on the fact that it was in existence. Then there is the agreement between the Government and Australian Plaster Industries, which has not been brought to Parliament as an agreement for the purpose of obtaining parliamentary approval. A third instance is the agreement between the Government and the Kauri Timber Co. Ltd. The Government rushed that agreement to Parliament for approval and there was no legal necessity to do so.

The Minister for Industrial Development: Except that we were advised it was illegal not to accept the lowest tender without parliamentary approval.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The agreement regarding the Chandler Works is one that the Government has been compelled to bring to Parliament.

The Minister for Industrial Development: Yet we were advised it was lawful.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Government might have been advised by some legal authority that it was.

The Minister for Industrial Development: The advice came from the same legal source as the advice that it was unlawful in the other matter. They do not say "yes" to everything.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Committee would be well advised not to give the general blanket approval that the Minister seeks. There can be no doubt at all that the Government was extremely anxious to get parliamentary approval for the agreement under discussion. If half a safe way could have been found to avoid the necessity, the Government would not have done so. If it is not necessary, why does the Minister oppose my amendment which would prevent any such agreement from being given legal standing in a retrospective sense? If the Minister is sure that parliamentary approval is not required for the agreement, there is no purpose in his opposing the amendment because all it will do is to prevent anything done by the Government to date with regard to the Chandler industry from being given retrospective approval in a legal sense. The Committee would be fully justified in passing the amendment. The Government would then be compelled to bring the agreement to Parliament so that members could study it clause by clause and arrive at a decision upon it. The Government seems to be very fearful of some of the clauses in the agreement and is not prepared to bring it to Parliament embodied in a Bill. I hope members will support my amendment.

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

Ayes	.....	21
Noes	.....	23
Majority against	.....	2

Ayes.

Mr. Brady	Mr. Needham
Mr. Fox	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Graham	Mr. Oliver
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sewell
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Styants
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wise
Mr. May	Mr. Kelly
Mr. McCulloch	

(Teller.)

## Noes

Mr. Ackland  
Mr. Brady  
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver  
Mr. Cornell  
Mr. Doney  
Mr. Grayden  
Mr. Griffith  
Mr. Hearman  
Mr. Hill  
Mr. Hutchinson  
Mr. Manning  
Mr. McLarty

Mr. Nalder  
Mr. Nimmo  
Mr. Owen  
Mr. Read  
Mr. Shearn  
Mr. Thorn  
Mr. Totterdell  
Mr. Watts  
Mr. Wild  
Mr. Yates  
Mr. Bovell

(Teller.)

## Pairs.

## Noes.

Ayes.  
Mr. Pantan  
Mr. Coverley

Mr. Abbott  
Mr. Mann

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, agreed to.

Clause 4—Agreed to.

Title:

The CHAIRMAN: I point out that there is an error in the Title, the word "Act" appearing twice.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of the Title, the word "Act" where it appears immediately before the figures "1946" be struck out.

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

Bill reported with amendments and an amendment to the Title.

### BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 3).
2. War Service Land Settlement (Notification of Transactions) Act Continuance.

Received from the Council.

### BILL—COMMONWEALTH JUBILEE OBSERVANCE.

#### Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. A. F. Watts—Stirling) [8.39] in moving the second reading said: The proposal in the Bill is for a public holiday to be held throughout Western Australia on the 9th May next, that being the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament in Melbourne by the Duke of York, later King George V. The Governments of the Commonwealth and of all the States have agreed to have a celebration extending through next year to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Commonwealth of Australia, and everybody, I believe, has approved of the 9th May for that purpose as a national holiday.

There is legislation on the statute book that enables the Government to declare a bank holiday or a holiday for shopping districts, but there is no legislation to permit of the declaration of a general public holiday. As members are no doubt aware, the celebrations are to take place throughout Australia, and it is desired that the holiday should be observed throughout

Australia on that day. In order that this may be achieved, it is necessary to pass a Bill authorising the declaration of a public holiday in this State as part of the Commonwealth.

As is well known, the Commonwealth has allotted a considerable amount of money—I believe £350,000—for the purpose of these celebrations and has divided it on a reasonable basis amongst the several States with a request that each of them should support it on a pound-for-pound basis.

Mr. Marshall: Are you enthusiastic about the Bill?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes, in the circumstances; as to the celebrations, I can discuss the matter with the hon. member if the opportunity offers.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Will this impose a burden on the Crown?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I cannot by the widest stretch of imagination conceive of that in the proposal to declare a public holiday. There is no suggestion of doing anything that could be regarded as imposing a burden on the Crown. I say that with all due respect to the member for Melville who, on occasion, does seek to be facetious. As members probably appreciate, his lighter moments are few and far between, and we are prepared to join with the hon. member in this minor hilarity.

The Minister for Lands: I wish we could have more of it.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: One can quite understand that by your expression.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The three principal dates involved in the celebrations are the 1st January, that being the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Commonwealth by the first Governor General, Lord Hopetoun; the 29th January, which is already recognised to a great extent as a holiday, that being Foundation Day; and the 9th May. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.  
Bill read a second time.

#### In Committee.

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

### BILL—RESERVE FUNDS (LOCAL AUTHORITIES).

#### Council's Amendments.

Schedule of five amendments made by the Council now considered.

#### In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Local Government in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 4, (2), page 3—Insert after the word "notice" in line 11 the words "whose decision shall be final."

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: The language that the Legislative Council has chosen is an improvement on what we sent to it. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 4, (2), page 3—Insert after the word "of" in line 12 the words "less than."

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Here again, I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. Marshall: What does it mean?

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: The clause at present is somewhat obscure. The number might be 30, or 40 or any other number, so, to clarify the position, a sensible change has been made.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 4, (2), page 3—Delete the word "not" in line 13.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I have given the explanation of this amendment when dealing with the previous one. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 4. Clause 4, (2), page 3—Delete paragraph (e).

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I adopt the same attitude here. This paragraph now becomes redundant because what it provides has been included in Amendment No. 1. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 5. Clause 11—Delete this clause.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Clause 11, which is an extremely useful one, was added at the instance of the member for Moore. I do not want to repeat the arguments that were adduced here in favour of it. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Minister for Local Government, Mr. Manning and Hon. J. T. Tonkin drew up reasons for not agreeing to No. 5 of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of six amendments made by the Legislative Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Housing in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 3—Insert a new paragraph to stand as paragraph (a) as follows:—

(a) Deleting from paragraph (d) of subsection (2) the word "fifty" in line 5, and substituting the words "two hundred and fifty."

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

The part of the Act concerned with this amendment empowers a person to do painting up to the value of £50 in any one year. That section has not been policed by the State Housing Commission to any great extent, because one can do very little painting with £50; and, furthermore, a painter is a painter and nothing else, and paint is not a controlled material. An increase to £250 will not in any way interfere with our housing programme.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 3—Insert a new paragraph to stand as paragraph (b) as follows:—

(b) deleting from paragraph (e) of subsection (2) the word "fifty" in line nine, and substituting the words "one hundred and fifty."

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I cannot agree with this amendment in its entirety. When the amount was £50 for renovations and additions to a private home it was a means of preventing people from building garages and such like. There was nothing in the parent Act to stop a man from building a garage but with a limit of £50 he could not possibly do it. By increasing this sum to £150 it is quite possible that the 8,000 people who have built houses since 1945 will immediately commence building garages.

Mr. McCulloch: They are already building them.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Only medical officers and the like are building garages now.

Mr. Styants: That is what you think!

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is all a matter of when we can catch up with them. If this amendment is agreed to it will be dangerous because it will take labour and materials from the building of houses. If it is increased to £100 it will

be taking a forward step towards the gradual relaxation of controls. We do not want to relax to the extent of £150. About 18 months ago one of my predecessors, Sir Ross McDonald, lifted the control over bricks and immediately brick fences and garages were constructed all over Perth. Even since the recontrol of bricks, we have never got back to the stage that existed prior to that time and we are about five or six months behind in our deliveries. I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the words "and fifty" in line 4 of the proposed new paragraph (b).

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 3—Insert a new paragraph to stand as paragraph (c) as follows:—

- (c) deleting from paragraph (f) of subsection (2) of the word "one" in line six and substituting the word "two."

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This amendment refers to additions to industrial buildings. The Commission feels that with the big increases in population, and the necessity to find work for these people, industrial establishments must be given some opportunity to enlarge. The Commission feels that the amendment should be agreed to. Therefore, I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. FOX: While material is in such short supply we should not agree to extra sums being spent on industrial establishments. Permits issued for self-help homes, as far back as July, are still not being used because of the lack of bricks and timber. The housing of the people should be given a first priority and people who have been holding permits for so long should be able to get bricks and timber, and everything else, before industrial establishments.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 4. Clause 3, in paragraph (a) lines 9 and 10—Delete the words "the Governor by Proclamation declares" and substitute the words "may by regulation be declared."

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This is a matter of administration and although the Housing Commission would have preferred the Bill as it stood, I am quite prepared to accept the amendment. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. GRAHAM: When last the matter was before the Committee, the Minister strongly opposed me in my endeavours to have this alteration made. The matter even went to the extent of a division and every single supporter of the Government voted against my proposition. As soon as

the Legislative Council makes the alteration, the Minister is apparently prepared to give way.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: What the hon. member says is correct but I think members know that I do not wilt easily. Having tested the feeling of another place in this regard, I am not prepared to lose the Bill by disagreeing to the amendment. This is one of the most important Bills in our lives and I have decided that wisdom had better prevail. That is my reason for agreeing.

Mr. Graham: I accept the apology.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 5. Clause 3, in paragraph (b), lines 18 and 19—Delete the word "Proclamation" and substitute the word "regulation."

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This is a consequential amendment and I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 6. Clause 3—Delete proposed new subsection (4).

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This is also a consequential amendment and I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## BILL—FAUNA PROTECTION.

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of five amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Education (for the Attorney General) in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 10, subclause (3), page 5—Delete the word "two" in line 24, and substitute the word "three."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The Legislative Council has undertaken to rectify certain minor errors in the Bill as it left this Chamber. The first amendment is the correction of an error and I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 10, subclause (3), page 5—Delete the word "and" in line 28.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This is in a similar category, the word "and" being at the end of paragraph (a). It should be at the end of paragraph (b)

because it then connects up with paragraph (c). At present, there is no connection. Therefore I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 10, subclause (3), page 5—Insert the word "and" after the figures "1946" in line 33.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This is a corollary to Council's amendment No. 2 and I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 4. Clause 10, subclause (3), page 6—Insert the word "and" after the word "reappointment" in line 3.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This is necessary to link up the wording in the clause and I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 5. Clause 11, page 7—Add after subclause (2) a subclause (3) as follows:—

(3) In making any inquiry in respect to game reserves and sanctuaries as required by the provisions of this section, the committee shall refer the subject matter of the inquiry to the road board in the district of which the matter under inquiry may have effect, and shall obtain such information and advice as the road board can give relative to such matter, and the committee shall not advise or make any recommendations to the Minister unless and until a report on such matter has been received by it from such road board unless such road board neglects to furnish such advice immediately after its first meeting.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This is the major amendment the Legislative Council has made, and it is considered to be a rather cumbersome way to deal with the matter. The Legislative Council obviously foresaw there might be some delay in a local authority giving consideration to such a request. Many local authorities do not meet more often than once a month, and a substantial proportion meets less frequently than that. The function of the proposed committee under the Bill is only in an advisory capacity, should the Minister desire to advise any local authority relative to fauna. It is considered that the fauna committee should tender its own advice in connection with such matters, and should not be asked to submit advice from other local authorities to whom the Minister or the chief warden could refer matters direct. In addition, the Minister may require advice urgently from the advisory committee, and he should not be obliged to wait until that period of time has elapsed when the

next meeting of the board takes place. There would be considerable delay. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Minister for Education, Hon. E. Nulsen and Mr. Hearman drew up reasons for not agreeing to No. 5 of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## **BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Council's Amendments.*

Schedule of seven amendments made by the Council now considered.

### *In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 7—Insert a new paragraph after paragraph (d) to stand as paragraph (e) as follows:—

(e) deleting the words "it is completely extinguished" in lines four and five of paragraph (d) of subsection (1) and substituting the words "the fire in the opinion of a bush fire officer is safe."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Bill provides that the bush fires officer should remain until the fire is extinguished. The Legislative Council wishes to provide that he shall remain until the fire is safe. That is reasonable. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 8, in paragraph (b) proposed subsection (2)—Insert before the word "The" where first appearing in line 19, the words "Paragraphs (b) and (c) of."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will be remembered it was decided to exempt spark-arresters on tractors in the timber industry and also in orchards. The Legislative Council proposes to make it mandatory that these tractors should carry a knapsack spray, and I think that that would be a further precaution. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 12, paragraph (a)—Insert after the word "plough" in line 16 the words "cultivate, scarify."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think this will be all right and I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

No. 4. Clause 13, proposed new section 22A, paragraph (a)—Insert after the word "officers" in line 16 the word "and."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I propose to agree to this amendment subject to an amendment to strike out the word "(a)" in proposed new Section 22A and later to strike out the whole of Subclause (b) in amendment No. 6.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Is not the amendment the Minister is moving amending the Bill as it was in Committee rather than amending the Legislative Council's amendment?

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment the Minister handed me appears to endeavour to amend the amendment made by the Legislative Council.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and I do not intend to agree to the insertion of the word "and." I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out all words after "(a)" and inserting in lieu the words "Delete the letter (a)" in line 16.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment, as amended, agreed to.

No. 5. Clause 13, proposed new section 22A, paragraph (a)—Delete the words "and other persons voluntarily assisting any of them," in lines 17, 18 and 19.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In striking out these words the Council has taken the sense out of the clause. I therefore move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 6. Clause 13, proposed new section 22A, paragraph (b)—Delete all words after the word "brigade" in line 26, down to and including the word "captain" in line 29.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This deals with the insurance of fire-fighting equipment. There are letters here on the file indicating that insurance companies agree to insure fire-fighting equipment of private individuals. It is the responsibility of local authorities to insure their own equipment. That is already provided for in the Act.

The CHAIRMAN: I understand the Minister wants to amend the Council's amendment?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. I want to delete the whole of paragraph (b). I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out all words after "Delete" and substituting the following words:—"the whole of paragraph (b)."

Mr. HEARMAN: I oppose this amendment because I do not think it is reasonable. In many instances people make available their own private equipment in order to fight fires, and they run considerable risk of that equipment being damaged or destroyed. It may be all very well to say that such vehicles or implements should be insured by the owners. They are not always insured, particularly agricultural implements. If such equipment is used at the direction of a fire control officer, and particularly if it is used on a property where there is a fire burning other than on the property of the owner of the equipment he should be protected against loss. Even if the owner has insured a vehicle, if it is damaged and he has to make a claim, that would affect his insurance premium in the following year, because he would lose the benefit of the no-claim provision straight away. The local authority should be prepared to cover such vehicles or implements. It is not as though the premium is exceptionally heavy. It is only £3 to £5 a year. Such policies are already in existence and I know claims have been paid without any trouble in those circumstances. The amendment is unreasonable.

Mr. STYANTS: I understand that the Minister intends that his amendment shall wipe out paragraph (b) entirely.

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Mr. STYANTS: That means we would abolish the provision for insuring against the loss of or damage to appliances, equipment and apparatus of a bushfire brigade or any privately-owned equipment working under the direction of a bushfire control officer or bushfire brigade captain.

The Minister for Lands: At present we have a policy arranged with the insurance companies to cover a car.

Mr. Hearman: Whose car?

The Minister for Lands: The car of anyone engaged in bushfire fighting.

Mr. STYANTS: That is not provided for in the Bill.

The Minister for Lands: There is a policy available.

Mr. Hearman: But it is not compulsory.

The Minister for Lands: No.

Mr. STYANTS: It seems to me that it would be much better for the Minister to retain the first part of paragraph (b) so that the local authority will insure against loss or damage in connection with bushfire brigade equipment. The amendment by the Council is to wipe out the latter part of the paragraph relating to the insurance of privately-owned equipment. I agree with the remarks of the member for Blackwood that if an implement is being used

under the direction of a fire control officer and is damaged or destroyed, the owner is entitled to compensation. But it may be difficult for the local authority to know how much cover to take out. I certainly think the first portion of the paragraph should be retained and I would resist the proposed amendment by the Council.

Mr. MANNING: I oppose the amendment made by the Council and also the Minister's amendment thereon. I have had a lot to do with fighting fires and my experience is that the equipment has been all privately-owned. Such equipment should be insured.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member desires to leave the clause as printed and I have no objection to that, but the Bush Fires Committee were concerned as to what kind of policy would be effective. Their note to me was to the effect that if we struck out paragraph (b) they would endeavour to draw up a satisfactory amendment to be introduced next session in order to cover the position effectively.

Mr. Hearman: What is their objection to this provision?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That was their suggestion. I can see the hon. member's point and am agreeable to re-inserting the words struck out by the Legislative Council. With the permission of the Committee I will withdraw my amendment and disagree to the amendment proposed by the Legislative Council.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 7. Clause 14, proposed new section 31B—Delete the words "or in his absence the next senior officer of a bush fire brigade registered pursuant to the provisions of this Act" in lines 33 to 36 and substitute the words "of a bush fire brigade registered under this Act or in his absence a member of the bush fire brigade who is present at the bush fire."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Minister for Lands, Mr. Hoar, and Mr. Hearman drew up reasons for not agreeing to certain of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1950-51.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd November on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

*Vote—Legislative Council, £3,966:*

MR. BRADY (Guildford - Midland) [10.11]: I wish to discuss some matters in general, and the one I am particularly concerned about is the question of transport as it affects the railways, because the Government railway workshops are in my electorate and also, the railways generally are the principal working utility asset of the State. I wish to draw the attention of the Premier to the railways position and, if possible, try to have some consideration given to a move to recapture some of the transport business which the railways have lost to private companies during the last four or five years. Some weeks ago in the House I asked a question whether the Commissioner of Railways had any policy in mind to redeem the lost passenger fares which have fallen from 18,000,000 in 1945 to just under 13,000,000 at present, indicating a drop of 5,000,000 in fares in five years. As I see it, the railways are losing all their fares to passenger buses which are now plying in competition with them in the suburbs. In my own area, I have noticed that the number of buses have been quadrupled in the last five years. As many as four and five buses are now travelling over the various suburban roads where one was running five years ago.

I will give an illustration of what I mean in that respect. In Midland Junction, at the end of the war, one bus was running through that suburb to Perth picking up passengers at 8 a.m., but now there are at least four buses passing through Midland Junction. Apart from those buses operating at that time, at various intervals throughout the day two or three traverse the same route. Not only is that taking place in Midland Junction but it is also taking place in Maylands, Inglewood, Morley Park and Caversham, and gradually the railway fares, which should be coming to the railway stations, are drifting to the buses. The Premier should be particularly concerned about this matter, in view of the railway losses. I think he estimates a loss of about £2,500,000 for the current year. The Premier and his Government should be investigating whether the Transport Board has not let the State down badly.

A few nights ago, the Leader of the Opposition drew attention to the lack of competition which the Midland Railway Co. was getting or, in other words, the monopoly which that company has on the road running parallel to the Midland Railway Company's line. Yet we find that at least half-a-dozen buses are running over



suburban roads in competition with the Government railways. The Premier should seek some information from the Commissioner of Railways about that position. If it is good enough for a private railway to have protection against competition, surely it is good enough for the Government railways to have similar protection, to which they are justly entitled. I would be failing in my duty as member for Guildford-Midland if I did not draw the attention of the Committee, and particularly that of the Premier, to this state of affairs so that something may be done to recapture this loss of revenue to the Government railways.

There are a number of aspects of this matter which are quite clear when one looks into them, and I will quote a few of them as I go along. One of them is that it is nothing unusual, when one is travelling from Midland Junction to Perth, to pass four or five buses at intervals of less than a quarter of a mile, particularly in the Bayswater, Maylands and Bassendean areas, and if one cares to look into the matter it will be found that two or three of these buses are probably running into the hills beyond Midland Junction to Mundaring and other areas and, because of that, are not picking up passengers anywhere between Perth and Midland Junction. Already I have been one of a deputation waiting on the Minister for Public Works to draw attention to the havoc that is being played with the roads between Perth and Bassendean by the normal road traffic, but now these large buses, carrying 35 and 40 passengers, are travelling over the roads, they are cutting them to pieces more rapidly than would otherwise be the case.

In a few years' time, the Government is going to get it from the public both ways, because it is going to be asked why it has let this passenger trade slip through its fingers to private companies, and also, why it has not kept the roads in a decent state of repair to prevent them depreciating below the standard they are at now. Earlier, I said that the Commissioners of Railways should approach the Transport Board at the earliest possible date so that some steps may be taken to recapture the passenger fares for the Government railways. If they are not taken, I think the Commissioners of Railways should run their own buses instead of allowing private companies to run theirs and thus obtain these fares. It seems to be rather ironical that although these buses are creating great competition between Perth and Bassendean, Maylands and other areas, Government railway buses are queued up between Pier-street and Stirling-street which could be used to run a passenger service in competition with the private transport system.

If I could, I would give a word of advice to the Commissioners of Railways and the Government to point out that in their own interests they should use the buses they

have as quickly as possible, and as long as possible, so that they will not lose too much money by depreciation and obsolescence, which they will do if they are not used to full capacity. It may be said by the Commissioners of Railways that they are not used now for suburban traffic because they are being used on country services and therefore must be left at the railway yards to be refuelled, greased and cleaned to provide for a return service to the country from day to day. There are enough buses lying in the enclosure between Pier-street and Stirling-street to compete with those which are being operated by private companies between Perth, Maylands and Bassendean.

These private bus companies are growing like mushrooms and are allowed to operate services that could and should be the responsibility of the Railway Commissioners, either by catering for passenger fares on the railways or the Government buses which they now have. The Pioneer Bus Co., which originally served a route from Swanbourne to Cottesloe, has now extended its service through to Caversham, and I understand that it has also taken over the Federal Bus Co. The Beam Bus Company is now running its services along the Guildford-highway through the Bullsbrook area and beyond to the hills. If the matter were investigated, it would be found that that company is owned by the Midland Railway Company, or at least substantially owned by it, which means that a private bus company, mainly owned by shareholders of the Midland Railway Company, can enter into competition with the Government railways along that route. It is definitely wrong for the Government to sit idly by and see that state of affairs developing.

I think I can proffer a word of advice on the railway service itself. Today, the metropolitan railway services are deplorable when one compares the services being rendered by private bus companies. By that I mean that the Government railways, on a normal working day between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6.30 p.m., run only 24 trains between Midland Junction and Perth to cater for the travelling public. Also, they run at intervals from half an hour to as long as an hour and a quarter. Some of them are spaced at more frequent intervals, especially early in the morning, at midday and late in the evening, but between those periods the railway services are deplorable. Let me give an idea of what is happening with the private buses compared with the railway service. The former run a service at intervals of five, 10 or 15 minutes and those quick intervals result in the public patronising buses rather than the railways. Attention should be given to that aspect by the Commissioners of Railways and by the Government when they consider the loss of passenger traffic. Whereas the railways run 24 trains between Perth and Midland Junction from 6 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., the buses over a simi-

lar period run 62 trips. Of that number 25 trips are run in the morning and the balance in the afternoon.

Thus the Beam Company runs 62 trips during that time compared with 24 trips run by the Commissioners of Railways. The Federal Bus Company runs 41 trips to Bassendean and return between 6 a.m. and 6.30 p.m., 21 of the trips being in the morning. On the Guildford route the Beam Bus Company runs 56 trips as against the 24 trips by the railways. It is obvious that the public will patronise the buses because of the more frequent service. That is the only explanation of the drop in the passenger traffic on the railways, because it is not a matter of fares, seeing that the railway fares are cheaper by as much as fourpence and fivepence return and in some cases with regard to single fares, compared with the charges levied by the buses. I think the Commissioners of Railways should give consideration to running a quarter-hourly service to and from Guildford; and if the Transport Board would do its part and play the game by the railway service, it would curtail the private bus services to Guildford and make them run to the Guildford station where passengers could join the trains and do the trip to Perth more quickly than they can by bus.

Comment may be made on the huge lag in the railway fares collected pre-war and even as late as 1945, compared with the position today. I feel I am doing my duty in referring to this and other matters about which I am concerned. Before leaving the railways, however, I think it is important to note that not only are the private buses taking away the passenger traffic from the railways but the men employed in the Railway Department are losing heart regarding their future prospects. Many of the men thought that as the railways cater for the travelling public, their jobs in the Midland Workshops would be secure and promotion would lie ahead for them. Now they find that the bodies they should be building in the workshops and the motive power plant that should be constructed there are being purchased by the private bus companies outside the State and assembled in their own workshops. The irony of the whole situation is that if the Commissioners of Railways were to be tackled on the subject, they would say that they cannot secure the buses, yet the private bus companies have increased the number of their buses considerably. They have brought them from the Eastern States and I believe that buses could also be obtained for the railways and used in competition with the private concerns. Alternatively, the buses should have been built by local tradesmen in the railway workshops.

Not only has the private bus competition played havoc with the revenue of the railways and their passenger traffic, but it has begun to interfere with the continuity of service of railway employees who are losing

heart in their jobs, because all they are doing is secondhand work and very little new work. I draw the attention of the Committee, and particularly of the Premier, to the necessity of giving grave consideration to that aspect. If the Commissioners of Railways desire to cater for the travelling public in the metropolitan area, I believe the position is not yet unredeemable. If they set themselves out to cater for the travelling public by offering inducements that the private companies are not giving, they could make the railways a much brighter and happier concern than they can today.

I should like to make a few suggestions along these lines in the hope that, even if the Minister for Railways does not read the report of my remarks, one of the Commissioners might take up "Hansard" and find a few points that may not have occurred to him. Nowadays our railway stations are quite dull and unattractive. They are lighted by the old electric globes used in a system that has been there for the last 30 years, whereas business men have adopted up-to-date systems such as fluorescent lighting and thus made their business premises quite attractive.

The railway stations are anything but cosy. In winter-time the seats on the platforms are open to all the weather, and women and children waiting for a train find themselves sitting in a blizzard and subjected to conditions anything but comfortable. They prefer to wait in the cubicles provided by the private bus companies rather than sit on the bleak stations and wait for trains that often run late. The stalls on suburban stations, which are supposed to provide the small odds and ends needed by the travelling public, are invariably closed. People contract to take these stalls at 7s. or 8s. a week and they pay the rent but keep the stalls closed. Consequently, newspapers and other little knick-knacks that a person may require cannot be purchased.

On the Perth station, after six o'clock in the evening, it is impossible to buy a cup of tea or anything in that line. Here again the public are discouraged from using the railway service. If they have to wait for a bus, they can slip into a refreshment shop almost alongside and get a cup of tea, a cool drink, some chewing-gum or the evening paper and then, without any trouble, board their bus and proceed on their way. The Commissioners seem to have lost sight of the fact that these things, though small in themselves, are an attraction to customers and can be made to pay dividends. I urge the Commissioners to consider keeping the refreshment rooms open after 6 p.m. so that members of the public travelling to amusements in the city, those coming to the city merely to see the lights, or those about to leave for the country may have this inducement to patronise the railway system.

I believe that the suburban stations could be improved by growing flowers and shrubs on the platforms as is done in New South Wales and Victoria. I am quite prepared to give credit where credit is due. At Bassendean and Guildford, attempts are being made to beautify the stations, but as to the actual platforms, the flowers and shrubs that were at one time a feature have become a thing of the past. Another suggestion is that the coaches used in the metropolitan area should be brightened up and made more attractive. It would be of no use carrying out improvements along the lines I have suggested if they were done gradually. If the Commissioners wish to attract passenger traffic, they should do these things conjointly and make a real bid to compete with the private bus companies.

Let me now direct attention to the shocking service uneconomically being rendered by suburban passenger trains, and in my remarks on this phase, I shall comment on the actual value of the trains employed. Trains running in the metropolitan area on an average consist of an engine and four or five coaches. I invariably find that when these trains pass through Guildford, East Guildford, Midland Junction and other stations, they are carrying only 25 or 26 passengers. The value of a train consisting of an engine and about five coaches would be in the vicinity of about £45,000 or £50,000.

So, we have trains running into Guildford, Midland Junction, and Bellevue worth £45,000 or £50,000 and carrying only 25 passengers! The whole thing is grotesque, and it is time the Government investigated the matter. I have checked trains running through Guildford, East Guildford and Midland and have found them to be carrying only 23 to 25 passengers. Fancy employing an engine and four or five coaches to haul 25 passengers when one bus could carry the lot!

Often I have seen a train being hauled without there being a passenger in one of the coaches. The coach would consist of five or six compartments and not so much as one passenger being carried! It is about time that the Premier and the Commissioners took steps to provide a decent service, a quick service, and one that would pay dividends, rather than continue using a unit worth £45,000 or £50,000 to haul 23 to 25 passengers.

Mr. Yates: How long has this been going on?

Mr. BRADY: For donkey's ages! But I noticed these numbers and gathered the actual facts myself only last week. Because I knew that I was going to speak on these Estimates and that the service we were receiving was shocking, I checked up to see what the position actually was. I am satisfied that with proper administration we could run a quarter-hour service to Guildford and that service would

bring existing passengers into Perth quicker than the buses can. If the Transport Board did the right thing and made the buses run to the Guildford terminus, and if the railways ran a service at quarter-hour intervals, the railway revenue would grow considerably, passengers would receive a better service and we might get something for our money rather than have this £30,000,000 asset strangled because of shocking administration. I hope my remarks will take root either with the Premier or with the Commissioners.

I turn now to other matters affecting my electorate. The provision of a hospital for Midland Junction is still a burning question. The Minister for Health has been good enough to promise that certain areas of land will be set aside for such a hospital, and that as a first step towards that institution a maternity unit will be built. I would point out, as I did last year, that great inconvenience is suffered by certain sections of the community through the absence of such an establishment. I mentioned, too, that pensioners who are obliged to visit the Royal Perth Hospital had to pay fares to Perth and sometimes hired taxis to take them to the hospital. Tomorrow I shall be asking the Premier a question whether he is aware that in the Eastern States pensioners are allowed to travel on the railways free of charge and I would like to know whether he is prepared to allow pensioners to do that in this State. People from my electorate should not have to pay money out of their meagre pensions for this purpose. To give an idea of the position, I would like to read from an article which appeared in the "Pensioners' News" of the 25th October. The article is headed "Wanted: A Hospital for Midland Junction," and is as follows:—

A hospital committee has been working for over six years for a hospital to be built in Midland Junction for Swan districts area. When Mr. Ross McLarty was in Canberra in September the following telegram was sent to him: "Ask Federal Government for money for a hospital in Midland Junction now. F. A. Thomson, Chairman Hospital Committee," and Mr. Ross McLarty replied: "Dear Sir, I acknowledge receipt of your telegram of the 7th inst. addressed to me while I was at the Premiers' Conference regarding the hospital at Midland Junction. As this matter is not one for the consideration of the Federal Government, it is not possible for any action to be taken in Canberra. Yours faithfully (Sgd.) Ross McLarty, Premier."

Might I point out that pensioners needing treatment and medicine free under the medical scheme have to leave home before 8 a.m. to go to Royal Perth Hospital, sit for hours waiting attention all day, whereas they could attend at the Midland Junction hos-

pital and receive treatment locally without railway fares, etc. Thousands of people in the district have been blood donors, but if they need treatment they can only obtain it at Perth. There are over 40,000 people in this district who would be catered for; also workshops in the district. I personally have interviewed members of the House of Representatives and Senators, who inform me if the State Parliament will apply for it, money will be found to establish a hospital in Midland Junction. Even it has appeared in "Hansard" that it would be so, but the inhabitants, including over 1,500 pensioners in the districts, are penalised. Why? What is the Premier, Mr. Ross McLarty, gaining in refusing to ask the Federal Government for the money? A midwifery ward would be of no use for pensioners. Wake up West Australian Ministers of Parliament!

So the poor old-age pensioners, in their own quiet way, are trying to wake up members of Parliament to the fact that they have to pay money out of their pensions to visit the Royal Perth Hospital. The point may be brought home realistically if I mention a case I took up last week. An old-age pensioner from Midland Junction has been visiting the hospital for a number of years. She invariably has to get a taxi to go to the hospital from the station after having paid her fare to Perth. Last week I rang up the almoner at the hospital and asked whether it was not possible for the free transport which is provided to be made available to Midland Junction. In reply, it was pointed out that this free transport is handled by honorary drivers who have a limit as to the districts wherein they pick up passengers.

I told the almoner that this pensioner should be picked up because of special circumstances, which I do not wish to mention here for fear of embarrassing the family. It was suggested that this pensioner should pay for a taxi from the station at a cost of 2s. If she did that, she would have to pay 2s. to get back to the station. If to that is added the fare of 1s. 2d. from Midland it will be seen that this woman is required to pay 5s. 2d. a week out of her meagre pension in order to get to the hospital. If that sort of thing is occurring in other suburbs, it is a shocking state of affairs. I hope the Premier will give consideration to the matter of providing pensioners with free transport on the railways or, if not for all pensioners, at least for those who have to visit the hospital in circumstances such as those I have outlined.

I pass from hospitals to high schools. Recently the Minister for Education was good enough to visit Midland Junction and give the district an assurance concerning

the erection of an infants' school and a primary school. I hope the Minister will also keep in mind the priority of Midland Junction in regard to the provision of a high school. For just on a quarter of a century Midland Junction and surrounding districts have been waiting for that institution. A site has been chosen, and I hope the Minister will give consideration to proceeding with the erection of the high school, because the district is expanding rapidly. All the areas around Midland Junction are being gradually built out and it is only a matter of time when the existing schools will be overcrowded. They are already overcrowded and practically every public hall in the town has been used for school accommodation.

The matter of electricity supplies being taken over by the State Electricity Commission is causing a lot of concern to local authorities in the Guildford-Midland electorate. At present, as a consequence of the change-over those local authorities are considerably down in their revenue. Some people fear that they are not getting the service they received previously under local government administration. I hope that the Electricity Commission will see its way clear to place an officer in the Guildford-Midland districts in order that thousands of people who are using electricity there will receive the attention they have had in the past.

I wish to refer briefly to the matter of gas. I touched on this subject previously, and the people of Midland Junction are greatly concerned about it. Gas was promised to us by Mr. Dumas before the war. I was surprised to hear the Minister for Works recently say in this House that he was giving every assistance to the Fremantle Gas and Coke Co. to get the necessary piping to complete the Fremantle gas extension. I would like him to consider extending the gas mains from Bayswater, through Bassendean to Guildford and Midland Junction. Wood for fuel is becoming more difficult every year, and the cost is getting beyond the means of the average working man. Gas would be more convenient, and I hope that before the Minister agrees to further extensions by the Fremantle company, he will arrange for the State Electricity Commission to do something about supplying gas to Midland Junction.

I cannot understand why the Minister is giving the Fremantle Gas and Coke Co. the consideration he is, because when the previous Minister for Works, the present Chief Secretary, introduced the Bill under which the gas works were taken over from the Perth City Council, he made the point that it was advisable to take the gas works in conjunction with electricity supplies, because by so doing economic working would result, and the man reading the electricity meters could attend to the gas meters at the same time. It would appear that with

the change of Ministers there has been a change of policy, because the new Minister does not seem to be encouraging gas and electricity being run under dual control.

Mr. Marshall: How far east does the gas supply go now?

Mr. BRADY: As far as I know, to Maylands. In view of the fact that gas was promised to the Midland district before the war, I hope the Minister will give consideration to having it extended there at the earliest possible moment.

The only other subject I wish to touch on tonight is that of housing which does not seem to be keeping up with the requirements of the Midland Junction and surrounding areas. It is considered that 700 houses are required there to cope with urgent demands. I believe that more than 100 homes are required by people working in the railways, as well as others who do not work there. In addition, a further 200 or 300 houses are required almost immediately, to say nothing of what will be required for the workers that the Railway Department hopes to bring into the State. In the Midland area there are numbers of condemned houses which should have been pulled down during the war but which, because of the shortage of homes, have been allowed to remain.

Mr. May: Has the Midland Railway Company built any houses there?

Mr. BRADY: I believe it has built some and renovated others for certain of its employees. I do not know that it has built any for its tradesmen in the town, but it has for its permanent way employees along the line, although not as many as the workers would like. The housing position is desperate. The Minister for Police might consider building houses for his local staff at Midland. I believe at the police station there are some six or seven policemen, and they live all over the metropolitan area. Not long ago, the sergeant had an urgent call, and needed two or three officers to go with him, and he had to travel a distance of five miles to get one of his men to build up the strength required for the job.

The Minister for Police, in conjunction with the Minister for Housing, could consider building quarters at Midland Junction, and possibly a decent police station. The existing building has been there for 35 or 40 years and, as the site is a valuable building one, it might be a good business proposition for the Minister to sell it and build an up-to-date police station and quarters elsewhere. I hope the various Ministers concerned will take cognisance of my remarks and that, as a consequence, Midland Junction will come into its own. I expressed the opinion a session or two ago that the Guildford-Midland electorate had been badly treated by different Ministers. I feel to some extent that at the moment it is the Cinderella electorate of the State. I would be greatly relieved if the Govern-

ment could approve of the amenities and works that are so necessary and to which I have drawn attention tonight.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [10.47]: I want to say a few words on the matter of prices and price-fixing. Despite all that has been said by the Premier and the Minister for Prices during the last three or four years, prices have not only continued to rise, but have risen substantially and at a rapid rate. I think it was when the Premier delivered his Budget speech in 1949 that he prophesied that the inflationary spiral, which was then ascending at an alarming rate, would cease to rise before the 30th June, 1950. That prophesy was made in face of every indication to the contrary at that time.

The Premier: An eminent economist made that prediction.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I would not be surprised if several so-called eminent economists made that prediction at about that time, but I would have thought the Premier would be careful to keep out of such company, rather than rush into it and express the views that those gentlemen had been expressing. All the indications today are that prices will rise much higher within the next two years.

The Premier: That is a world tendency.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: It is, although I have no doubt there are some classic exceptions in some countries of the world. In connection with this matter I shall discuss whether the Commonwealth or the States should control prices in Australia during the next two or three years. We have had experience in the last 10 years of Commonwealth control during portion of that period and control by the States during the balance of it. Apart from the political views we might hold on the question of price control, I believe it can be said with substantial justification that the Commonwealth Parliament and Government are better situated effectively to control prices than are the six State Governments.

Because the Commonwealth Parliament and Government are in possession of much greater financial resources than are the States and because the Commonwealth controls certain legislation which already plays an important part in connection with costs and prices of goods—it could play a much more important part if the Commonwealth Parliament and Government were in fact and in law responsible for price control within Australia—I am sure the experience of price control by the States during the last four years has proven to the great majority of the people of Australia that that control should be completely within the hands of the Commonwealth authorities. We know that the Commonwealth Parliament has no power to legislate in regard to prices during times of peace, and therefore it might be claimed that there is no use anyone advocating

Commonwealth control or arguing in favour of it because the Commonwealth Parliament has at present no legal authority to do anything practical in the matter. That is the view taken by the present Prime Minister and Commonwealth Government.

We read in the Press the other day that the Prime Minister and one of his Ministers attended a conference of State Prices Ministers, and that after the conference the Prime Minister and also the chairman of the State Prices Ministers issued statements. Both of those statements gave considerable food for thought and, in my opinion, cause for worry. The Prime Minister made it clear that his Government was not going to take any real responsibility in the matter and that the problem was to be left entirely in the hands of the States; that the headaches involved would be headaches for the State Governments and not for the Commonwealth Government. The Prime Minister declared that he would appoint a Commonwealth Minister to be a sort of liaison Minister between the State Prices Ministers and the Commonwealth Government.

The Premier: Was it a Commonwealth Minister or a Commonwealth official?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I think it was a Commonwealth Minister, although it is probable that a highly placed Commonwealth official will also attend the conferences in company with the Commonwealth Minister. I am afraid that the attendances of those Commonwealth representatives will not be of great value to the States and that the future will produce much the same results as have the past four years, except that they will be worse results. I think we will find the State Prices Ministers doing their damndest to keep within some sort of control the upward movement of prices, but that the economic forces operating against them will be much too strong and that the powers and resources available to State Governments with which to deal adequately with the problem will prove, as they have during the last four years, largely insufficient.

The Commonwealth authorities certainly have the States in a nasty spot in connection with this vital matter because, if I remember rightly, every State voted in favour of State control over prices when the Commonwealth prices referendum took place in May, 1948. The Leaders of the anti-Labour parties in every State of Australia fought vigorously during that campaign for the legal control over prices to rest entirely with the States, and for no legal control over the management of the prices structure to remain in the hands of the Commonwealth Parliament. The Commonwealth people today can, therefore, quite happily say that they do not propose to take any responsibility for the control

of prices in Australia, and do not propose to take steps to give the people of the Commonwealth the opportunity to reconsider their attitude on the question of whether the Commonwealth Parliament should have power to legislate in peacetime for the control of prices.

Under those conditions the States are left to carry the baby which, instead of becoming more easily manageable as it gets older, becomes much more difficult to manage. Together with increasing difficulty in dealing with it comes an increasing degree of discredit to every State Government in Australia and through those Governments to every State Parliament. The State Parliaments and Governments are carrying all the responsibility in this intensely vital matter of trying to control prices within the Commonwealth.

The existing state of affairs is unjust and unfair, because the one Parliamentary authority in Australia and the one Governmental authority that are best equipped to deal with the position and keep it within reasonable bounds are the Commonwealth Government and authority; yet in fact they have nothing to do with the subject beyond the appointment of a liaison Minister and perhaps a liaison officer, both of whom are to report back after each conference of State Ministers to the Commonwealth Government, with regard to the discussion that took place and the decisions reached by State Ministers. That is a most unsatisfactory situation. It is intensely unfair to State Governments and State Parliaments and it is not giving to the consumers of Australia, and the general public of Australia, the measure of protection and safeguard in connection with inflation that would be available to them if full legal responsibility were within the hands of the Commonwealth authorities, instead of within the hands of the State authorities in Australia.

I do not know how much longer the State authorities propose to carry this responsibility. I am inclined to think very strongly that the time has arrived when the State Governments should decide unanimously to throw this problem into the lap of the Commonwealth authorities. Let the State authorities at the same time tell the Commonwealth authorities that this problem has become so dangerous to the economy of the Commonwealth, and the future of Australia, that the time has arrived when the Commonwealth should be compelled to shoulder the burden of dealing with the problem.

That would be a very drastic step for the States to take but the sooner it is taken the better it will be. I am strongly inclined to think that that suggested move will be forced upon the States in the not-too-distant future. When it is forced upon the States they will be in an extremely desperate situation and so will be the

economy of Australia. Consequently it would be much better to hand this problem back to the Commonwealth and let it take whatever steps are necessary to enable it to control the situation as best it may in the meantime, and to do something about obtaining power for the Commonwealth Parliament to legislate in connection with the matter; even if the power to legislate be obtained only on a temporary basis.

If I remember rightly, at least three States in Australia, by Act of Parliament, agreed to refer power to the Commonwealth Parliament to legislate upon this matter and also upon certain other matters. I am not at all clear whether those referred powers still exist. If they do not exist then the State Prices Ministers, or the State Premiers, might very well, at their next meeting, give serious consideration to the question of whether the State Parliaments should not be asked to pass legislation referring to the Commonwealth Parliament the legal right to legislate and carry out administration in connection with prices control in Australia during the period of the next five years.

In my opinion the problem of prices control, and the general problem of inflation, will remain serious within the Commonwealth for a period of another five years or thereabouts. Therefore, I make these suggestions very strongly to the Premier and through him to the Government, because it seems to me that the time is long overdue when there should be a clear-cut showdown between all of the State Governments in Australia and the Commonwealth authorities over this matter. I hope that as a result of what I have said some action along the lines I have suggested will not only be considered but will also be taken within the next two or three months.

**MR. GRAYDEN** (Nedlands) [11.5]: I have listened with interest to the views of the member for Northam and, while I believe that our present policy regarding price control is wrong, I cannot wholeheartedly subscribe to his views. Firstly, I think that the object of price control is to keep down the price of basic essentials in order to give the man upon a low wage the opportunity of purchasing, with his wage, all the necessities of life. The question we must ask ourselves is whether this policy is being put into effect by the present system; whether we are achieving the object of keeping the prices of those basic essentials down.

Our present price control policy seems to be based upon pegging the prices, or as nearly as possible pegging the prices, of the basic essentials. Those basic essentials are mainly the items of the "C" series index. The worker's basic wage is computed upon the articles in the "C" series index, and in other words the basic wage is taken largely upon the prices of things

which are kept artificially low through price control. Anything the worker wishes to buy outside the "C" series index is liable to be uncontrolled and dearer in price, which means that he has difficulty in purchasing within his wage any of the items outside the "C" series index. I think that is wrong and unfair.

Secondly, I think that the policy of price control, in the absence of being able to control any other factors, boils down to a policy of profit control upon those items which are controlled. Wages are not controlled and the other items are not controlled; the only item that can be controlled is profits. So, our present price control policy is really a profit control policy. The effect of that is that any person wishing to invest money in an industry has two choices open to him; either he invests in an industry in which the profits are not controlled, or he invests in an industry in which the profits are controlled. Naturally, there is only one in which he will invest—in the industry where profits are uncontrolled. So, our investments are being diverted from essential to non-essential goods which is leading to a milk-bar economy, as Professor Copland has called it. It would be far better for us to control the price of non-essential rather than essential goods. Actually, I think it would be better not to control the prices of goods and best of all, to decontrol all goods.

**Mr. MARSHALL:** I move—

That progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

**THE PREMIER:** (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray—in reply) [11.10]: I do not propose to reply to all the matters which have been raised in this debate, because some of them would have been better applied to the departments concerned. However, some very thoughtful speeches have been delivered. The member for Kalgoorlie made a speech on railways and I listened to him at considerable length. He must have gone to a great deal of trouble to compile the information which enabled him to deliver such a speech and it struck me as one to which the Minister for Railways and the Railway Commissioners should give consideration. Tonight we heard a speech from the member for Guildford-Midland who also dealt in the main with railways. He drew attention to certain aspects relating to the losses which the railways are incurring. What he said as to trains which are running almost empty or, with comparatively few passengers, is a matter which has been giving the Government considerable anxiety.

On many occasions I have considered ways and means of arriving at a solution to overcome this loss of passenger traffic. I will see that the railway matters referred to by those members are brought before the Minister and the Commissioners of Rail-

ways. At considerable length the member for Eyre spoke on land settlement, pine plantations in his district, the development of the pyrites industry at Norseman and also made reference to questions affecting his electorate generally. All those matters to which the hon. member referred have been receiving the consideration of the Government. He knows what has been happening as to the pyrites set-up at Norseman, and I think I gave him an opportunity of perusing a report on the position. The Government has a full knowledge of what that industry could mean to Western Australia in the future. The member for Blackwood in a brief speech made reference to super. supplies.

The question of future supplies of super. is giving the Government extreme concern and it has deeply considered the matter on many occasions. Everything that is possible to speed up the super. works at Albany is being done because we realise what the shortage of supplies will mean to agriculture in this State. I can assure members representing agricultural districts that no effort is being spared to overcome this difficult position. When we come to the Agricultural Estimates I know that country members will have something to say on this important matter. The only two members who made reference to the Budget were the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Perth, and they referred to the financial position of the State generally and issued certain warnings and tendered certain advice.

The speech of the Leader of the Opposition has been carefully analysed by the Treasury officials, and the suggestions he has made to us are receiving consideration and will receive more later. The member for Northam referred to prices, and of course we all know that this particular subject is one which is causing concern to all thinking people. As members are aware, Western Australia is not the only place that is suffering from increased prices. Just about every part of the world is caught up in this inflationary spiral. From the Government angle it is brought home most forcibly because many, if not all, of the essential goods imported into this country are going up in price very rapidly. As to those goods, I not know what control can be exercised.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Why did you tell the electors that you were going to keep prices down?

The PREMIER: Neither the Commonwealth Government nor the State Government can fix prices to suit the wishes of everyone and I do not know—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: "We tell you now!"

The PREMIER: —what effect they will have eventually on the cost of living and the general economy of the State.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: "Prices rise with Wise!" Has the Premier ever heard that cry?

The PREMIER: I did hear that, yes. The member for Northam suggested that this particular matter should receive the attention of the Government. As I have said, it is continually receiving its attention. When I attended the Premiers' Conference I moved the motion, which the Commonwealth Government agreed to, to call a special Premiers' conference at which Commonwealth-State financial relations would be considered. But I also suggested that at that conference the question of economic stability should receive the consideration of the Premiers. I think it should still be held because a conference of that nature to deal with Commonwealth-State financial relations is, of course, closely bound up with the future economic stability of this country.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: When is that going to take place?

The PREMIER: I think some time in March.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Oh!

The PREMIER: The Commonwealth Parliament is still sitting, of course, and I understand from the Prime Minister that it will be held in March.

Mr. J. Hegney: Will the Premiers discuss the question of the taxing rights of the States being returned to them?

The PREMIER: I have no doubt the Premiers will advocate the return of the States' taxing rights. I would still press for that economic financial stability conference to be held, and I believe that that would be one way by which we might arrive at some agreement with the Commonwealth Government whereby this matter could be considered both from a Commonwealth and State point of view.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Would the Premier agree to conferring legislative power on the Commonwealth Government to control prices?

The PREMIER: Members will recall that when the prices referendum campaign was being conducted, I did not object to the return of power to the Commonwealth Government for a limited period, and that was the view of all the States; and I feel quite certain that had the Commonwealth Government stipulated a term of, say, five years during which it would administer price control, the people of Australia would have agreed, but they refused to give the Commonwealth Government permanent powers of price control.

Mr. J. Hegney: The States would not effectively control prices even in the years to come.

The PREMIER: I did not answer the question of the member for Northam. If this conference on economic stability took



place, that is one of the matters that could be discussed between the Commonwealth and States.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Thank you.

The PREMIER: I think there is some merit in the suggestion of the hon. member. The population of this State has increased and is increasing very rapidly. I cannot help thinking that those thousands of people coming into Western Australia will do something to add greatly to the productivity of this State. We hear it said that these people coming into the State have to be fed, clothed and housed, that they require all the necessities of life and that we will have to help look after them. I think it is generally recognised that most people who come into this State to work can produce more than they need for their own personal requirements. Therefore, from that angle alone, our production in Western Australia should considerably increase in the future, and, of course, as we hear repeated over and over again—and it is absolutely true—greater production is the cure for this inflationary spiral in which we are now caught up.

I think all shades of industry could do considerably more than they are doing at present to bring about that increased production if we could get a proper understanding between them. If there is any conference in the future, it might consider the question from that point of view as well. The matters that have been raised by members on the Budget have all been raised as a result of thoughtful speeches. It is quite evident that all members who have delivered them have given very considerable thought to the subject-matters they covered, and I will undertake to see that the questions they raised are brought before the departments concerned.

Vote put and passed.

General debate concluded:

Votes and items discussed as follows:—

*Votes—Legislative Assembly, £5,353; Joint House Committee, £12,550; Joint Printing Committee, £11,714; Joint Library Committee, £380; Premier's Department, £23,138; Treasury, £57,675—agreed to.*

*Vote—Governor's Establishment, £4,990:*

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I would like to ask the Premier as to the possibility of restoring the Government House ballroom to what it was originally intended for. This is the only place in Perth where entertainment in the way of balls can be held. I understand we are likely to have a visit from Their Majesties next year, and it is probable that the ballroom will be required then. Could the Premier tell us what the chances are of getting the Government House ballroom restored to what it used to be?

The PREMIER: Some few weeks ago I made an inspection of the Government House ballroom and was appalled at the shocking condition into which it has fallen.

Mr. Marshall: Is it any worse than the Treasury buildings?

The PREMIER: Yes, it is much worse.

Mr. Marshall: Then it is damnable.

The PREMIER: I had a look at some of the rooms. There is a danger of the ceilings coming down and, in fact, in some parts they have already come down, and the place looks most untidy. There is no doubt that the Government House ballroom is a very fine room, easily the best we have in Western Australia, but it has deteriorated very sadly and it is still deteriorating. As members know, once a building starts to deteriorate it gathers momentum and it soon becomes a wreck.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It is a shame to let it get into that condition.

The PREMIER: I quite agree. The roof is leaking, with the result that the ceilings and the walls are being damaged. It is certainly not the place where people should be carrying out clerical duties. It is a huge room, very draughty, with no conveniences for people who are doing clerical work. Therefore the Government has asked the Chief Architect to prepare plans to house these hundred or so people who are at present working in the Government House ballroom. As the member for Fremantle has said, it is expected there will be a Royal visit in 1952, and it is hoped that the Government House ballroom will be put into such a condition as to allow of its being used on the occasion of the Royal visit. In any case I emphasise the fact that such a building should not be allowed to get into a hopeless state of disrepair, and the time has come when early action should be taken.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Executive Council, £5; London Agency, £18,043; Public Service Commissioner, £5,625; Government Motor Car Service, £4,220; Audit, £35,250—agreed to.*

*Vote—Compassionate Allowances, etc., £5,631:*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Can the Premier give some information about item No. 1. It is a compassionate allowance and it seems to me to be a very meagre one. Could the Premier say what it is for?

The PREMIER: I find no specific information about each individual item here. My notes indicate that this item includes annual payments and also final payments, so that may account for it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It would not because it is the same for 1949 as it is for 1950-51.

The PREMIER: It is not possible to foresee the expenditure under this item. The item includes payments to four ex-officers whose pensions were very small and to the dependants of whom compassionate allowance has been permitted, in each case

provided under the Government Pensions Act, 1948, of £130 per annum. That might explain it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It was just that I thought the amount was very small.

The PREMIER: This is possibly the explanation.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Government Stores, £52,157; Taxation, £12,000; Superannuation Board, £7,970; Government Printer, £221,245; Literary and Scientific Grants, etc., £26,739—agreed to.*

*Vote—Miscellaneous Services, £3,613,634:*

*Item, Surf Life Saving Association, £100.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON: Some years ago, the Willcock Government initiated an annual grant of £100. The estimate for this year is £100, but I understand that the Premier has increased it to £150. That information has been passed on to the association. The amount of £150 is woefully below the figure required for the smooth running of this important organisation. I regret I have not details of the amounts allocated by other State Governments to their respective associations, but they are considerably in excess of what is provided here. In New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, the average annual grant would be in the vicinity of £500.

The work done by and the benefits derived from the association are undoubted. If it were not an honorary organisation, there would be an outcry from the people for the Government to concern itself more fully in the part the organisation plays. There are 11 clubs in the State and another in process of formation, and they are doing admirable work, being instrumental in the saving of many lives. We fall far behind our responsibilities in allocating only £150, and I feel that the Premier should take steps further to increase the amount. The additional £50 will not by any means give as much value to the association as the £100 initially granted by the Willcock Government, and I am led to believe that Mr. Willcock was rather noted for the tight control he maintained over the finances.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He inaugurated the grant.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: That is so.

Mr. J. Hegney: And he did not have the money that the Government now has.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: I stated that his grant was better than the one now being paid. Each year, hundreds of thousands of citizens flock to our beaches, which are the playgrounds for the young folk. That is where we may send our children to indulge in a fine healthy sport, assured of their safety because of the work of this association.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do not you think that in the summer months permanent men should be in attendance there?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: If the honorary organisation did not carry out the work, it would devolve upon the Government to provide permanent lifesavers, and that would entail considerably increased expenditure. The Governments in the other States have realised the position to some extent, and the least we can do is to bring our policy into line with theirs. The fact that the association assures the safety of our children should be sufficient to lead the Premier to feel that the additional £50 will not adequately cover the expenses of the organisation, which has to find a considerable amount each year for the purchase of surf boats and equipment. I hope that the Premier will see his way clear to make a substantial increase in the grant. I can supply him with additional information of grants in the other States if it will be of any assistance to him.

The PREMIER: This amount is provided to enable the association to maintain its operations in preventing loss of life on our surfing beaches. I should be pleased to see how our grant compares with those in the Eastern States. I did agree to an increase of £50, making the amount £150. I believe that the association conducts a street appeal and receives some assistance from the Lotteries Commission. It is an association which has the right to expect public support and I would suggest to the hon. member that perhaps even greater efforts could be made in that direction. There are a number of deserving causes in Western Australia that are appealing for funds, and one just cannot provide all the money that is perhaps necessary.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Some are more deserving than others.

The PREMIER: Yes, there is no question about that. Without committing myself to a further grant at this stage, if the hon. member is able to obtain the information as to the contributions made by other State Governments, I would be glad to have a look at it.

Item, Wanslea Home, £1,000.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: The amount provided for this institution appears to be inadequate in view of the service it renders to the community. Wanslea Home is of great help to the mothers of this country. Its purpose is to look after children of tender years when their mothers are in bad health or when another child is expected, and the women are at their wits' end to know where to place the other youngsters in their family. With increasing costs it must be difficult for this home to make ends meet and the institution deserves much greater financial support.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I support the remarks of the member for Middle Swan. Wanslea Home is a unique organisation. It is the only institution, to my knowledge, where

the entire family of a woman who has to go into hospital is looked after. It is not unusual for from three to five children of a family to be cared for in this way. The charge the home is supposed to make is 30s. per week per child. If there are five children to be looked after from one family it can readily be seen that the cost would be, in many cases, more than the father would be likely to earn. Such a man would find himself in financial embarrassment by having to maintain his home, keep his wife in hospital and pay for the care of five children. I know that the grant to this institution has been increased from the original figure, but I would urge the Premier as strongly as I can to give consideration to increasing the amount still further.

The PREMIER: This grant is made to assist the home financially in caring for children of sick mothers. It is only in the last couple of years that any grant has been made to it at all.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The Labour Government bought the home.

The PREMIER: That is so. The provision on the Estimates is for £1,000. The balance sheet of the home is examined from year to year and financial assistance is rendered in the light of its financial circumstances. The Government recognises the useful work the home is doing and will take a sympathetic view of its future requirements.

Item, Emergency Housekeeper Scheme, £200.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I think that members representing country areas could speak with much greater authority than I on this item, but I have had contact with this organisation for many years. The women who operate under the scheme perform a great service to mothers on farms far removed from townsites, who are at their wits' end to know what to do with a family of small children when they are obliged to leave home. In the circumstances, this figure of £200 appears to be niggardly. Persons receiving service under the scheme are not always able to pay the full amount required of them, but the 15 or 17 women who make themselves available for this work travel long distances to perform their valuable duties. I am sure that many country members have had representations made to them to secure the services of women under this emergency housekeeper scheme. This is a first-grade scheme and must be developed and assisted. The amount could be increased.

Hon. E. NULSEN: I support the remarks of the member for Middle Swan. I have had experience of the good work these women do in the country. I know of a nasty accident which occurred at Corrigin, and but for this organisation the people concerned would have been in a critical position because it is hard to get help in the country. I think £200 is very little.

I know the Treasurer has many calls on him, but this is one of the most deserving causes that I know of.

The PREMIER: The committee provides housekeepers to take care of homes while mothers are in hospital, or where a mother is on the verge of a nervous breakdown. It is certainly rendering a valuable service to the community. The Commonwealth Government announced in 1949 that money would be made available to assist such schemes.

Mr. J. Hegney: None has been paid yet.

The PREMIER: Western Australia's share of the grant was to be £1,000, but no word has been received as to when the money will be available. I have taken the matter up with the Minister for Social Services, Mr. Spooner, and I hope to have something definite within the next couple of months.

Item, National Safety Council of W.A.

Mr. MARSHALL: Last year we expended £250 on this organisation but there is no Vote for it this year. Is the council to go out of existence or is it to be financed from some other source?

The CHAIRMAN: Item 22 refers to the Tuberculosis Association. There is no Vote for the other items.

Mr. MARSHALL: I want to know what has happened, because there is no provision this time.

The CHAIRMAN: I am afraid the Committee cannot discuss something for which there is no Vote. I must rule that the only items that can be discussed are those for which there is a Vote. This will have to be discussed on a general debate, or the Loan Estimates.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I move—  
That progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

Item, Tuberculosis Association—Advertising in Trains, Trams, etc., £50.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The vote last year was £50 but only £12 was expended. The estimate this year is £50. I would like to know why such a small sum was spent last year. I think £50 could justifiably have been expended. Is it anticipated that the full amount of the estimate will be spent this year?

The PREMIER: All I can tell the hon. member is that £50 was made available to the association to be spent in advertising. Why it was not spent I am unable to say. The same amount is being made available this year. It is there to be spent if the association so desires.

Item, Road Transport—Mt. Magnet-Sandstone, £2,000.

Mr. MARSHALL: Before making any comment, I would like to know what this item covers.

The PREMIER: Owing to the discontinuance of the Mt. Magnet-Sandstone railway a temporary cartage arrangement has been made under which £30 is paid every four weeks for the transport of passengers, goods and mail between Sandstone and Anketell, and 14s. 6d. per ton for the haulage of wool. The subsidy will eventually cover road traffic from Mt. Magnet to Sandstone until tenders are called.

Item, Transport of Superphosphate by Road, £180,000.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier and the Minister for Industrial Development have been critical about the estimates made by departmental officers. They referred to the estimates by Mr. Fernie, and those of other officers, as being most unreliable. The Premier's estimate could not be worse in connection with this item. The provision in the 1948-49 Estimates for the transport of super. was £500. I said it was ridiculous. The amount actually expended was £100,000. Last year I pointed out that the Premier's estimate of £30,000 was again very short of the mark and suggested £50,000, which was a considerable advance. But what I suggested could be only a guess because I had no data such as the Premier would have. The amount expended was £209,000. When I drew the Premier's attention to the item he said he was hopeful that the railways would do better. His Minister for Railways said that the management of the department had taken steps to convince him that it would do better, so he was convinced. As a Committee, we were led to believe that the expenditure would be within the estimate. In order to refresh the Premier's memory I propose to read from "Hansard" of last year. The member for Kalgoorlie was critical of this subject and his remarks are to be found on page 1774 of "Hansard" for 1949. Then there appeared the following:—

Mr. Styants: What about those you gave me earlier? There is a 25 per cent. discrepancy.

The PREMIER: I just do not know about that, but I would say that these can be taken as the correct ones for the 12 months. These are to the end of the financial year. The member for Mt. Magnet objects to the payment of the subsidy on the ground that the farmer can well afford to pay it himself. It is unfortunate that the railways were unable to cope with the super. traffic. Members know the condition of the locomotives and the heavy strain that was placed on them in the carting of water to the dry areas. There were 51 engines a week engaged on that work. The use of super. greatly increases production and, had road transport not been subsidised, less super. would have been used, with a consequent decrease in production.

Mr. Styants: The railways would have lost another £150,000 in addition to the £315,000.

The PREMIER: They would have lost considerable traffic in wheat, stock and so on. I point out that there is a lesser amount, about £30,000, on the Estimates this year for the subsidy.

A lot of good that was. The Premier pointed that out to allay the anxiety of members, but the figure of £30,000 did not mean anything, as we actually spent £209,000. The debate continued—

It is hoped that the railways will deal with a far greater tonnage of super. this year than they did last year.

Mr. Rodoreda: Are there any grounds for that hope?

The PREMIER: The Commissioner of Railways is formulating a plan to transport super. to central stations from which it can be distributed, and it is hoped that from now on the locomotive position will improve. The increase in freights will make a difference in the cost as between rail and road transport. I have endeavoured to explain how this expenditure, mentioned by the member for Fremantle and the member for Mt. Magnet, is justified.

At page 1776 the debate continued—

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: There is a well known saying that hope springs eternal in the human breast. What the Premier said tonight goes to prove that saying. The Premier will recall that I was very critical of the Estimates on this item when another Budget was introduced earlier this session. By a trick the Government has so arranged that we have two Budgets in the one session and that precludes me from quoting from "Hansard" remarks which I made when this item was under discussion earlier this session. However, my memory is fairly good and I can recall what I said. The estimate for 1948-49 was £500. The Premier made that estimate when he had before him as a guide the estimate of £48,000 for the previous year. I drew attention to that and I told the Premier that it was ridiculous to forecast in that way when the railways could not handle the traffic which the Premier expected.

The Minister for Railways: Did they not exceed their expectations up to the end of December?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The expectations were that it would not take more than £500 and it actually took £100,000. That is how close the Premier got to his expectations.

The Minister for Railways: You know very well that the railways were ahead of their programme up to the end of December.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The previous year it cost £48,000 and the Government came along and said that it had cost £48,000 for the previous year, but it could be done for £500. Actually it cost £100,000.

The Premier: You cannot predict water shortages, can you?

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Premier gave as his explanation that he had been assured by the railways that the department would do so much better. I told him that we had had this assurance too, and I asked the Premier if he believed those assurances. He said that he was hopeful. He must be still hopeful because he provides an estimate of £30,000 for this year when it cost £100,000 last year. The Treasurer cannot keep on making forecasts which are so wide of the mark. If I am any judge he will not get through for anything like £30,000 and it will be nearer £50,000. I know that there will be a reduced quantity of super. for cartage. That is inevitable as a result of the recent industrial trouble.

The Minister for Railways: Not a great deal. There will be 360,000 tons, which will be 40,000 tons less.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I was prepared to calculate that there would be a much greater reduction and then these figures might have been somewhere near the mark. If what the Minister now says is correct, and there is only that difference, then I am certain the Premier will never get through for an expenditure of £30,000. We all know that this Government cannot resist requests put forward by the farmers. We have seen it over the past two years. The farmers have asked that the period for subsidies be extended and this Government has extended it each time the request has been put up, and I have no doubt that a similar request will come forward this year especially as it is election year. I cannot imagine that the Government will resist the requests for keeping on this subsidy for as long a period as before—if not longer. If the Government does that then it will not get through with an estimated expenditure of £30,000, or anything like that amount. Surely the Premier and the Minister for Railways must appreciate that. There was an expenditure of £48,000 for 1947-48 and an expenditure of £100,000 for 1948-49. Yet the Premier says that for 1949-50 the State will get through with an expenditure of £30,000.

The Minister for Railways: There is a new management and the steps being taken convince me that the railways will do a much better job than previously.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is nice to know that the Minister is convinced.

Mr. Ackland: The railways are already carting several more thousand tons of wheat per week.

Mr. Styant: And cutting out passenger trains to do it.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I would like the member for Irwin-Moore to read the remarks passed on this item last year. They are covered on page 2330 of Vol. No. 2 of "Hansard" 1948. He will see that I told the Premier that it was just too foolish to rely on the assurances of the Railway Department that it would do better. The Premier said he was hopeful that they would and now the Minister is convinced that they will.

The Minister for Railways: No, but that the new management will do better.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: The Minister cannot separate the management from the railways.

The Minister for Railways: There will be a big difference.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Surely the management cannot do these things.

The Minister for Railways: The management will arrange for the railways to do it.

It is very nice when we see the way in which they have done it. The debate continued—

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: It is no good trying to separate them. If the management has assured the Minister, and he is convinced that this job will be done for £30,000 and it is not done, he cannot come along and say that the management was all right but the railways were all wrong. If the management of the railways has stated to the Minister, and he has accepted the statement, that the performances will be such an improvement on last year that we will not need a larger subsidy than £30,000, and the Minister has been convinced, then subsequently he cannot say that the railways could not do it although he believed the management.

The Minister for Railways: No, I won't, provided there are no strikes or hold-ups this year.

There were no strikes or hold-ups. Then—

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We have no reason to believe that there will be any strikes or hold-ups.

The Minister for Railways: We hope not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We are not budgeting upon the possibility of strikes.

The Minister for Railways: No, we are not.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: We must assume that this is a reasonable forecast and that the Premier is expected to get somewhere near the mark. When he is making an estimate in Parliament he is not making a wild guess. The provision of £500 last year was most unreal and I said so and was proved right. The Minister cannot explain it away by saying that the railways had to cart water. They did have to cart water but not to that extent. It is possible that they may cart water to a greater extent than they did last year. I am firmly of the belief that it will take a lot more than £30,000 to satisfy the demands by the Treasurer for the cartage of super. this year. However, the Minister is convinced and the Premier is hopeful and we will see what happens.

We have seen what happened and we know that the Premier's estimate of £30,000 was £179,000 out. The Premier owes the Committee some explanation.

The PREMIER: The explanation is that the railways were not able to cope with the traffic.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is what we told you.

The PREMIER: As the hon. member knows, we have spent great sums in trying to get new locomotives, rollingstock and all the other requirements of the railways. We have been and still are faced with the acute shortage of water in agricultural areas. The hon. member knows how many locomotives are carting water to the dry areas. Unfortunately we are still faced with that position, perhaps even to a more acute extent than we were last year. So, there have been many factors that have contributed to this increased expenditure to which the hon. member has referred and, unfortunately, over which the Government did not have any control. If occasion demands that the railways have to transport some essentials, such as water, we have to do it even though it means that we have to leave other more payable traffic behind. Even the cartage of super. is a more payable proposition to the railways than the cartage of water.

I can understand the hon. member's concern about this large expenditure of money. I am concerned also and the hon. member will no doubt recall that when I introduced the Budget I said, "With the increasing burden on the Budget, every consideration must be given to the question of the continuance of this subsidy. While the Government has agreed to continue the subsidy for the time being, it is obvious that this heavy and increasing expenditure cannot continue and next year will either have to see a very substantial reduction or, alternatively, a cessation of the subsidy." So I can only tell the hon.

member that while he is concerned, and I think rightly so, as Treasurer I am concerned too. That is why I issued this warning when I delivered the Budget.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You are still budgetting for an expenditure of £180,000.

The PREMIER: We have to get this super. out and we have to make some provision for it.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I would like to ask the Premier what system is used in the payment of this subsidy. Would the statement be true that one large firm gets most of the subsidy and then sub-lets it to other people, thereby obtaining a rake-off on every ton carted?

The PREMIER: I am not aware of that. I have some figures which I can make available to the hon. member regarding road transport of super. For the year 1949-50 the tonnage transported during the year by rail was 215,120 tons; road transport 41,964 tons and subsidised road transport 138,446 tons, making a total of 395,530 tons. It may help the hon. member if I give him some further figures. The refund on farmers' accounts to the 30th June, 1950, was £123,094 1s., paid to carriers £309,356 4s. 8d. and the net expenditure was £186,189 4s. 2d. I also have figures of the tonnages despatched and the amount paid to carriers. In January 12,512 tons were despatched, and £23,526 was paid to carriers at an average payment of £1 17s. 7d. per ton for an average mileage of 106 miles. In February 26,542 tons were despatched, £55,222 was paid to carriers at an average payment of £2 1s. 7d. per ton on an average mileage of 117 miles. In March 32,504 tons were despatched and £70,441 was paid to carriers while £2 3s. 4d. was the average payment per ton, and 131 miles was the average mileage. In April, 25,548 tons were despatched, £59,473 was paid to carriers at an average payment of £2 6s. 7d. per ton, and the average number of miles was 131.

In May, 30,481 tons were despatched, £78,372 was paid to carriers at an average payment per ton of £2 11s. 5d. and the average mileage was 145. In June, 10,859 tons were despatched at a cost of £26,391 paid to carriers, an average of £2 8s. 8d. per ton and an average mileage of 137. The over-all average distance was 128 miles at an average payment of £2 5s. 6d. per ton, while the average load was nine tons. The average per ton cost to the Treasury was £1 7s. 6d. and the average refund from farmers amounted to 18s. per ton which represented the full transport cost to the producer, with the refund representing rail freight charges £97,223 and the refund representing terminal charges, at 4s. per ton, £27,777. I can only tell the hon. member that I am not aware of any particular firm making any rake-off, if I might use the term. I know of one firm

that does a considerable amount of this carrying and that is probably the firm to which the hon. member has referred.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Bell Bros. is the firm.

The PREMIER: That is so, but I do not know that there are many carriers with just one truck operating, and even with all these trucks operating it has been a difficult task to get out all the super. that was required.

Item, Australian Blue Asbestos Ltd., £3,000:

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Will the Premier give the Committee some information regarding the asbestos industry which is being operated in the Hamersley Ranges by the Australian Blue Asbestos Coy. Ltd. I am not questioning the amount of assistance set out for the company but I would like the Treasurer, if he is in a position to do so, to state what progress is being made by the company.

The PREMIER: Towards assisting the development of the asbestos industry at Wittenoom Gorge, the State and Commonwealth Governments have agreed to subsidise transport, namely sea freight on asbestos from Port Samson to Fremantle, on the basis of 10s. per ton paid direct to the company, the State and Commonwealth Governments each paying half. Road haulage, Port Samson to Wittenoom Gorge, 27s. per ton is being shared equally by the State and the Commonwealth. On goods transported by road from Meekatharra to Wittenoom Gorge, excluding building materials required for houses, a sum of £10 per ton is being fully paid by the State. The quantity transported is not to exceed 40 tons per month and the route is not to be used more than eight months out of 12. A subsidy of 27s. per ton is also paid on asbestos hauled from Wittenoom Gorge to Meekatharra.

Item, Air Transport of Beef, £12,000:

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not know whether this is an example of budgeting or guessing. The vote for 1949-50 was £100, but the expenditure was £3,070. This year the estimate is £12,000. I would like the Premier to say whether the amount provided for this year is to cope with increasing business or an increased rate of subsidy. Obviously, something was radically wrong last year. I have seen the publicity as to this air beef scheme and the desire to develop it, but I would like to know more about the expenditure for this year.

The PREMIER: This subsidy is being paid to enable the establishment of air transport of beef in the North-West. It is based on the difference between Wyndham Meat Works charges over and above 1.6d. per lb. The cost to the Wyndham Meat Works is subject to increases brought about by the basic wage, and assistance may also be given to other expenditure that may

be considered necessary towards developing a method of transport of beef by air. This industry is facing increased costs and, on account of its location, its costs are much heavier than those of industry in other parts of the State.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: They would not be four times those of last year.

The PREMIER: As I have said, assistance may also be given by expenditure for ways and means that may be considered for transporting beef by air. This is an experiment being carried out and it has yet to prove whether it is economical, but in the northern parts of the State we have to take some risks.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Have you had any departmental reports on the scheme?

The PREMIER: Yes. The Director of Works, Mr. Dumas looks after this matter, and he reports to the Government that he is optimistic as to its future success. The present position is that the man who supplies his meat to Glenroy where the works are is not getting the price, by a considerable amount, that the grower is who sends his cattle to the Wyndham Meat Works. So I do not know exactly what the future of the air beef scheme will be, because it is still in the experimental stage.

Mr. STYANTS: As to this item, I noticed in the Press quite recently that the Commonwealth Government has indicated to the Commonwealth Meat Board that it should pay a subsidy of 1d. per lb. to the air beef transport scheme. Would that in any way affect the amount of subsidy which the State Government will be called upon to pay? I also understand that there will be an estimate of about £4,000 paid so that the journey from Glenroy Station to the Wyndham Meat Works, a matter of 130 or 140 miles, will be made. It appears that the State is to subsidise each carcass by about £3 over a journey of about 130 miles. I also understand that almost all the beef which was sent last year to Wyndham from Glenroy was declared to be surplus, and was sold overseas at a much lower figure than could have been secured in the metropolitan area if it had been shipped from the North-West. Therefore, one of the directions in which the Government could materially assist the air beef transport people would be to see that, instead of declaring the product surplus when it arrives at the Wyndham Freezing Works and selling it on a low market overseas, shipping space was provided and the meat brought to the metropolitan area where it is so urgently needed.

The PREMIER: The subsidy paid by the Commonwealth Government and which may be paid by the Commonwealth Meat Board, would not affect the subsidy which the State Government pays. As to the future of meat supplied to the Wyndham Meat Works, arrangements are being made to bring larger quantities to the metropolitan area this

coming season. What effect that will have upon the price which the Glenroy Meat Works will be able to pay the producer I am unable to say at this stage.

Mr. Styants: The manager expects it to be of material financial assistance to them if that were done.

The PREMIER: Yes, I know that they will probably get a better price for their meat in the metropolitan market than in the overseas market.

Item, Difference between Landed and Normal Western Australian price in regard to Importation of Potatoes, £25,000:

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The expenditure under this item last year was high and the estimated expenditure for the current financial year is also high. I can believe that some of the difference is accounted for by the cost of freighting potatoes from the other States, especially Tasmania I understand, to this State. I would like to have some information from the Treasurer as to whether any other items of cost enter into these figures, apart from the cost of transport.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: If I interpret this item correctly, it is alarming. It is something new, because there was no Vote in 1949 for this expenditure. It has arisen from circumstances about which we know nothing. The contemplated expenditure for this year is £25,000, which appears to me to be a subsidy paid to the Potato Marketing Board to keep down the price of imported potatoes to local consumers. If that is so, there must be contemplated a tremendous potato importation this year, and I doubt if we will get the potatoes. Something must have gone wrong with the scheme of things in Western Australia if we have to contemplate an importation such as is envisaged in these figures. That is a matter to which the Minister for Agriculture will have to give some consideration.

There is a definite payment by the Treasury from which no corresponding benefit will be obtained. It means our own production is going to fall so short that we will be obliged to import potatoes to such an extent as to pay subsidies amounting to £25,000 to keep the price somewhere near normal. Is this because fewer potatoes are being produced, or that the demand is growing so rapidly that there is no possibility of keeping up with production? Whilst this figure is alarming now what will it be like next year if the trend is to continue? We ought to have some explanation for the appearance of this item to begin with and the grounds for contemplating that the Premier will have such a large importation this financial year.

The PREMIER: Last year the Government approved of a subsidy to reduce the price of potatoes imported during the period of seasonal scarcity in August and September to the price authorised for local

potatoes. The object of this subsidy was to avoid an increase in the cost of living and a consequent increase in the basic wage. I think members know what happened in regard to potatoes last year. The Potato Board decided that a large quantity of potatoes would have to be imported or else people would have been without potatoes. In order that the public might get potatoes at a reasonable cost this subsidy was provided. The hon. member expresses alarm at the amount provided on the Estimates for the coming year. I can only say that the provision is being made to meet another shortage should we be faced with one. I am hoping we will not be and that potatoes will be available. The member for Melville probably knows that the Potato Board is encouraging growers to produce more potatoes for the public, and I am hoping that the sum provided on the Estimates will not be necessary.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I suggest to the Premier in all seriousness that he ask the Minister for Agriculture to go into this matter with the Potato Board immediately to see whether it is not possible to pay some part of this proposed estimate of £25,000 to local growers to induce them to produce potatoes in Western Australia. It is far better to get our local producers into production by giving a bounty or a subsidy than to import potatoes from the Eastern States and subsidise the consumer so that the price of potatoes can be kept down. I believe if the Government is prepared to spend £25,000 on potatoes it could be better spent as an inducement to local producers to go in for greater production on the distinct understanding that they will be subsidised if their costs are higher.

The Premier: The question of storage enters into it and it is a difficult one.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: I do not think it will, because the Potato Board will tell the Premier that we produce our potatoes at certain times of the year as it pays producers to do so at that time. But they could produce potatoes at certain other times if the return were such as to make it worth their while. We had an inquiry by a Select Committee appointed by this House into the marketing of potatoes, and we had evidence brought forward that if a price increase were guaranteed at a certain time of the year potatoes would be grown in the sand by producers. But they would not grow those potatoes because at the ruling price it would not be worth their while. I think the idea should definitely be explored.

I would like to induce our own growers to produce in a period of shortage, with the promise that they would be paid a bounty or a subsidy for doing so, with a view to stepping up local production. If we have to continue importing large quantities of potatoes from the other States we may be in difficulties because



they may not be able to supply them. The Minister for Supply and Shipping will remember the time when she would not allow us to have the ships to bring more potatoes from other States. It would be better for us to spend our money on our own producers rather than let it go in a subsidy to consumers to keep down the price of imported potatoes.

The PREMIER: I might just make reference to the statement of the member for Melville that the Minister for Supply and Shipping would not allow us to import potatoes. That was at a time of acute shipping difficulties when we could not get freight, and we had to decide which was the most essential requirement to give to the people. That was the reason why on that occasion potatoes were not imported. Freight was not available because other commodities considered to be more essential had to be brought in.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Do I understand that the Minister for Supply and Shipping interfered with the freedom of trade between the States?

The PREMIER: No, but she had to decide what goods were essential and priority was given to them. That was the only difference. I will look into the hon. member's suggestion and have also asked the Minister for Lands to give the matter consideration, so that when the Agriculture Estimates are under discussion further information can be given to the Committee. I do not know whether his suggestion is a practical one or not, but I have asked the Minister for Lands to have a discussion with the members of the Potato Board on the views expressed by the member for Melville, and inform the Committee of the conclusions arrived at.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Treasurer omitted to answer the question I asked him at the beginning of the discussion on this item. The question was whether in the expenditure last year and the estimated expenditure this year any items were included in addition to freight.

The PREMIER: I explained that the subsidy was paid to enable the imported product to be sold at the same price as the locally grown potatoes. It was a subsidy to keep down the cost of potatoes in order in turn to keep down the cost of living.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Is the difference between the landed cost and the price at which the potatoes would normally be sold represented entirely by the cost of transporting the potatoes from Tasmania or was there some other item of cost?

The PREMIER: The cost at which the potatoes were purchased in the Eastern States was also a factor, apart from the cost of transport.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Can you tell us whether any of those potatoes were bought on the black market in the Eastern States?

The PREMIER: That is not likely, seeing that negotiations were carried out between our Potato Board and similar boards in the other States.

Item, Children's Receiving Home, Applecross—Purchase of land, £1,236.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN: Last year I asked the Premier why the Government had not bought this land, seeing that we were negotiating for its purchase in 1945. Is the putting of this amount on the Estimates year after year just done to hoodwink the Committee? Has the Government abandoned its intention to buy the land? If not, why does not it do so? The question was put to the Premier last year without a satisfactory answer being received. Why not some action? If it is not intended to purchase the land, why not say so and let us know where we stand? Presently the owner will be expecting more for it.

The PREMIER: The only note I have is that the site will be used for building a receiving home for children, who will be placed in the care of the Child Welfare Department until such time as they may be suitably placed. I will note the hon. member's remarks and ask the Minister in charge of Child Welfare to give a full explanation when dealing with that Vote.

Item, Exchange on Overseas Interest, Payments and Remittances, £400,000.

Mr. MARSHALL: What is actually our interest payment overseas which entails the provision of this terrific sum in the way of exchange? Later on there are other items involving expenditure in relation to borrowing. I believe that our actual interest bill is about £5,000,000, and if these extra costs be added, the total is nearly £6,000,000.

The PREMIER: This amount is provided to meet exchange on the payment of interest in London and for payment of expenditure incurred through the London office. The decrease on last year's expenditure is really brought about by the altered method of accounting. In previous years, recoups received in regard to exchange were credited to revenue. The practice now is to credit these recoups direct to the Vote as such recoups represent exchange incurred on behalf of other governmental activities. The previous method also actually inflated revenue and expenditure. The decrease shown this year is £580,526.

Mr. Marshall: But that is due to the altered arrangement.

The PREMIER: I tried to explain that when introducing the Budget. At the moment I am trying to find the details in the budgetary statement.

Mr. Marshall: If you let me have them when the Loan Bill is under discussion, that will do.

The PREMIER: I shall do so.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: As the Premier did not warn us that we were to have an all-night sitting or something approaching it, I suggest that progress be reported.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 12.49 a.m. (Thursday).

## Legislative Council.

Thursday, 23rd November, 1950.

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

## QUESTION.

### HOSPITALS.

*As to Midland Districts Proposal.*

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT asked the Minister for Transport:

What progress has been made with regard to the proposed Midland districts hospital?

The MINISTER replied:

A site has been selected and surveyed and a study of the lay-out of what will eventually be a hospital sufficiently large to meet the needs of the district, is proceeding in the Principal Architect's office.

### ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment Bill (No. 2).

### BILLS (5)—THIRD READING.

#### 1. Vermin Act Amendment.

Returned to the Assembly with amendments.

#### 2. Child Welfare Act Amendment.

#### 3. Railway (Port Hedland-Marble Bar) Discontinuance.

#### 4. Fremantle Harbour Trust Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Assembly.

#### 5. Gas Undertakings Act Amendment.

*Passed.*

### BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

*Assembly's Message.*

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to amendments Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 7 made by the Council, had disagreed to Nos. 5 and 6, and had agreed to No. 4 subject to a further amendment.

### BILLS (2)—REPORT.

#### 1. Noxious Weeds.

#### 2. Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act Amendment.

*Adopted.*

### BILL—MILK ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—Central) [4.45] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to amend the Milk Act in three places. The first amendment seeks to alter the constitution of the Milk Board; the second increases the maximum amount of compensation payable to owners of re-acting cattle from £20 to £25, while the third amendment alters the method of obtaining funds for cattle compensation and administration.