

an amendment to strike out all words after the word "that" in line 1 with a view of inserting the following words:—

This House agrees that the construction of a railway south of the Swan River is desirable, but considers its construction should take place only as soon as the position of supplies and more urgent works make it reasonably practicable.

The Premier: The member for Fremantle would agree to that.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think I will have to move it in two parts.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move—

That all words after the word "that" in line 1 be struck out.

On motion by Mr. Marshall, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.5 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 20th September, 1951.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Presentation.

The PRESIDENT: In company with several members, I waited on His Excellency the Administrator and presented to

him the Address-in-reply to His Excellency's Speech agreed to by this House, and His Excellency has been pleased to make the following reply:—

Mr. President and hon. members of
Legislative Council—

I thank you for your expressions of loyalty to His Most Gracious Majesty the King, and for your Address-in-reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament.

QUESTIONS.

NORTH-WEST.

As to Additional Road Cartage Charge.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) As the fee of 15s. per ton levied by the Transport Board is an extra cost on all goods carried by road to the north of this State, will the Minister give consideration to the abolition of this charge?

(2) For what reason is the charge made?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Transport Board permit fee of 15s. per ton for general loading to Carnarvon is very moderate compared with other States. In New South Wales, for instance, the permit fee for a similar journey would be in the vicinity of £4 per ton. If the north were exempt from the payment of Transport Board fees, there would be no justification for the board continuing the North-West subsidy payments which total many times the amount of revenue received from the same area by way of license and permit fees.

(2) License and permit fees constitute the revenue of the Transport Board as provided under the State Transport Co-ordination Act. The bulk of that revenue is applied in maintaining roads but a large proportion is used for payment of subsidies from which the north of the State benefits very considerably.

DAIRYING.

As to Farm Improvement Scheme Applications.

Hon. C. H. HENNING asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Will the Minister inform the House as to—

(1) the number of applications received under the £300,000 dairy farm improvement scheme;

(2) the area to be cleared;

(3) the number of applications, if any, refused?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) Ninety-seven.

(2) Approximately 4,650 acres.

(3) None, at this stage.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Poultry Industry (Trust Fund) Act Amendment.
- 2, Marketing of Eggs Act Amendment.
Transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 18th September.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [4.38]: This is one of the most important measures that will be brought before us during the session. It is of vital importance to a tremendous number of people. Furthermore, it is difficult legislation, and casts a big responsibility on the courts administering it. I thank the Minister for Transport for information I have received regarding the present position. The information shows that the shortage of houses is just as acute as ever, and a large number of tenants are in a bad way.

I have here a summary of evictions and threatened evictions as at the week ended the 7th September, 1951. During that week a further 20 notices to quit were registered, bringing the total number now registered, under the amended legislation, to 539. There were four cases only before the Local Court. With regard to these, three orders for possession were made, one case being adjourned until the next hearing. This brings the total number of cases before the court to 161, and the total number of orders for possession to 113.

Eleven warrants for ejection, all under the amended legislation—that is, the 1950 legislation—were executed. Of these evicted families, five were housed in temporary dwellings at Guildford, four at Naval Base, whilst two were housed as emergency cases in Commonwealth-State rental homes. The total number of temporary dwellings now occupied is 62, consisting of 43 at Guildford and 19 at Naval Base.

There were 21 keys for temporary dwellings received from the Public Works Department on the 4th inst. This brings the total number of temporary dwellings now completed to 94—58 at Guildford and 36 at Naval Base. There are 32 keys on hand—15 at Guildford and 17 at Naval Base. It will be noted that four large evicted families have been allotted two temporary dwellings each and it is suggested that efforts be made to transfer these families to three-bedroom type army flats as soon as possible and thus make the eight dwellings now occupied by them available to other evictees.

For the week ended the 17th August, 1951, there were 18 notices to quit registered, bringing the total number of threatened evictions under the amended legislation to 470. Of this number 212 are to take effect on or after the 30th September.

A further nine cases were heard in the Local Court on Tuesday, the 14th inst., and six orders for possession were made, bringing the total number of cases before the court to 125 and the total number of orders for possession to 91. Under the amended legislation, 24 families who were evicted have been accommodated in temporary dwellings—20 at Guildford and four at Naval Base. Ten families evicted under the old legislation have been housed in temporary dwellings—seven at Guildford and three at Naval Base. One other family has been housed temporarily at Guildford pending completion of an army flat at Vail Park.

As at the week ended the 10th August, 1951, four warrants had been executed, but the evictees did not avail themselves of the temporary accommodation offered by the Commission. The number of temporary dwellings occupied to date is 35—28 at Guildford and seven at Naval Base, while keys on hand number 26—seven at Guildford and 19 at Naval Base. That means that during the month there were six more keys available than there were at the end of August. That is the position in a nutshell and it shows the House the large number of people who are in difficulties with the housing accommodation. This Bill affects the well-being of many thousands of people in the State, particularly in the metropolitan area and the large towns in Western Australia.

I was astounded to find in my letter box a circular which was sent to every member in the House. This letter was written by the Property Owners' Association. I was amazed that that association showed such bad judgment, lack of understanding and lack of dignity, in sending such printed correspondence to members of this Chamber. This circular reads—

**PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION
OF W.A. (INCORPORATED).**

Monthly Meeting, 5th September, 1951.
Motion.

That this meeting of property owners views with alarm the proposed amendments to the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act by the Liberal and Country Party Government, and considers that the proposed legislation is fundamentally socialistic, and that the penalties to be inflicted are a savage and vindictive attack upon a reputable and law-abiding section of the community, and are far in excess of those penalties imposed on drunken drivers of motor vehicles and other persons endangering human lives.

Mr. W. G. Kensitt, J.P.,
President,

10 Thomas-st., Nedlands.

I am surprised at Mr. Kensitt—

Hon. L. A. Logan: And a J.P., too.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: —being connected with correspondence of this nature. He is a man of high repute in the locality and I think he has made a very bad mistake. I am surprised at this association linking itself up with people who deliberately break the law and rob our people of many thousands of pounds thus causing some in the community extreme suffering. It is amazing that an association should support any attempt to protect people who will do that sort of thing.

Everyone in this Chamber knows—because it is recognised as a property House—that a large number of property owners are first-class citizens and men and women of very high character. It is a mistake for this association to endeavour to protect those of its members who are deliberately robbing the people and by-passing the law. Therefore I think we should all toss this correspondence into the wastepaper basket and refuse to take any notice of it.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Who said they are robbing the people?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I did. They are breaking the law and forcing tenants into a position where they are too frightened to go to the courts when they are being charged higher than the standard rent. Every member knows that that sort of thing is going on, and such landlords should not be protected by any association. In my opinion, the Government is to be commended for taking necessary action to try to amend the Act and thus make it more workable. Everybody realises that this legislation is difficult to administer and both tenants and property owners are suffering. Some tenants are bad tenants and there are also bad landlords, and our job is to pass legislation which will rid the Act of anomalies and so enable both owners and tenants to receive justice. It would be very hard to read any socialistic provisions into this Bill as this association stated.

Hon. G. Fraser: Some people brand anything socialistic.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I think the Government deserves every commendation.

Hon. H. K. Watson: It is pretty hard to read anything else but socialism into it.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Even though some people have claimed that it is socialistic legislation, it is fundamentally right and is a great credit to the Government. I congratulate the Government for having introduced these amendments. The measure seeks to protect the public against unscrupulous landlords and property owners and by doing so it will protect the interests of decent law-abiding property owners. It is a pity that the Property Owners' Association passed the resolution which I have read to the House because in doing so, it has lowered its prestige and reputation by seeking to protect law-breakers of any kind who are operating to the detriment of society generally.

Owing to the weaknesses in the existing legislation, some property owners are inflicting severe hardship on a large number of tenants. I am referring now to the particular sections of the Act that have been recognised by the courts as being unworkable. Those property owners are moral law-breakers and the amendments contained in the Bill should effectively deal with the position. The Minister, in introducing the measure gave a careful and clear explanation of the major amendments. It is essentially a Committee Bill and I do not propose to spend a lot of time repeating the various amendments. Under the Bill the magistrate will have greater discretionary powers. I am assuming that the House will agree to the Bill.

Hon. H. Hearn: You are optimistic.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I believe that even the most ardent opponent of the legislation recognises that something must be done.

Hon. H. L. Roche: You are quite right—something will have to be done!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It is generally recognised that such a course is necessary in order to deal with the weaknesses apparent in the Act so that we may protect both owners and tenants. There is no doubt that the amending legislation is urgently required, and equally it is certain that the success or failure of it will depend upon the administration of its provisions. I believe I am expressing the opinion of a large number of people who are conversant with the housing difficulty in this State, when I recommend to the Government that one magistrate should be appointed to deal with the cases to be brought before the court during the coming year, particularly in the metropolitan area. I do not think the Government would have any trouble in selecting a suitable magistrate from those who hold such positions today. The work that will confront him is very difficult.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: There were only three cases last week.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, but people are waiting to see what will happen regarding this amending legislation. As I say, it will not be very difficult for the Government to select a suitable magistrate who will be charged with the task of administering the Act and who will be conversant with the details of this problem. I am sure the Act in its amended form will be far more effective if litigation under its provisions is dealt with by one magistrate. In my view, that is a vital consideration. The interests of both owners and tenants are involved, whichever way we look at it, and if one magistrate were appointed to handle these cases, he would be better able to administer justice in a very difficult situation.

I am very keen on the Government giving consideration to my proposal respecting the appointment of a special magistrate. It is a matter of general knowledge that certain men are essentially suitable for certain types of work and in those circumstances the Government should appreciate the advisability of choosing a suitable magistrate to undertake the task I have mentioned. In the course of his second reading speech, the Minister explained that the amending Bill will iron out anomalies that have become apparent in the principal Act. Those anomalies have been commented upon by both judges and magistrates, who will now be given greater discretionary powers in dealing with evictions.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But surely that is a matter for decision by Parliament rather than by magistrates or judges.

Hon. G. Fraser: They have to interpret the law as we make it.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Most decidedly the courts have to deal with the law as we pass it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is so.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: We should make the law clear enough to enable magistrates and judges to mete out justice in dealing with matters arising under it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is so.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Provision is also made for an owner to send to the rent inspector a copy of his declaration that he requires his premises. I think that is a good idea because the State Housing Commission will then be fully advised as to prospective evictions.

Hon. H. K. Watson: And should an owner neglect to send a declaration to the rent inspector, some lawyer will seize upon that point to hold up the application.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do not think any lawyer would be in that position because I do not believe a man would neglect to forward the declaration. Business premises are also dealt with in the Bill. One of the important anomalies under the Act has relation to shared accommodation, and that is certainly a weakness in the legislation, particularly in connection with flats. Anyone who goes about the metropolitan area will be acquainted with the injustices that have been worked upon flat-dwellers who have been called upon to pay highly exorbitant rents. The Bill will remedy that position. Another amendment will deal with what the Minister described as wholesale evasions of the Act in respect of flats and shared accommodation.

Hon. H. Hearn: What are your views about business accommodation?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The hon. member is in a better position to speak about that phase than I am.

Hon. L. Craig: And I suggest the two views would not coincide.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There are many difficulties in connection with business premises and many unfortunate people who have built up prosperous businesses are threatened with eviction. The amendment in the Bill seeks to extend to them a measure of justice.

Hon. H. Hearn: What about the unfortunate landlord?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I did not know there are any unfortunate landlords! At any rate, not among those who are businessmen. I do know of instances where new Australians and others have had to take business premises without any lease whatever and have paid large sums for goodwill, often running into thousands of pounds. Some of those people are threatened with eviction under the existing Act, without any possibility of compensation.

Hon. H. Hearn: And when the situation was not controlled, they benefited to the detriment of the landlords.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do not think it is common justice that men should build up businesses and then be forced to lose everything.

Hon. L. Craig: They knew all about the position.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The owner has every moral right to compensate such people, and the amending Bill will serve to protect such tenants.

Hon. H. Hearn: Will you explain how he has a moral right?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: In my opinion, Mr. Hearn would be a very good landlord, and I do not think he would ever dream of imposing injustices on his tenants.

Hon. H. Hearn: You have a lovely way with you!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am not a businessman, but I know of quite a number of people in the metropolitan area who are in very serious trouble owing to the weaknesses in the Act, and the Bill will provide some measure of justice in the interests of those concerned. I certainly hope Mr. Hearn, as a successful businessman, will support the proposals in the Bill. I would much preferred to have followed Mr. Watson in discussing the Bill, because I see he has placed quite a number of amendments on the notice paper. He proposes to seek the deletion of paragraph (f) of Clause 3. I regard that as a most important amendment. It deals with a matter that has been the subject of sharp comment by the Supreme Court and the lower court as well. The Government has evidently endeavoured to supply an amendment to meet the caustic criticism of judges and magistrates. Paragraph (f) reads as follows:—

Adding after the word "therewith" in line 4 of the proviso to the definition "shared accommodation", the words "and includes a room or suite of rooms, whether described as a flat or otherwise, leased or intended to be

leased with or without goods for the purpose of residence and forming part of other premises, but does not include either of a pair of semi-detached dwelling-houses or any dwelling-house in a terrace or group of dwelling-houses joined together by party walls, where each of the dwelling-houses has a curtilage and where the tenant is entitled as such to exclusive possession of the dwelling-house and the curtilage."

That was inserted to remedy the existing weakness in the legislation, and I am surprised that the hon. member has placed an amendment on the notice paper designed to delete it.

Hon. H. K. Watson: You realise that the Bill will take away from the magistrate and hand to the rent inspector control over the fixing of rents for all flats?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I should say that the rent inspector would be of great assistance to the magistrate.

Hon. H. K. Watson: This takes power from the magistrate. The magistrate can fix the rent of a house, even that on a 15s. a week house but cannot fix the rent on a flat, though it be 10s. a week, which seems ridiculous.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The matter has been considered, and I think that the Bill covers the position. The hon. member also proposes to delete paragraphs (d) to (j) inclusive of Clause 8. Paragraph (d) reads—

adding after the word "lessee" in line ten of subsection (1), the words "a copy of the declaration and a copy of the Rent Inspector's acknowledgment and."

That will make it easier both for the department and the court to deal with a case. Paragraph (e) reads—

adding after the word "shall" in the fifth last line of Subsection (1), the words "subject to the provisions of Subsection (2a) of this section;"

Paragraph (f) is as follows:—

(1a) Where an owner has given notice before the day on which the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment and Continuance Act, 1951, comes into operation, he shall be regarded as having complied with the provisions of this section requiring service of a copy of the declaration and acknowledgment, if he serves the copy of the declaration on the rent inspector, and a copy of the declaration and acknowledgment on the lessee, so soon after that day as is reasonably practicable;

All these amendments have been inserted to help the court assist a claimant and afford an opportunity for justice to be done to both parties. It will be a grave

error if this Chamber accepts Mr. Watson's amendment. I shall listen with great interest to what he has to say, because last session he was the driving force in the opposition to the Bill then under discussion. This measure imposes a very grave responsibility on every member of this House.

The ramifications of the Act; the difficulties associated with it; and the trouble with which so many thousands of people are faced, have made it absolutely necessary for the original penalties to be increased; and I hope no attempt will be made by any member to have those penalties reduced, because high penalties will prevent unscrupulous property owners from attempting to rob the public. The penalty for a first offence is £100, in addition to a sum up to £500. In this way, a magistrate or a judge will be able to inflict fines that will make it impossible for a property owner to break the law and derive profit therefrom.

This intricate measure deserves every consideration; and I hope members will study it closely and reach the same conclusion as I have, namely, that it is a great improvement on last year's legislation and that its passage by this House will give justice to a large number of people. It will provide protection for good property owners—men of high prestige and character—of whom there are many, and will also protect tenants against imposition on the part of unscrupulous property owners who will do anything to get a few pounds. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

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

BILL—PETROLEUM ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the previous day of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill. Clauses 1 to 8—agreed to.

Clause 9—Section 54 amended:

Hon. G. FRASER: The general intention of the Bill is to give some protection to people who are investing a lot of money in this State. What I want to know is whether, if the people concerned are granted that protection, they will be able to make a corner in this particular industry as has been done in the goldmining industry at various times. Will they be able to sit on the lease instead of going on with the job of discovering oil? That could easily be done.

Is there sufficient protection in this measure to provide that these people will not be given a close preserve and shut everyone else out? I am willing to accept that, if they are prepared to do the job. I want an assurance from the Minister that, by regulation or by some other means, the Government will be in a position at any time, should the people concerned sit on the job, to deal with the leases and, if necessary, impose forfeitures so that someone else can carry on.

Hon. H. HEARN: I would also like the Minister to mention the amount of money spent in trying to find oil.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Any possibility of the present applicants sitting on a lease is very remote. That point, if it arose in connection with this or any other company, could always be dealt with by legislation. I think the hon. member will agree that we are out to encourage this or any other company to pursue the search for oil, and our aim has been to encourage these people to go ahead. In that regard we have been advised that they are now collecting material which will certainly exceed 1,000 tons and will possibly amount to nearly 2,000 tons, ready for shipment immediately the measure is passed. That is an indication of their desire to prosecute the work with all possible speed. While these amendments to the Act were suggested by the company and agreed to by the Government, subject to parliamentary review, the company has expressed the opinion that it is in the administration of the Act that virtue lies rather than in its actual wording, and it knows from the record of administration of mining Acts in Western Australia that Governments have been very sympathetic towards genuine prospectors for gold or anything else.

In reply to Mr. Hearn, I cannot say off-hand what amount of capital has been invested, but I know that one company has invested upwards of £250,000. There has been much more than that invested in the search for oil in other parts of Australia. I feel that there are sufficient safeguards retained in the Act to protect the Government against anyone who might endeavour to evade the intentions and provisions of the legislation.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: We have had experience of that sort of thing on the Goldfields where Tindal's, for instance, held up huge leases at Coolgardie for years, but as long as there is provision to make people operate their holdings, I will support the clause.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 10 to 13, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—PARLIAMENT HOUSE SITE PERMANENT RESERVE (A1162).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [5.17] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to provide statutory authority for the occupation by Government buildings of part of the parliamentary reserve for a period of 21 years from the coming into operation of the Bill. Members are aware of the circumstances leading to the introduction of the Bill and that negotiations have taken place between the Joint House Committee of Parliament and representatives of the Government. It is unfortunate that parliamentary sanction was not requested prior to the commencement of work on the site of the uncompleted building. This omission was not deliberate, however, being due to a lack of appreciation of the necessity to obtain legislative sanction, caused by the fact that over a period of years a number of other Government buildings were erected on the reserve, for which no authority was asked and regarding which no complaint was ever made.

As a result of these earlier constructions the necessity to obtain parliamentary sanction for the erection of the unfinished building was entirely overlooked. I would say that had there been any reasonable alternative to the construction of this building, it would have been adopted. The erection elsewhere of the building would create administrative and general difficulties, the work of the various sections of the departments being so co-related that it is most essential that the entire staff be located in the same area. The Public Works and Water Supply Departments are grossly overcrowded and unless further accommodation is quickly provided they will not be able to cope adequately with the increased duties caused by the evergrowing population of the State. The activities of these departments have developed enormously in recent years.

During the war years and also during the depression period, public buildings and engineering undertakings were allowed to fall far below population requirements and consequently, with the cessation of war, there has been the necessity for the Government to formulate a very extensive and vigorous programme of new public works, not only in the form of schools, hospitals, police stations and quarters, but also housing and many other Government requirements. There have also been many other important engineering activities entered into, comprising country water supplies—including the comprehensive scheme—increased activities in drainage of country lands, extensions of irrigation schemes, large harbour developments and special requirements in the North-West. An indication of the growth of the work of the departments located at the Barracks is revealed in the following figures:—

Total expenditure from all funds by the Public Works Department and Main Roads Department were—

1939-40	....	....	£1,698,555
1949-50	....	....	£7,253,371

Total expenditure from Metropolitan Water Supply Department—

1926 (the year the Water Supply Department took over their present premises)	....	....	£4,103,000
1951	....	....	£11,656,000

Some of this increase is, of course, due to the variation in the value of money but there is no doubt that the functions of these departments have considerably developed. This additional work has, of course, required the appointment of extra staff, the salaried personnel of the Public Works Department having increased since 1941 from 385 to 649. When the Water Supply Department building was erected in 1926 the staff of the department was 129. In 1945 it was 177 and it now is 260. The numerical strength of the Main Roads Department has increased from 35 in 1938-39 to 62.

The present overcrowding is affecting departmental efficiency as the ever increasing degree of work requires additional staff which cannot be appointed owing to the limited accommodation. To submit one instance only, that of the Land Resumption Branch, which needs additional staff to deal with its greatly increased activities, no further additions to the strength can be made as there is nowhere in the present buildings where they can be accommodated. As a result it is beyond the bounds of possibility to keep the work up to date. A similar state of affairs exists in connection with the Engineering Drawing Office, the Metropolitan Water Supply Department, the Accounts Branch of the Public Works Department and the Main Roads Department and other offices.

Premises that were provided for staff rest rooms have had to be used as offices and there have been strong representations, both from the staffs of the departments concerned and the Civil Service Association, for better working conditions and for improved amenities. Although it would be most inadvisable to place any section of the departments elsewhere, efforts have been made to obtain temporary office accommodation, but the extreme shortage in Perth of this type of accommodation has produced negative results. Certain premises were bought with the object of removing the Local Government Department from the Barracks, but the extreme shortage of alternative accommodation has made it practically impossible to justify the eviction of the tenants so that the Government could assume possession.

All alternatives having been examined without result, the only solution was to erect additional accommodation on the present site. This building, although classed as of a temporary nature, will, according to the architects, be an improvement to the area, as it will mask the view from Malcolm-st. of the poorer type buildings in the P.W.D. yard. A suggestion that these buildings, which include the Government garage, stores, etc., could be removed and constructed elsewhere is not possible as at present this would be a most expensive and uneconomical project, entailing, as it would, the diversion of materials required for housing and other more urgent requirements.

The new building is designed on simple and orderly lines. The levels of the area are such that a basement is unavoidable and this must be in brick or concrete. The two upper floors will be timber-framed. The brick or concrete basement would prove invaluable as fire-proof storage for the very valuable, and practically irreplaceable, technical records, plans and surveys of the department, which at present have, of necessity, to be housed in non-fireproof accommodation, which would be better utilised for office accommodation. The building will be set back about 26 feet from the street alignment and the ground in front will be developed as lawn and gardens to present a pleasing aspect.

I might say that the new building will not in any way interfere with the completion of Parliament House, for when this very desirable and perhaps rather remote stage is reached, the whole of the Government buildings on the site will have to be removed. It might be asked, "Why not commence the building of part of the permanent block proposed on the site next to Government House?" This, unfortunately, is not possible under present conditions. The site in St. George's Terrace is an extremely valuable one and the buildings erected thereon must do justice to the vicinity.

As the object of the scheme is to concentrate all Government departments on the one easily accessible site, and in view of our rapidly growing population, the building must be multi-storied to meet the demands that will be levied on it. The development of the project has to be in complete blocks, the first of which, on present values, would cost £750,000, and would take four to five years of planning and construction. Unfortunately the demands upon Government services render it quite out of the question to wait four to five years for additional accommodation. It would not have been possible to have had this first block under construction or completed now, the reason being that it would require a steel frame. It is not necessary for me to remind members of the current shortage of steel and of this State's requirements of that commodity.

All supplies of structural steel received during the past few years have been required for the South Fremantle power house and the Royal Perth Hospital. There would have been none available to construct an office block. In fact, steel is still required for the second block of the Royal Perth Hospital. The new building is designed to accommodate and give much needed space for officers of the Engineering Drawing Office, who are working under difficulties, the Mechanical and Plant Engineer's Branch, the Main Roads Department and the plan room.

In considering this problem, I think members would be interested to hear something of the history of the parliamentary reserve and the buildings erected thereon. The original barracks building was constructed in the years from 1863 to 1865 to accommodate soldier-pensioners who were brought from England to constitute a military guard. Accommodation in the building was also provided for their families. When Western Australia was granted Responsible Government in 1891, the duties of the guard ceased but many of the pensioners occupied part of the barrack premises for some years.

The Public Works Department commenced taking over the building in 1899, the department previously using premises in Cathedral Avenue. In 1900 the registered purpose of the whole of the area now bounded by Harvest Terrace, Malcolm-st., St. George's Place, and Hay-st., was changed from that of "public buildings" to that of "parliamentary buildings" and it was created a Class "A" reserve under Section 31 of the Land Act.

Parliament House was built in 1903, and in 1911 a building was added at the rear of the Public Works Department as a garage for Government cars, and it is still being used for that purpose. In 1926 the Metropolitan Water Supply Department's building was erected on the site, and in 1946 it became necessary to construct temporary accommodation for the steadily growing staff of the architectural branch. I trust that the House will pass the Bill in its present form, so that the construction of the new building may be resumed.

I have endeavoured to impress upon members that additional accommodation is urgently required and that all alternatives to the present course have been examined and have proved fruitless. We are fortunate to have good, conscientious officers attached to the departments concerned, and it is a tribute to their efficiency and loyalty that they are working so well under poor and overcrowded conditions. But, unless more accommodation is made available, essential work must fall in arrears. As I have said, the new building will in no way affect future additions to Parliament House, as when these do occur, all of the Government buildings on the

site will be removed. It will, in fact, present a more pleasing frontage to Malcolm-st. than the present one, and it will fill a most urgent requirement. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.33]: I support the Bill and regret the necessity for its introduction. I consider the Joint House Committee acted unfairly and stupidly.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Why?

Hon. L. CRAIG: The building is necessary. Had the members of the Joint House Committee made inquiries previously, which they since have made, there would have been no necessity for the Bill. Action such as this causes a feeling of contempt among the public for the folly of parliamentary institutions.

Hon. G. Fraser: The folly of the Government.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The fault might lie with the Government for erecting previous buildings, but to stop the work on a structure, which we all knew would be completed, is absolute folly, especially when the work already done has cost approximately £3,000.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Two wrongs do not make a right.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Apparently money comes before principle sometimes.

Hon. L. CRAIG: To raise this objection when buildings have been in existence for so long and when the one under criticism has already been started, is perfectly unjustified. Had proper inquiries been made there may have been some reason for the objection, but to object after the building had been commenced and everyone knew it would be completed, is wrong. There was not one person who did not believe that the work would proceed. We will all approve of this Bill and let the work go on.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Who said so?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, we will. I am quite sure of that.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are cracking the whip now!

Hon. L. CRAIG: No. I am not cracking the whip at all. I believe that members of Parliament are reasonable and sensible people. The reasons given by the Minister make it perfectly plain that no other site is suitable. If members are not going to let the work on this building proceed, are they prepared to agree that the other buildings shall be pulled down, which are not nearly as attractive as this one will be? The action of the Joint House Committee was unreasonable. I agree that the committee had to assert its right of control over the land, but as half-a-dozen mistakes had already been made in the past, its members should have said, "Let us bring down a Bill to ensure that this is

the last structure we will have to approve on this site and also approve of the existing structures unless we are prepared to pull them down." The publicity that this matter has received has had a detrimental effect on the people who have shrugged their shoulders and said "Mucking Parliaments again."

Hon. H. Hearn: Is not that true?

Hon. L. CRAIG: It may be true, but it is not right that parliamentarians, through their folly, should be brought into ridicule. It is a pity that the matter has been brought into the limelight at this particular moment because people are becoming increasingly contemptuous of parliamentary institutions. I repeat that there is not one person who believes that the work will not go on. They have all said it must proceed and that it will conceal other extremely unsightly buildings. To stop the work on the building was, in my opinion, great folly.

I hope the House will support the Bill. I do not see what else it can do, unless members are prepared to see unsightly bricks and other material left there. It made me extremely angry to see bricks being carted away when we all knew that they would have to be carted back again. The knowledge that tradesmen engaged on the work and officers employed on the drafting of plans, etc., were diverted to other avenues has done a great deal of harm, and I greatly regret it. Mr. Hearn cannot be still! He is just itching to jump to his feet!

Hon. H. Hearn: Mr. President, why should Mr. Craig refer to me in that manner? I am merely sitting in my seat.

The PRESIDENT: Does the hon. member object to Mr. Craig's remarks?

Hon. H. Hearn: Yes, I do object, Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT: Then I shall ask Mr. Craig to withdraw his remark.

Hon. L. CRAIG: He is not sitting in his seat; he is standing up.

Hon. H. Hearn: Mr. President, I still take exception to that remark.

The PRESIDENT: I ask the hon. member to withdraw his remark.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I withdraw, Mr. President, if he is sitting in his seat.

The PRESIDENT: I am sure the hon. member will withdraw any remark that has caused offence to Mr. Hearn.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Anything that would cause offence to the hon. member I gladly withdraw; but he was on his toes. It is regrettable that this incident has happened because it has not done Parliament or the Joint House Committee any good. I support the Bill.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [5.58]: I oppose the Bill because it is high time that the growth of buildings on this Class "A" reserve ceased. Last year we had a Bill before the House to make available portion of a Class "A" reserve for the erection of the town hall. At that time we should have rejected the claims of those who wanted this land for a town hall site, because it was encroaching upon property belonging to the people.

If we allow the Bill to pass we shall show the people still further that we have not the right or the will to stand up for what rightly belongs to the citizens of the State. I commend the members of the Joint House Committee for the action they took because it is high time that civil servants understood their position. I support the committee's action in every way and I seek the assistance of every member to oppose the Bill with everything they know.

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson: Why did not the members of the committee take action earlier?

Hon. A. R. JONES: It is of no use continuing mistakes such as have been made in the past. Let us profit by our mistakes.

Hon. L. Craig: And waste all the money already spent on the building?

Hon. A. R. JONES: We have a site already selected for the building of Government offices and we have been told that £70,000 is to be spent on this building. If that is not a worth-while amount to be spent on the erection of a permanent building on the most suitable site, I do not know how much money will be needed before it is decided that we can make a start. The Minister explained that it was necessary to construct the building on this reserve because other departments were inter-related. Surely we can have a department apart from the others occupying a building costing £70,000 and erected on its correct site. I appeal to every member to exercise his right and reject this idea of encouraging the erection of buildings on Class "A" reserves. Let each and every one of us vote as our consciences dictate.

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

BILL—PUBLIC BUILDINGS ACT (VALIDATION OF PAYMENTS).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT
(Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [5.42] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is introduced for the purpose of validating the payment into Consolidated Revenue of moneys that the principal Act requires shall be paid into a trust account termed the "Government Buildings Leasing Revenue Account." The Act was

passed in 1937 for the purpose of financing the erection of a central block of Government offices. Members will be aware that the site proposed for these offices was in St. George's Terrace, between Government House and Christian Brothers' College. The advent of war and our present housing and other building problems have deferred this project indefinitely.

In 1937 it would not have been possible to obtain sufficient loan moneys to have proceeded with the scheme, as this would have adversely affected the loan programme for unemployment relief works. The Act, therefore, authorised the borrowing of £300,000 from the State Insurance Reserve Fund for the new buildings. The Act provides that the interest on the borrowings and the cost of administering the Act should be met by leasing or letting certain Government property, these rents to be placed in an account at the Treasury, known as the "Government Buildings Leasing Revenue Account." If, at the end of each financial year, this account stood in credit, the balance was to be paid to a trust fund termed the "Government Buildings Sites Trust Fund Account," and used to recoup the loan from the State Insurance Reserve Fund.

The Act provides for the appointment of a committee of five public servants, including the Public Service Commissioner, the Under Treasurer and the Principal Architect, to advise the Government in regard to the leasing of the Government property I have referred to, and which is set out in the schedule to this Act, and to the location and erection of new buildings. Owing to the war and to postwar conditions, this committee was not appointed. The money in the State Insurance Reserve Fund is now not available, having been invested in Commonwealth bonds. As it is not intended to finance the erection of the buildings, when circumstances will permit this to occur, by the method set out in the Act, it is proposed to repeal the Act, and I intend later on to introduce a Bill for this purpose.

Up to date the sum of £44,085 has been collected in rents from the leasing of Government property. This money was paid into Consolidated Revenue, and not into the trust account as provided in the Act. After the Act was passed, it was thought that until the advisory committee was appointed, the rents could be paid into Consolidated Revenue. The Solicitor General has since advised that this procedure was incorrect and that the moneys should have been credited to the trust account. From the point of view of the Treasury, it was far preferable to place the funds to Consolidated Revenue, where they could be used, than to credit them to a trust account, where they would lie idle. The total

of £44,085 has been collected in the form of rents from the leasing of property occupied by—

	£
Town Hall Branch of the Commonwealth Savings Bank	14,262
Observatory	7,144
State Saw Mills, Murray-st.	7,475
State Saw Mills Building, private tenants	6,338
Workers' Homes Board, Treasury Buildings	2,997
Wyndham Meat Works, Treasury Buildings	2,150
Grieve and Rich, Wellington-st.	1,840
School quarters, Carr-st.	926
State Hotels Dept., Public Health Dept. building	708
Hoardings	245
	£44,085

In view of the fact that it is not proposed to continue with the scheme of financing the erection of public buildings as provided by the Act, the Bill contains a proposal to validate all payments that have been made into Consolidated Revenue, and provides that all further payments shall be paid into Consolidated Revenue, and not into the accounts referred to in the Act. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—PUBLIC BUILDINGS ACT REPEAL.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [5.47] in moving the second reading said: This is the Bill that I referred to when introducing the previous measure. As we do not contemplate financing the erection of Government buildings in the manner provided in the principal Act, it is proposed that the Act should be repealed and that is the intention of this Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

House adjourned at 5.48 p.m.