administration account" for the use of administration expenses. The amendment in the Bill will allow the board to use any money remaining in the pool account to provide for extensions for the better working of the board. Its operations are being carried on under difficulties and representations have been made to the Housing Commission for permission to erect buildings. I am sure members will agree that, when we set up such a board, we must allow it proper facilities to store, candle, and do everything necessary in the marketing of eggs. The Bill also provides for a contribution towards the costs of the board's administration by holders of buyer and seller permits. It is only right that those who are permitted to operate outside the board should make some contribution. The same principle is involved here as with seed potatoes, which we recently considered. The amendment is intended to require producers whose eggs are not delivered to the board to make some contribution. As administration costs include the granting and controlling of permits, it is reasonable that these producers should contribute towards the cost of maintaining a section of the board's staff, which, if no permits were issued, would not be necessary.

At present the non-permit holder pays for the upkeep of staff required to supervise permit holders, and this is not equitable. The section of the Act dealing with regulations provides that the board shall have power to "inspect any records or accounts relating to eggs or to premises." It is obvious that the records or accounts referred to relate to eggs and not to premises. This Bill clears up what is considered to be an error, and the relevant portion will read, "to inspect any records or accounts relating to eggs or to inspect premises on which eggs are produced," etc. I commend the Bill to the House, as I consider the amendments desirable for the better working of the parent Act. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Grayden, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.2 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 26th July, 1949.

CONTENTS.

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

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

As to Provision at Fremantle.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES asked the Chief Secretary:

In view of the extreme shortage of housing in Fremantle, will the responsible Minister give an assurance that a reasonable percentage of transient homes being constructed on Davies Estate, Beaconsfield, will be made available to local applicants?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

Consideration will be given to this matter when these dwellings are approaching completion and the requirements of local applicants in the Fremantle area can be assessed in relation to the total accommodation becoming available in the area.

STATUTES, 1948.

As to Issue of Bound Volumes.

Hon. A. L. LOTON asked the Chief Secretary:

In view of the inconvenience caused to members through the Statutes of the first period of the present session not being available, will he give an indication as to when they may expect the bound volumes to be made available?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

It is anticipated that bound volumes of the 1948 Statutes will be available for distribution in approximately two weeks' time.

PIG INDUSTRY COMPENSATION FUND.

As to Collections, Payments, etc.

Hon. A. L. LOTON asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What amount has been collected by the Pig Industry Compensation Fund by way of levy since the inception of the Act until the 30th June, 1949?

(2) What amount, if any, was refunded to the Treasury for payments to producers before the fund came into operation?

(3) What amounts have been paid each year by way of compensation since the fund was established?

(4) Has a definite amount been set as the objective of the fund? If so, what is the amount?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied:

(1) Amount collected to the 30th June, 1949, £46,154.

(2) Amount recouped to Treasury on account of swine fever compensation advances, £12,402 4s. 1d.

(3) Compensation payments from fund—1942–43, £261 5s. 9d.; 1943–44, £2,087 8s. 11d.; 1944–45, £2,041 3s. 10d.; 1945–46, £3,431 5s. 8d.; 1946–47, £2,789 9s.; 1947–48, £2,288 17s. 5d.; 1948–49, £3,004 11s. 3d.

(4) A definite amount has not been stipulated but it is considered that a reserve of £50,000 should be established.

MOTION—TRAFFIC ACT.

To Disallow Tare Display Regulation.

Debate resumed from the 20th July on the following motion by Hon. A. L. Loton:—

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.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (East) [4.37]: The regulation which the House is asked to disallow deals only with the prescribed size of lettering or figures to be placed on vehicles. Of course, as the Minister pointed out to the House, the Act, prior to 1930, provided—

41. (1.) No owner of any cart, motor wagon, goods vehicle, or locomotive or traction engine shall use or cause to 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.

That provision has been on the statute book for over 20 years but it has never been enforced. I do not know whether the reason for its non-enforcement has been because the size of the letters has not been prescribed. I do not know whether a local authority could prescribe the size of the lettering to be used in its own district, but I would like to ask the Minister: Why has this matter been revived at this stage? For the life of me, I cannot see what benefit will come of it. It is not a question of load because the weight of the vehicle does not determine the weight of the load. If it is a question of excessive weight being carried by vehicles traversing bridges, then another method must be found for controlling that aspect.

I know that under the Traffic Act and the State Transport Co-ordination Act, inspectors have been able to weigh vehicles one-quarter at a time with a machine that is carried in a motor car. How accurate that machine is, I am not in a position to say. As a result of this supervision, quite a number of convictions took place for the overloading of vehicles. For a considerable time local authorities have been concerned about this question but, bringing Section 41 into operation and prescribing the size of the letters and the figures only, will not help one bit. The Government might well give further consideration to the regulation. After having prescribed the size of the letters and figures, will it be permissible for local authorities to exercise this power or will they be compelled to exercise it?

The Chief Secretary: Under the Interpretation Act, it must be prescribed by the Governor-in-Council.

Hon. SIR CHARLES LATHAM: Of course it must be prescribed through the Executive Council, but the local authorities could initiate it.

The Chief Secretary: It was put through at the request of the local authorities.

Hon. SIR CHARLES LATHAM: Is it intended to apply to a particular road board or is it to have general application throughout the State?

The Chief Secretary: The Road Boards Conference asked for it.

Hon. SIR CHARLES LATHAM: Then it would apply to the State generally: I do not think the power is likely to be exercised, so Mr. Loton need not feel concerned on that score. If it is exercised, however, a great deal of inconvenience will be caused. The Minister will appreciate that, while there is a weighbridge at every wheat siding, only when wheat is being delivered is there a man in attendance, and the weighbridge is privately owned. Consequently the inconvenience to people living in remote areas will be considerable.

In the metropolitan area there is quite a number of public weighbridges on which, for the payment of 6d., an owner may have his vehicle weighed. For a long time the police in the metropolitan area—the licensing authority—have insisted upon the weighing of vehicles that come from the country. It does not matter whether they know the make and the model of the vehicle—certain vehicles are of standard weight according to whether they are 1947 or 1948 models—they have not accepted this but have adopted the attitude, "You have brought a vehicle from the country and want metropolitan registration for it and you must have it weighed."

I have no objection to that, but it would be futile and would serve no useful purpose to require people in remote districts to display letters and figures of a certain size on their vehicles. I cannot imagine what purpose it would serve. True, for registration purposes, a formula is used based on the horsepower and if that were accepted, I doubt whether there would be a difference of more than 1-cwt. or 2-cwt. Quite a lot of fuss has been made by local authorities after having requested this power for no good purpose, and I hope the House will show its disapproval of such action by disallowing the regulation, though I do not think it will make much difference whether the regulation be allowed or disallowed.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [4.44]: I support the motion. It will make a considerable difference whether the regulation be allowed or disallowed because it will involve people in remote areas in an absurd amount of inconvenience and trouble for no good purpose. It seems that this is an instance of bureaucratic control clothed with legal power, in order to assist in preventing some abuse, being quite prepared to impose a regulation that will inconvenience many people who are really not those with whom the department wishes to deal. I am quite prepared to approve of a regulation of this nature being applied to licensed carriers, but the regulation as framed will apply to all vehicles of commercial makes. For instance, a man with an old model motorcar has converted it into a utility and the most he has loaded on it is one drum of petrol. He is 35 miles from the nearest weighbridge and yet he would be compelled to go there and have his vehicle weighed.

The Chief Secretary: How did he get his license? That would show the tare.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: All such licenses have the tare shown on them.

The Chief Secretary: Then he will be required to put it on the side of the vehicle.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Why not let him show the license?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Section 43 of the Act provides for weighing by a recognised weighbridge.

The Chief Secretary: This has nothing to do with weighbridges. Look at Section 41.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I am aware of the provisions of Section 41. If the local authorities enforce this regulation, owners will be compelled to have their vehicles weighed. One road board in my area sent out circulars instructing ratepayers to have their vehicles weighed on a weighbridge, but subsequently the board decided that, for the time being, it would not enforce the regulation as it was not expected to stand. This has also happened with other local authorities that I know of. When it comes to a recognised weighbridge, as provided by Section 43, I doubt whether there is any in the country which, by resolution, has been recognised by a local authority.

The Chief Secretary: That is why local authorities want the tare displayed on the side of trucks; it is because there is no weighbridge.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Of what advantage would it be to have the tare displayed on the side of the truck if it is shown on the license? I have not yet had a license on which the tare was not shown.

The Chief Secretary: Have you ever driven a vehicle without a license?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: No.

The Chief Secretary: Then it is extraordinary.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Perhaps I cannot take the risk.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: An owner can always be compelled to show his license.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: The regulation deals only with the lettering. Unless the lettering is of a prescribed size as provided by regulation, that section of the Act cannot operate, so that, by disallowing the regulation, we shall be disallowing the application of that section and also the widening of the scope of the Act, as apparently the department desires. If people have to travel 30, 40 or 50 miles to a railway weighbridge to have weighed a vehicle that might carry 10-cwt., simply because the local authority is trying to police this regulation, great inconvenience will be caused. Even if a road board does not insist upon the enforcement of the regulation, once the vehicle was brought to the metropolitan area, the owner could immediately be apprehended by the traffic authorities.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Within a 20-mile radius.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: If he brings it to the metropolitan area—as quite a lot of people do—he would be liable, although the regulation might not be applied in local districts. In all the circumstances, I hope the House will agree to the motion to disallow the regulation and give the department an opportunity to re-submit one that will deal with those people against whom the department ostensibly desires to take action, namely, licensed carriers or people transporting heavy loads.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [4.52]: I did not quite understand from the Minister why this regulation is needed and what is going to happen if the weight of a vehicle is painted on the side. It is suggested that the regulation was introduced as a result of a request from the local authorities. That is news to me. I have attended scores of conferences and never once has this question been raised. I have never heard any local authority complain of difficulty in this respect. I think that if weights are to be painted on vehicles, the regulation should stipulate what vehicles are to be so marked. It is not necessary to have weights painted on motor cars or even on farm utility trucks.

There may be something to be said about applying the regulation to heavy transport trucks, those licensed for transport purposes in respect of which the local authorities have to check on overloading. If the regulation provided for that, I do not think the House could have any objection to it; but I do not believe the House should agree to the regulation in its present form. If the Minister can tell us what it is all about and what advantage is going to be gained, that will be a different matter; but I have had some experience of local government, and I have never heard the question raised.

On motion by Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham, debate adjourned.

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

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th July.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [4.54]: I secured the adjournment of the debate to make some inquiries. Any measure that is in the best interests of the farmers I am always prepared to support, because we have to get ready for the inevitable day when prices will fall. I have been assured that this is a good start. I do not speak as an expert, and there are many farmers in this Chamber who will be able to correct me if I am wrong; but I object to the f.a.q. standard set out in the Bill. It seems to me to be very low. Paragraph (b) of proposed new Subsection (3) of Section 15A provides that—

> (b) The oats shall have a natural bushel weigh of not less than thirty-seven pounds.

That seems very low. I grew oats many years ago but never grew any, or saw any, that did not average more than 37 lb. There is a certain type of Algerian grain which goes up to 40 lb. and there are white oats that average as high as 46 lb. to the bushel. I cannot understand why the department recommended to the Minister, who understands all about these things, such a comparatively low figure. Would it not have been better to raise the figure to 38 lb.?

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: You can do that by amendment if you like.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I want the Minister's opinion about the matter. This is a f.a.q. standard set for all time or until the Bill is amended, and I cannot quite understand why we should not adopt the same procedure as with regard to wheat, the f.a.q. quality of which is determined every year. There will be dry years with comparatively light weight oats and other years when the oats will be of a higher weight.

As I see it, the Bill will assist the careless farmer. I may be wrong, but that is my opinion. The quality is so low that it will be an encouragement to careless farmers to market oats of an inferior quality. One would think that the best thing to do would be to declare the weight at the beginning of every season in order to encourage farmers to market the very best quality. Paragraph (e) states—

(e) Not more than a total of ten per centum of the whole shall comprise tailing or screening oats (that is oats passing through a 1·5 mm. sieve) and foreign matter: Provided that not more than four per centum of such ten per centum shall be foreign matter (foreign matter includes other cereals, oat husks and the like, weed seeds or uncultivated oats);

Ten per cent. seems too much. Paragraph (f) provides that—

(f) Not more than one-twentieth per centum of the whole, by weight, or five seeds per hundred grammes of the whole shall be speargrass.

I never saw a sample of oats which contained those quantities all the time I was growing oats. But I may be wrong about the possibility. I am supporting the second reading; but it seems to me that the standard set for the quality of oats is too low and an encouragement for careless farmers to market poor quality oats which, in turn, encourages careless growing. That is detrimental to the good farmers who always strive to market grain of the finest quality.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East—in reply) [4.57]: I have to answer two objections to this Bill: one from Mr. Loton to the effect that the standard is too high; and one from Mr. Gray that it is too low!

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You must be right with your happy medium.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The happy medium is 37 lb. If the Bill has to be amended, I would prefer it to be amended along the lines suggested by Mr. Gray in order to build up the standard. Generally speaking, over the years everybody has talked in terms of a bushel of oats weighing 40 lb., but it is admitted that we should allow a little liberality for certain circumstances by making the figure 37 lb. I have no objection if the House desires to raise it to 38 lb., but I have every objection to lowering the figure to 35 lb.

I have some samples of oats on my desk which members have had an opportunity to inspect. This particular sample which I hold in my hand was taken from a shipment that went oversea recently. It weighed 40 lb. to the bushel. It is not a wonderful sample, but just ordinary. I would be very loth indeed to have the quality reduced to 35 lb. to the bushel. Here is another sample taken out by officers of the department and again it is not a very wonderful one. Members can see that it contains a certain amount of husk and light stuff. And here is another sample of some very light oats; but even they went 38 lb. to the bushel. I will have very little objection if Mr. Gray moves an amendment to make the figures 38.

During his remarks, Mr. Loton talked about a sample which he thought was good enough. I have to admit that when I saw it, I thought it was good too; but when we had it analysed and weighed, we found that it went only 33 lb. to the bushel. It certainly looked all right, but when we examined it closely, we discovered that a lot of the oats had no kernels at all. That is what we must guard against. It is no use selling for any purpose oats that do not contain kernels. Mr. Loton said the kernel does not matter, but I say it matters a lot. If we let a sample of oats slip through at only 35 lb. to the bushel it might contain a lot of dead oats with no kernels in them. Even for feed oats we require the kernels.

An objection was raised by Sir Charles Latham to the two names with only one standard, and I have no objection to his moving an amendment, when the Bill is in Committee, to strike out the reference to f.a.q. Having given the matter a great deal of consideration I feel we should call our oats "W.A. standard feed oats" and not have the confusion of both a W.A. standard and f.a.q.

Hon. E. H. Gray: And what about the last paragraph?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We are dealing with feed oats and not seed oats and I think we must give way a little. I appreciate the interest that has been taken in the Bill, which is an attempt to set up a standard that is long overdue. Let us maintain the standard and not reduce it. If we say that the W.A. standard of feed oats provides for 38 lb. to the bushel, that does not mean that no-one can sell oats at 35 lb. or 33 lb. to the bushel. They can be sold on a sample or on a docket. I ask the House to accept the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Honorary Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 15A:

Hon. SIR CHARLES LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of proposed new Subsection (3) the words "fair average quality of oats or to" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Should there not be a consequential amendment in lines 6 and 7 of the proposed new subsection, in order to remove the words "to the quality or"?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think it is necessary.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of paragraph (b) the word "thirty-seven" be struck out, and the word "thirty-eight" inserted in lieu.

One lb. weight per bushel is a big improvement.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I support the amendment as I think that within reason we should maintain the standard.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The Minister's explanation has been so sound that I will not pursue my objection further.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I would like the Minister to tell the Committee why such a large proportion as one-twentieth per cent. of speargrass is to be allowed.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think one-twentieth of one per cent. is intended. That is obviously a mistake.

The CHAIRMAN: My attention has been drawn by the Clerk to paragraph (c), where in line 3 there is reference to "a two mm. sieve." The question is whether that does legally mean a two millimetre sieve.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think that difficulty could be overcome if the Clerk were authorised to substitute the word "millimetre" for the abbreviation "mm." where it appears in the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: That will be done.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—THE WESTRALIAN BUFFALO CLUB (PRIVATE).

Received from the Assembly and, on motion by Hon. H. K. Watson, read a first time.

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

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th July.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [5.19]: It was never intended that the regulations under this Act should remain in force for so long. I doubt if there will be any gain to the public if we continue with the present restrictive policy. As is the position with all such continuance Bills, the one under discussion cannot be amended. It is a matter of either passing or rejecting it.

I consider there should be no restriction placed upon any buildings requiring less than 12 squares. Such houses would cost between £1,700 and £1,800 or, at any rate, less than £2,000. If that policy were adopted, permits would only be required for large structures, the erection of which would mean the consumption of quantities of building materials sufficient to build a dozen or more small dwelling houses. In my opinion, the State Housing Commission has had a very difficult, if not quite impossible, task in carrying on the work entrusted to it.

If what I suggest regarding the exemption of buildings smaller than those requiring 12 squares were adopted, the work of the Commission would be considerably reduced, and I am convinced that the new set-up would be welcomed generally. The present methods whereby hardup cases for which permits will be granted, are selected out of the thousands of applications received is, to my mind, unsatisfactory and unfair. If the present restrictions are to be maintained until plentiful supplies of all necessary building materials are available, then I believe we shall have to continue passing this type of legislation for the next ten years.

Hon. G. Fraser: There is no doubt about that.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I have not noticed any great improvement over the past few years. I know the position today, and the question arises as to whether we shall do any good by continuing existing restrictions for all time, as it were.

Hon. A. L. Loton: No, we will not.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I think the time has arrived when some other method should be adopted. I am quite sure that any steps in that direction would not make the position worse but would make it better for the community at large. I notice that bricks and cement have again been brought under control because of the strike at Collie.

Hon. G. Fraser: Do not give us that!

Hon. H. TUCKEY: That statement has been made.

Hon. G. Fraser: They are nine months behind with supplies, and yet you would blame a strike that lasted for three weeks only for the present position!

Hon. H. TUCKEY: At any rate, industrial unrest has had disastrous effects.

Hon. H. Hearn: Anyhow, the A.L.P. Disputes Committee settled the Collie strike!

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I realise that that trouble was a passing phase compared with other industrial upheavals. We do not have many strikes in Western Australia.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: We have been waiting for galvanised iron but we cannot get it. The strike did not cause that shortage.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Nevertheless, strikes in the Eastern States have cost Western Australia millions of pounds, and this is not the only State that has been affected. I appreciate the fact that all the industrial troubles we have had in this State cannot account for all the difficulties that confront us. What I have in mind are the illegal strikes engineered by disloyal elements in unions that have taken place elsewhere. They have proved a serious matter for the country as a whole and particularly as they affected the building trade.

Hon. G. Fraser: How did the Eastern States strikes affect the brick position? That is the point you were dealing with.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I did not hear that interjection.

Hon. G. Fraser: It does not pay to do so at times.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I consider there has been a certain amount of bad management in connection with the allocation of some materials. Take the position regarding galvanised iron piping. If a farmer requires some for a water supply for his stock, he has little chance of getting what he wants because he has a No. 3 priority. On the other hand, if another person is growing a few vegetables and makes application for some piping for irrigation purposes, he is given a No. 1 priority and has little difficulty in having his requirements met. The farmer may have stock depending upon a windmill supply of water and he requires pipes in that connection. If he cannot get the piping, he has to provide another paddock for the stock with another water supply, which he may not be able to do, or failing that he has to dispose of his stock.

There should be some overriding authority to deal with such cases and the producers should not have to submit to such a hide-bound restrictive policy that gets them nowhere. I cannot understand why officials holding their jobs in Perth should be in a position to tell a farmer that he cannot get the piping he wants and that he had better sell 300 head of stock in consequence.

There are other cases in the outback districts and particularly in the northern parts of the State that should receive much greater consideration. A man living in those outer areas, should he require a bag of cement or a few sheets of iron, is placed in the same category as the individual who lives in Subiaco. That is not right. Do we desire to develop the back country, or is it our intention to place obstacles in the way of that achievement? It is high time that steps were taken to remove the existing restrictions and so bring about a better feeling among the people throughout out the State. I can see no gain whatever in continuing the restrictions that have applied during the past few years.

At present I feel like voting against this particular legislation. I would support a measure the effect of which would be to prevent the erection of large buildings that would necessitate the use of materials that could be better employed in building dwelling houses. I would not like to have the job of sorting out the few to whom permits should be given out of the many thousands of applications received by the State

Housing Commission. I regard it as an extremely onerous task, and I would not like to have the responsibility of carrying it out.

Under the existing system I know only too well that is possible for people who should receive every consideration now, to have their applications passed over for years. I realise that whatever policy may be adopted, cases of hardship will always crop up and wrongs will be noted. On the other hand, I think we could do much better if the system were changed. The merchants have always been very fair in their dealings. If they have had a limited quantity of materials on hand, I have never known of any instance where the lot has been disposed of to one person. The usual practice is to make what supplies are available spread so as to meet the requirements of the greatest number possible.

I think that type of rationing system would continue if controls were lifted, and it would be more satisfactory because the merchants know the circumstances of their clients far better than can any man who sits in his office in Perth and deals with large numbers of applications. Such an officer has not the experience that is possessed by the merchants. I agree that some restrictions are warranted, and for that reason it is a pity we cannot amend the Bill. If it were possible, we would attempt to do so. We must take it or leave it. I feel inclined to leave it, and vote against the second reading of the measure.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East) [5.28]: I would like to see all controls of building materials lifted in respect of country districts. As that is apparently impossible, we have this continuance Bill before the House. It takes my mind back to two or more years ago when from public platforms, representatives of the Liberal Party chanted their slogan "Lift all controls." Today, nearly three years after the last general elections, we find there are more controls than ever, or, at any rate, just as many as before. We have the spectacle in this House of the Chief Secretary introducing a Bill to continue the operations of the Act, and members of his own Party opposing it.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is evidence of independence of thought.

Hon. W. R. HALL: There is a lot of independence of thought in this Chamber! Surely the action of the Minister in this respect is in the nature of a somersault. The people generally have had about enough of controls.

Members: Hear, hear.

Hon. W. R. HALL: They were all right during the war.

Hon. H. Hearn: I hope your Party believes what you say.

Hon. W. R. HALL: The war is over, and the people have had it as regards controls. I am not concerned about the strikes; they are not responsible for all the present shortages of building materials. So far as the Goldfields and the districts surrounding them are concerned, I have found that the time between applying for permits for building materials and the applications being finalised is too long. That remark applies also to the metropolitan area where people have to wait a considerable time before their applications are dealt with; and, as I said recently on the Supply Bill, it is time that this queueing up finished. Three or four months ago, as you, Mr. President, know, there was a brick kiln at Coolgardie.

The Chief Secretary: Bricks in the country are not controlled.

Hon. W. R. HALL: If the Chief Secretary will give me an opportunity to put my case, I will try to enlighten him as to what is in my mind with regard to the Coolgardie brickworks. Three or four months ago those works were closed down through lack of orders. That is a well-known fact. As a result, the directors of the company interviewed the State Housing Commission and were given eventually, I understand, an order for about £10,000 worth of bricks. Whether the money has been paid by the Treasury, or some arrangement made for its payment, I cannot say; but I know, as to some extent I handled the case, that the works closed down because of lack of orders.

Very few brick buildings are being erected in Kalgoorlie and there is little or no outlet for the sale of bricks on the Goldfields. There are, however, ample opportunities to sell the bricks in the metropolitan area. Had there been some cooperation between the Railway Department and the State Housing Commission, and had the Railway Department reduced the freight on the bricks, the kiln need not have been closed down at all, as there was a big demand for bricks in the metropolitan area,

and, of course, there was plenty of backloading for the trucks. According to "The West Australian," the Government recently reimposed control on bricks. In my opinion, it would have been in the interests of the State generally if the works at Coolgardie had been kept in production and the bricks sent to the metropolitan area. In that event it might not have been necessary to reimpose control on bricks.

I wish to refer to another matter. One of my constituents made application for building materials to repair a house which had been more or less condemned by a local authority; but he had to wait approximately six months before he got any satisfaction and the requisite approval to proceed with the work. It has been said that these controls benefit the contractors, who get most of the building materials, but would the position be any worse if controls were lifted? There would be no additional materials available for the general public, as the contractors would still get them. If controls were lifted, the people requiring materials might possibly have a better chance to procure them, though doubtless they would have to wait for months before their permits were approved by the State Housing Commission. Too much time is lost in having applications approved.

Another point I desire to bring before the House is the situation as to tiles, which the State Housing Commission seems to have sewn up. A person may own a house, the galvanised iron roof of which may be rotting on account of old age. It would be necessary for him to apply to the State Housing Commission to procure roofing tiles, because Wunderlich Ltd. will not supply them unless the Commission approves. The Commission is prepared to let people have tiles of an inferior quality but one cannot get Bristile or Wunderlich tiles unless the Commission approves. Even so, Wunderlich state that they are about two years behind with their orders. The whole position is entirely unsatisfactory and something should be done to relieve the acute shortage in country districts, especially when one considers the hundreds of new buildings that have been erected in the metropolitan area.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Thousands!

Hon. W. R. HALL: I did not like to go too far, as some member might say hundreds of thousands.

Hon. H. Hearn: The people in the metropolitan area are spoon-fed!

Hon. W. R. HALL: Yes, but not so the people in the country districts. I have no doubt that the metropolitan area is well served in comparison with the Goldfields and the surrounding districts, of which I can speak with some authority. I say without fear of contradiction that the Goldfields have had a raw deal as far as control of building materials and permits is concerned, and it is time something was done to release these controls in country districts.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [5.37]: I intend to support this continuance Bill because I believe that until supply equals demand it is necessary to control building materials.

Hon. H. Hearn: When will that be?

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I leave that to the hon. member to tell us; he seems to know everything, and he might know that. It is necessary to control certain commodities when they are in short supply so that the people most in need may have an opportunity to procure them. We find that the Government, for some reason or other, while removing controls over building materials, retained the permit system. Whatever use that was I cannot understand, as I know of one person who was able to obtain a lot of building materials with which he was about to commence to build a home for himself but he was unable to obtain a permit. The result is that the material is stacked on his block of land, where it is of no use to anybody else, and he is not permitted to use it.

But apparently the Government has seen the error of its ways and has now re-imposed control on bricks and cement. I am sorry the Government has not re-imposed control on timber. I know of people who need flooring boards to replace floors in some of the older houses in my province, the existing floors having been white ant eaten. It is not necessary to obtain a permit for these boards, but nevertheless these people find it impossible to obtain a sufficient quantity to refloor their houses. I venture to say that if the material were under control and they were able to establish a need, they would be able to get a permit for the small quantity of timber necessary to effect the repairs.

While bricks and cement were decontrolled, I noticed that some people were able to put down granolithic paths and construct brick balustrades and brick fences. It appears

to me that it is not what one knows, but whom one knows, and that people with sufficient influence can obtain building materials. Hence we find that building materials are used for work that at present is non-essential and could be left until such time as more material was available. There are eating-houses at Fremantle needing alterations and renovations in order to comply with bylaws, but these have been held up for six months. One reason given was that bricks were not available ; and in one case the people were told that it would be six months before the bricks could be procured.

I think the Government has realised the situation because it has brought bricks and cement under control again. I do not know that anyone is desirous of controls being continued any longer than is necessary ; but until such time as there are sufficient materials to meet the demand, I consider the Government has done the right thing in asking for control to be continued for another year. I support the second reading.

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

BILL—MENTAL INSTITUTION BENEFITS (COMMONWEALTH AND STATE AGREEMENT).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.42] in moving the second reading said : In May, 1948, the Commonwealth Government suggested that the States cease collecting maintenance charges from the estates of mental patients and their relatives and that, in return, the Commonwealth pay the States the equivalent of such collections. No capital expenditure was contemplated under this scheme nor was there to be any payment on behalf of patients from whom no maintenance fees were received.

All the States, except Queensland and Western Australia, accepted this proposal in principle, Queensland and Western Australia contending that a more suitable scheme would be the payment of invalid pensions to mental patients. A sum for their maintenance could then be deducted from the pension. This would ease the burden on the States, as few mental patients are able to pay for their keep. In the financial year, 1947-48, the cost to this State of maintaining mental patients was £192,000, of which only £15,250, or eight per cent., was recovered.

The Commonwealth scheme would advantage neither the patient nor State finances, the only persons benefiting being relatives, who are asked to pay only if they can afford to do so, and beneficiaries under patients' estates. I would point out that if a person is sent to the Hospital for the Insane, his estate is taken over by the Public Trustee and his maintenance paid out of the estate. The State Government could see no reason why there should be any distinction between mentally and physically ill persons so far as their eligibility for invalid pensions was concerned.

This point of view was submitted to the Commonwealth Government, but not accepted, the Prime Minister, in a letter dated the 20th December, 1948, stating that it would mean a substantial new grant to the State revenue by the Commonwealth, which intended only to relieve mental patients or their relatives of fees and not to take any action which would affect the Commonwealth-State financial relations. The State Government was, therefore, left no option but to accept the Commonwealth scheme in its entirety, and the agreement with the Commonwealth was duly signed.

The agreement is set out in the schedule to the Bill and reveals that the Commonwealth payment to the State in each financial year will be assessed by multiplying the Commonwealth mental institution benefit rate by the number of patient-days in the year. The benefit rate, which can be altered from time to time by agreement between the Commonwealth and the State, is 8d. This amount was arrived at by dividing the amount of fees received from patients and relatives, £15,250 in the financial year, 1947-48, by the number of patient days in that year, viz., 510,279. The average actually worked out to 7.173d. per patient-day but the Commonwealth Government proposes to pay 8d.

For members' information, I may state that 1,459 persons were inmates of mental hospitals in 1947-1948, and of these, 61 were persons being paid for by the Repatriation Commission. Some payments were received on behalf of 321 patients, and none at all for 1,077 patients. The actual cost to the State for each patient was £2 10s. 11d. per week, and the average

weekly amount received on behalf of the 321 paying patients was 18s. 3d. The agreement provides that no means test shall be imposed on mental patients, and that no charge shall be made for services or comforts for which there was no charge prior to the 1st November, 1948, except with Commonwealth approval. The agreement is valid for five years and thereafter until such time as either party gives twelve months' notice.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: From when does it take effect?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is mentioned in the measure. The position is that the Commonwealth says, "Those people who pay all or partial maintenance of patients shall be relieved of making those payments." But that does not help the State at all in maintaining the homes, because the Commonwealth will only pay what the State already receives, so that instead of the State getting the money from the people who already pay, it will be obtained from the Commonwealth. The measure is, I think, somewhat unfair, but nevertheless it is the best we can do for the next five years, or until some alterations can be made by a Premiers' Conference. On the ground that this is the best we can do, I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.48]: I intend to support the second reading, and in doing so I want to say that I regret the State Government did not sign up when the opportunity was originally offered. I admit that it was only a little earlier, but still I think it would have been better had the State signed at that time and so received the money for a longer period, rather than have continued the agitation for the overall payment. I think it rather threw away some substance for a shadow.

The Chief Secretary: When was that?

Hon. G. FRASER: I cannot remember the date. I think some of the other States signed an agreement about 12 months or two years ago. I am of the opinion that some time has been lost. Had the Government signed when most of the other States did, some relatives would have had relief in connection with money they have paid during that period. I have often argued with Federal members that all the inmates of mental institutions should come under the Invalid and Old-age Pensions Act. However, the Government has come good at last.

The measure will no doubt considerably relieve many patients' relatives who have been paying. I quite freely admit that many have not paid, and possibly that includes some who could have done so. I know of instances where relatives have been contributing at very great cost to themselves. They will be relieved of those contributions by this measure. I hope the Government will still continue, notwithstanding that it has been unsuccessful to date, with its endeavours to get the Commonwealth Government to agree to bring these people under the Invalid and Old-age Pensions Act, because apart altogether from the benefit the State will derive from the payment for all patients, there are certain comforts that can be provided for the patients with the money represented by the difference between the cost of maintenance and the amount they would draw from the invalid pension.

Quite a number of these people are probably beyond knowing whether they are in comfort or otherwise, but nevertheless a fair percentage of them could enjoy the comforts that the extra money could provide. So, I hope the fight will be continued, and that eventually success will be obtained so that the full invalid pension will be paid.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (East) [5.51]: I support the Bill, and am most anxious to see it implemented. We must not forget that while a great number of people contribute to the maintenance of relatives who are inmates of mental homes, some do not contribute at all. Fortunately we have provided in the Divorce Act of this State that a person whose spouse is an inmate of a mental home may marry again. Some such people have been young, with the result that they are expected to make contributions to the care of their relatives in a mental home, as well as maintain a wife and family outside. In some instances it has been very hard.

While I do not think adequate payment is being made, I agree with Mr. Fraser that it would be better if the inmates of these institutions could have some sort of a pension, such as is provided for those in the Old Men's Home and in the Old Women's

Home. We provide for people who are physically ill, but not for those who are mentally ill.

The Chief Secretary: That was the argument.

Hon. SIR CHARLES LATHAM: It is a very sound argument, too. Had they been provided for as they should have been, the State would not have been expected to bear the expense, and as a result the relatives would have been materially assisted. Quite a number of relatives feel they are under an obligation to make some payment. It is a bit distressing to find some patients in mental homes with no possible hope for their future, and who appear to have not many, apart from the officers of the service itself, to care for them. I believe the Government will financially benefit by this Bill. I still maintain that the State Government should continue any reasonable agitation to make the Commonwealth Government realise, as it has accepted the responsibility of pensions, that it should make invalid pensions available for people who are mentally ill.

There is a difference between being physically ill and being mentally ill. Some people who are being kept in our gaols today are mentally ill. They have an unaccountable kink in the brain and so violate our laws, in consequence of which we put them in gaol. Those people ought to be cared for in the same way as we look after people with physical disabilities. I will do anything I can at any time to help this Government to get the Commonwealth, which is responsible for pensions, to render assistance to these people by way of an invalid pension.

On motion by Hon. H. K. Watson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.55 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 26th July, 1949.

CONTENTS.

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

QUESTIONS.

ELECTORAL ACT.

(a) As to Objections to Enrolment.

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Attorney General:

What section of the Electoral Act gives power to electoral registrars to object to the name of any elector remaining on the roll solely because the elector is at a different place of residence from that shown on the roll, although still in the same district?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

Section 48 of the Electoral Act, 1907-1948, is the section which gives electoral registrars the right to object to any name on the roll.

(b) As to Amending Legislation.

Mr. RODOREDA (without notice) asked the Attorney General:

In view of the answer given to my question, does he intend to amend the Act so that the provisions of Section 11 can be enforced?