Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 9th August, 1949.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Deputy President, election of Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	982
Question: Hospitals, as to medical staff, Fremantle	982
Bills: Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment (Continuance), 3r., passed	982
Acts Amendment (Increase in Number of Judges of the Supreme Court), 3r., passed	983
Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment (No. 4), 2r.	982
Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment, 2r., Com., report	986
Water Boards Act Amendment, Com., report	986
Land Sales Control Act Amendment (Continuance), 2r.	987
Superannuation, Sick, Death, Insurance, Guarantee and Endowment (Local Governing Bodies' Employees) Funds Act Amendment, 2r.	987
Guildford Old Cemetery (Lands Revestment), 2r.	988
Bees Act Amendment, 2r.	989
Petroleum Act Amendment, 2r.	990

DEPUTY PRESIDENT—ELECTION OF HON. J. A. DIMMITT.

The Clerk (Mr. L. L. Leake): I have to announce that the President, Hon. H. Seddon, is absent. It is therefore necessary for members to elect one of their number, now present, to fill the office, perform the duties and exercise the authority of the President during such absence.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved:

That Hon. J. A. Dimmitt be elected to fill the office, perform the duties and exercise the authority of the President during the absence of Hon. H. Seddon.

(*The Deputy President took the Chair.*)

QUESTION.

HOSPITALS.

As to Medical Staff, Fremantle.

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

Is the Minister aware—

(1) That the Resident Medical Staff at Fremantle Hospital consists of only three?

(2) That the number of doctors required to efficiently attend patients is six?

(3) That two of the medical staff will be leaving the hospital shortly—one awaiting a call to the Women's Hospital, Melbourne, and the other leaving at the end of the present month or early in September?

(4) If so, what arrangements are being made to replace these doctors and increase the medical staff?

(5) If not, will the Minister take urgent measures to remedy the unsatisfactory position?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: replied.

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes.

(4) and (5) Every effort is being made to adjust the position satisfactorily.

A new superintendent is to arrive from England immediately, but the position is complicated by the general shortage of doctors and a reluctance of junior residents to accept employment at Fremantle.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment (Continuance).

2, Acts Amendment (Increase in Number of Judges of the Supreme Court).

Passed.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT (No. 4).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th August.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (East) [4.39]: This is a class of Bill which members of this Chamber would not readily agree to vote against, but I would say it is probably one of the cruellest Bills that have been introduced in this Parliament. First of all we have to remember that, collectively, we owe a responsibility to the returned soldier and his dependants. We are collectively, prepared to accept that responsibility, but by this class of legislation we are throwing, in addition, the responsibility on to the house-owner to provide a home for these people. As it is our responsibility collectively we should see that they have homes, and not ask individuals to be responsible.

There are numerous cases in this State of people who are receiving old age pensions, or who would be entitled to receive them

if they were living in their own home, Because they are not able to get possession of their home and are living elsewhere, they have to take into account the rent they receive, and so they are placed at a terrific disadvantage. This House, and the Government, should not force individuals to accept this responsibility. In each of these cases the State Housing Commission should have accepted the responsibility of finding a home as speedily as possible. I do not think we are entitled to say to the individual, "Not only will you accept this responsibility with us, but in addition you will make a further contribution."

So I would like the Minister, when he is replying, to tell us that his Government will accept the responsibility of finding homes for these people, particularly where the homes of old age pensioners are already occupied. Besides the old age pensioners, there are others who have served their country in a very generous way. I am talking of those who went out into the backblocks and pioneered the State, men who in their younger days saved a little money and so were enabled to purchase a property either in the metropolitan area or some country town, to which they could retire in their old age when they were no longer capable of earning a living.

Some of these places are occupied by the people who are protected under the Bill. The owners of those homes find themselves in the unfortunate position of having to stay as long as they are permitted in an hotel—and they are not allowed to stay for very long—and then moving on to another, so that they are continually changing from place to place. I reluctantly support the measure, not because I am not prepared to accept my responsibility to those people who are entitled to the best we can give them, but because I feel we should shoulder some of the additional responsibility that we are throwing on the individual by this legislation. It is only fair, therefore, that we should ask the Minister to tell his Government that this is a collective and not an individual responsibility

The Returned Soldiers' League has more or less brought pressure to bear upon the Government to introduce the measure. It has been in operation for a long time—I think about four or five years—under the regulations promulgated by the Commonwealth Government. Those regulations afforded protection until they were set aside by the High Court. No doubt the judges who arrived at the decision must have felt, as I do, that it is not fair to ask—

The Chief Secretary: You do not suggest that is the reason for the judgment?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No.

The Chief Secretary: Of course, they could not.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not say they gave it as their reason, but that they must have felt as I do. Their reason was that it was outside the powers of the Commonwealth Government to do this.

The Chief Secretary: That is so.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Any fair-minded man will agree with me that this is a responsibility which should be accepted by the community as a whole. It is with a great deal of reluctance that I am compelled to agree to the measure. I do so only because I feel that we should not throw these people out on the streets without providing some accommodation for them. Some people will make no attempt to procure a home of their own while this legislation is on the statute book. When an application is made to the court—as is provided for in the Bill—the State Housing Commission should make a note of the individual and see that an application is made by him for the State to accept the responsibility of finding him a home, instead of some individual.

I am not the only one in this House who is continually getting letters from people telling distressing stories, and how they have been left without the home that they had provided for themselves in the days gone by. I hope other members will indicate their views on the Bill. I may be wrong. I would like to have the support of members, because I do not want to be the only one to express myself in this way, as I think others feel the same as I do. I hope, if I am in this Chamber when Parliament is next called together, that the State will have provided homes for those people who are now having shelter made available to them by individuals.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [4.48]: I will not let the hon. member wait very long for some support of his remarks. We ought to be prepared to give protection to the genuine returned soldier, but we know

that many people are not worthy of the consideration extended to them by the Bill, and that they have taken advantage of it. When we sum up what will be the greatest good for the greatest number, I think we must vote for the measure. Like Sir Charles Latham, I realise that the State Housing Commission or the Government has not done all that is possible for this particular section of the community. We know that these people can get consideration for the building of a home from the War Service Homes Commission.

When we appreciate the number of discharges that have taken place since the war ended—I think in the Army alone there have been something like 23,000 and, in addition, there are those from the Air Force and the Navy—we would be safe in saying that something like 30,000 people were discharged during the period from the middle of 1945 to about the middle of 1946. As a result, the War Service Homes Commission was not able to cope with anywhere near the number of applications it received. I did keep check on the progress of that department in its dealing with the applications, until quite recently. Some thousands were received during the period between about October, 1945, and June, 1946. Until recently, the department had reached the stage of giving consideration only to applications made up to April, May and June of 1946.

Hon. E. M. Davies: The officials have reached June and July now.

Hon. G. FRASER: I have not made any inquiries over the last few weeks, but when I recently interviewed the department, it had reached the stage of dealing with applications lodged in April, May and June of 1946. Although the department has reviewed, in some manner, applications up to that period, it does not mean that every application lodged has been given full consideration. A large number have been adjourned to a later date because of an alteration in policy. This alteration provides that no application shall be approved unless the applicant is suffering acutely from lack of accommodation. So we find that no application lodged since July, 1946, has received consideration. Whilst I am satisfied that the War Service Homes Commission has given all that it possibly could, no assistance has been rendered by the Housing Commission or the Government to relieve the war service homes section in connection with its large number of applications.

One puzzling feature about application forms for either tenancy homes or permits to build is that a question is asked of the applicant as to the war zones in which he served, and the periods of that service. He is also requested to state the Service to which he belonged, and so on. It is a waste of time answering those questions because that is the last that is heard of the matter. No consideration is given to a returned soldier under the ordinary civilian conditions for a permit to build. That being so, why are the questions asked? The only consideration shown to those who served in the Forces is by the War Service Homes Commission. We must also realise that that Commission does not build homes for tenancy purposes and therefore all those who are not in a position to build receive no assistance other than that granted to the ordinary civilian. The question is asked on the form, but no consideration is given to it.

Like Sir Charles Latham, I believe that something should be done for people who are not able to receive full consideration from the War Service Homes Commission. The Commission is being administered by the State Housing Commission, but, of course, the department can only issue permits according to the grants made under that heading. We must realise, too, that there are many different phases of the War Service Homes Commission. Even with these various phases, quite a number of people are still unable to receive full consideration. Therefore I hope the Government will heed the remarks of members respecting the Bill and, from a State point of view, do something more for our returned soldiers. I would particularly like the Government to give consideration to the tenancy angle. I do not want to reiterate my previous remarks, but I impress upon the Government that there is an increasing number of people requiring attention through the tenancy section of the State Housing Commission. Owing to rising costs, a larger number of people are applying under that heading.

Many ex-Servicemen, at the time of their discharge, had large sums of money available to them by way of deferred pay, gratuity and so on. In addition, a number of them had been able to save during their service and were in a position to be regarded as potential home-builders. Because they

were not able to get permits, their money has dwindled and the recent rise in costs has made it impossible for them to even consider the building of a home. This has forced them to drop the idea and they have withdrawn their war service homes applications and applied for tenancy houses. These facts can be checked at the State Housing Commission. We must also realise that many of those men, when they returned from service, had the money to build but no family; now they have the family but no money.

Hon. H. Hearn: Stock instead of cash!

Hon. G. FRASER: The old saying, when I was a boy, was that "money is stock," but in certain classes of stock, such as human beings, that is not so. Therefore, through no fault of their own, these people who have done their duty to their country are removed from the category of potential home-builders and placed in the class of rentpayers. A check of applications at the War Service Homes Commission will prove that a number of ex-Servicemen had sufficient money to provide deposits on their homes but they are now unable to build because of increased costs. Originally they were called upon to lodge deposits only, but now they have to lodge a further sum to cover the rise and fall of costs clause. This means that the sum originally needed for a deposit has practically doubled and, no matter how anxious these men are to build, the added costs make it impossible for them to do so. I repeat that I trust the Government will do something to increase the number of homes made available to ex-Servicemen, either by way of civilian permits to build or through the tenancy scheme.

One other point I wish to raise concerns leased premises. Whilst I am prepared to give every consideration to the ordinary individual, I think some alteration should be made to cover people who sign leases and then ask for protection under this Act. I know of some bad cases which come under that heading where people were prepared to lease their homes for a year or two but afterwards found that the Act prevented them from evicting the tenants. In many cases they were people who had done good turns and were penalised in consequence. If the Bill is passed in its present form it will still protect that particular class of tenant. This will prevent ex-Servicemen from being able to lease properties in the future because people who own them will say that it will be impossible to evict returned soldier tenants, even though they have signed leases, because such men will be protected by the Act while it is in force. I do not know just how many ex-Servicemen are at present leasing premises, but I guarantee that if the Bill is passed in its present form, no returned soldiers will be able to obtain leased properties. Therefore I think the House would be well advised to amend the Bill in that respect. Whilst I have not given the matter full consideration, I think a way out of the difficulty would be to make a returned soldier lessee liable to eviction at the expiration of his lease. That would give some protection to the person who owns a property and would not preclude ex-Servicemen from being able to lease homes. I again repeat that I hope the Government will give further consideration to ex-Servicemen under all headings of the housing programme. If that course is followed, I am sure members will feel that they have done the right thing in voting for the second reading of the measure. I support the Bill.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [5.0]: I also support the second reading of the Bill. I shall mention two cases that I previously referred to just before the House adjourned prior to Christmas. One had reference to a miner at Kalgoorlie who was a returned soldier. He contracted not only a complaint during his war service but an industrial disease as a result of his work in the mines. His doctor ordered him away from the fields to the coastal districts. He had a home here but another ex-Servicemen was occupying it. The latter brought his relatives and their families down with him to the coast, and they made quite a crowd. The owner could not get possession of his home and he was in trouble. In that instance the Minister was able to do something for him. Owing to the special circumstances and in view of the letter the doctor had given to me for the perusal of the Minister, he made available a converted hut for the accommodation of the man and his family.

The second case referred to a Boulder resident and it still continues. He is an old age pensioner who let his home to a returned soldier for a certain period. While his house was let, he lived in an old camp he had erected at the back of the property. When he sought to regain possession of his home, he was told he could not get it because the other returned man desired to

retain it for the accommodation of his family. That man had made special provision for himself in his old age so that he would be able to live in comfortable conditions. As a result of allowing the other returned man and his family to live in his home for a certain period, he is now forced to exist in an old humpy that is not really fit for him to live in. Furthermore, the rent he receives from the letting of his home has been deducted from his pension.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Which means a loss of income to him.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. Not only has he that loss of income but he has to suffer the inconvenience arising from his inability to regain possession of his own home. I know of many other such cases, and possibly members are acquainted with others. Many old people have homes here but because they cannot gain possession of them, they are forced to live with families that include a number of young children. That is out of all reason. Old people should not be forced to put up with such conditions, for they are entitled to the comfort of their own homes.

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

BILL—RIGHTS IN WATER AND IRRIGATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th August.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.4]: I support the second reading of the Bill because it is designed to cope with a position that was not contemplated when the parent Act was framed. Moreover, if the present state of affairs is allowed to continue it will have a serious effect upon those who are engaged in irrigation operations in the three areas already proclaimed in the South-West.

It must be remembered that Western Australia has had little experience in irrigation operations. The first attempt on a large scale was at Harvey, but the original scheme was confined to the weir there and it served a relatively small number of people living in a somewhat circumscribed area. Experience showed that irrigation in that part of the State was so successful and desirable from every point of view that other larger projects were undertaken, such as the Stirling Dam. Those works are still providing huge quantities of water for irrigation purposes spread over large areas. The capital cost of maintenance and looking after the original weir was not very great and, in those circumstances, it is not difficult to understand why the principal Act was framed as it stands.

The position has arisen now, however, whereby water from the reservoirs within the Harvey area is used in other districts; with the result that if the Act is not amended, inequality in rating matters will be emphasised. The Honorary Minister for Agriculture explained the position very clearly and I have no intention of traversing that phase to any extent. If the amendments embodied in the Bill are not given effect to now, they will very definitely have to receive the attention of Parliament in the near future. If the use of irrigation extends in the South-West, as it is sure to do, we shall have greater problems to deal with, and I am afraid that if the position is not corrected now, there will be an outcry later on. I have no hesitation whatever in commending the Bill to the House.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.8]: Unfortunately, I was not able to be present when the Honorary Minister for Agriculture explained the provisions of the Bill. In the circumstances, I would like him to put me right if I am wrong. I assume that the purpose of the amendment is to enable areas to be divided into sub-areas for rating purposes.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: That is the position. We cannot do that now.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 4th August. Hon. G. Fraser in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 2 had been agreed to.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—LAND SALES CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.12] in moving the second reading said: This is another of the Bills that, unfortunately, has to be brought forward because of existing conditions. In this instance the Bill deals with the sale of land on which there are improvements, such as a house. The fear is that if the sale of properties with residences on them be uncontrolled, then prices may rise to an unreasonable extent. That situation would affect rents and, as members are aware, rents constitute a factor in connection with the determination of the basic wage. In such circumstances, it simply means that costs go on snowballing.

It is proposed to extend the operations of the Land Sales Control Act for a further twelve months, ending on the 31st December, 1950. Members will recollect that last year, following the Commonwealth Government's decision, after the result of the referendum was known, to relinquish control of land sales as from the 20th September, 1948, the principal Act that the Bill seeks to amend was passed here. Under the Act, regulations were made excluding certain classes of property from control, and those classes included vacant land of not more than one acre, business and licensed premises, control thus being maintained over residential and rural properties. Prices have not risen to the extent that was feared.

There is a certain volume of blackmarketing going on but that is largely because of the number of people with money who are arriving here from oversea and find immediately on landing here that the value of their money is inflated by 25 per cent. Not knowing the relative values of property here, they constitute an easy mark for the blackmarketeer. It is extremely difficult to catch such an offender, but efforts are being made to prevent blackmarketing and to keep prices of dwellings and house property generally on a proper level.

It is certainly felt that some control is necessary and that if the present control were lifted blackmarket prices might be regarded as the market values. This, of course, would affect building costs, which would in turn force up rents and inevitably affect wages. An inflationary trend would almost certainly continue until supply equalled demand, and we can be certain that this is not likely to happen during the 12 months asked for in the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—SUPERANNUATION, SICK, DEATH, INSURANCE, GUARANTEE AND ENDOWMENT (LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES' EMPLOYEES) FUNDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker — Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.16] in moving the second reading said: Members will recollect that in 1947 Parliament passed a Bill authorising local governing bodies to provide superannuation schemes for their employees. This Act sets out that, subject to the approval of the Governor, local governing bodies—or "corporations" as they are termed in the Act—may, individually or collectively, institute schemes for superannuation, sick, death, insurance and guarantee funds for their staff. The funds can be established and maintained by the ordinary revenue of the corporation or from deductions out of the wages of employees who voluntarily elect to join.

Some little time ago the King's Park Board asked that it be allowed to formulate a similar scheme for its employees. To bring this about, it was considered preferable to amend the principal Act, which provides the necessary machinery, rather than amend the Parks and Reserves Act, which would be a more cumbersome method than the one adopted. It is therefore proposed to extend the definition of "corporation" which at present means a municipal council or a road board, to include a "board of parks and reserves appointed under the Parks and Reserves Act, 1895–1947." This will allow the boards appointed under the Parks and Reserves Act to institute superannuation schemes should they wish, subject to the approval of the Governor.

No doubt members will wonder who will be affected by the Bill. The King's Park Board has 15 employees, and amongst the boards to whom the amending measure would apply are also the State Gardens Board, with 60 employees, the Karrakatta Cemetery Board with 24 employees, and the Rottnest Board of Control with 12. In

the future some of these boards may desire to have their own superannuation schemes; and if that course is approved by the Governor, they will come under this Act without any further legislation being necessary.

There is another small amendment in the Bill which rectifies an omission in the Act. Members will notice that the Title of the Act as shown in the Bill includes the word "endowment"; but Section 3, which provides for the institution of superannuation and other schemes, does not include that word. This amendment is purely a formal one.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It has a big meaning though. It means the expenditure of money.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If members will read the measure, they will find that it does not alter in any way the principle of the Act. It is important that this error be rectified, as endowment schemes have been adopted under the legislation by a number of local authorities. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion, by Hon. E. M. Davies, debate adjourned.

BILL—GUILDFORD OLD CEMETERY (LANDS REVESTMENT).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.20] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to enable the old cemetery just outside the Guildford Grammer School church to be taken over by the Diocesan Trustees and to revest in the Crown the site of that cemetery. When the revestment has been made, a grant will be issued to the Diocesan Trustees. I am quite sure that all members have deplored the condition of the cemetery and the lack of care that has been occasioned by a peculiar set of circumstances.

The history of the cemetery is very much bound up with that of the State. It was originally part of the first grant of land ever made in Western Australia. This grant was one of about 4,000 acres made to Governor Stirling and it became known as the Woodbridge Estate. The records of the Diocesan Trustees reveal that Sir James Stirling donated part of this estate to the Colonial Missionary Society for a church, the foundation stone of which was laid by the Governor in 1836, the church and churchyard being consecrated 12 years later by the Bishop of Adelaide, under whose jurisdiction the church in this portion of Australia came at that time. In course of time the church was demolished and the graveyard, which was full, fell into a state of disrepair.

In 1935 the Guildford Grammar School authorities requested that some attention be given to the cemetery. It was then discovered that the title to the cemetery had never been transferred and still remained in the name of Governor Stirling. No further action was taken until recently, when the Diocesan Trustees asked whether the cemetery could be placed in their care. A considerable amount of research work was carried out by officers of the Lands and Surveys Department, who were eventually satisfied that, although no record existed of the transfer, the site of the cemetery was the area that had been donated by Governor Stirling to the Colonial Missionary Society.

A deed was found under which Governor Stirling's executors sold part of the Woodbridge Estate, the deed specifically excluding certain lands that had been sold by Sir James and also the Guildford cemetery and church site. No deed has ever been found of the transfer of the church site, but there is no doubt of that having been done because it is recited in the deed of the transfer of some of the other land. When Sir James's executors had completed the necessary transactions, and titles had been issued to the new owners, it was found that an area of three roods, 1 6/10th perches remained, this being the area of the cemetery. It is proposed that portion of the property be excised for very necessary road corner truncation purposes, but this will not affect the site of the graves. The area which will be used for this purpose has been agreed upon by the Diocesan Trustees, the Main Roads Department and the Lands Department.

The Bill provides that the Diocesan Trustees shall maintain the cemetery in proper condition at their own expense and that the public shall be allowed free access during the hours of daylight. The trustees will be given power to re-group the monuments, headstones and grave fittings as they wish, but not to interfere in any way with human remains. The trustees propose to re-group in cruciform shape the headstones and monuments and set them in concrete as near as possible to the site of the old church.

The rest of the area will be beautified by grass and trees. The cemetery will be properly cared for and will serve as a memorial to the pioneers who rest there.

Looking through the list of graves that have been found, I discovered that the first burial was in 1832, when an officer of the Royal Navy buried an infant child. The next year he buried another infant child, and the following year he unfortunately died and was buried there himself. The last record of a grave is that of his widow who died in 1882, 50 years afterwards. So the cemetery is an historical monument and I feel that it cannot be better looked after than in the manner provided by the Bill.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is that not where the school chapel is situated?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is right alongside.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Not in the grounds?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Will the headstones be shifted the same as was done in Bunbury?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is not desired to move the bodies.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: What about the headstones?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is proposed to move them and put them in a cruciform style on the site of the old church. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. L. Loton, debate adjourned.

BILL—BEES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [5.26] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to amend the Bees Act of 1930, since which date there has been no amendment to the Act. Conditions have changed very considerably in the intervening period. In 1930 most of the bee-keepers were practically stationary: that is to say, they set up their hives in a certain place and stayed there. Nowadays bee-keepers are migratory as a rule and can be found travelling all over the country, looking for new trees and blossoms which have not previously been exploited by the bees.

Recently we had the extraordinary experience in Western Australia of an influx of millions of bees from New South Wales because the bee-keepers considered that the trees here were understocked. I mention these things to indicate that we have to face up to different conditions today, as regards bee-keeping, from those which previously existed. There are many more bee-keepers here than there were some time ago. That, as I have said, has been brought about by this State being considered a good country for bees, because there are plenty of trees and reasonably high prices can be obtained for honey.

Consequently bee-keeping has advanced fairly considerably since 1930, and the production of honey is a very desirable industry indeed. I know that the people of England are very anxious to have our honey, which has been of great benefit to them during the period of shortage of foodstuffs. The Bill alters the long Title of the old Act, which is called "An Act for the Prevention and Eradication of Contagious Diseases Amongst Bees." That is not as far-reaching as is necessary today, and the Title is to be altered to read, "An Act relating to the Regulation and Control of the Keeping of Bees and the Control and Restriction of Diseases and Pests affecting Bees and for other purposes."

So it will be seen that the Bill, when it becomes an Act, will be more far-reaching than the parent Act. It is necessary to alter the methods of registration. Under the legislation at present bee-keepers are registered once only, but it has been found that over the years many bee-keepers have died or gone out of production. This has led to considerable confusion in finding out where they are or what has happened to them. It has tended to lessen the control that is necessary for the elimination of disease and other purposes. In the Bill it is proposed that bee-keepers shall register every year, which I think highly desirable.

A further amendment deals with the classification of hives and sites. Provision is made for a Class A. apiary, which is one comprising less than 50 hives, and a Class B. apiary, which comprises not less than 50 hives, together with provision for an apiary that breeds queen bees. The Bill also deals with sites for migratory bee-keepers who for some reason or other go away for perhaps six months from their original sites and return perhaps for the rest of the year.

This will reserve their sites for them on return. Provision is made also for the branding of hives. That is to be contained in regulations and is necessary in order to prevent the stealing of hives.

Under the measure bee-keepers will be forced to provide water for their bees and will be required to set their hives down in places where sufficient water is available. There was a nasty experience recently at Baker's Hill, where some unauthorised person set his hives down without providing water. The bees were a continual worry to the residents and, as the hives were not branded or registered, it was impossible to tell to whom they belonged. It was not until a long time afterwards that the owner was found and was made to remove the hives to a site where sufficient water was available. I think members will agree that these amendments are desirable.

Provision is also made to meet the case of a man who deserts his bees and leaves them without sufficient water or food, or who neglects them generally. The Bill provides in such cases that the hives may be seized by an inspector. Most of the amendments have been considered by the Bee-keepers' Association. At the bee-keepers conference recently I promised that I would not object to the Bill being held up while the association studied it, after I had moved the second reading. I understand that an hon. member will obtain the adjournment this afternoon and take the Bill to the Bee-keepers' Association, which has a committee to consider the measure. They will be able to give full consideration to any of the amendments, especially should they think some of them undesirable. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—PETROLEUM ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.35] in moving the second reading said: I feel that members will be interested to have explained to them the laws relating to petroleum in Western Australia. In this State the search for petroleum is controlled by the Petroleum Act that was passed in 1936 and considerably amended in 1940. It provides that companies or individuals desirous of searching for oil must obtain a permit to explore an area of not less than 1,000 square miles—which permit is in force for two years and may be renewed for periods of 12 months.

When the permit is granted a fee of £100 must be paid and a bond of £1,000 entered into. Within three months of the date of issue of the permit, the holder must institute an aerial, geophysical or geological survey of the area covered by his permit. He is required to submit quarterly reports to the Mines Department describing the operations, and these reports must be accompanied by full geological maps of the area surveyed. There are companies that have been operating in Western Australia and are at present doing extensive work in this State.

Expeditions from the U.S.A. have been particularly active in many parts of the North-West. No doubt members have seen in the Press reports to the effect that there is an excellent chance of oil being discovered in this State. If the holder of a permit to explore has been successful in his operations, he may then be granted a license to prospect a defined area, which must not exceed 200 square miles. This license remains operative for four years but may be renewed for two periods of 12 months each. At first he is granted the right to explore 1,000 square miles and, having done that, he applies for permission to prospect an area of 200 square miles.

Within six months of the granting of the license to prospect, a detailed geological survey must be commenced and any trace of oil must be at once reported to the Mines Department. If oil is located an oil lease or leases may be applied for and the amendment provides that the licensee shall then be entitled, after application, to be granted one or two leases of an area of not more than 100 square miles each. The first amendment is to Section 55 of the Act and provides that any person who holds a license to prospect and who discovers petroleum shall be entitled as of right, within six months of discovery or a further term allowed by the Minister, to obtain a lease or leases within the area of his license. It is felt that persons who have spent large sums in exploring and prospecting for oil should be entitled to a lease if oil is found.

The Act at present provides for the mandatory granting of a lease to the first discoverer of petroleum in the State irrespective of that person having done explora-

tory work or any prospecting, so long as the discoverer holds a license to prospect. The next amendment refers to the period for which a petroleum lease may be granted. Under the Act the maximum period is 21 years, but at the end of that time successive renewals of 21 years may be applied for and granted. This wording is not considered sufficiently definite by the interests that have been operating in this State.

I fear that on occasion some of them have perhaps had to deal in another part of the world where an Act of Parliament saying that the Governor may do something means literally that he may, whereas here it means that it is almost mandatory for him to do it. The American interests operating in Western Australia have requested that they be given something more definite than "may." I think that on reading the measure members will agree that if there is a lease for 21 years and the lessee may apply for and be granted an extension of 21 years that is fairly definite, as it is what has applied on the Goldfields.

The American interests have pointed out that it would be difficult to raise the finance necessary for exploration and development unless the legislation provided something more definite. This Bill, therefore, provides that the lease shall be for 21 years and shall continue thereafter as long as oil is being produced from at least one well on the lease.

Hon. L. Craig: Is there any limitation with regard to the quantity of oil to be produced?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They have to produce the oil efficiently, and that entails the erection of considerable plant, including the laying of pipe-lines, storage facilities and other expensive equipment. It is obvious that 21 years' lease would not be long enough to repay them for all that outlay. In view of the great importance to Australia of the search for oil it is proposed to follow the practice that has proved successful in America. It is, as I have explained, that after the term of 21 years is up, the lease continues so long as the lessee is producing oil from at least one well on the lease. This is so that a lessee cannot just sit tight on it. Apparently they are satisfied with that provision, which applies in America.

Hon. G. Fraser: They could produce a minimum quantity.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They could not do that, owing to the enormous expense. At all events, that aspect would be watched and it is within the powers of Parliament to alter the provisions at any time. The last amendment is designed for the purpose of permitting the sale of oil oversea. As members will recall, the Act provides that all oil produced must be refined in Australia. It would be absurd for us to lay down that the crude oil could not be exported, as Australia could not use all the by-products of the refining of the oil. The Bill provides that the whole of Australia's requirements must be refined in Australia before any crude oil may be exported. Members will agree that that is only fair because if there is a large supply of oil available, it would be extremely uneconomical not to export the raw product. However, members may rest assured that no Commonwealth Government would allow that oil to be exported if it were required in Australia.

On reading the Bill, members will find that there is not a great deal of difference in it except that permission is granted for oil to be exported. The term is virtually the same and the first amendment, granting the right to the first lease on which a company may have spent so much money, is only fair and reasonable. I feel that members will not be able to find much fault with this amendment which has been designed at the request of those who have already spent a tremendous sum of money and have explored, and are continuing to explore, the possibility of oil being discovered in this State. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

House adjourned at 5.47 p.m.