

Mr. WATTS: I do not think the Minister has fully reviewed the implications of this subparagraph. As I understand the clause, a second mortgage to the Rural and Industries Bank could claim priority, on a sale of property for water rates, over a first mortgage to any other person or institution. If the Commissioners of the Rural and Industries Bank desire to place themselves in that position, then I do not know them. They would not expect to take precedence over an institution which they had allowed to take a mortgage in priority of their own at an enforced sale.

The Premier: They have first mortgages.

Mr. Doney: They are not all first mortgages.

Mr. WATTS: They will soon have some second mortgages if they have not them already.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 91 to 111, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2 p.m. on Tuesday, the 12th November, 1946.

I submit this motion not primarily because of difficulties associated with lighting, but because of those associated with the conduct, by the Controller of this House, of the affairs of his department. I believe, in moving for the sittings to commence at 2 p.m., and anticipating that they will cease at 6 p.m., that it will mean a minimum number of meals to be served here, which will be of great assistance to the Controller.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.52 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 12th November, 1946.

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

QUESTIONS.

COPPER AND SUPER-FERTILISER.

As to Expediting Production.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Chief Secretary:

1, Is the Minister aware of the growing demand for copper and super-fertiliser in the heavier rainfall areas of the State?

2, Is the Minister aware that owing to difficulties with the men engaged in mixing this fertiliser at the works there is some doubt as to whether the copper mixture will be available this season?

3, In view of the growing importance of this fertiliser will the Government intervene in this matter with a view to expediting production of the copper and super-fertiliser?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, Yes, following upon the activity of the Department of Agriculture.

2, Yes.

3, Consideration is being given to means whereby copper may be applied to pastures requiring this element.

COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY SCHEME.

As to Rating, etc., in Great Southern Districts.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Chief Secretary:

1, Will the Minister advise the number of farming, horticultural and pastoral properties in the Pingelly, Narrogin, Wagin and Katanning electorates which will be rated under the Country Areas Water Supply Scheme?

2, The anticipated total annual return from such rating?

3, The number of consumers to be served by this scheme in country towns in the above areas?

4, The anticipated revenue from such town consumers?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

1, Pingelly, 942; Narrogin, 521; Wagin, 848; Katanning, 569.

2, At 5d. per acre—Pingelly, £28,000; Narrogin, £14,000; Wagin, £22,000; Katanning, £17,000.

3, Pingelly electorate, 513 assessments (2,050 people); Narrogin, 875 assessments (3,500 people); Wagin, 500 assessments (2,000 people); Katanning, 750 assessments (3,000 people).

4, Pingelly electorate, £1,540; Narrogin, £2,625; Wagin, £1,500; Katanning, £2,250.

BILLS (5)—THIRD READING.

1, Milk.

Returned to the Assembly with amendments.

2, Traffic Act Amendment (No. 2).

Returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

3, Charitable Collections.

Transmitted to the Assembly.

4, Fisheries Act Amendment.

5, Land Alienation Restriction Act Continuance.

Passed.

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clause 2.

In Committee.

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

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 4:

Hon. W. J. MANN: On behalf of Mr. Seddon, I move an amendment—

That at the end of the clause the following words be added:—"but not a mining lease."

I understand that Mr. Seddon is not quite clear whether a mining lease would be covered under the Bill. In the original Act there is reference to a parcel of land held for any tenure under the Mining Act. It is proposed to repeal that provision and add the words "under the Mining Act, 1904-1937, as a lease or tenement for agricultural or pastoral purposes." I do not know how many types of leases there are under the Mining Act. There may be more than one, and if these words were not added it might so happen that a mining lease would be seriously affected.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What about a pastoral lease and a mining lease, too?

Hon. W. J. MANN: At the moment I am concerned only with this amendment.

The HONORARY MINISTER: There is no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. L. Craig: What about Clause 3?

The CHAIRMAN: The recommittal was for the further consideration of Clause 2 only.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 6th November.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [4.45]: I intend to support this measure, and I cannot understand the opposition to it. The

other day Mr. Baxter made what I thought was a very reactionary speech on this measure, which only seeks to bring into line, under the Factories and Shops Act, those people who are not covered by an award of the Arbitration Court. When members realise that there has been no amendment of this Act since 1920, I think they will agree that it is time it was brought up to date. The Bill does not give to any worker a privilege that has not been obtained by other and more fortunate workers through the Arbitration Court. It seeks only to give those people who are unorganised, and who are working, the same rights and privileges as to both pay and holidays—neither more nor less—as have been granted to other workers by the Arbitration Court. As that is a fair proposition, I intend to support the second reading.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TROT- TING ASSOCIATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 6th November.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [4.47]: I congratulate the Government on having brought down this Bill which, as a number of members have indicated, is an improvement on that originally placed before us. I think the Government has made a very fair attempt to handle what is a difficult question. By and large, I feel we can accept the Bill, and I hope it will become law, but there are one or two provisions that might, with advantage, be amended. Those matters can be dealt with when the Bill is in the Committee stage. They are neither big nor far-reaching. A good deal of ministerial control is provided for in the Bill, and from a number of measures that have been before us lately I think the idea of ministerial control is gaining ground.

There are one or two matters to which I wish to refer. For instance, Clause 16 says that the Minister may establish a country clubs' benefit fund. I assume that the association is being formed to conduct trotting, and that it will be the governing body throughout the State. I can hardly

understand why the Minister should indicate whether or not a country clubs' benefit fund should be formed. This is a matter that could well be left to the association, which will have to bear the burden. There are one or two provisions in the schedule that require explaining. I would like an interpretation of "out-of-pocket expenses." Provision is made that no officer of the association shall be given remuneration or other benefits in money or money's worth, and I agree with that; but I maintain that in the conduct of a large concern of this sort, a little more latitude should be given to a governing officer, whether he be the president or other officer, who may have to extend hospitality, if out-of-pocket expenses can be stretched to cover that outlay. All expenditure, I contend, should be accounted for and should be shown in the balance sheet, and there should be nothing of which the members of the association are not made fully aware. This provision would be inclined to cramp the style of the president, whoever he may be, in the matter of expenses.

Then there is the question of life members. I understand that those who are at present life members will be included in this measure. I am glad of that, but the matter has not been made quite clear. I understand there are two life members at present, both of whom are employed by the association, one of them being the general secretary. It is laid down elsewhere in the Bill that no person shall remain an employee of the association and be a member of the committee. What is that man going to do? Is he to resign his membership or will it be made clear in the Bill that he will be in a position to carry on? These matters should be clarified in Committee, so that there will be no trouble or ambiguity in future. I support the second reading.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [4.53]: I am surprised that there should have been so few speakers on the Bill. Further, the galleries were crowded with spectators when the first trotting Bill was introduced, and now we have a measure apparently acceptable to everyone. However, I am pleased that this Bill is not creating the intense interest the previous measure did. It seems to be a straightforward piece of legislation,

as it should be. The whole show will be run by members of the association, and I am glad to see provision to that end.

I have very little criticism to offer except on one or two minor matters. To define the Town Hall as the centre of the metropolitan area does not appeal to me as being satisfactory. According to the Bill—

“Metropolitan area” means the area within a radius of 15 miles from the Perth Town Hall.

The Town Hall might be moved to another site. At the corner of St. George's-terrace and Cathedral-avenue there is a mark, if I remember rightly, “OM” which is supposed to be the central point of the metropolitan area, and surely this should be adopted for all purposes. I take it this is the point from which all measurements are made.

Hon. F. E. Gibson: The datum peg.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, if the hon. member wishes so to express it. All measurements should start from that mark rather than from a place such as the Town Hall, the position of which might be altered.

Hon. G. Fraser: If it is altered to the proposed site, it will still be very near to that mark.

Hon. L. CRAIG: But 100 yards might make a difference in the future. It would be far better to use the definite mark. The only criticism I have to offer is of the provision that the Minister shall determine the funds that shall be made available to country clubs. Surely that is a matter for the association to decide! The Minister is not mentioned in the following provision, which stipulates what shall be done with the money. I regard it as a matter for the association to determine whether it will foster trotting in the country. It will be in a better position than anyone else to decide that question. The Bill seems to be complete. I am pleased that schedule may be amended from time to time as seems desirable. I am glad to see provision for an approved auditor so that the members of the association and the public may be protected. The Bill appears to be reasonable and simple, and I commend it to the favourable consideration of the House.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [4.57]: I congratulate the Government on having introduced the measure, which ap-

parently is satisfactory to all parties. The absence from the gallery of interested spectators is somewhat of an anti-climax after our experience when the previous measure was before the House, but it does indicate that all parties who have had an opportunity of perusing the Bill are satisfied with it. During the week-end, I conferred with representatives of the Golden Mile Trotting Club, who expressed satisfaction with the measure. They had some doubt as to the definition of the district to which they belonged, not being sure where the Eastern Goldfields District Council began and ended, and they asked me to keep an eye on this provision. With all other aspects of the Bill, they were pleased, and I have satisfaction in supporting the second reading.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [4.59]: I have pleasure in supporting the second reading, although some improvements may be made in Committee. As Mr. Heenan said, it is somewhat of an anti-climax to find the public galleries empty while this Bill is being debated as compared with the attendance when the previous trotting Bill was before us. It seems to me that if it was the only time in its history when it justified its existence the Council must have done so on the previous occasion when it declined to be stampeded into passing the Bill that was introduced last session. There is a point of particular interest to me in the Bill, apart from one or two amendments that may be forthcoming, namely, the definition of the metropolitan area. Under the Racing Restriction Act, 1917, the metropolitan area is defined as being within 30 miles of the Town Hall, whereas in the Bill before us the radius is only one of 15 miles.

It is possible that country clubs established in places like Armadale and Rockingham would under this Bill be excluded from the metropolitan area. If clubs were established in those places the funds from the central authority, which are to be devoted to the support of country clubs, might be considerably reduced should the definition of metropolitan area be allowed to remain as it is in the Bill. We could well follow the example of the Racing Restriction Act, 1917, in this matter. Although some amendments could be made in Committee to improve the measure, I support the second reading. I should also like to see matters in connection

with the general control of trotting left even more in the hands of the association—they are not major matters I have in mind—than is provided for. It is largely a matter for the Trotting Association to cater for its patrons. Whilst it is getting support and is running the business properly and to the satisfaction of its patrons, I think we should allow it to continue to do so.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [5.3]: I am in a somewhat different position in connection with this Bill from what I occupied with regard to the one that came before us last session. It is strange to find that measures to control sport should contain provision for so much ministerial interference, although in this case we are almost free of it. The Bill is one that does call for a few small amendments, though these are not of a major character. The Government has been complimented on bringing the measure before Parliament. I join in that expression of commendation. I say, too, that the work done by Mr. Charles McLean, the Royal Commissioner appointed to inquire into trotting, should not be overlooked. That gentleman, who took a large volume of evidence, did a great deal of research work and framed the report on which this Bill is based, deserves the commendation both of Parliament and the Government. We have overcome a great difficulty in connection with one section of the sport enjoyed by the community. Let us hope that as a result of this Bill all difficulties will be smoothed over and that we shall not have a repetition of one party fighting another. I trust that all those concerned will settle down for the good of the sport and the enjoyment of the people of Western Australia.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [5.5]: I congratulate the Government on bringing down the Bill, and believe it will overcome most of the difficulties that arose in the past. I also support the second reading, but will submit one or two minor amendments in Committee. These have a considerable bearing on the employee members of the Trotting Association. At the Committee stage I am going to suggest that employees who have been mem-

bers of the association for a number of years, who are really unemployed except for what they may earn in this way, and whose positions are mostly of a minor character but to whom their earnings are of assistance to them, shall be better catered for than is proposed in the measure. In this respect I will move an amendment to Clause 16.

Then there is the question of the working of the totalisator. The Bill proposes to make an alteration that will, in my opinion, be quite unworkable and prove very cumbersome compared with the present method of collecting dividends on the tote. The proposal is—

Holders of winning tickets must claim their dividends within half an hour after the last race, except when a protest has been lodged, in which case the stewards will appoint a time and place for payment of dividends, but in such event the holders of tickets on any horse in the race which may be subsequently declared the winner shall register such tickets with the secretary or his deputy within one hour after the last race of that day, otherwise they shall not be entitled to the dividend.

One could imagine upwards of 1,500 or 2,000 persons, who might be fortunate enough to have backed the winner of the last race or even one of the placed horses, having to register their winning tickets with the secretary within half an hour after the last race. That is ridiculous.

The Chief Secretary: It is the present by-law.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I understand that at present it is possible to collect winning dividends at the totalisator office in St. George's-terrace at any time of the week, and that provision is made for the dividends to be paid out at the following race meeting.

The Chief Secretary: That is so.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: This part of the Bill does not provide for that. The by-law now in existence sets out that the dividend may be collected at the office at any time during the week. That is the information given to me by the trotting authorities. I make this suggestion so that the Chief Secretary may explain the position.

The Chief Secretary: That is the method adopted, but it is not the by-law.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: The final clause of the paragraph says—

In any special case the stewards may direct a dividend to be paid notwithstanding that the ticket has not been presented or registered within the prescribed time.

That is an outlet but it gives the stewards a lot of unnecessary power. Generally speaking, I congratulate the Government on getting out of the unfortunate position that arose in connection with trotting by means of the Bill now before the House. I support the second reading.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [5.8]: I have been asked to congratulate the Government on behalf of my district. Residents there are of opinion that the Bill is one that will be satisfactory to those interested in trotting. I have pleasure in adding my congratulations to those offered by other members.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move—
That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [5.9]: I am pleased at the reception that the Bill has received at the hands of members. In view of the fact that quite a number of amendments have been foreshadowed I shall be pleased if members will place them on the notice paper so that I may have an opportunity to examine them. It is true that the Bill consists almost entirely of the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner. As Mr. Baxter stated, the Royal Commissioner devoted a lot of time and gave close attention to the subject. I agree with the hon. member that Mr. McLean is to be congratulated on his report. The Government feels the same way about it, and consequently we had little hesitation in endorsing his recommendations and putting them into the Bill that is now before the House. There is nothing more I desire to say at the moment except that from the advice that has been given to me by one or two members in regard to proposed amendments, I will no doubt have a good deal to say in regard to a few of them. It is for that reason I request that the amendments be placed on the notice paper so that I may

have an opportunity to examine their full implication no matter what they may comprise.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—STATE HOUSING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 6th November.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [5.12]: When Mr. Seddon completed his speech on the second reading last week there appeared to be very little indeed in the measure. My opinion is that it is one of the most important Bills that has been introduced in the House for some time. It provides for the taking over of the Workers' Homes Board as well as giving extended powers in connection with housing activities. I understand that the same organisation will carry on, but that it will be known as the State Housing Commission instead of the Workers' Homes Board. It is unfortunate that there is such an acute shortage of houses at present. This situation has been brought about mainly by the war, and by the lack of materials and labour, etc. The position will continue to be acute for some time, but it cannot go on for ever.

I think some of the powers contained in the Bill are, for that reason, rather drastic. I would agree to almost any conditions in the case of an emergency, but I do not think we can anticipate an emergency in the building trade for all time. In Western Australia we have millions of acres of land and a small population. In such circumstances it should not be necessary compulsorily to acquire private land or to do some of the other things referred to in the Bill. I intend to support the second reading, but I hope that in Committee some amendments will be accepted that will water it down to some extent, particularly in regard to Clauses 21 and 69. Many years ago there was no shortage of houses for in those days they were built by private enterprise. Decent houses were erected then, and the rents charged were about half those that prevail today. As time went on owners could not collect the rents and the law was made so much against them that they could not put people out of

the houses for non-payment of rent, and other obstacles arose that discouraged private enterprise from building houses.

Since the Workers' Homes Board came into being people have more or less looked to it to support them and, I think, in general, the board has done a good job. It seems strange for us to be asked to pass a Bill giving the board such wide powers as to take from people, at the board's value, land which they have gone to a great deal of trouble to acquire in order to provide homes when, at the same time, private enterprise is not allowed to build houses. It is a dog-in-the-manger attitude, mainly on the part of the Commonwealth Government, to say to a person that he cannot build a house for a returned soldier, but that he may hand the money over to the authorities to have the house built. That position has arisen and I was so surprised when I heard of it that I went to the Workers' Homes Board to verify the statement and found it to be correct. I was informed that no private person could build a house for a returned soldier.

If private enterprise can find ways and means of providing money, labour and materials, why not let it build houses? The particular case that I have in mind is that of a soldier who owned a block of land. He was going to save more than £100 by having his house built through a friend who was willing to give him the money on the same terms and conditions as those imposed by the Workers' Homes Board. It is unfair to adopt this attitude and then ask Parliament to pass this Bill enabling the housing commission to acquire any block of land, including a person's home, even though the owner can appeal and show reason why it should not be acquired. Apart from the fact that a person might want the land for the purpose of erecting a residence for himself he might require it for the use of one or other of his children, or for a close relative.

People acquire land for other than residential purposes. A young person on a small salary might desire to save money by investing in a block of land. By doing so he would pay rates and taxes on it for many years, but under this measure someone could go to the Workers' Homes Board and apply for that land to be acquired on his behalf and the board could take

the land and build a home on it. That is going too far. It is a different matter if a large estate is locked up and the owners are not prepared to make it available. But it is wrong for any one to come into a built-up district, or any other area, and ask the authorities to acquire a block of land there irrespective of the feelings of the owner. The person possessing the land might be looking forward to doing something of a special nature with it in the years to come, and I see no reason why he should not be allowed to continue to hold his block. The measure also provides for the building of hostels, canteens and dining-rooms, and the employment of caretakers, supervisors or any other persons in the conduct and management of these places. Such hostels would, in the course of time, probably become the homes of our old men and women. I cannot imagine people refusing to go to these places if they provided such facilities, and they would seem to me to constitute a big business concern for the housing commission, which should be set up to build houses and not to run hostels. I think this is going far beyond the work that the commission should carry out.

The Bill also provides for the manufacturing of building materials. If the commission does that, I do not know that it could not sell them to anyone. That seems to me to be a very wide power. The clauses with which I am mainly concerned are those dealing with the confiscation of private property. I know that there must be a certain amount of that done, but the Bill goes too far. Some protection should be given to the land owners. It is all very well to say that the full value will be paid. That is not so. Recently I was speaking to a high official who told me that land at Mandurah had not increased in value since 1929. Well, what hope has a person of getting a decent price from a man who says that land at Mandurah has not increased in value since 1929? We know that its value is two or three times what it was in those days. If land owners received what they could get in the open market they would not be too badly treated, but even so, a person who did not desire to sell a particular block should not be compelled to do so.

There are one or two other matters that I wish to deal with. I understand that for at least two years it is proposed not to pay

rates to the local authorities. If the commission acquires ratable property in a road district, and has no liability to pay rates, it would be unfair to the road board concerned. Crown lands are not ratable under the Road Districts Act, but if the commission acquires a large parcel of ratable land and ties it up for some years, it is only fair that it should pay some rates to the road board concerned. We are complaining today of the large tracts of land being held and nothing done with them, and yet provision is made in this measure for the housing commission to do the same thing. The Bill also seeks to empower the commission to direct local authorities to demolish any houses of a slum nature. Yet a little further on in the measure we find that the commission is to be allowed to purchase army huts, and other army buildings, so as to convert them into dwellings. I do not know that we are going to improve the housing of the people by that means, while, at the same time, we direct the local authorities to condemn houses not quite up to the necessary standard. I know of a few local authorities that are very dissatisfied with some of the houses in their districts, but they have not been prepared to do anything about them during the war.

Housing is rather short in some of the country towns, as well as in the city, but I do know that some of the local authorities intend to take action as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Those authorities will not require to be directed by the housing commission, or any other body, to do what is necessary; they will be ready to deal with these places themselves. The houses I refer to are quite equal to many of the army huts, so it seems to me that if the housing commission is going to engage in converting army huts into homes, it will not bring about a higher standard of dwellings for the people.

The Chief Secretary: Would you suggest that the housing commission should cease converting army huts?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: No, but I suggest it should not direct local authorities to demolish what it calls slum dwellings because many of them are quite equal to the army huts. What is good enough for the housing commission ought to be good enough for the local authorities, and vice versa. There should be no shortage of

building materials in this State. We have, perhaps, the best hardwood forests in the world and unlimited coal. We also have any amount of asbestos and iron. Because of the raw materials we have, the time may not be far distant when there will be a considerable improvement in the housing position. If the provisions in the measure were to be effective for a period only, the Bill would be more acceptable to me.

I do not like the idea of saying that for all time someone can go to the housing commission and say, "I like that block of land; please acquire it on my behalf." That is not fair to the owners of land. We want to encourage people to spend their money in sound investments, and a person would not bother to place his small savings in a block of land if he knew that the housing commission could come and take it from him. That is commonsense, and I hope something will be done, even at this late hour, to arrange matters so that, while these people would be protected, nothing detrimental would be done to the housing commission. We must have the commission but we should deal with matters on their merits from time to time. If, later, an amendment were necessary then the Government could submit the matter to Parliament for further consideration. I intend to support the second reading.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.29]: I support the second reading of the Bill. I am quite prepared to give the Workers' Homes Board all the powers that the Bill sets out. I do that in recognition of the fine work that it has done through the years in handling the various housing problems. The other day Mr. Seddon quoted figures showing that during and since the war practically no workers' homes have been built. I think that in one year there were only four built, and that position is easy to understand. One has to appreciate the method adopted by the Workers' Homes Board. It lists the applications as they are lodged and were the board to continue erecting homes under its old system, many of those who had lodged applications would have had their homes erected by this time. To obviate that, according to my judgment, the Workers' Homes Board in recent years has built homes only to meet the requirements of particularly urgent cases. Instead

of carrying on under its old system, especially since the cessation of hostilities, the board has been operating on behalf of the Commonwealth in connection with the tenancy scheme, the object of which is to provide homes for people in the direst need. I would not like the board to depart from that practice at this stage and to embark upon the erection of workers' homes to the exclusion of the provision of tenancy homes.

I agree with members who say that any person wanting to own his home should receive all the assistance possible, but I would not agree to its being done at the expense of the poor devil who cannot even rent one. My attitude at this stage is that I hope the board will continue to build tenancy homes until such time as the situation has eased. Mr. Seddon, if I understood him aright, when quoting some statistics regarding permits granted, said that none had been granted for persons to build privately. The figures he quoted were rather astounding because some time ago I also perused figures which showed the buildings erected by the Workers' Homes Board under the tenancy system and under other conditions and the permits granted to private individuals to build.

Those figures indicated that during the past two years, the proportion had been practically on a fifty-fifty basis. I refer to the homes built by the Workers' Homes Board under the tenancy and War Service Homes schemes and to the permits to private individuals to build. Under the system adopted approximately 50 per cent. of the available materials was set aside for homes for soldiers' tenancy and the other 50 per cent. was made available for private construction. That was my experience and I think that if the figures are investigated members will find that I am not far out in my view. I compliment the Workers' Homes Board on the way it has handled the materials available. It is quite common to hear tales about people who have made applications being refused while the applications of others more favoured have been granted.

Hon. H. Tuckey: You cannot avoid such complaints.

Hon. G. FRASER: But my endeavour has been to scotch them when I hear them. When such complaints are made I ask that the names of the individuals concerned

should be supplied. I find very often that while an individual will spread such tales he is not prepared to support the complaint by giving the name of the person who has been favoured. As a matter of fact, a few of the people who complained did supply the names, but when I investigated the files of the Workers' Homes Board, I found that those who had been spreading the tales were entirely wrong in the statements they had made. In every instance I investigated the board could amply justify the issuing of a permit where it had been granted. That has been my experience. I have handled hundreds of such cases both in the war service and material sections and no-one has been keener to ascertain the facts than I have been. I could not discover one case in which the board was wrong in issuing a permit.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: There are many people who have been granted permits.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes.

Hon. H. Tuckey: I said that the board had done a fine job.

Hon. G. FRASER: I know that is so.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: We all agree that the board has done a good job.

Hon. G. FRASER: I ask members to inspect the files for themselves if they have any doubts.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: But you know there have been some cases.

Hon. G. FRASER: I know of one instance where a person, by making a false declaration, was able to get a permit, but that was not due to any fault on the part of the Workers' Homes Board. We legislate only for honest people; if people are dishonest they can flout the law. As I mentioned before, I have not been able to find one instance in which the board acted wrongly.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Do you approve of unlimited supplies of materials being made available to people in order to turn residences into flats?

Hon. G. FRASER: No.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: And that has been done.

Hon. G. FRASER: That may be known to the hon. member. I am dealing with the

position as I have found it, and I can assure the House that I have examined a large number of files in the course of my investigation of complaints that have been made to me. I can honestly say that I have not yet found one case in respect of which it could be said that the board had acted wrongly. I like to give praise where it is due, and I have the utmost admiration for the manner in which the board has carried out its work. I have not yet found one case where an individual has been refused a permit and one has been granted to a less deserving applicant. With reference to the point raised by Mr. Tuckey, when he suggested that the board would not issue a permit to someone to build a home for a returned soldier, I think he told only half the tale.

Hon. H. Tuckey: No, I did not.

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member suggested that the board would not permit someone to erect a home for a returned soldier, but I know of many people who have done so. If the returned soldier mentioned by Mr. Tuckey was refused a permit, I should say that the returned man could not prove an acute accommodation problem. I suggest that Mr. Tuckey investigate the case from that point of view. I know that there are returned soldiers who are receiving permits practically every day. Some of them apply under the civilian section and some under the war service section. There again there is a reason why a lot of tales are getting about and complaints are made that one individual gets a permit while another has had his application rejected. No permit is required for those who build under the war service section.

A returned soldier who builds under the civilian section does require to have a permit and that gives rise to suspicion on the part of people who have applied for permits and have not been able to get them. A returned soldier who builds through a private contractor can get a permit under the materials section and that is done where the ex-Serviceman is able to establish his acute accommodation problem. As to the complaint made by some members respecting the board's power to commandeer land, I have no fears in that direction. Right from the inception the policy of the Workers' Homes Board has been that should a person desire

to get a particular block of land, it would enter into negotiations with the owner with a view to acquiring it. The provision in the Bill will merely give the board a little more power.

Hon. H. Tuckey: It will provide the board with all power.

Hon. G. FRASER: This provision deals, I take it, mainly with large areas of land and is not required so much for individual blocks. I have sufficient confidence in the board to know that anyone who has a block of land which he is holding for building purposes will receive ample consideration in the event of an application being made by someone else for the purpose of securing that block.

Hon. H. Tuckey: The Bill says that the applicant may specify the block of land he wants.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is so. But does not the hon. member realise that the board comprises hard-headed businessmen? Does he suggest that, without any investigation at all, the board would go to the man who owns the block to commandeer it without recognising the man's rights to retain the block? I agree that if it were held for purely speculative purposes, the board would most likely secure the land. Any action taken along those lines would be most exceptional and should a person be able to prove that he required the block for himself, the board would meet his wishes. If members have perused the Bill carefully and have a fair knowledge of the Workers' Homes Board and its methods, they should appreciate the position. Personally I am satisfied to give the board all the powers outlined in the Bill.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [5.42]: I support the second reading of the Bill and endorse Mr. Fraser's remarks regarding the volume of work done in the erection of private homes. I am not familiar with the position in the metropolitan area, but I know what happens on the Goldfields. In that part of the State the practice is to grant permits for the erection of workers' homes in blocks of ten at a time. Those homes are erected for private people and returned soldiers. I know that permits are being issued to such people. The methods adopted on the fields are not restrictive unless the indi-

vidual concerned has a very low priority. An individual who has a reasonably high priority can generally secure a permit.

The other day when in Kalgoorlie I was asked to make inquiries to ascertain why a certain individual had not got a permit for his house when the latest block of ten had been provided for. When I reached the city I made inquiries and the officer of the Workers' Homes Board turned up the file for my perusal. I was surprised to note the detailed manner in which the file had been compiled. The qualifications of the individual concerned were set out and I was able to check them. As a matter of fact, if I had been setting about the compilation of the file I could not have done it more completely than the board had already done. I heard Mr. Tuckey talk about blocks being taken away from the owners. I can call to mind quite a few blocks that have been dealt with in that way. I lodged a protest in respect of one case and the person was told that a board was provided to deal with appeals and that if he made out a case his land would be returned to him. In this instance the individual concerned put a price on the land and he obtained it.

In one other case I know of the land was held for speculative purposes only. If that is the position, many more blocks of land will be held up while at the same time people will be requiring them. I think that the owners should be compelled to sell or the land should be resumed. There are some deplorable homes in many of the outback municipalities and road board districts. I represent a big outback constituency and am a member of the municipal council. I fear that we have allowed, owing to pressure by some members, too many buildings to be erected on one block. I know of 12 buildings on a quarter-acre block, for which the owner receives 25s. per week each. I do not believe in that kind of thing.

The Chief Secretary: It is a good investment.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: We should study the health of the community. I am a member of the works committee of the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council and, of course, see the permits as they come through. There is a considerable amount of private home-building proceeding on the Goldfields. The ratio

is three to one. I support the second reading of the Bill.

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

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th October.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.48]: I support the second reading of the Bill, although it does not go as far as I would wish. Nevertheless, it goes a little way along the road of reform so far as enrolment for this Chamber is concerned.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You ought to grab it with both hands.

Hon. G. FRASER: I would not say that. In the main, the Bill seeks to achieve something for which we have been agitating for years. It is proposed to extend the franchise to the wife of the householder, a reform that we have advocated for years. Still, the Bill does not make provision for adult franchise. I have not been able to understand why this Chamber has rejected previous measures of this description; and what I cannot understand, so far as this measure is concerned, is the silence of the members of the Select Committee that dealt with a similar Bill some two years ago. I forget the precise contents of that measure, but I suggested at the time that the move for a Select Committee was merely a counterblast to it. The measure did not appeal to some members and their action in referring it to a Select Committee was not altogether sincere. Events have borne out the opinion I then held. The Select Committee did recommend this particular phase, yet only last week or the week before we found one member who signed the Select Committee's report opposing this measure.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: He has since seen the light!

Hon. G. FRASER: Either he was sincere then, or he is not sincere now; he cannot have it both ways. Only two years ago he signed the report of the Select Committee recommending that the franchise for this Chamber be extended to the wife of the householder.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: We live and learn, you know!

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member has been in politics too long to learn an item of that description. We now find the same hon. member opposing his own recommendation of two years ago. It may be said that the Bill provides for one or two matters that were not dealt with by the Select Committee. That may be so, but it ought not to stop the hon. member from supporting a measure that seeks to give effect to a recommendation which he himself made two years ago. The only other two members who were members of the Select Committee and who have spoken to the Bill are Sir Hal Colebatch and Mr. Heenan. We have not yet heard from the other members of the Select Committee.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: They are waiting for you to speak.

Hon. G. FRASER: It looks as if they do not intend to speak at all. I think it only fair that the chairman of that Select Committee should at least have given us his views on the present Bill. I do not recollect all the members who comprised the Select Committee, but I am sure they are still members of this Chamber and we should at least hear from them on this Bill. The definition of a self-contained flat does not appeal to me as being suitable and I doubt very much whether it will prove to be of great value. Indeed, I doubt whether it would cover the member himself who introduced the Bill. The definition is, "any structure of a permanent character . . . and is structurally severed from any other part of the structure."

If those words are left in the definition, they will defeat the objective of the member who introduced the Bill, and I would ask him to consider that phase before we reach the Committee stage. I know he is desirous of overcoming the difficulty, and I can but hope that he will seek some way out. Nor do I think the definition of "resident occupier" is satisfactory. The definition reads, "resident occupier" of any dwelling house or of any self-contained flat means . . . the person responsible for the payment of the rent . . ." In these days many dwelling houses are divided into two parts, each part being occupied by a family. Are both or either to be entitled to the

franchise? Both are occupying a dwelling house, admittedly.

Hon. L. Craig: But that would only be temporarily.

Hon. G. FRASER: It might be of the same temporary nature as the structure at the rear of Parliament House, which has been temporary for 40 years.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: In the instance you cited, would both families have the use of the kitchen and other conveniences in common?

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, in some cases. In the instance I mentioned, one occupier might be renting the whole house and letting half of it to some other person who is paying a bigger rent than the landlord charges. But that is by the way. There are many other buildings in which two distinct tenants live, but both use the one kitchen and the one bathroom. Which of the two is to have the vote? Both are entitled to it, as both pay rent. Is the fortunate one to be the tenant who pays the rent to the owner of the premises? I submit that he has no greater claim to enrolment as a resident occupier than has the other person who is renting the other half of the house. Many problems are likely to arise in connection with the definition of "resident occupier," and I hope that when we reach the Committee stage we shall be able to solve them. It appears to me that the measure will at least make this Chamber a little more popular, because it will extend the franchise to a large number of people who are denied it today. But until we provide for adult franchise, this House will not be all that is desired. I believe that Sir Hal Colebatch, who introduced the Bill, has made an honest attempt to overcome some of the difficulties that exist, and for that reason I intend to support the second reading.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.56]: Down the years, Bills purporting to effect an improvement in the Legislative Council have been introduced, generally by the Government. On this occasion, a private member has brought down such a measure, and I want to pay him this tribute: I believe he is sincere in his effort. But at all times I have contended, and I still contend, that this seeking to interfere with the

constitution of the Upper House is something that has been fostered by a very small section of the community, and there has been no real demand for it. There has, however, been a demand for electoral reform of the whole of Parliament, and with that I am in thorough accord.

At the outset, I would intimate that I propose to vote against the second reading, and that is my main reason. I believe that if we are going to have any revision of the parliamentary system and our constitution, it should cover the whole of Parliament. I shall have to make reference to the other place. I want to ask members: Is everything perfect in regard to representation in the Legislative Assembly? Would any member contend that? Are there no anomalies there—glaring anomalies? I do not think anyone can deny that there are. Are there not sections of the community that would welcome very sincerely a revision of that position? It is unnecessary for me to quote figures concerning electorates, but we know that in one instance there are four electorates whose aggregate number of electors on the roll is something like 2,400—and I think that figure is a bit conservative—while in another electorate the aggregate number of electors approaches 14,000. We know there are certain circumstances governing those electorates, but I do not think anyone can honestly contend that a system that allows that kind of thing is perfect.

I say clearly to the Government that if it were courageous enough to bring down a Bill to put the whole of the electoral system into the melting pot, I would gladly support it. I would go some distance along the lines indicated in this measure, but I am not going to support any Bill which, in my judgment, is only tinkering with the position. At the very best, this measure touches only the fringe of the position, and that position concerns only one House. I think I said here recently that during the year I had an opportunity to make extended reference to the position of the Legislative Council in this State and the part it played, and on not one single occasion did I hear anything derogatory about it. But I reiterate what I said the other day: I did hear on a number of occasions reference made to the necessity for reform in another place. That is mainly the reason I shall oppose this measure.

Hon. G. Fraser: Any port in a storm!

Hon. W. J. MANN: No, it is not a question of any port in a storm at all. It is a question concerning the position which has grown up over the years and which no Government has ever had the courage to tackle.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: What view do you take of the Select Committee's report?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am not here to discuss the Select Committee's report. The members of the Select Committee have already been referred to this afternoon and they, in turn, will be able to give the House their views. It is the Government's duty not to continue endeavouring to play up to a handful of people who want us so to emasculate this place—if not abolish it altogether—as to make it merely a rubber stamp for another place. We know what has happened in the Federal sphere, and we do not want that to occur in this State. I admit that this House is not perfect, and our constitution is not perfect.

I will go so far as to say that I believe we could go some distance into the question of resolving differences between the two Houses, but I will not support any Bill that does not make a clean sweep of the whole position. If I had the promise of the Minister that the Government would bring down a measure such as I have indicated, I might be inclined to view the position much more sympathetically. I do not mind being called a die-hard or—what was it?—a “sit-patter,” or something of that description. Those names do not worry me, and I do not see any great virtue in a statement that was made that two wrongs do not make a right. One member, speaking in this House, very naively used that expression. I accept his confession that there is a wrong in another place. That is the first time I have heard such an admission from a supporter of the present Government. But that is the position. There are two wrongs, and an attempt must be made to right them together.

One could point out that so far as another place is concerned, this State has suffered very considerably. Governments in another place have built up huge deficits over the years, and I can see no virtue in that. On the other hand this House has always striven to see that the finances of

the country have been so administered that budgets have been somewhere near balanced. These remarks are a little off the track I am afraid, but there is no chance of my giving support to the measure because although there are some phases of it that might be acceptable—but Mr. Fraser has raised doubts in my mind—I think the sponsor of the Bill has been sadly led astray in his good intentions. I want it to be perfectly clear—

Hon. G. Fraser: You believe it might apply.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That is like the statement that two wrongs do not make a right. It does not get us very far. I shall vote against the second reading.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.8 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 12th November, 1946.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

NORTH-WEST RIVERS.

As to Expert Investigation for Barraging.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for the North-West:

1, Have any investigations been made or surveys conducted (other than in the Kimberley Division) as to the practicability of barraging the rivers of the North-West of this State or otherwise conserving the waters that run to waste therefrom?

2, If so, by whom were such investigations made and were the investigators surveyors or engineers or both?

3, Had these persons any experience of water courses elsewhere in connection with which there exist difficulties similar to those that exist in our North-West?

4, Was their report favourable to such work on any of such rivers, and if so, which?

5, If the reports were unfavourable, or no investigation made, does he not consider it desirable that an engineer of international repute and experience in such matters should be engaged to investigate the possibilities and plan for the work?

6, Will he, in the interests of the development and populating of these areas, recommend to the Government the appointment of such an engineer as mentioned in Question (5) with a view to early consideration of the matter?

The MINISTER replied:

1, An inspection has been made of a site in the Gregory Gorge through which the Fortescue River runs and of the basin and portion of the catchment including Mill Stream. Aerial inspection has been made of sites on the Margaret River, Leonard and other North-West streams.

2, Inspections of the Gregory Gorge site and catchment were made by the Director of Works and the Government Geologist.

3, Yes.

4, Inspections were preliminary only. It is considered that investigations should be concentrated on the Ord River area in order to demonstrate the possibility of development of the North-West by conservation of water and irrigation. Assuming this is successful, other schemes will then follow.

5, Aerial surveys of the Gascoyne River are to be made shortly. These will be fol-