

a comparatively small town ; and then we have a road board governing the area outside of that. Any member conversant with that set-up—I think the member for Wagin is familiar with it in his area, and I have it at York—will agree there is a tremendous waste and overlapping under that system, and sometimes friction develops. But in the bringing about of an amalgamation of these bodies, we must be careful that there is no loss of prestige on the part of those who have been working under the Municipal Corporations Act, and who would be very reluctant to be compelled to go back, as they would regard it, to working under the Road Districts Act. In any event, that Act is an absolute misnomer insofar as giving any idea of what our local authorities are responsible for is concerned.

The members of a municipal council are known as councillors ; those of the other local authority are just called members of a road board. In other States of the Commonwealth the members of any local authority are always given the title of councillors. Any measure that will build up the prestige of our local authorities is all to the good, and it is little enough for us to do for people who give a great deal of time to local government in a voluntary capacity and who are doing an excellent job. They are the people who are really making local government in our country districts tick. Personally I favour the delegation of a lot of powers which are administered by State departments in the city to the local authorities, because I think they can better interpret the needs of the people in their own particular area than can people in a department at a considerable distance from where the actual work is being carried out.

Mr. Hoar : Would you still retain the present franchise if you gave them more powers ?

Mr. PERKINS : I see no objection to that. If the government is being suitably carried out and the powers to which I am referring are ones that affect the local area intimately, I see no reason why the people who are elected under our present system should not be quite capable of doing the job satisfactorily under the amended set-up. My general attitude towards the Bill is that if possible we should deal with it and obtain the necessary amendments. I do not look forward to the Committee stage. Obviously the number of amendments that are likely to be necessary

is very great ; but it must be done somehow and the situation must be faced some time. The general framework of the measure is here and I do not see very much wrong with that.

Mr. Read : Nobody does.

Mr. PERKINS : I am glad to have that interjection. Seeing that we have the general framework, I think we should do our job and deal with the necessary amendments. It is fairly simple to decide between the amendments we should have and those we should not have. Any proposals that place power and authority back in the hands of the people on the spot should be acceptable provided that they are not likely to cause any injustice to people in other areas or over the State as a whole. Undoubtedly in any local government measure there must be restrictive provisions, but certainly not the tremendous number that are in this Bill. On that basis I support the second reading.

On motion by Mr. Ackland, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.28 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 20th July, 1949.

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

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.*Section "B", 1948.*

The PRESIDENT: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of Section "B" of his report on the Treasurer's statement of Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1948. This will be laid on the Table of the House.

QUESTIONS.**RAILWAYS.***As to Kalgoorlie-Perth Service.*

Hon. G. BENNETTS asked the Chief Secretary:

In the event of an amended timetable being issued for the run between Kalgoorlie and Perth, will he ask the Minister for Railways to see that a train leaves Kalgoorlie on Mondays to enable Goldfields members of Parliament to travel to Perth on that day?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Railway timetables are now under revision and the request will be given full consideration, but in making any alteration the community generally are the deciding factors.

PRIVATE HOSPITALS.*As to Fixation of Charges.*

Hon. H. HEARN asked the Chief Secretary:

Has any representation been made to the responsible Minister, or his advisers, by the managements of private hospitals concerning the scale of charges allowed to them by the Price Fixing Commissioner?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No representation have been made to the responsible Minister. Routine applications have been made on occasions to the Prices Control Commissioner.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. A. L. Loton, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. A. Thomson (South-East) on the ground of ill-health.

BILLS (6)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment (No. 3).
Introduced by Hon. Sir Charles Latham.
- 2, Coal Mines Regulation Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Mines.
- 3, Water Boards Act Amendment.
- 4, Administration Act Amendment (No. 2).
- 5, Acts Amendment (Increase in Number of Judges of the Supreme Court).
- 6, Lands Sales Control Act Amendment (Continuance).
Received from the Assembly.

MOTION—TRAFFIC ACT.*To Disallow Tare Display Regulation.*

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [4.38]:
I move—

That Regulation No. 143B, made under the Traffic Act, 1919-1947, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 14th January, 1949, and laid on the Table of the House on the 15th June, 1949, be and is hereby disallowed.

Once again I rise to move for the disallowance of a regulation. This time I am concerned with one under the Traffic Act. As some members may not have seen the regulation in question, I will read it to them. It sets out—

No owner of any cart, motor waggon, goods vehicle or locomotive or traction engine shall use or cause or permit the use of such vehicle on any road unless the correct weight of the vehicle is painted and displayed on some conspicuous part on the off-side in white letters, such letters to be one and a half inches in size on a black ground.

I have perused the parent Act in order to look up the appropriate definitions and I find that a cart is described in the Second Schedule as—

Any description of vehicle drawn or propelled by animal but not human power, and solely or mainly used for the carriage of goods, the term includes jinker and whim.

The description of a locomotive or traction engine is —

Any description of vehicle defined by the Governor by Order in Council which is not propelled by animal or human power and which in the opinion of the Governor is intended for the haulage of goods therein or thereon at slow speeds. The term also includes a road roller.

I now come to the description of a motor wagon—

Any motor vehicle (not being a motor carrier or a motor cycle or a locomotive or traction engine) which is constructed for the conveyance therein or thereon of goods or merchandise or for the conveyance therein or thereon of any kind of materials used in any trade, business or industry or for use in any work whatsoever other than for the conveyance of passengers and includes a wagon driven by steam if fitted with wheels similar to those of a motor vehicle or to those of a sentinel or a similar vehicle. The term also includes any vehicle which comes within the popular conception of a motor car but which is fitted or adapted for the conveyance of any such goods, merchandise, or materials and is in fact used for that purpose where the appropriate license fee for the vehicle licensed as a motor car would be less than the appropriate fee for the same vehicle licensed as a motor wagon.

Those are the vehicles that come within the scope of the regulation. Tractors used on a farm going from one part of a property to another, and perhaps travelling along the road for a couple of miles, would be included. A tractor must also comply with the regulation by having painted on the offside in white letters the weight of the vehicle. But the regulation does not say where the vehicle is to be weighed in country centres.

In some centres the only weighbridge available, if any, is on railway property and I understand that such weighbridges are outside the scope of the Weights and Measures Act. Consequently, I fail to see how one can obtain the accurate weight of such a vehicle. I know that with respect to tractors the weight is given in various degrees. I say "various degrees" because the different types of tractors, as well as their attachments, make a considerable difference to the actual weight of the vehicle. A late method of putting water inside tyre tubes, instead of pumping air into them, increases the weight of the vehicle by approximately 4 to 5 cwt. or more. Even if a tractor has the weight painted on the outside of it, that is no indication of the maximum load that may be carried.

Again, every utility vehicle must have painted on the side of it the weight of the vehicle, even the 7 h.p. vehicles one sees running round the town today. It would be impossible to overload them to the extent of $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. Some owners whose utilities might be painted a brilliant red

might not like to have the weight of the vehicles painted in white on a black background; it certainly would be conspicuous from the point of view of the people employed to police the regulation. It appears to me that the object of the regulation is merely to create jobs for certain persons who will make it their business to drive up and down highways to catch a vehicle not displaying the required white figures on a black background, and to stop the driver, take his name and address and later prosecute him.

I have been informed by some local authorities that they have no intention whatever of trying to enforce this regulation. That would be quite satisfactory so long as the vehicle remained in a particular district; but once it is taken into the metropolitan area or into some district where the regulation will be enforced, the owner, or the person using the vehicle, will be prosecuted for not complying with the regulation. I certainly have no objection to the owners of heavy motor vehicles, such as those used by haulage contractors, being made to comply with the regulation. I think that is long overdue, but otherwise I think the proposed officers would be better employed on certain highways in checking the loads of vehicles used to cart firewood and logs to the metropolitan area. I refer particularly to two approaches to the city, the Greenmount-road and the Armadale-road. The drivers of those vehicles I will admit are careful, but on occasions one can see the load canting to one side.

It must be borne in mind that the road is very narrow and some of these trucks must be carrying over five tons of firewood. I would not hazard a guess at the weight of the big logs to which I have already referred. Some of these vehicles are a menace in daylight, but at night—particularly in wet weather—I do not think they should be allowed to traverse the roads at all. The men who are driving such vehicles solely for their livelihood should be compelled to display the tare weight; but I take strong exception to farmers having to comply with this absurd regulation. Even if the load on a vehicle used by a farmer on his own property exceeded the weight of the vehicle by a couple of tons, that would be nothing compared to the loads carried by trailers and semi-trailers. Such loads often weigh 18 to 20 tons.

I am under the impression that the regulation was promulgated to try to stop overloading and so prevent roads from being damaged. If that is so, I point out a seven or eight ton load would not adversely affect a road; but so long as some carriers are permitted to haul heavy loads damage to roads will ensue, and it is the owners of these vehicles who should be compelled to comply with the regulation. The weight of a vehicle and its horse-power are generally shown on the license. If an owner should make a false declaration as to these particulars, the person issuing the license—the road board secretary or the town clerk—could easily check the information given. He simply inspects the vehicle and says, "It is of such and such a vintage." He then looks up the specification in order to ascertain the weight. The weight and the horse-power are, to all intents and purposes, what are required for licensing purposes.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Would the regulation apply to the huge trucks carrying sugar and wheat?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I have been trying to convey that impression to the hon. member for the past five minutes. I am sorry I cannot make myself plain.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are talking to the other side of the Chamber.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I did not notice that the hon. member was in the Chamber. I am sorry. I regret the omission. I have stated my reasons for bring forward the motion.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.50]: The object of the motion is really to prevent the powers that be from deciding the size of the lettering. If the regulation is disallowed, the tare of a vehicle will still have to be painted on the side. Let me read the Traffic Act, and I will ask the hon. member to check it with the regulation. He will find it is exactly the same, except that the regulation provides for the use of $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. lettering. Section 42 (1) provides—

No owner of any cart, motor wagon, goods vehicle, or locomotive or traction engine shall use or cause or permit the use of such vehicle on any road unless the correct weight of the vehicle is painted and displayed on some conspicuous part on the off-side in white letters of the prescribed size on a black ground. Penalty—Five pounds.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You are prescribing the size of the letters now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is all. The regulation states—

No owner of any cart, motor wagon, goods vehicle, or locomotive or traction engine shall use or cause or permit the use of such vehicle on any road unless the correct weight of the vehicle is painted and displayed on some conspicuous part on the off-side in white letters, such letters to be one and a half inches in size on a black ground.

On the 20th January of this year, the following appeared in "The West Australian":—

Weight Signs on Vehicles. A new traffic regulation has been gazetted making it compulsory for the owners of carts, motor wagons, goods vehicles and traction or locomotive engines to have the correct weight of the vehicle displayed on the offside in white letters, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. size, on a black background.

The Police Traffic Branch will not issue licenses in future for any new vehicle of these types unless the regulation has been complied with. A spokesman of the branch said yesterday that present owners of the vehicles should have the lettering painted on 'as soon as possible.

This matter was brought up at the request of the South-West Road Board Association. On the 21st December, 1937, the secretary of that association wrote to the Under Secretary for Works asking that the tare be placed on a plate. This is the reason he gave—

It has been found repeatedly that some salesmen will deliberately state the incorrect weight of a vehicle in order to render their particular make of car more attractive to purchasers from a licensing point of view, and as weighbridges are few in the South-West, it is very difficult to check on the figures given. I attach herewith a report of the discussion which took place at the conference on this subject.

There were various conferences. In November, 1926, the Mullewa Road Board wrote and asked for this. In October, 1926, the Road Board Association of W.A. wrote and asked about the matter, and I propose to read the communication.

Hon. A. L. Loton: That is a bit out-of-date, is it not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I suppose so, but this has been carried out since 1926, and the road boards have been asking for it. Mr. Loton says that this is out-of-date. Well, the Traffic Act in its present form was passed in 1919, so that many things are out of date—if we look at them in that

way. It has been found essential to have the weights displayed because vehicles are obviously overloaded, and there is nothing to show the weight for which they are licensed. There are no weighbridges available in country districts, and only a very few in the metropolitan area. I cannot see any objection to painting the tare of a truck on its side.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Where are you going to get the vehicles weighed?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I was under the impression that when a person purchased a vehicle, the weight was given.

Hon. G. Fraser: How are you going to dispute it?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Perhaps I would be entirely wrong to enter into a discussion on that point because that is the law, and there is no suggested amendment of the Traffic Act. That measure states that it must be done, and this regulation prescribes the size of the lettering. If Mr. Loton desires that the letters be half-inch instead of inch and a half, there may be something in his argument, but all we are asked to do is to say that the letters shall not be one inch and a half. There is no alternative.

Hon. H. K. Watson: What size has been used in the past?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Unfortunately, this provision has been observed very largely in the breach, but I think that the vehicles which comply with the law have $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. lettering. I do not think there is any real objection to this. Members have, no doubt, seen trucks with the tare marked on them. I can see no objection to the tare being marked on a vehicle that is used for carrying goods. I therefore ask members not to disallow the regulation. If they do, we shall have to bring in another providing for $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. or $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. We are not being asked to do away with the provision that the tare has to be put on the truck.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But the authorities have never enforced the law.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That may be so, but the law is there.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: You mean that for Mr. Loton to reach the point he wants to make, he would have to amend the Traffic Act?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so. There is no suggestion here that the Act should be amended. This motion is only to disallow a regulation. If we disallow it, that will not alter the fact that the tare will have to be displayed because the Act provides—

. . . the correct weight of the vehicle is painted and displayed on some conspicuous part on the offside in white letters . . .

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Is not that enough?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It goes a little further—

. . . of the prescribed size on a black ground.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: So that you can read it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, that is all. If $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. is thought to be too big, I have no doubt that the size could be varied, but is $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. too big? The vehicles concerned are virtually commercial vehicles for carrying goods.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Has a proclamation in accordance with Subsection (2) of Section 41 been issued?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That I could not say, but whether it has or has not it does not make any difference to the law as regards painting the tare on the offside of a vehicle.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [4.58]: I am in a bit of a quandary at the moment as to whether I should support or vote against the motion. It depends on the information I get during the debate as to how I shall vote.

The Chief Secretary: Might I suggest that the Transport Union wants this?

Hon. G. FRASER: This has been the law for a good many years, but it has never been enforced. It has been dead. The regulation is obviously being brought forward with the idea of complying with what was provided for in the Act many years ago. I do not like irritation tactics at any time. I will vote for the retention of the regulation to put the tare on vehicles, if it is shown that it is going to have some effect.

During the course of the debate we have been told that there are very few weighbridges available where the weights can be checked. Therefore it appears to me that unless the regulations can be policed, it would be merely adopting irritation tactics

to compel people to put the tare weight on vehicles. If there is to be a move to curtail overloading of vehicles, then I am prepared to support the move; but I am not prepared to support the regulation unless any further action is to be taken in the matter. In any case, my vote will go according to how the debate develops. If effective means are to be taken and weighbridges made available for checking purposes in order to ensure that there is no overloading, I shall vote against the motion. Unless I am satisfied on the point, I will vote with the hon. member who introduced it.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [5.2]: I cannot see any harm in this regulation. All railway vehicles, locomotives, and even barrows on stations, have the tare weight placed on them. This is quite handy to anyone who wants to know the tare of those vehicles. Even large wagons coming into railway yards, such as motortrucks, display the tare weight. A carrier may have employees and it is more simple for those men if the tare weight is known, because it can be deducted from the total weight and thus give them the load on their trucks. The regulation, in my opinion, is quite satisfactory and serves a useful purpose. I am prepared to vote against the motion.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, debate adjourned.

BILL—MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [5.6] in moving the third reading said: I wish to give the House some information which I promised yesterday. Sir Charles Latham mentioned that he was concerned at the pilfering taking place respecting country consignments of eggs and stated that the board should take some action to overcome the loss to the producers in this respect. Shortly after the board came into operation on the 1st July, 1946, steps were taken with the railway authorities to overcome shortages in rail consignments. With the cooperation of the Railway Department, shortages have now been reduced to an absolute minimum.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What is that minimum?

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Absolute.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is a very good one.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The system operating is that immediately a shortage is noticed when the case is opened up on the grading floor, advice is sent to the producer concerned as to the number of dozens which are short in the case, when the shortage exceeds one dozen. With this advice is sent a circular setting out the precautions which should be taken with future consignments. With this circular the board provides a seal which should be placed on the case in an appropriate position.

The Railway Department recognises this seal and in all instances where it is broken, inquiries are instituted immediately as to the cause. Investigations are also carried out by the board's staff and where it is established that the breaking of the seal was caused in transit, the board makes application on behalf of the producer concerned for the value of the shortage involved. I am pleased to advise that in each instance where the board has approached the Railway Department, a refund has been obtained on behalf of the producer.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That is very good.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Sir Charles Latham also mentioned that the case itself should be such as would minimise losses. The old type fruit case has been discarded entirely and a substantially constructed standard case with a clip-on lid has been issued. These lids do not become easily detached. Everything possible is done by the board to minimise producers' losses in relation to rail consignments, even to the extent of issuing special instructions to the staff when receiving sealed cases ex rail. I hope the foregoing will satisfy the hon. member.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It satisfies me.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have the circular mentioned with me.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Lay it on the Table of the House.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I will do that. I move—

• That the Bill be now read a third time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

**BILL—PLANT DISEASES ACT
AMENDMENT (No. 1).**

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

**BILL—WHEAT POOL ACT
AMENDMENT (No. 3).**

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 12th July.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Central) [5.11]: The purpose of the Bill is to establish a standard for f.a.q. oats, or a Western Australian standard of oats, bought or sold by the wheat corporation, which really means the Trustees of the Western Australian Wheat Pool. The idea is to amend the Act in relation to oats which may be exported, but I differ from Mr. Loton when he recognises a natural bushel weight of 35 lb. instead of 37 lb. as set out in the Bill. A weight of 37 lb. per bushel means 111 lb. in a fully packed bag.

I have handled many hundreds of bags of oats and I find that it is possible to feel by the weight of a bag whether it is one cwt. or more. If I handle a well-filled bag which does not weigh about one cwt., I immediately come to the conclusion that there is something wrong with the standard of oats. Usually any well-stretched bag averages a weight of 120 lb. and sometimes up to 130 lb. I have known of bags which weighed up to 150 lb., but the oats, in that case, contained a fairly large quantity of wheat.

, Hon. A. L. Loton: The more wheat, the heavier the bag.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: That is so. At present the pool is a voluntary one, and it is not given a monopoly of marketing by the corporation. Under the conditions of the oat pool, as set out in contract form, a standard is specified in the fifth clause, portion of which I will read. It is as follows:—

The Trustees shall arrange for an advance to be made to the Grower upon each bushel of Feed Oats of Fair Average Quality handed over to the Pool in reasonably sound bags free from holes and fit to handle, less any deductions on account of oats being below that

quality and plus or minus an adjustment on account of bags being above or below the required standard, provided, however, that if any oats are received which the Trustees consider should be rejected, the Trustees may at their absolute discretion sell such oats and pay to the Grower or his assigns the price obtained less rail freight and other costs, it being expressly understood that such oats so sold shall not be received into the Pool.

That refers to a standard but does not define it, and the Bill sets out, in very easily understood terms, exactly what the definition shall be so that there may be no misunderstanding or argument as to the actual standard required. Merchants and traders who handle fodder lines can make their own standards because it is a voluntary pool, and the selling is generally done according to sample. I trust that this system of voluntary marketing will continue, particularly in view of the reported proposal to establish an Australia-wide pool under Commonwealth control. I feel that this is a matter of vital interest to growers in the northern and marginal areas. I hope to say more about that later.

Oats constitute a different commodity from wheat inasmuch as the quantity that is grown varies enormously from year to year, while the outside demand also varies enormously. Export markets are very uncertain, and naturally prices tend to follow the law of supply and demand. In seasons of plenty with a small demand, the price is low; in lean years when stock have to be hand-fed, the price is higher. I have purchased oats as low as 1s. 4d. per bushel and, on the other hand, have paid as much as 6s. per bushel.

Mention was made by Mr. Loton of the fact that he had grown different varieties of oats. I, too, have grown crops of oats and have handled many hundreds of tons in the course of business. Mr. Loton also referred to light and dark oats. We found in our district that the colour varied according to the land on which the oats were grown. On heavy land the oats would be darker in colour than those grown on light land. The varieties grown were Burt's Early, Palestine, Mulga, Wilga, Wongan and Ballidu, as well as a small proportion of Guyra.

The point I had in mind when I mentioned the effect on farmers in the northern areas was this: Around Mullewa there is a fair amount of light land and the rainfall

is by no means reliable. It is the practice for a farmer to sow 200 to 300 acres of oats to serve as a stand-by in case he has to hand feed his stock and to provide stubble for sheep feed. If he experienced a light season, he would have the oats available as a stand-by; if it were a bumper season, he would have much more oats than he required. The actual yield of oats might vary from four up to 12 or 13 bags to the acre. When a farmer sows his land, he cannot tell how the season will turn out, and if he gets much more oats than he requires for his own use, the practice is to store the surplus in bins or bags and, if there is no outside demand, he may keep them till the following year or even the year after. Then, should a drought occur, as droughts do with rather distressing frequency, the farmer is certain to have a demand for his oats, and the sales he is able to make through those channels represent a profitable side-line.

In years gone by, when the prices of wheat and wool were not as good as they are now, the yield from this source meant added income, which in some cases made all the difference between conducting operations at a profit or loss. The oats I purchased in the course of trade were occasionally reinforced by the addition of foreign grains, many of which had quite a good food value. I remember when oats were about 3s. 4d. per bushel to the farmer and wheat about the same price. A bushel of oats weighs 40 lb., which meant a return of 1d. per lb. But with wheat selling at 60 lb. to the bushel, it meant that he was getting only two-thirds of a penny per lb. for his wheat and it paid the farmer to put a fair amount of wheat with his oats on account of the higher price he could get.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I bet you docked him for an over-quantity of wheat.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: No.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Well, it was done.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Station people are satisfied to have an admixture of wheat because it serves their purpose equally well for hand feeding. They saw the sample before buying, and as a rule made their own price which was lower than the price of oats in the outer areas. Both they and the farmers were satisfied, and this meant quite a good thing for the farmers who had a surplus of oats to sell.

I specially mention these conditions because it was reported over the air last night that there was a move on foot to establish a Commonwealth pool. If that comes about, I am afraid that very stringent conditions will be imposed as to the quality of oats permitted to be marketed, and should the farmers be prevented from selling the oats they have to offer, it would result in a loss to them as well as an economic loss to the country. I hope the Minister will bear these facts in mind. The information might be of some use to him if ever this proposal for a Commonwealth pool is brought forward or if we have to introduce legislation dealing with such a pool. The standard set out in the Bill is a very fair one, and I am pleased to give the measure my support.

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

**BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND
BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL
ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE)
(No. 2).**

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 12th July.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.22]: During my week-end reading, I came across the report of a very interesting speech made by the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill just at the beginning of the recent World War and before he had become Prime Minister. In the course of his address, he used these words—

Perhaps it might seem a paradox that a war undertaken in the name of liberty and right should require as part of its processes the surrender of so many liberties and rights. I wonder whether we stop to think of the number of surrendered rights which today, even four years after the cessation of hostilities, are still being withheld from the people. Here, session after session, we have continuance Bills brought before us, the purpose of which is to carry on for a further period the surrender of liberties and rights which we enjoyed before the war and which we surrendered gladly because of the war—liberties and rights which thousands of men laid down their lives to gain. The Chief Secretary, in moving the second reading, gave a very interesting resume of the progress of building in this State. I suggest that the progress made is very much to the credit of the Government.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Not on the Goldfields.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Over the past two years, the housing position has been relieved to some extent and the number of houses built compares more than favourably with the number built on a pro rata basis in other States. Another very interesting part of the Chief Secretary's speech was his reference to building material supplies. He went to great pains to tell us the present position and indicated what the future might have in store. He mentioned bricks, which I think he said—we have not the "Hansard" report of his speech—are being produced in a seven per cent. greater output than in pre-war days. He stated that the brickyards owned by private concerns were steadily stepping up production. He also said that at the present moment the manager of the State Brickworks is in England finalising the purchase of fresh plant and machinery, and that when this comes to hand and is installed, there will be a considerable increase in the output of that undertaking.

The Minister also touched on timber and said that production was improving. He informed us it had been decided that a certain quantity of the timber now being exported should no longer be shipped away, but would be used to increase the scantling, etc., available for local use. He informed us that the W.A. Portland Cement Co. was steadily increasing the quantity of cement being manufactured, that fresh plant was on order by the company and that when it was installed the output would be greatly increased. He also spoke of tiles, plain asbestos sheeting and corrugated asbestos roofing, and indicated that the output was largely increasing. Despite the setback experienced as a result of the recent coal strike, the whole picture is opening out and showing a better perspective than previously.

I ask members to realise that the existing Act has 5½ months to run before expiring by effluxion of time and, on the Minister's own showing, in 5½ months conditions will be very much better. So the question that arises in my mind is whether we should pass this continuance Bill. Personally, I think we should seriously consider rejecting it. I wish to try to visualise the scene if we reject the Bill. January, 1950, is 5½ months ahead, and by that time, on the Minister's own showing, the flow of building material will be better. For a start, there is sure to be

a little confusion. I believe that this will not last long, but that active trading and competition will soon smooth it out.

What is the position regarding building as compared with pre-war days? Before the war, the contractor, whether large or small, played an important personal part in building construction. A big contractor was frequently his own superintendent. He was sometimes his own clerk of works and was always on the job. The small contractor was generally a building artisan who laid bricks, spread plaster or carried out carpentry or plumbing work and was on the job from 8 a.m. till 5 p.m. His very presence spurred his own men on to work; the men were under superintendence and work was produced at a greater rate than would otherwise have been the case. The men worked better because the boss was on the job and contributed to the building by the actual manual labour he himself did. The condition of affairs today is very different. The contractor, whether he be operating in a large or small way, spends a great deal of his time filling in forms.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Chasing permits.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: He then goes to the Government department, interviews a Government officer and asks, "Please can I get some of this or more of that?" Having obtained the permit he has to scout around the warehouses and find out what is under the counter because of these controls and these restrictions. If these controls—we can only speak of these controls, but I say all controls generally—were lifted, I believe there are thousands and thousands of manpower hours which are today consumed in implementing the control, that could be very much more usefully employed than is the case at present. So I suggest that this House should seriously consider its attitude towards the Bill. I mentioned the loss of manpower hours in regard to the contractor, the actual man on the job.

There is another aspect. We are employing in the various control offices hundreds of men and women; and if these controls were thrown overboard, those individuals would be released on the labour market and could be absorbed by commerce and industry. Moreover, the relinquishing of these controls would leave vacant certain premises which industry and commerce are anxious to obtain. Therefore, on the whole scene, on

the whole outlook, I suggest that members should seriously consider whether it is wise to pass the Bill and thus continue these controls and deny to the people for a further period those liberties and rights to which Mr. Churchill referred.

I am afraid that over these years of control the people have become complacent. At the same time Governments have become rapacious, and they are not willing to let go the controls they have exercised for so long. The Chief Secretary will have to tell me a very much better story in his reply to the debate than he did in his opening address to make me change my mind, which at present is set on opposing the Bill. We should all remember that we are representatives of the people, and as such should listen to the voice of the people. The voice of the people is crying aloud for a discontinuance of control. They are sick and tired of it.

Hon. G. Fraser: You move in a different circle from some of us.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I have heard a lot of complaints and if members walk round the streets they will hear the same objections voiced. For the reasons I have mentioned, I intend to vote against the Bill.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.33]: Mr. Dimmitt did not paint a true picture of the position. He said that the filling in of forms was holding back building today. Let us examine what is under control, and we will then see how true was his story. Only four or five items are controlled. These are down-pipe, corrugated iron, corrugated asbestos sheeting and asbestos. Those are about the only things in connection with building to-day that are under control.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Then why worry about it?

Hon. G. FRASER: Yet we are told that the filling in of forms is holding back building. That is not a true story. I omitted to say that according to an announcement today bricks are to be brought under control again. The hon. member's own Government, which relinquished control, now finds it has to reimpose that control.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Only because of the strike, according to the Minister.

Hon. G. FRASER: That shows how much credence members can place on the hon. member's story about all these forms having to be filled in. It cannot be disputed that

there are only four or five items controlled. I forgot to mention baths and things of that description. But they are the only items under control with regard to home building today. Yet the hon. member told us that the filling in of forms was holding up building!

Hon. W. R. Hall: They may not be controlled, but a lot of things are tied up.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: You ask the building contractor what he thinks!

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not care what any building contractor tells me! Those are the only things for which he has to obtain a release and in connection with which he has to fill in forms. What is holding back the erection of homes? The hon. member did not tell us, and I will attempt to fill in the gap. The reason is that controls were lifted from a large number of items some time back and it is therefore impossible to obtain them today. Because certain articles have been used for projects that could have been done without for the time being, there is a shortage of commodities.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Due to strikes and lock-outs!

Hon. G. FRASER: Due to people building what could have been done without. The Government has announced that bricks are to be brought under control again. Why is that? It is because bricks, since the Government removed control, have been used for footpaths, fences, and a number of other jobs that should have been held over. The result is that houses are taking very much longer to erect today than was the case when controls were in operation. I know of a brick house that was commenced in August of last year and is still within a couple of months of completion because of the fact that it is impossible to get materials, mainly through controls having been lifted, thus enabling anybody to walk in and buy these goods.

That is what is holding back building to-day. I had an experience myself which will give members an idea of what sort of a deal the average person gets when trying to buy building commodities. I had reason last year to require three sheets of asbestos which happened to be still under control. I went to the Housing Commission—it was an urgent case—and submitted the facts. Without any bother I was given the highest priority possible—a B1. priority. I took that

to the store a week before last Christmas and I still have not received those three sheets. The matter was in the hands of the merchant, and because I was in the hands of dealers I am still waiting for the three sheets of asbestos.

Hon. H. Hearn: What wicked men these dealers are!

Hon. G. Bennetts: You were not a big enough customer.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is exactly the point I was going to make.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You have to be in big business!

Hon. G. FRASER: Since the lifting of controls, that is the sort of thing that has been going on. If one happens to be well known to the merchants, one will get the materials required. If not, one will not get them. Even though the job in which I was interested was urgent, and I had the highest priority it was possible to get, I have been waiting since the 18th of December for those three sheets of asbestos. I am in the hands of the merchants.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: What about clothes and meat?

Hon. G. FRASER: The same thing happened after controls were lifted on such lines as cigarettes. What chance had a man of getting a packet of cigarettes if he was not in the good books of the storekeeper? The same applies today. If one is not in the good books of the merchants, one cannot get building materials. Because of the lifting of controls, materials are being used for other than housing and urgent jobs.

The Government finds it has to reimpose control on bricks. It blames the strike—which has lasted only three weeks—for its having to reimpose that control. Why, last Christmas it was well known that no brick kilns would take any more orders before March. That was announced at Christmas-time. What was the reason? It was because controls had been lifted and bricks had been used for other than home-building purposes. That has been occurring all the time, and the period for the building of a home has been lengthened, considerably as a result. I have referred to one happening, which might be a bad case. But it is a fact that where before the war a place would be built in approximately four to five months, the time required today would not be under nine months. Why?

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Because of the 40-hour week.

Hon. G. FRASER: The main reason is that people who were not in need have been getting the materials. Until I saw that announcement in the paper about bricks, I was thinking of doing what Mr. Dimmitt intends to do. I proposed to vote against this measure, because during the last few months the system, under which only a few items have been controlled, has been an absolute farce, since anybody could walk in and buy the main essentials. Quite a lot of people did that, and stuff can be found stacked in yards everywhere. There was no brake on the purchase of the materials. The only brake was the fact that if the value of the work to be done exceeded £50, a permit had to be obtained.

What a stupid thing! Willy-nilly people bought materials and left them to rot in their back yards or until it was not necessary to obtain a permit. The only sane and logical thing to do, and the only thing that will bring the State out of the present chaos, is to reimpose control on all building materials. That is the only way we shall see daylight. It is no good saying that so many more houses are being built now as compared with 1945. Is it not only natural that with increased production following the war there must be an increased supply of materials available as the years go by and a consequent increase in the number of buildings erected? But the fact remains that because of the removal of controls, many buildings are going up that should not be built, and many jobs are being done that should not be undertaken. The only logical thing to do is to give everyone a fair go.

Heaven knows many people in this State want a fair go; and the only course to take is to impose controls on all essential materials. Until the Government does that, there will be no satisfaction for the general public. I mentioned by way of interjection, when Mr. Dimmitt was speaking, that he moved in a different circle from some of us; and because he moves in a different circle, he would not have any difficulty in getting the materials he required.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You got a permit.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes; but not the materials.

Hon. W. J. Mann: We cannot get permits!

Hon. G. FRASER: I did not get the materials, and that is what is hurting the average person in this State. He can obtain a permit but can get no further. Many people have been given permits under the self-help scheme. But how long does it take them to build a little place of seven squares with two squares of verandah? I have handled many such cases and have told the people concerned that their real trouble would start after they had obtained permits, because the material would not be available. Unfortunately, that has been only too true. Until such time as the Government reimposes controls, the people whose need has been certified as urgent will not be able to get homes quickly, because they will not be able to obtain the necessary materials. It is useless granting permits if the materials are not available to allow the work to be done.

Had it not been for the fact that there is a safeguard, I would have voted against the measure because, I repeat, during the past 12 months the controls have been an absolute farce. Seeing that the Government is going to reimpose some controls—and I hope still others—I support the second reading.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Central) [5.47]: The trouble with this measure is that it is only a continuance Bill and we cannot do anything about altering the Act. One or two suggestions have been made this afternoon as to how to fill in gaps in the production of building materials, and as to the reason why enough houses are not being built. I believe the main reason today for the lack of sufficient building is the 40-hour week, which is the biggest curse this country ever had. On going into figures, one finds that for 1,000 men employed in connection with the building trade there is a loss of four hours per week per man, which is 4,000 hours per week in the aggregate. Taken over 48 weeks in the year that gives a total of 192,000 man-hours lost per year. By utilising that 192,000 man-hours a great number of extra houses could be built, and that loss is the main trouble in the building industry today.

The sooner the workers realise that they are responsible for their fellow-workers not getting houses, and do more work, the sooner will their friends be housed. There

is no doubt about that. The Chief Secretary mentioned the life of a mill as 40 years, but I would like more information about that because I do not believe that, with present methods, any mill will last 40 years. It might have been possible in the old days, when mainly manual labour was used, but I think it is stretching the probable life a bit in the light of modern conditions. If the mill did last 40 years, it might put back our reforestation programme. It is necessary that the life of a mill be considered in relation to that aspect.

Seasonal conditions were mentioned by the Chief Secretary when explaining the shortage of building supplies. I do not think we have had any abnormal weather and cannot see how seasonal conditions can be brought into the question. It has been suggested that all the imported cement is being used by the Public Works Department and, if that is so, I want to know why it can be seen in business houses throughout the State today. I wish to know whether all that cement has been imported by the P.W.D. or by the firms themselves.

We have been told that blue asbestos from Wittenoom Gorge has been going to Sydney, and also that there is a shortage of asbestos in this State. I understand that the Government has backed the Wittenoom Gorge venture with a considerable sum of money and has put in amenities for the workers there, yet the product is going to Sydney and apparently we must pay the freight on it back from Sydney or else go without. I think the Government should obtain some of those supplies of asbestos for manufacturers in this State.

I believe that permits for houses up to a value of £1,800 should be wiped out altogether, if the dwellings are for permanent residence. I believe we should carry on control over building for industrial or other ventures; but when a man wishes to build himself a house up to a value of £1,800, I think he should be able to do so without asking for a permit. The same thing applies to the self-help homes. The Chief Secretary stated that the average cost of a self-help home was £750, as against £1,500 or £1,600 for the other type. If we can have self-help homes built at a cost of £750 each, then the more we get of them the

better off we will be. I do not like the idea of every man having to go into a Commonwealth-State rental home.

Hon. G. Fraser: They cannot all do so, even if they want to.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN, When they do, it simply means building up a community in one centre with every householder paying rent to a Government landlord, and I do not like it. A lot has been said about the reasons for the greater number of applications for houses today as compared with the demand a few years ago. I believe there are two reasons for it. The first is that, since the present Government took office, people have been more confident that they have a reasonable chance of getting homes, and have therefore applied for them. The second reason is that two or three years ago many families were of only two units and knew they had no hope of getting permits even if they applied.

Today many of those families have increased until they are now of three or four units and naturally their need for homes is greater than it was, with the result that they are now applying. I think that factor has been overlooked. People who had recently been married were prepared to put up with living in the homes of their parents, but when their families increased their troubles grew also, with the result that they are now asking for permits for houses. Again I suggest that permits for residences of a cost up to £1,800, and for self-help homes, should be abolished.

I would not worry about the man with money building a home. It is said that the rich man will be able to build a house, but I would like to know where all these rich men are. It does not matter who builds a home, because the more houses there are built the better it is for all.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Have you been down St. George's-terrace?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I have not seen any houses being built there. We cannot overcome the difficulty easily but must face up to the problems. No matter what Government is in power, it will have the same trouble, and I feel that the workers should help each other to get homes by going back to the 44-hour week.

On motion by Hon. H. Tuckey, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 26th July.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.55 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 20th July, 1949.

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