Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 24th September, 1941.

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

QUESTION—JUSTICES OF THE PEACE.

As to W. P. Griffiths.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Chief Secretary: 1, When was W. P. Griffiths appointed a justice of the peace for the Fremantle magisterial district? 2, How many times has he taken his seat on the bench of the Fremantle Police Court during the past twelve months? 3, On how many Mondays, if any, within that period, has he sat?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, 18th July, 1938. 2, Four. 3, Three.

MOTION—FORESTS ACT.

To Disallow Regulation.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [4.33]: I move—

That the amendment of the Second Schedule to the Forest Regulations, 1935, paragraph 3 (d), made under the Forests Act, 1918, as published in the "Government Gazette" on the 24th April, 1941, and laid on the Table of the House on the 12th August, 1941, be and is hereby disallowed.

I have received a communication from settlers in the Denmark area who feel that they should not be compelled to pay the royalty prescribed in the regulation. The letter states:—

We requested the Forests Department to waive the royalty on posts and strainers in this district where settlers have no jarrah on their locations. It may be possible that other branches may put this suggestion forward and we should like to support it. Our application to the Forests Department was unsuccessful.

The letter was from the honorary secretary of the Denmark branch of the Primary Producers' Association. The regulation sought to be disallowed provides the following royalties:—

On timber for settlers' requirements—

Fence posts	1d. each
Strainer posts	6d. each
Vine posts	1d. each
Split rails	1½d. each
Split slabs up to 3 ft. in length	½d. each
Split slabs over 3 ft. and up 5 ft. in length	1d. each
Squared or hewn timber	3d. per cub. ft.

Poles for sheds, gates, rails and wireless poles—at rates prescribed under paragraph (g).

It does not seem to be asking much to pay royalty on timber of this character. The Government has expended a large sum of money on our group settlements, but the settlers are not permitted to sell timber growing on their blocks. They may cut posts for their own use without paying royalty. Many of the settlers have no jarrah growing on their blocks, and for that reason the Government might very well waive this charge, small as it is.

Hon. L. Craig: Why in that particular area only? Why not in other areas?

Hon. A. THOMSON: These settlers would not be supplying posts except for use in their own area. If an outside person were to go on the land and cut the posts for the purpose of selling them at a profit, then I certainly would have no objection to the regulation. These bona fide settlers should have the opportunity to cut posts, of course under supervision.

The Chief Secretary: What supervision would you suggest?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Officers of the Forests Department inspect the district and mark the trees which may be cut.

The Chief Secretary: How would you supervise the man cutting the tree?

Hon. A. THOMSON: How are other timber-cutters supervised?

The Chief Secretary: But there is a difference when timber is being cut for commercial purposes.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The Government might very well waive payment of this royalty. I hope the House will agree to the

disallowance of the regulation. The department could then frame a new regulation in such a way as to exempt bona fide settlers in that area from payment of the royalty.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Are the group settlers allowed to cut timber on their own property?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes. The timber cannot be sold, however, as it does not belong to the settlers. I have no desire to detain the House. The matter is a simple one and we should do our best to help these men who have been struggling for years in that area. There is an old saying, "Every mickle makes a muckle," and the exemption from payment of this royalty would assist the settlers. After all, the timber is required only for fencing purposes, and fencing is not reproductive work. It merely serves to keep the settlers' stock on their holdings.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [4.40]: I support the motion. Mr. Thomson said that 8s. 4d. per hundred is not a very big royalty to pay, but it is in this particular case. Fencing posts today cost anything from 25s. to 50s. per hundred for splitting. Labour is very expensive indeed. A hardship will be imposed if settlers cannot have a bit of jarrah with which to fence their holdings. In all jarrah country there is a large proportion of inferior timber. Little loss would accrue to the Forests Department in marking some of these trees, which would be quite suitable for fencing but of very little use for milling. The Chief Secretary was wondering how such an arrangement could be supervised, but it is being done now. I own a farm on which there is no jarrah, and occasionally I apply for a permit to split posts on a reserve. The permit is granted under certain conditions, and no difficulty is experienced. The Forests Department has rangers who attend to this work, and any person reported for taking timber for which no permit has been issued, is duly punished. I cannot see much difficulty in policing the matter for private purposes. It would be different if it were dealt with in a commercial way. A royalty such as that set out in the regulation is the last thing a settler should be called upon to pay. I hope the regulation will be disallowed.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

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

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [4.44]: Occasionally, in the course of years, a crisis arises in the affairs of a country. Whether the crisis be caused by a depression, a war, or by some other great calamity, the Government and those in authority are confronted with a special set of circumstances which they endeavour to meet by introducing special legislation. Frequently that legislation is placed on the statute-book without first receiving the closest examination. The result is, and experience proves this, that the legislation brings, as an aftermath, certain consequences not contemplated at the time. Not the least of them is that once one such measure has been placed on the statute-book, it remains there and the greatest difficulty is experienced in having it removed. The record of this State since the depression proves that. Acts are on our statute-book today which have long outlived their usefulness. They have been brought forward year by year and continue to be retained. I have always contended that the parent Act, which this Bill seeks to amend, was unnecessary because the Commonwealth takes the necessary steps under the National Security Act; and under its Regulation No. 62 quite a lot of machinery is created. Federal legislation supersedes State legislation when they conflict.

If this Bill is amended, a provision may possibly be inserted that is contrary to the Federal legislation, and would therefore become abortive. I draw the attention of members to that point when considering the measure. The Bill purports to amend certain defects in the original Act. One principle introduced goes a great deal further. I look upon the policy of the Labour Party as one that regards the landlord as a public enemy. That idea is evidently in the mind of the Government, because it has not only introduced this restrictive legislation, but includes in it a penal clause, which provides a substantial penalty. The parent Act sets out that where a rental is charged higher than what is called the standard rent, the tenant has the right to recover the difference. That section is included in this Bill. It has been taken out of one part of the original Act

and put into another. The Bill provides, in addition, that the landlord may be penalised to the extent of £50. That is a definite penalty of £50. It is not up to £50, but a flat £50.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: No, the Interpretation Act governs that aspect.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Criminal Code imposes a penalty of £100 for betting.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Well, that is what the Bill says. The Government is perpetuating that principle, and in future, if this is placed on the statute-book, the landlord will not only have to refund the difference in the amount of rent, but perhaps pay a penalty, say, up to £50.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It would be better to be a S.P. bookmaker than a landlord.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Much better. Very few people at the present time look to houses for investment, and those who have done so are very sorry. I know quite a number of instances of people who have looked for accommodation and simply could not get it because none was available. The effect of the war has been to transfer large numbers from one part of the country to another, with the result that in the Eastern States as well as here, we have the spectacle of many people concentrating in certain localities because of the possibility of securing work there and yet being unable to get accommodation for themselves. They are homeless. That is one effect of legislation of this description. I understand a considerable demand exists today in the metropolitan area for houses, and the demand cannot be satisfied. That condition applies in other parts of the State as well.

In these circumstances, I am inclined to think that the Bill will work out in the usual way that legislation of this type does, and any measure we place on the statute-book which does not take into account the working of natural laws will prove to be abortive. In this particular instance it has proved abortive in so far as people cannot secure houses and others are not prepared to build them for letting purposes. With regard to proposed Section 12 (b), to which I have drawn attention, in view of the fact that a tenant has the right to claim a refund of excess rent he has paid, which should be sufficient, the inclusion of a penal clause is not only entirely unnecessary but most unjust. I shall oppose the second reading of the Bill but should it be agreed to, I trust that members will co-operate during the Committee stage to eliminate the provisions to which I have drawn attention.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West—in reply) [4.53]: The contentions raised by Mr. Seddon constitute an important reason for according support to the Bill. There is at present a shortage of housing accommodation to meet the requirements of people, including soldiers' wives, who wish to reside in the metropolitan area. When munition manufacture is actively undertaken in Western Australia the shortage will be accentuated. That being so, the Government desires the passage of legislation to protect people against unscrupulous landlords.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And to prevent men from investing money in houses!

The HONORARY MINISTER: No.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That will be the effect of this legislation.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not think so. Only a very small proportion of landlords have evaded the provisions of the parent Act. When I moved the second reading of the Bill, I think I made out a good case in support of its provisions.

Hon. A. Thomson: You did not furnish us with any examples of how the Act has been evaded.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I can give the hon. member the examples he indicates. These tend to show that tenants have been unfairly treated by unscrupulous landlords. Fortunately landlords of that type are few in number, but the number is sufficient to necessitate the introduction of the Bill. The amendments suggested by Mr. Thomson are practically those that were moved in another place and apply to the proposed new Section 12B, the effect of which is that any person who receives rent in excess of the fair or standard rent shall be guilty of a breach of the Act. That provision is wide in its effect. The words "any person" are intended to cover any individual likely to receive excessive rent. Mr. Thomson desires to place a limit upon that liability and to confine it to any "lessor or agent of a lessor who personally and knowingly" collects the excessive rent. If that amendment were agreed to, the effect would be that a guilty person could successfully evade the Act.

Hon. L. Craig: Is that not a matter for discussion in Committee?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I think it well to state the case fully at this stage because time may be saved later on. A guilty person could evade the provisions of the Act, firstly by not receiving the rent himself. He could employ a servant, a friend or a relative to receive the money and could escape liability by saying that he had not personally received the rent. Secondly, he could have the rent collected by an agent appointed by the lessor and that agent could adopt a procedure similar to that I have suggested regarding the lessor himself. Thirdly, the Act could be evaded because the lessor or agent who collected excessive rent could deny that he did so knowingly. If the amendment be agreed to, it will be very difficult to prove, should any prosecution be launched, that the parties concerned acted knowingly.

Hon. A. Thomson: But they ought to know; they collected the rent!

The HONORARY MINISTER: The point is that the tenants would be penalised and yet it would be utterly impossible to bring the guilty person to book in court. We can deal with that phase further during the Committee stage when I shall be prepared to give members particulars of specific cases. I remind the House that the legislation will not affect the fair landlord or even the majority of the landlords, but only a small minority that is prepared to exploit existing conditions.

When discussing the Bill last night Mr. Cornell referred to the provisions of Section 12 and intimated that he proposed to move for the insertion of a new section as follows:—

12C. Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to extend the term of any lease of land which has expired during the operation of this Act, nor to entitle the lessee to remain in possession after such term has expired.

I am advised that as the section stands now, every lease expires at the end of the stated term embodied in the document and that the landlord can get possession—

1. If the tenant peaceably surrenders the property;

2. If the tenant is not willing to leave but the landlord can show—

(a) that the tenant has been guilty of waste; or

(b) has been guilty of conduct which is a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours; or

(c) that the premises have been sold by the mortgagee under a power of sale; or

(d) that the premises are reasonably required by the landlord for the occupation of himself or some other person in his employ or in the employ of some tenant for him; or

(e) that there is some other ground which a court may deem satisfactory.

Hon. J. Cornell: Most of that is so much piffle, as the man could be prosecuted under other legislation.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am also advised that if the landlord cannot bring his case under any one of these grounds he has no right to re-possess the property. This is a war time measure for the benefit of the mass of the population, as a protection against exploiters and profiteers. It is designed to prevent a landlord increasing his rent beyond the standard or fair rent, by any method whatsoever.

Hon. J. Cornell: And the Federal regulations provide for that.

Hon. H. Seddon: Yes.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Bill has been introduced because of the experience of some tenants who have been compelled, as they could not obtain other accommodation, to submit to an evasion of the Act and have had to pay rent in excess of that contemplated by the Act. A landlord or his agent guilty of such action should be punished, and for that reason the penal clause was included in the Bill.

Hon. J. Cornell: My amendment applies only to leases with a fixed term.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Because of the breaches of the law the Government contends it should be tightened up by means of the simple amendment embodied in the Bill. The measure will do no harm to anyone apart from a few people whom, I am sure, no member of this House would be prepared to defend.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. V. Hamersley in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 5:

Hon. A. THOMSON: Will the Honorary Minister state the reason for the proposed omission of paragraph (b) of Subsection 2, which reads—

Where any such payment has been wrongfully required and received after the thirty-first day of August, 1939, then the amount shall be recoverable from the lessor who received the payment, and may, without prejudice to any other method of recovery, be deducted from any rent payable by such lessee to such lessor.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The object is to prevent the defeat of this legislation under the conditions which have been mentioned.

Hon. A. THOMSON: We should be informed whether the provision has proved unworkable. The amendment is of a highly drastic nature. What is the reason for the Government's proposal?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Obviously, proposed Section 12A is substituted; and that is the reason for this Bill.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Under the Act as it stands, the provision deals only with houses existing when that measure was passed. Under the amendment the application will be extended to houses built since 1939.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—New section: Recovery of sums paid in excess of the standard or fair rent, etc.:

Hon. A. THOMSON: On the second reading the Honorary Minister gave reasons why the insertion of certain words should not be agreed to. We must be fair. To meet the position I propose to move an amendment as follows: That in line 7 of proposed new Section 12B the words "person who" be struck out, and the words "lessor or agent of a lessor who personally and knowingly" inserted in lieu. If a penalty of £50 is to be imposed, the Committee should agree to this and to the other amendment which I have placed on the notice paper. A bank may be collecting the rent of a property owned by me. The tenant goes to the bank and pays the rent. The money goes into my account, and I might be away, say, in the North-West. There is the case of a house the rent of which, after repairs had been effected to the ceilings, was increased from 22s. 6d. to 25s. per week. The tenant left the premises when it suited him to do so, about nine months later. Meantime the house had been sold. The next tenant took the premises at 27s. 6d. per week, but upon his offering 22s. 6d. the new landlord had to accept that rent. Under the present proposal in the Bill, the then owner would be liable to a fine of £50 for increasing the rent. I do not cavil at the new owner being obliged to accept the lower rent, but we should be fair to both sides. In the country districts there are many houses which cannot be let at all, owing to the drift of country people into a metropolitan area. This drastic provision is likely to defeat its own purpose. The Workers' Homes Board will not be helped by this legislation to build more houses. I trust the Committee will agree to the amendment, when I submit it.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I wish to move an amendment that will come before that suggested by Mr. Thomson. I move an amendment—

That in lines 1 to 8 of proposed new Section 12B, the words "Any person who receives rent for any premises in excess of the standard rent or fair rent, as the case may be, lawfully payable for the premises concerned, and any person who receives any payment or makes any charge contrary to the provisions of Subsection 2 of Section 5 or of Subsection 1 (b) (i) of Section 6 of this Act shall be guilty of an offence against this Act. Penalty fifty pounds." be struck out.

It is already provided that any sum charged in excess of the standard rent has to be refunded, and in some instances a considerable amount might be involved. That is a sufficient penalty.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If the amendment is accepted, the Bill will be rendered useless. The object is to impose a penalty. Why should not a person be fined and even imprisoned for a grave breach of the law? Why should he not be penalised for robbing unfortunate people by means of subterfuge? True, there may be only a comparatively small number of people engaged in this practice, but the measure will help to prevent it.

Hon. L. Craig: Would you fine tenants for non-payment of rent?

Hon. G. Fraser: Landlords have redress at law for that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Tenants can be fined by a magistrate.

Hon. L. Craig: Can they?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The landlord has legal redress. I am stressing the point that this provision is required to make the existing legislation effective.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment because, as the Honorary Minister has pointed out, it would defeat the purpose of the Bill, which has been introduced as a war emergency measure. In our wisdom we have seen fit to declare that landlords must not charge anything above a rent fixed at a certain date. We can well go further in a time of stress such as this by declaring that if anyone breaks that law he shall be subject to a penalty. As the Act stands, there is no penalty.

Hon. H. Seddon: Yes, there is!

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: As Mr. Seddon has pointed out, excess rent charged may be recovered, but there are thousands of people who are ignorant of their rights; they are the ones that have to be protected.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Do not you think there are some ignorant landlords?

Hon E. M. HEENAN: Yes.

Hon. G. Fraser: I have never found them!

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: A landlord, whose business is letting houses, would know that on a certain date the rent of a particular house was 25s. and he should not be in a position to take advantage of the ignorance of people who are searching for a place in which to live and, owing to a shortage of houses, are prepared to contract out of the Act. A landlord should not be able to indulge in that practice without suffering some penalty.

Hon. J. CORNELL: If Brown rents a house from Jones, there is a basis on which the rent is fixed. I think it must be the rent obtaining in September, 1939. Suppose Jones says to Brown, "I am going to raise your rent," and he does so above what is considered a fair rent. Has not Jones a remedy for that? I understand he has.

The Honorary Minister: It is not very effective.

Hon. J. CORNELL: But he has a remedy. If Brown does not resort to the remedy but agrees to the increased rent, he thereby compounds a felony with the other man. If they are both wrong, is it not reasonable that both should be penalised?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: We hear a lot about protection for people that rent houses. There are, however, some landlords and landladies who also require a little protection because all of them have not the knowledge they are supposed to possess.

Hon. G. Fraser: But they engage astute land agents who have that knowledge.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Not always. I know a lady whose tenant said to her, "I want a washhouse, troughs, etc., installed." The cost was £20 and the landlady said she would have to charge 1s. a week extra as rent, as she had to raise the money from the bank. Afterwards I was asked whether the correct course had been followed. Let it not be forgotten that the tenant approached the landlady in that instance and agreed to pay; yet, under this measure the tenant could at once take proceedings against the landlady for collecting more than the 6 per cent. allowed.

Hon. G. Fraser: Those conveniences should have been there in the first place.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: The lady raised money to instal those conveniences. Under this legislation if the tenant becomes wise to the fact that he is paying not 6 per cent. but 12 per cent., because 1s. a week is 12 per cent. on the amount, he can insist on the rent being reduced. If that is done, how is the landlady to repay the money to the bank, since she is paying 6 per cent. to the bank and only charging 1s. a week extra to the tenant? The penalty clause is serious and requires consideration.

Hon. T. MOORE: When this measure was introduced, the idea was to keep prices down during the war. I hope hon. members will bear that in mind. Once we allow any laxity in this matter, the trouble will continue. I have heard Mr. Seddon advance good arguments but he made a poor effort just now. The hon. member would have been better advised to suggest a lower penalty. There certainly must be a penalty; otherwise landlords will be prepared to take a risk, knowing that, at the worst, they will only lose money in costs and will not be fined.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I do not agree with Mr. Moore. There is sufficient penalty for the landlord in that he must make a refund.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is not a penalty; he is only giving back what he should never have had.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Mr. Piesse has drawn attention to the case of a tenant who asked for improvements and agreed to pay an extra amount. Anybody with experience of letting houses knows that 6 per cent. is an inadequate amount to allow. Wear and tear is severe.

Hon. T. Moore: That is the law we passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: But we are trying to make it more severe by imposing a penalty. It is a sufficient penalty upon a landlord to have to make a refund of rent, particularly if he has to meet the costs of an action against him.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I hope the Minister will give an assurance that the amendment which I have suggested will be accepted. Some penalty should be prescribed.

Hon. G. Fraser: It would not be regarded as much of an offence if there were no penalty.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Mr. Seddon used a very extraordinary argument. Where a landlord charges too much, Mr. Seddon considers that he should merely have to return the money, although he has deliberately flouted the law. There is provision in the Act to cover structural alterations. Under no circumstances could I imagine a successful prosecution in the case quoted. The legislation is designed to protect people who come from Mr. Thomson's province seeking houses. I hope that the amendment will be negatived.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I remind the Committee that country people are in a totally different position from those residing in the city. In the country, landlords are being forced to carry out additional improvements in order to retain their tenants. I have heard of 15 or 16 people in Katanning who have shifted from one house to another, to secure the benefit of much reduced rentals.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I can see no good reason why a person who deliberately commits an offence against the Act should not be subject to some form of punishment. The latter part of the clause provides a sensible protection by making a case hearable only by a resident magistrate. There is no fear of a man being fined £50 unless he deserves to be fined £50. Some members appear to believe that this provision concerning the resident magistrate might well be applied in other instances.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I intend to move an amendment to the effect that in line 1 of proposed new Section 12B, the words "person who" be struck out and the words "lessor or agent of a lessor who personally and knowingly" inserted in lieu.

Hon. J. Cornell: We should put the amendment in order. Mr. Thomson is seeking to delete words which the Committee has resolved to retain.

The CHAIRMAN: Unless the Bill is recommitted, we cannot go back to that stage. I cannot accept the suggested amendment.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That a new section, to stand as Section 12C, be inserted, as follows:—"12C. Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to extend the term of any lease of land which has expired during the operation of this Act, nor to entitle the lessee to remain in possession after such term has expired."

I outlined the position at the second reading stage. The Honorary Minister mentioned certain methods by which a man could be evicted after his lease had expired. More than half such cases would be for offences against the Licensing Act. I am informed, on the authority of two eminent King's Counsel, that it is one of the hardest matters possible to put a tenant out at the expiration of a fixed lease. He may continue in occupation of the premises for the duration of the war and for 12 months afterwards. Apparently it was not the intention of the framers of the law that the legislation should apply to leases with a fixed tenure, particularly business leases. The Honorary Minister said there were methods of getting the persons concerned out if they would not vacate premises. Why not amend the Act to provide that fixed leases shall not apply after their expiration?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Surely when the lease expires, the contract is completed.

Mr. J. CORNELL: Yes. If the clause is amended in the direction I propose, they will go out. The landlord will have some protection to which I believe he is entitled.

During the depression, when the emergency legislation was enacted, I know of businessmen who leased premises on the goldfields at a low rental. They took advantage of the law and secured a further reduced rental, but they did not receive a new lease when the current one expired.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Owners got a 400 per cent. increase in rentals.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I know of more than one case where advantage was taken of a flaw in the law. The landlord should be given a fair deal. Whilst business has declined in some parts of the State it has increased beyond all expectations in other parts. Landlords now find themselves subjected, through the exigencies of war, to numerous additional charges and to increased taxation, and these additional payments have to be met. Such charges have increased in certain businesses to a considerable extent. I hope my amendment will be agreed to.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I oppose the amendment. I leased a property in the metropolitan area some 12 months ago. I have been able to pay the rent and keep the place in good order and have paid for 57,000 gallons of excess water. I am entitled, therefore, to renew my lease without trouble, but if this amendment is carried I may not be able to do so. The landlord may tell me my lease has expired and I must take out a new one. Hotelkeepers are engaged in a profitable trade and we need not worry about them. On the goldfields some landlords who were only getting £6 a week from their tenants are now able to get £20 a week. The legislation with which we are dealing is designed to protect those whose breadwinners are away at the war.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I also oppose the amendment. We cannot accept isolated instances as proof of the necessity for this amendment. If it were passed it would stultify Section 12 of the Act. The interests of many people would then be jeopardised. More harm than good will be done if the amendment is passed.

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

Ayes	13
Noes	9
Majority for ..	4

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	*(Teller.)*

NOES.

Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. E. H. H. Hall
Hon. E. M. Heenan	*(Teller.)*

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5—agreed to.

New clause—Repeal of Section 14:

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move—

That a new clause be inserted to stand as Clause 5 as follows:—"5. Section 14 of the principal Act is hereby repealed."

I propose to show that a Government instrumentality has taken advantage of Section 14 of the principal Act. It seems that the Government approves of the Railway Department raising lease rents in cases where military camps have led to an increase in the business, and that it seeks to impose a penalty of £50 if that business is done by private citizens. I wish to refer to some matter collected by the member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward), although I, too, received similar information. In 1935 in the case of the Cunderdin railway refreshment rooms the annual rental paid was £300. Fresh tenders were called and in 1940 a tender of £500 was accepted, a difference of £200—although in 1935 the Government considered that £300 per annum was a fair standard rent. At Fremantle £370 was regarded as the standard rent, the lease expiring in 1940, but the department subsequently accepted a tender of £468, an increase of £98. At Katanning the rental of the refreshment rooms was £64, but the new tender was £78, an increase of £14. At Narrogin the figure was £156, but that was increased to £168, a difference of £12. In the case of book stalls, at Coolgardie £6 was deemed to be sufficient, but that was increased by £1 6s. At Fremantle the rental was £9 2s., and £31 4s. was accepted, an increase of £22 2s. At Kalgoorlie the figure was £52, but was increased to £60, an additional £8. At Midland Junction the figure of £48 was increased to £57, a difference of £9. The total increase in rentals amounted to £364 8s. per annum, which the Railway Department is collecting from refreshment rooms and books stalls. We have heard a lot about avaricious landlords.

If the law is good enough for private citizens, it should be made to apply equally to the Government.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The citation of a few isolated cases with regard to the Railway Department ought not to affect the Bill. Section 14 of the principal Act was fully debated and Parliament took the view that the Crown should be exempted from the provisions of the Act.

New clause put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	12
Noes	..	..	9
Majority for		..	3

Ayes	
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	Hon. E. H. H. Hall (*Teller.*)

Noes	
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. W. H. Kitson	(*Teller.*)

New clause thus passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Collie Recreation and Park Lands Act Amendment.

2, Water Boards Act Amendment (No. 2). Received from the Assembly.

BILL—WEIGHTS AND MEASURES ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—DISTRESS FOR RENT ABOLITION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [6.10] in moving the second reading said: This short Bill proposes to amend Section 6 of the principal Act, which members will recall was passed in 1936. The object of the Act was to abolish distress for rent and that laudable object has been attained. Section 5 provides that although distress for rent is abolished, nothing in the Act shall prejudice or affect the right of a person to recover rent owing to him. Section 6, which the Bill seeks to amend, has, as shown by experience, worked rather harshly in many cases. Members will recollect that that section was an amendment submitted at the last moment and agreed to by way of compromise. It provides that any person who is seven days in arrears with the payment of his rent may receive two days' notice from the landlord to vacate the premises.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That is the only protection left to the landlord.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: That is not so, because the landlord may recover his rent in the same way as the butcher and baker may recover debts owing to them. Members no doubt will agree that two days' notice to vacate a house is totally inadequate.

Hon. G. W. Miles: We want legislation providing that a landlord must not let a house unless the rent is paid in advance.

Hon. G. Fraser: That can be done without legislation. The landlords can refuse to let a house unless the tenant pays the rent in advance.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I must admit that that would be a wise provision to insert in the Bill, which simply proposes to alter——

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Two days to fourteen.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Yes.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Plus seven, that is 21 days.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: No.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You must remember that the tenant must be seven days in arrears before the landlord can take action.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Many people often get a week behind, and sometimes longer, in their payments. Circumstances may prevent us from paying our accounts when they fall due.

Hon. T. Moore: Some are years behind.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: A man, owing to sickness, may get a week behind with his rent. In such a case it is surely not fair that the landlord should force him out of the premises on two days' notice. The tenant may get the notice on a Saturday and be expected to get out on Monday.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: You try to get a tenant to vacate a house and find out how hard it is!

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I had practically completed my remarks at the tea adjournment. Since then an article in tonight's "Daily News" has come under my notice. If any further argument is needed respecting this Bill, I refer hon. members to the report which is headed: "Rented Homes Scarce." It says, "There is an acute shortage of lower to medium-priced rented houses in the metropolitan area." Further on it says, "Out of 800 or 900 rented houses on our rent collection books, we have not one to let." That is the statement of Mr. Hodd, manager of Hodd and Cuthbertson, which is, I understand, a large firm of agents in the city. Under the present Act, if a tenant is unfortunate enough to get two days' notice he has no earthly hope of complying with it.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Let him pay his rent.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: The Bill proposes that the period shall be extended to 14 days. Members who appreciate the existing situation will agree that that period is not unreasonable. It is also fair to bear in mind the important fact that, although the tenant is given 14 days' notice to quit and may not get out until that period has expired, the landlord is not deprived of his common law right to recover the rent for that period. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. V. Piesse, debate adjourned.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West [7.33] in moving the second reading said: This is an important measure, and at the outset I ask that very earnest consideration be given to it by members. It proposes to amend certain sections of the Workers' Compensation Act, and the proposals may be briefly summarised as follows:

(a) To include within the definition of "worker" under the Act persons whose earnings are up to £600 per year;

(b) to alter the definition of the term "worker" in respect to its application to sub-contractors;

(c) to alter the present method of assessing the average weekly earnings of a worker who has been injured;

(d) to establish a travelling and away-from-home allowance on a fairer basis than at present;

(e) to increase the daily allowance to hospitals within the South-West land division, and in the goldfields and the North-West;

(f) to set up a medical register committee for a term of three years with power to investigate medical treatment received by injured workers and the charges made for such treatment.

The first proposal aims to amend the definition of the term "worker" by including within its scope all persons whose wages or salary does not exceed £600 a year. The existing definition excludes all persons whose remuneration exceeds £400 a year. The present maximum of £400 a year was placed in the Act in 1920, the amount prior to that having been £300 a year. There was in 1920 no basic wage declaration, such as we understand it today. A general ruling minimum rate for labourers of £3 6s. a week applied in 1919 and a similar rate of £3 18s. a week in 1920. The basic wage rate today is £4 10s. 5d. in the metropolitan area, £4 10s. 10d. in the South-West land Division, and £5 5s. 7d. in the goldfields districts and the North-West.

The higher rates of wages and salaries operating today, as compared with 1919 and 1920, have had the effect of placing many workers outside of the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act. The cost of living increases brought about as a result of the war have had the effect of raising wages and salaries, thus causing many workers, especially on the goldfields and in the North-West, to be deprived of compulsory legal cover against accident. The cost of living is likely to increase further as the war continues, with the inevitable result that more and more workers now covered by the Act will lose the benefit of its protection. Many workers here are now engaged in the production of munitions and other war requirements. Most of those men are skilled or semi-skilled and receive reasonably high wages.

Hon. J. Cornell: Do any get £12 a week?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Cases occur on the goldfields, through shortage of special men, where they earn more than £12 a week.

Hon. J. Cornell: They are contractors.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, they are not contractors, but workers called upon to do double work.

Hon. G. Fraser: Some workers earn that amount in the metropolitan area, too, on munitions work.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Not too many.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is not uncommon on the goldfields at the present time. If they did not carry out the job, it would occasion a serious hindrance to the particular work upon which they are engaged. It is not done by design, but to carry the job through that they work these long hours and consequently earn enough to be excluded from the Act. That occurs repeatedly. In addition, they are called upon to work overtime on many occasions. Their rate of wage, plus overtime payments, place some of them outside the provisions of the Act. As the production of munitions and other war requirements increases in this State, more and more workers will receive remuneration beyond £400 a year and will be automatically placed outside the scope of the Act.

The amendment to alter the definition of "worker" by bringing under the provisions of the Act every person whose remuneration does not exceed £600 a year aims to restore the protection of the Act to those who have already lost that protection because of increases in wage and salary rates. It also aims to secure a continuation of that protection to other workers likely to be deprived of it by future increases in wage and salary rates and overtime earnings. It is not denied that the amendment in question will have the effect of bringing a number of new wage and salary earners under the provisions of the Act. That number is not likely to be large and in every instance is likely to be a very good risk for those providing the necessary insurance cover. While the amendment will bring a fair number of men under the Act, the cost will be comparatively low because of the nature of the work upon which they are engaged. It will be a good move for the insurance companies.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Not only for the insurance companies but for the employees.

Hon. J. Cornell: What is the definition of "worker" under the Commonwealth Workers' Compensation Act?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I cannot say offhand; I could tell the hon. member later. It will be agreed that persons whose remuneration is between £400 and £600 a year are occupying positions where the risk of accident is not great. It will not be a serious burden on industry and should therefore be welcomed both by the employers and the men concerned.

The Bill also proposes to alter the definition of the term "worker" in respect of its application to sub-contractors. The Act now includes sub-contractors in the timber industry within the definition of the term "worker." Such sub-contractors are already covered by the provisions of the Act. It is considered that sub-contractors in every other industry are entitled to be given the protection of the Act, and the Bill aims to include all sub-contractors in other industries. Most members realise that considerably more sub-contracting is now done by individuals than when the Act was first passed years ago. Men who carry out subcontracts without labour are entitled to the protection of the Act.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Farmers would be responsible for shearing contractors.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, a shearing contractor employs labour.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: The work is carried out under a sub-contract.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am advised it will not affect a sub-contractor who employs labour. The amendment does not cover a contractor who carries out work under contract. It will affect only those sub-contractors who do not employ labour in the carrying out of work for contractors.

The Bill contains an amendment to the method now used in assessing the average weekly earnings of an injured worker. The present practice is to pay half the average weekly earnings during the previous twelve months, or any lesser period during which the worker has been in the employment of the same employer. In addition, a child allowance of 7s. 6d. per week is provided for each child under the age of 16 years, but the total weekly payment cannot exceed £3 10s. a week in any case. The new method, as outlined in the Bill, will allow a weekly payment of half the wages received by the worker in the week immediately preceding the accident, or half his average weekly earnings during the previous twelve months, or for any lesser period during

which he has been in the employment of the same employer, with a provision that the larger of those two sums shall be paid. A child allowance of 7s. 6d. a week for each dependent child is to be paid in addition to such compensation. The total weekly payment will continue to be £3 10s. a week.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is what it is today.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This particular amendment is desired because of the difficulty that has often been met in the past in correctly assessing the weekly compensation payments due to certain classes of workers. The existing method of assessing the weekly payment often operates unfairly in respect to workers who have been employed continually, but not continuously, by the one employer, as their breaks in service during any one year have had the effect of reducing the amount of weekly compensation they were legally entitled to when they suffered injury. The amendment will greatly simplify the method of assessing the amount of weekly compensation due to workers, and will protect the interests of workers not continuously employed. In the past many men, especially in Fremantle and parts of Perth, did a lot of casual work, and were placed at a very serious disadvantage.

Another proposal in the Bill seeks to establish the granting of travelling and away-from-home allowances on a fairer basis. At present, an injured worker has no legal claim upon such allowances unless he is called upon to travel by the employer, the employer's agent or the employer's doctor. In the majority of centres in country districts there is only one doctor and he immediately becomes the worker's doctor when an accident occurs. Frequently the worker's doctor finds it necessary to send the injured man to a bigger country town or to the city so that he may receive more expert medical treatment and more adequate hospital accommodation. The proposal is to allow travelling and away-from-home allowances to any injured worker called upon to travel by his own doctor. The Bill also aims to make such allowances available to injured workers in districts where no doctors are available, provided such workers are able to prove it was necessary for them to travel from the place where they were injured to some other place.

Members will appreciate that even fewer doctors will be available as the war continues. At present the shortage is acute not only in the rural districts but in the metropolitan area. Several of the smaller country centres are even now without doctors. It is thought only fair that a worker who is not able to consult a doctor at the place where he is injured should be eligible to claim travelling and away-from-home allowances if he is able to prove it was necessary for him to travel to a doctor or hospital for the purpose of receiving treatment in connection with an injury suffered by him during his employment.

On behalf of country hospitals representations have been made over a fairly long period for the purpose of having increased payments made available to hospitals in connection with patients provided for under the Workers' Compensation Act. The Act at present allows the payment of 10s. 6d. per day to hospitals throughout the State. The Bill proposes to continue the existing allowance to all hospitals within a radius of 15 miles of the General Post Office, to increase the daily allowance to 12s. 6d. for hospitals within the South-West land division and to 15s. for hospitals on the goldfields and in the North-West. The higher payments will apply only for the first 30 days during which an injured worker remains in hospital for treatment. The existing allowance of 10s. 6d. a day will apply after the first 30 days.

The only other important proposal in the Bill is one which seeks to set up a medical register committee, and this amendment is regarded by the Government as of the greatest possible importance. It is well known that the cost of workers' compensation in Western Australia had been considerably increased because of medical charges. There is good reason to believe that the charges levied by some of the doctors have been exorbitant. It could be freely admitted that the majority of doctors have been reasonable in their treatment of injured workers and in the fees charged for such treatment. On the other hand, instances are known of a number of doctors whose treatment of workers was very much open to doubt on more than one score and whose charges for such treatment were abnormally high. No good reason exists why action should not be taken to set up a system that would enable the treatment given to workers by doctors and the charges made for such treatment, to be examined and decided upon at any time.

Many examples could be cited—doubtless members know of many themselves—to illustrate the necessity for setting up an authority with power to investigate the treatment received by workers and the charges imposed for such treatment. In one particular case an injured worker was under treatment for a period of slightly over 12 months. During that time the worker had 100 consultations with his doctor, who gave him 30 diathermy treatments. The total result was that the worker was interviewed by the doctor on 130 occasions in a period of slightly over 12 months. It is considered by those well qualified to judge that the man could have been very well cared for if he had been seen by the doctor on an average of once a fortnight. Certain doctors have immediately issued final medical certificates to workers when those workers have been called upon to report for examination by another doctor. A worker recently suffered a very slight abrasion to one of his cheeks. A certain doctor gave the man a certificate to indicate that he would be totally unfit for work for a period of at least a week. When arrangements were made for the worker to see another doctor, his own medical adviser immediately issued a certificate certifying that the man was fit to resume work. Many cases of doctors having kept injured workers in hospitals for periods that were far longer than was necessary could be quoted. In addition, the unnecessary use of X-ray treatment in connection with injured workers appears to have been increasing at a very great rate.

Hon. J. Cornell: Much of that has been going on for over 15 years.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is never too late to mend, and that does not furnish any excuse. Attempts have been made to cope with the problem in various ways, and the step contemplated in the Bill is the one the Government considers will deal with it effectively. There is no intention to handicap doctors in their efforts to look after the interests of their patients, but everyone knows that in some instances abuses of the Act have amounted almost to a scandal.

Hon. J. Cornell: But those concerned number only a few.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is so, but their actions have meant increased premiums and added to the expense involved. The case for the setting up of a special committee to investigate the treatment of injured workers by doctors and the charges made in connection therewith, does not rest alone on the over-treatment of workers. If it did, the case might not be sufficiently strong because it could be argued that it is far better to have a worker over-treated than under-treated, from a medical point of view. The second part of the case in favour of supervision rests upon the under-treatment and the improper treatment of injured workers by doctors. There have been many instances of careless treatment of workers and not a few of insufficient and unskilled treatment. Several cases could be quoted to show that certain doctors have sent injured workers to the city or some other place for further treatment as soon as the maximum amount of £100 allowed for medical and hospital expenses has been spent. Some doctors in the metropolitan area have effected rapid cures in the treatment of injured workmen when the £100 thus allowed is almost or completely expended.

It is most essential, particularly in the interests of injured workers, that every case of under-treatment, careless treatment or unskilled treatment should be thoroughly investigated and the doctor responsible compelled to submit himself to the judgment of some competent authority. The setting up of the proposed authority is certain to have an extremely good disciplinary effect upon those members of the medical profession who regard the Workers' Compensation Act as a piece of legislation that provides them with easy money.

Hon. J. Cornell: Only up to £100—then they knock off.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The medical register committee, as provided for in the Bill, will consist of five members to be appointed by the Governor in Council. One is to be a judge of the Supreme Court or magistrate of a local court, who will be chairman of the committee. The Government will appoint four other members, two of whom shall be medical practitioners registered under the Medical Act of 1894. The members of the committee are to be appointed for a period of three years. The committee will be given power to keep a register which will contain the names of all medical practitioners registered under the Medical Act of 1894. Registration at the commencement will be automatic. There-

fore, all medical practitioners now in the State will be registered. Only doctors whose names appear in the register will be entitled to treat injured workers covered by the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act.

The committee will have the right to inquire into the conduct of any doctor with respect to his treatment of any worker, and will also have power to make inquiries in connection with any expenses or fees charged for advice or treatment given to any injured worker. The Bill aims to give the committee power to remove the name of any doctor from the register whenever the committee, or a majority of its members, considers such drastic action is justified. Such deregistration will mean that the doctor concerned will not be able to treat any injured worker who is covered by the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act. If it is thought such action is not justified but a lesser punishment is needed, the committee will have power to impose a fine or other penalty upon a doctor in lieu of the major punishment of deregistration. A deregistered doctor will be entitled in a case of emergency to attend and treat an injured worker, provided the services of a registered doctor are not available. The committee may at any time re-register a deregistered doctor.

It may be thought by some that the powers proposed to be given to the suggested committee are rather drastic, but it has to be remembered that that body will be called upon to deal with a difficult problem, namely, the exploitation of the Workers' Compensation Act by a small but increasing number of doctors in this State. The activities of the committee will be financed by the Government as required during each year. As soon as possible after the close of each year, the total cost will be calculated and the Government will then recoup itself for all expenditure incurred by calling upon the approved insurance offices to meet that expenditure. Each insurance company will be liable to pay its share in proportion to the amount received during the year as premiums for workers' compensation insurance. It is thought that no reasonable objection can be raised to that procedure.

Hon. H. Seddon: Could not the Government take the required money out of the £25,000 in the fund?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I regard this proposal as quite fair.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: What about the workers who insure themselves in their own companies?

The HONORARY MINISTER: They can please themselves.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: They secure protection from their own companies.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The proposal is important. It is necessary because of the exploitation that has gone on by a few doctors. I think members generally will agree that the proposals embodied in the Bill are fair and reasonable. The majority of doctors act honourably and will be protected. They will have no reason to fear the appointment of the committee.

I have placed before members a brief explanation of the proposals embodied in the Bill, and I trust the earnest endeavour of the Government to remedy what may be regarded as apparent weaknesses in the existing legislation will be recognised, and that members will give their whole-hearted approval to the Bill. I move —

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. L. B. Bolton, debate adjourned.

BILL—ABATTOIRS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. V. Hamersley in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 6:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on Clause 2, which had been recommitted for further consideration.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 of paragraph (C2) after the word "carcases" the words "provided that the fifth paragraph shall not apply to the goldfields district." be inserted.

The Abattoirs Act becomes operative in certain districts by proclamation. There are three proclaimed districts—the metropolitan district, the Katanning road board district, and the goldfields district. The argument

has been used that the provision in the Bill is for the protection of the consumer and out of consideration for the producer. Neither of those aspects has much bearing on the Kalgoorlie and Boulder districts, where the goldfields abattoirs operate. I assert that 75 per cent. of the meat killed at the local abattoirs and eaten in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder district comes from the East. During last year and the year before wholesale butchers on the goldfields were forced to secure from Alice Springs a reasonable quality of beef for consumption on the eastern goldfields. By no stretch of imagination can it be maintained that those wholesale butchers would go that distance from their markets to buy rubbish.

Hon. A. Thomson: But that was in an exceptional year.

Hon. J. CORNELL: No. Year in, year out, 60 per cent. of the beef consumed in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder district comes from the East.

Hon. A. Thomson: I mean the reference to Alice Springs.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The wholesale butchers go as far as Alice Springs; and a considerable proportion of the mutton comes from north of Kalgoorlie, and some from the Esperance district. Again, some comes from the eastern wheat belt, going direct to Kalgoorlie, where there is no stock market. The wholesale butchers who go westward from Kalgoorlie and Boulder for their mutton buy largely direct from the producer. When they are forced to come to the metropolitan area they are not going to buy rubbish at the Midland Junction saleyards and rail it 360 miles to the eastern goldfields to be slaughtered. Therefore the main argument, as to protection of consumers, falls to the ground. All things considered, no place in Australia eats better beef and mutton than that supplied to Kalgoorlie and Boulder consumers. The Esperance mallee area could supply four or five times as much mutton as it does. I fail to see why, in all the circumstances, the goldfielders should be brought within the purview of the measure, or why they should be subjected to an additional charge. In spite of what has been said, there will be an additional charge. Goldfields butchers, year in, year out, obtain 60 per cent. of their mutton from east of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, and every bullock they bring from beyond the South Australian border has ridiculous expense placed upon it on account of pleura. The goldfields butcher does not go beyond the Western Australian border for beef because he likes doing so. He goes there because beef is not offered elsewhere. There is a race at Kalgoorlie by which all the cattle transported from the Eastern States have to be rushed out from the trucks to the abattoirs, fed and maintained there.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I consider that nothing the hon. member has said would justify the Committee in excluding the goldfields abattoirs district from the operation of the measure. The Bill merely provides power to gazette regulations for the purpose of grading stock slaughtered in Government abattoirs in an abattoir district. More particularly in view of the fact that this is the standard practice in other countries, it seems strange that we should find many members opposed to the provisions of the Bill. If all that Mr. Cornell has said is correct, then the people for whom he is speaking—apparently the master butchers—have nothing to be afraid of; for if the grading is put into operation there will be proof positive that the stock slaughtered in those abattoirs is first-class in every respect. The producers, and especially the Western Australian producers, appear to have quite a lot to gain from the operation of the Bill if put into effect at Kalgoorlie and Boulder.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: In what way?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Because butchers will be prepared to pay better prices for stock which they know will be branded as first-class, or whatever the quality may be.

Hon. L. Craig: They know that now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The consumer will have the satisfaction of knowing that he is getting what he has asked for. The Bill empowers the gazetting of regulations for the purpose of grading stock. It has already been pointed out that that is an inexpensive and quite simple process, and one which will give adequate protection to consumers, because the grading applies to a certain branding which makes it patent to every purchaser that the meat he buys is of the particular type or quality that he asked for.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: How many brands would there be on a carcase so that every piece a purchaser bought would show that he was getting the right article?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If it happens to be a sheep, I understand two or three brands are put on the carcase. A roller brand runs the full length, and when the purchaser gets a chop from that carcase there will be a brand shown on that chop. Notwithstanding the statements made by some members about seeing all the colours of the rainbow in a butcher's shop, it is not essential that there should be more than one colour. All brands could be of the same colour and yet be clear and distinct and quite simple to apply to a carcase.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Where does that apply?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In almost every country in the world. We are asking for the right to grade stock in Government abattoirs, yet members object! Wholesale butchers have nothing to fear; the producers will welcome this measure, and it will give protection to the consumers.

Hon. A. THOMSON: In regard to the argument advanced by Mr. Cornell, the butchers in that particular portion of the State have nothing to fear from the standpoint of quality. I judge that by the statement made by the hon. member who said that all that was purchased was prime and that there was no rubbish at all.

Hon. J. Cornell: It does not pay them to buy rubbish if they can get good stuff.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I took the opportunity of discussing this matter with the representative of the Western Australian meat industry on the Australian Meat Board and this is the statement he has furnished to me—

1. The grading and branding of carcases is already operating in Queensland for the local trade in beef, mutton and lamb.
2. It has been in existence in Australia for the export trade for many years for both quality and weight.
3. Lambs would be branded with a roller brand down the spinal column, and consumers would know they were getting the quality desired.
4. In regard to beef graded for quality the buyer would know, if requiring prime meat, that Government officers had certified the same.
5. It would help the Price Fixing Commissioner who has complained that low grade meat has been sold as best quality meat.
6. The Minister for Commerce has announced his intention to bring down regulations to make branding of lambs compulsory.

That should meet the wishes of Mr. Craig. I hope he will be convinced. All that this measure proposes is to enable the Government to introduce regulations similar to those in existence in other parts of the Commonwealth. I had the privilege of visiting the meat market in London many years ago and there the various carcases were branded, as first, second or third class. I cannot see why there should be so much objection to these regulations operating on the goldfields. Surely the consumers there are just as much entitled to protection as are those in the metropolitan area! I have heard of no objection to this from those in the meat industry. If we discover that the regulations are detrimental to the primary producers, we can amend them. I understand it is the intention to indicate to the public that if they purchase certain types of meat in a butcher's shop they will receive what they ask for. I do not suggest that every chop will be branded but there will be a certain amount of policing of the Act, and we can safely leave it to the Health Department or to the Commissioner to see that inferior meat is not sold as prime.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Mr. Thomson said he hoped that I would be convinced. I am not convinced one tiny bit.

Hon. A. Thomson: I did not expect you would be.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I have been trying to find out exactly what it is proposed to brand, but that has not been made clear. I do not know if this is correct but I understand it is proposed to brand three types—lambs, hoggets and other sheep.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Bill says all meat.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I understand it is proposed to deal with those types to begin with. The point is that if lamb is to be branded as lamb and we leave it at that, we shall play into the hands of certain butchers. Lamb varies from 4d. to 7d. a pound. All good lamb—40 lb. lamb for export—is today worth about 6d. a pound. If it goes 42 lbs. of the same quality, it is down about 2d. a pound and is not allowed to be sold for export but must be disposed of on the local market, although it is still a prime lamb, just as prime as the 40 lb. lamb. It is going to be marked as choice lamb and will be sold at 2d. a pound less than a 36 lb. lamb. To all intents and purposes these lambs, I take it, will be branded with the same mark. Certain breeds of lamb bring

higher prices than others. The South Down lamb ex a crossbred ewe is called a prime Down lamb, and is the highest priced for export. It also brings more money in the local market. Another breed of sheep—a longer one, not so chubby, with a smaller leg, like the Border Leicester—although of prime quality, is not of the same class. Its leg weighs less; it is thinner and longer, and can be bought for less in the market. That will be branded with the same mark. So one man will buy prime Down lamb, another export reject prime lamb, and another will buy a different lamb of another breed. These various kinds bring different prices in the local market the same as in the export market, but they will all be marked with the same brand, so the butcher who buys the 4d. a pound lamb will get the same price as the man who buys the 6½d. a pound product, unless the buyer has the astuteness to say, "I like the look of this better than that."

Take the case of hogget meat. Hogget is a year to a year-and-a-half old. It is not lamb but the best quality mutton. Now it is proposed to put a different mark on that from the mark placed on a sheep which is a year older. There might be an inferior hogget—one that is good but not prime, not as fat as it might be. Then there might be a wether fed on good pastures and much better meat than the hogget. They would have different marks indicating that the inferior meat was superior to the better quality meat. I do not know how it is going to work, particularly on the goldfields where the abattoir area is small and killed meat can come in from outside their area in any quantity. I am not objecting to this because I am stubborn but because I cannot see that any good purpose will be served. We may just have another mass of regulations that will cause confusion. It will help the butcher who is not too careful with his prices and will certainly cost the producer more money. The cost of the inspectors employed will be reflected in the price paid for the sheep. I have yet to be convinced that the provision will achieve any good.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Mr. Craig seems to be fighting very hard. I discussed this matter with my brother, Mr. G. A. W. Piesse, who has been president of the Royal Agricultural Society. He told me that meat was graded at the Smithfield market in England. The system is also in operation in Queensland. I sincerely hope that members will reject the amendment.

Hon. SIR HAL COLEBATCH: I thank the Minister for having lent me statements showing how the branding is done. As I read it, in America there is no compulsion upon the butcher to have his meat graded. The meat is branded if the butcher considers that the branding will be good for his business—that is, if his customers want it.

The Chief Secretary: Branding is compulsory in most places.

Hon. SIR HAL COLEBATCH: According to this document, it is not. It merely shows that the practice is growing popular. This is not a matter on which I feel strongly, but I think something can be said for the development of a process such as this.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The advocates of examination contend somewhat hysterically that this is an essential reform. They speak as though it were going to benefit every meat consumer in the State. As a matter of fact, more than half the meat consumers of the State will derive no benefit at all. Why apply the branding system to a community 400 miles from the coast, 90 per cent. of whose meat is purchased by treaty between the wholesale butcher and the retailer? Why say that on the goldfields meat has to be graded when all the facts indicate that the goldfields people are securing the best meat obtainable, even if it has to come from South Australia? I hope the Committee will agree to grant exemption to the goldfields.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I support the amendment. The whole difference is that in Canada, America, London and Queensland the system is in operation before the butcher buys the meat. In this State, the inspection takes place after the butcher buys the meat. The only effect that the measure will have will be to increase the costs of the producer.

Hon. W. R. HALL: I want to refer to the quality of the cattle which comes to the goldfields from the Eastern States. That meat should be graded. Some pretty rough stuff has come over the trans-Australian line, and I have helped to consume the meat. I am sure that it was not first quality. There appears to be only one quality and the top price has to be paid. I do not see why a health inspector should not undertake inspection of the meat. More often than not, goldfields residents who pay the price for lamb get mutton instead, and old mutton at that. One seldom gets lamb in a restaurant on the goldfields.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is not the fault of the butcher but of the restaurant-keeper.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Butchers have a lot to do with it.

Hon. J. Cornell: You cannot expect spring lamb for 1s. 6d.

Hon. W. R. HALL: Does the hon. member get it?

Hon. J. Cornell: No.

Hon. W. R. HALL: That is the point. I shall vote against the amendment. People on the goldfields, as well as those elsewhere, are entitled to have their meat graded.

Hon. T. MOORE: I am surprised at the argument put forward by Mr. Craig, who is usually logical, but he seems determined to see no good at all in the Bill. Most of the foods that we buy are labelled. Jams, for instance, are branded, and one knows that he will get the variety mentioned on the label.

Hon. L. Craig: I hope so!

Hon. T. MOORE: In the Eastern States I understand butter is graded.

Hon. L. Craig: Some of it is graded here.

Hon. T. MOORE: It would be better if all our butter were graded. I have often heard it said at home, when the Sunday joint has been produced, "I bought this for lamb, but whether it is lamb or not I do not know." People are entitled to know what they are buying; they should not be sold mutton for lamb. Today I saw some joints hanging up in shops in Perth. If the roller which has been mentioned had been run down the carcases, it could be seen whether or not they were lamb or mutton. The measure should apply also to the goldfields. The housewives in Kalgoorlie will see some merit in the Bill, even if Mr. Craig cannot.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Like my colleague, Sir Hal Colebatch, I had an opportunity to peruse the pamphlet he referred to and ascertain the conditions regarding the branding and grading of stock in other countries. The pamphlet had entirely the opposite effect on me. Prior to reading it I was opposed to the measure, but it will be remembered that I reversed my vote the other night in Committee, and that was the reason. I am convinced that the branding and grading of carcases under these conditions will ultimately benefit the grower.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: It has been pointed out that in other countries branding is usually done after the stock is slaughtered. Sir Hal Colebatch mentioned that all the meat is not graded. I suggest that the meat not graded is probably of inferior quality; anybody desiring to obtain the best quality will usually buy the branded meat. That applies to all classes of goods. I have observed quite a lot of butchers operate at Midland Junction. Very few people, in my opinion, can tell at the first glance whether lamb is first, second or third class; but my experience has been that the best quality meat will command the highest price. For the reason that I think the measure will be beneficial to the grower, I shall vote against the amendment.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Mr. Moore said that all foodstuffs should be branded. Perhaps that should apply to fish, because on going along Barrack-street or Murray-street it is sometimes advisable to wear a gas mask when passing the fish shops. If meat ought to be branded, then fish also should be branded.

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

Ayes	6
Noes	13
Majority against	7

AYES.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. F. R. Welsh (*Teller.*)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	(*Teller.*)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. H. Tuckey	Hon. H. L. Roche

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Bill again reported without amendment and the further report adopted.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [9.0]: This amending Bill is quite a simple measure and I do not raise any objection to it. One matter that should be considered before the Bill is finally passed refers to Section 383 of the principal Act, because an anomaly exists respecting the fixing of the annual rateable value of land, which is uninproved and unoccupied, and which is taken at not less than 10 per centum on the capital value. My attention was drawn to that anomaly today. It should not be mandatory that the charge should be 10 per cent. The Commonwealth Savings Bank interest charges have been reduced and the charge on the value of land in municipalities should be on similar lines to that applied in road districts. I have not yet had an opportunity to investigate the position, but it might be considered. The measure has several good points. It provides that land in municipalities may be rated on the unimproved value, which is long overdue. A clause enables an old-age pensioner to appeal, and it seems only right that that provision should be made. Sometimes a man receives the old-age pension and is later fortunate enough to receive a legacy. He then becomes immediately liable for the payment of rates on a higher scale than he really should pay. If he had been paying rates under normal conditions he would be able to appeal. I have no desire to hold up the business of the House, but I would like the section I have quoted amended in conformity with the Road Districts Act. I support the second reading of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—GOVERNMENT STOCK SALEYARDS.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The definition of "saleyards" at the present time is "a place belonging to the Crown," and those words cover all Government land and reserves. Take the Subiaco yards: A very progressive business is carried on at those yards in dealing with horses and dairy cattle. It is not the intention of the Government that they should come under the control of this definition, although it includes them. I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of the definition of "saleyard" the words "belonging to" be struck out and the words "conducted by" inserted in lieu.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I raise no objection to the amendment. Even if the Bill were not so amended, it would be unreasonable to assume the Act would be construed in the manner suggested by Mr. Baxter. His amendment, however, does bring the definition into line with Clause 6, where the same words are used.

Amendment put and passed; the clause,

Clauses 4 to 9—agreed to.

Clause 4 to 9—agreed to.

Clause 10: The Governor may prohibit sales of stock elsewhere than in a saleyard:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This clause is very badly drafted. The Governor, by Order in Council, may do certain things. Clause 10 prohibits the sale of stock elsewhere than in a saleyard. Much business in the sale of stock is done in offices. All the stock agents sell stud stock and store stock in their offices. If Clause 10 is allowed to remain, they would be in a very dangerous position. It may be necessary to have an Order in Council and that could be done by amending Clause 11 which contains a penalty, but only for a breach of regulations under this Act. Clause 10 at the present time does not permit of private sales outside of a saleyard.

Hon. F. R. Welsh: Does it include sales by auction?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: They would come in as well.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This is a most important clause. It gives protection to the Government saleyards established in various places. There is no intention to interfere with existing practice, nor to interfere with the saleyards at Subiaco or with the sale of stock by stock agents in their offices and various other places. The wording of this particular clause could,

however, be interpreted to mean interference along the lines suggested. To meet the objection raised I move an amendment—

That in line 6 of Subclause 1 the words "elsewhere than" be struck out and after the word "in" the words "any saleyard other than" be inserted.

That would make it clear that there is no intention to interfere with present practice in any shape or form. If that amendment is passed, it will be necessary to amend Subclause 2 in the same way.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That is quite satisfactory.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I doubt if that amendment will overcome the position regarding auctions. If an auctioneer sold stock in a saleyard, would he be covered by this provision?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Existing stockyards in the metropolitan area where stock is sold at present will not be affected.

Hon. H. Seddon: I am afraid they will be.

Hon. L. Craig: I am not sure about the position.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is no desire to rush this matter through. I suggest that the Committee agree to the amendment and recommit the Bill should it be considered unsatisfactory.

Hon. L. Craig: I am satisfied with that arrangement.

Amendment put and passed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause 2 the words "elsewhere than" be struck out and after the word "in" in the same line the words "any saleyard other than" be inserted.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I may be wrong, but I am afraid this will mean that the Governor may, by an Order in Council, prohibit the sale of stock in saleyards other than Government saleyards. I think it is dangerous.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I suggest the hon. member allow the amendment to pass and examine the position later on. He can then take action if he deems it necessary.

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

Clause 11, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—CITY OF PERTH SCHEME FOR SUPERANNUATION (AMENDMENTS AUTHORISATION).

Second Reading.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [9.21] in moving the second reading said: In placing before members the Bill which aims at amending the City of Perth scheme for superannuation in order to provide benefits for the widows of former employees of the City Council, I should perhaps briefly trace the steps leading to the necessity for the legislation. As far back as 1928 a Bill was introduced in another place with the object of creating a scheme for the establishment of a fund for those employed by the Perth City Council. The Bill was eventually withdrawn and the matter remained in abeyance until 1934, when another Bill was introduced having as its object the payment of superannuation to all employees of the Perth City Council including members of the salaried staff, officers and wages employees. That measure reached the second reading stage and was agreed to. It was referred to a select committee and afterwards became law with many, if not all, of the amendments suggested by the select committee.

The 1928 measure did not become law, not only because it did not include wages employees but possibly because the public mind was not so well informed then as it is today about the necessity for superannuation. As the result of the legislation passed in 1934 the Perth City Council, after having fulfilled all the requirements outlined in the measure, established in 1937 a scheme of superannuation that has been in operation for four years and has survived all actuarial tests. The 1934 Act did not provide superannuation for widows of City Council employees who had been on either the salaried or wages staff. The object of the amending legislation now before the House is to extend the benefit to widows of former employees of the Perth City Council. The provisions of the parent Act are extended to widows on the basis of their receiving half the pension or allowance to which their husbands were or would have been entitled had they lived. The effect will be that if an employee of the City Council dies before becoming eligible for superannuation his widow will be entitled to a pension on the basis I have indicated.

Furthermore, should the employee die after becoming entitled to superannuation, and have been in receipt of payments under the scheme, then his widow will be entitled to a continuation of superannuation payments on the basis indicated in the Bill. Provision is also made for the payment of such superannuation to her during the period of widowhood, but should she remarry the allowance will cease.

The Bill contains a provision which will allow employees to exercise their option with regard to widows' superannuation. Any male employee who is contributing to the present scheme is to be given the option of extending such contributions to include benefits for his widow. Should the employee not desire to take advantage of this provision, if the Bill now before the House is passed, he must indicate his refusal by serving a written notice on the board within one month after the passing of the legislation. The Bill also provides that any contributor who may be serving with His Majesty's forces will be required to give notice of his intention within three months of his return to Western Australia. Each male person joining the City Council staff in future will be required to contribute for both his own and his widow's benefit. The contributions of female employees will remain as at present, but male employees who desire to participate in the widows' benefit section of the scheme will naturally be required to contribute at an increased rate, as outlined in the Bill. That provision is necessary because, from an actuarial point of view, the scheme is being extended to include widows and that makes it essential that contributions by members participating in the scheme shall be increased. The Bill embodies nothing new in the proposal to extend superannuation benefits to widows.

The Commonwealth Superannuation Act of 1922-37 makes provision in Section 31 for the payment of a pension to a widow and her children on the death of a contributor. There is also State legislation dealing with widows. The Superannuation and Family Benefits Act of 1938 provides in Section 54 for the payment of a pension to the widow of a qualified contributor. The Bill now before the House seeks to extend that privilege to widows of former City Council employees who were qualified contributors. When the select committee inquired into various phases of the superannuation scheme for the employees of the Perth City Council, some doubt was expressed by a leading witness as to the solvency of a scheme that would include the wages staff. That was the rock on which the original superannuation measure perished. Experience over a period of four years has proved that witness's view was somewhat pessimistic. Beyond all shadow of doubt the scheme is solvent, despite the fact that it embraces the wages section of the City Council's employees.

I have a copy of the fourth annual report of the Perth City Council Superannuation Fund for the year ended the 30th June 1941. Perhaps members will be aided in their consideration of the Bill if I quote one or two paragraphs with a view to proving my contention that the council's superannuation fund is solvent, despite the fact that it covers the wages staff.

The item of expenditure "payment under Clause 8 (1) superannuation allowances" amounted to £659 18s. 11d., as compared with £240 8s. 9d. for the previous year. As at the 30th June last, there were seventeen officers and employees receiving superannuation allowances under the provisions of the fund, and the total annual liability for pensions of these members amounts to £958. The average individual pension being paid at the 30th June amounted to £56 per annum.

The total expenditure including pensions and all refunds of contributions amounted to £1,246 16s. 10d., whilst the total interest earned on investments was £1,333 6s. 5d., being an excess of interest income over all outgoings of £86 9s. 7d.

During the year the board received its first application for a superannuation allowance under Clause 7 (1) of the scheme—permanent ill-health. After careful consideration, and production of the required medical certificates, the board granted the applicant's request.

The accumulated funds (as shown in the balance sheet) amount to £37,719 18s. 9d. This sum is invested in Commonwealth bonds £18,417 19s. 6d., municipal debentures £16,010 19s. 7d., road board debentures £2,043 9s. 7d., and cash at Commonwealth Savings Bank £908 8s. 9d. The average rate of interest earned on all investments during the year was £4 0s. 8d. per cent., compared with £3 19s. 2d. per cent. last year and £3 17s. 10d. per cent. for the previous year.

During the year nine officers (two from the head office, and seven from the Electricity and Gas Department) retired and were placed on pensions, and as previously stated one wages employee was granted a pension on account of permanent ill-health, making the total number drawing pensions at the 30th June last, 17, as compared with seven at the same date last year.

Now I come to the table in the report showing the number of men in receipt of superannuation. The number of pensioners at the 1st July, 1940, was three from the head office and four from the Electricity and Gas Department, a total of seven, and pensions were granted during the year to three from the head office and seven from the Electricity and Gas Department, a total of ten—making seventeen in all. The total number of members in the fund at the 30th June last was 195 officers and 265 wages employees. Thus there is a preponderance of officers over wages employees receiving pensions.

The Bill, which contains two schedules, is not as formidable as it may look. The First Schedule is simply a replica of the scheme now in existence, while the Second Schedule is largely a replica of the first, except that it shows in distinctive type the amendments made to the scheme. I direct members' attention to page 11 of the Bill, where they will find certain portions of the Second Schedule in black type, indicating the proposed amendments. The showing of amendments in this way is an innovation that might well be followed in other Bills. The distinctive type enables one to grasp immediately the salient points of intended legislation. The extension of the scheme of superannuation to widows will necessarily mean an increase of contributions; but, as I have pointed out, the scale has been actuarially examined and pronounced sound. Some members may desire information as to the additional cost this will mean to the Perth City Council. It will be noted that the contributions by the council for the year ended the 30th June, 1941, amounted to £5,216 5s. 8d., made up of £2,296 3s. 0d. from the head office and £2,920 2s. 8d. from the Electricity and Gas Department. The officers and wages employees contributed £3,916 5s. 8d.

Contributions are on a fifty-fifty basis between the council and the employees; but in addition, at the commencement of the fund, the council undertook to provide a sum of £1,300 per annum for a period of 30 years to compensate employees for the back service up to the date of commencement of the fund. The estimates of additional cost to the council and the employees in the event of the widows' benefits becoming a part of the scheme are £773 for the head office and £1,073 per annum for the Electricity and Gas Department. It is probable, however, that a certain percentage of the present employees will not desire to avail themselves of this added benefit, and the foregoing estimate will then be reduced accordingly. The total estimated additional cost of £1,846 per annum also included the female members of the staff, and as these would not be required to pay any additional contributions the amount would be still further reduced.

The measure contains nothing contentious, and is one that should appeal to every member. I have placed before the House all the information at my disposal. In conclusion I would say that the amendments to the scheme have been most carefully considered, and have been passed by the Perth City Council. I therefore commend the measure to the favourable consideration of the Chamber, and have pleasure in moving—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

House adjourned at 9.37 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 24th September, 1941.

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

QUESTION—DEFENCE.

Midland Junction Workshops.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Railways: Is it correct that all work for the Defence Department performed at the