

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Although a man may enlist in one or other of the services, he may be transferred to another part of Australia or may not even leave Western Australia.

Mr. Yates: That is the point.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If we are to protect men enlisted for service outside the Commonwealth and they may be sent to one of the other States, they should be equally protected just as they should be if they remain in Western Australia. The argument that if an enlisted man remains in Western Australia he can look after his family cuts no ice with me. If a person enlists for service outside the Commonwealth the Government should look after his family, and see that his wife and family are not thrown out of the house they occupy even though the man might, in fact, remain in Western Australia.

The Attorney General: Even for six or seven years.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The same point would arise if he were transferred to another State and remained there for the rest of his time of enlistment.

Mr. Hoar: The outlook of the member for South Perth is very narrow.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The family of a serviceman requires protection even though the husband is trained in Western Australia or in some other State.

The Attorney General: I take it your desire is to protect the man who is going to fight outside the Commonwealth, not the man who will serve in the Air Force as a carpenter within Western Australia.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: My desire is to protect the man who enlists for service outside the Commonwealth, as proposed in the amendment moved by the member for Collie.

Mr. Hearman: The only person you would not protect is the man who enlisted for service beyond Australia.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I would protect him.

Mr. Hearman: But not under your suggestion.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I know that.

Mr. Griffith: Some of these men enlisted for service in Korea, but have not gone outside Western Australia.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If the Attorney General or the member for Canning can overcome that difficulty, it will be all right. The member for Collie wants to go further than the proposal of the member for South Perth and seeks to protect all persons who enlist in the Armed Forces for service outside the Commonwealth, irrespective of whether they happen to be in Western Australia, the Eastern States or outside the Commonwealth.

Mr. Griffith: I want the men to have protection immediately they leave Western Australia.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The only difference between the member for Canning and myself is that I want to protect them while they are in their own State, as well as while they are in some other State. However, as the Premier has indicated he is anxious to report progress, I will not discuss the matter further.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 12.37 a.m.
(Wednesday).

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 28th November, 1951.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment.
- 2, Fremantle Harbour Trust Act Amendment.
- 3, Gas Undertakings Act Amendment.

QUESTIONS.**MEDICAL SERVICES.**

As to Doctors for North-West.

Hon. R. M. FORREST asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is he aware that—

(a) three serious accidents in the Ashburton district and one fatal accident at Wittenoom Gorge have taken place during the last week, and that three of the patients had to be flown to either Carnarvon or Port Hedland, owing to there being no medical facilities at Onslow;

(b) there is no medical officer stationed at Onslow, Roebourne, Wittenoom Gorge or Marble Bar?

(2) Can he inform the House when the Government intends to appoint medical officers to these districts?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) It is a question of availability of doctors willing to serve in these regions. We expect to have a medical officer at Roebourne shortly. Efforts are being made to improve the services at Wittenoom Gorge, Marble Bar and Onslow by an additional appointment to that region.

STATE SHIPPING SERVICE.

As to Retention of "Dorrigo" and "Dulverton."

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Has the Minister any information verifying "The Sunday Times" news item that ships belonging to the Commonwealth Government are likely to be offered for sale in the new year?

(2) If the report is correct, what action has been taken to ensure the retention of "Dorrigo" and "Dulverton" to service North-West ports?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) The manager of the State Shipping Service is in Sydney at the present time negotiating with the Commonwealth Government for the retention of "Dorrigo" and "Dulverton" for service to the North-West ports. When the manager returns, I shall convey what information he has gleaned to the hon. member.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act Amendment and Continuance.

Returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

2. Coal Mining Industry Long Service Leave Act Amendment.

Passed.

BILLS (2)—REPORT.

1. Trustees Act Amendment.
2. Prices Control Act Amendment (No. 2).

Adopted.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading—Defeated.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West—in reply) [4.42]: I am disappointed at the number of speeches made by the opponents of the Bill because they have been so few, but I am pleased to have the support of the real democrats in the Chamber. I cannot understand the attitude of members to this long overdue reform. Surely, looking back over the years, we must realise that we should try to make our franchise more up to date and in keeping with the march of events.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Do you think it would have much effect on the legislation here?

Hon. R. J. Boylen: It would have an effect on the legislators.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: In the old days, when the State was first settled, the line of demarcation between the rich and the poor was very marked.

Hon. H. Hearn: There are no rich people about now.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The women, particularly, had no time to take part in politics. They had to do the hard work, not only the housework, but that of looking after their husbands. The part women have played in the development of the State is worthy of the commendation of every citizen. Mr. Henning mentioned that the farmer's wife was under a disability. Surely he was not speaking seriously, because anyone with a knowledge of farming knows than no-one works harder than the farmer's wife, particularly in the early stages.

It would be absolutely impossible for a farmer to make a success of his undertaking unless he had the co-operation and assistance of his wife. Mr. Henning is wrong when he says that under the Bill the wife of a farmer would be at a disadvantage compared with the wife of a householder. The only way that argument could apply would be if the husband was intolerant to women having any say, and would not enrol himself as a householder, but would stick to the fact that he was a freeholder. Surely the hon. member realises it would be the husband's fault if his wife was disfranchised.

Hon. H. Hearn: It might be the husband's strength of character.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No, the husband's conservatism and lack of knowledge.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Why would it be the husband's fault?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If the wife required to be enrolled as the wife of a householder, it would be the duty of the husband to change his enrolment from that of freeholder to that of householder. The wife would then automatically, by making application, have a vote for this House if the Bill were agreed to. Surely she deserves it. How can we justify the ridiculous position that now obtains?

Hon. H. Hearn: You justified it for a good many years when Labour was in power.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Labour Governments made several attempts to alter the position, but they were knocked back by this Chamber. How can members justify the present position? A woman who looks after the house and does not bother about doing any work outside, cannot obtain enrolment unless she is a freeholder, or unless this Bill is passed, but a woman—

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: How about—

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I refer the hon. member to Mrs. Hummerston, who was recently elected to the Perth City Council.

Hon. H. Hearn: She is not complaining; the City Council is!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: She will. She is leading an army of women who may in time make some members here sit up and take notice. We cannot afford to ignore the progress that women are making. I was referring to the ridiculous position that now obtains. A woman who does her work and does not bother about buying any land with her husband's money, has no vote with regard to this Chamber. If she held any land in her own name, she would have a vote.

If a woman is fairly smart and can make hats or dresses, she can make half a dozen hats and sell them to Foy's or someone else and then go home and say to her husband, "I want to take part in the Legislative Council elections, so I shall pay the rates with my money and become enrolled as a ratepayer." She would then, under the present conditions, be entitled to the franchise for this Chamber. Can we justify that? Why should we not make the franchise wider and plainer, and of a more commonsense character? The time is overdue when we should do that.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It appears there is something wrong with the ratepayer qualification.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There is nothing wrong with it. If the hon. member's wife pays the rates on his property with her money, she can legally be enrolled.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You said it could not be justified.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That can be justified, and that is the present position. Why not be open and above-board, and give women the franchise as provided for in the Bill? We must remember too—I am

relying on Sir Charles Latham now—that in the early history of the State a person, in order to be enrolled, had to possess £500 worth of property. Later on it became £100 and now it is £50. Surely we should have a different basis for the franchise for this House. Let us recognise the work that the different sections of the community are doing.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Did you say there had been no liberalising of the franchise for this House during the last 100 years?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If the hon. member reads the history of this State he will find that what I say is correct. The time has come for recognising our women; they work in businesses, in industry and are prominent in our social life. They have come rapidly to the front during the last 30 years and they can take their places in any phase of society with credit to themselves and great assistance to the nation. In times of war they have done wonderful work. Surely women who pick out vocations or professions for themselves and devote all their lives to them, and do not buy property or houses, should be recognised. Women are taking a prominent part in many professions—there are women doctors and nurses—and in many other aspects of public affairs. I am sorry that no speaker who opposed this Bill made any attempt to justify the present position.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: That is very significant.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, it is. It seems that members who oppose the Bill find it impossible to produce a decent argument against it.

Hon. G. Fraser: They were speechless regarding it.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: What do you mean by "speechless"?

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Apparently they are not prepared to give any answer.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Because of the remarkable developments in this State and in the world generally, we should step forward and become modern in this Chamber. What is there to be frightened of?

Hon. H. Hearn: You tell us.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Surely, if there is an argument—

Hon. G. Fraser: You did not tell us.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: —for a second Chamber, the position of members would be far better if they were supported by the brains of the community rather than by only those who own land. I am astonished that over the years the most conservative portion of the membership of this House has not arrived at the conclusion that it is time to broaden the

franchise. Important developments have taken place in this State and therefore the time is long overdue when we should pass this Bill. Some members have said that the measure is not complete. There are three or four important provisions in this Bill, and if the measure could be passed it would be an important step forward.

Now, more than ever, we rely upon our young men. They have to undergo military training and are forced to live away from their homes early in their lives. In my opinion, they reach manhood much sooner now than they did before compulsory military training was instituted, and that training is better now than ever it was previously in the history of the British Empire. Any member who saw the first lot of trainees marching through Perth recently could not ignore the fact that military training has done those young men a lot of good. Those men might be called upon—although I hope not—to defend this country, and surely we should give them the right to stand for membership of this Chamber if they so desire.

The provision in the Bill which relates to flat-dwellers is one that should receive the support of every member. There are thousands of young married people—ex-Servicemen and their wives—who are forced to live in flats because materials are not available to enable them to build their own homes. Consequently, those young people cannot be enrolled for Legislative Council elections. Surely we should give them the right to vote even though they live in flats, because in ordinary circumstances they would be living in their own homes. The definition of a "self-contained flat" is set out clearly in the Bill and more arguments can be advanced for flat-dwellers than was possible before.

I hope that members will agree to the second reading of this Bill and we can then argue the various points at the Committee stage. There are three or four important provisions in the measure and if necessary we could come to some compromise. I consider the time has arrived when the House should squarely face up to the fact and be prepared to meet the members of all political parties and say, "Well, we are carrying out our promise to widen the franchise for this Chamber." I thought that the Leader of this House, and the Minister for Agriculture would have spoken to this Bill because the measure, after being modified in another place, could almost be called a Government Bill. I am disappointed that they did not speak, especially after the co-operation we have shown to them over the last few months. I thought that the Minister for Transport would make an impassioned appeal to members to agree to the second reading of this Bill.

Hon. H. Hearn: You are disappointed with the lot of us.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: This is my last session and it would have been very pleasing to me if, after 30 years' battling, we had succeeded in widening the franchise for this Chamber. If this Bill could be agreed to, I would be very happy as this will probably be one of my last speeches in this Chamber. If members can agree to the Bill it will be a very happy finish to my parliamentary career.

The PRESIDENT: As the Bill must be passed by an absolute majority of members, it will be necessary to divide the House.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	11
Noes	14
Majority against		3

Ayes.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. A. R. Jones
Hon. E. J. Boylen	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. E. H. Gray	(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. Sir Chas. Latham
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. L. LeBon
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. J. M. Thomson
Hon. C. H. Heuning	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. H. Hearn
	(Teller.)

Paes.

Ayes.	Noes.
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. G. B. Wood	Hon. F. R. Welsh

Question thus negatived; Bill defeated.

BILLS (5)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Royal Visit, 1952, Special Holiday.
- 2, Fruit Growing Industry (Trust Fund) Act Amendment.
- 3, Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Act Amendment.
- 4, The Perpetual Executors, Trustees and Agency Company (W.A.) Limited Act Amendment (Private), (Hon. H. K. Watson in charge).
- 5, West Australian Trustee, Executor and Agency Company Limited Act Amendment (Private), (Hon. H. K. Watson in charge).

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—STATE HOUSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.6]: Before I commence the few comments I have to make in connection with this measure, might I suggest that the Parliamentary Draftsman be informed that on all future occasions when he draws up Bills, it

would be of great assistance to members if he were to put alongside in the margin the year to which the amendment refers. On several occasions I have made suggestions regarding various Bills and it would save members considerable time when looking for the necessary Acts if this suggestion were adopted.

Take this Bill as an example: It is a very small measure but before we know what the Bill contains we have to look up four or five different Acts. There is the 1946 Act, with an amendment in 1947, another amendment in 1948, and a further amendment in 1950. Under the present system, we have to search through the whole lot to find out where the amendment should go. I hope some notice will be taken of my suggestion and it should not be difficult to improve the method adopted now.

To deal now with the provisions of the Bill, I was rather surprised when I found that such a small measure was introduced concerning the State Housing Act, because I consider there are other amendments that should also have been included when an amending Bill was being brought down. As a matter of fact, more has been left out than has been put into this measure, to my way of thinking. Admittedly, there are portions of the Bill that I will support. In the first place, there is the raising of the amount in the definition of "worker" from £500 to £750. The only point I am doubtful about here is that, if anything, we have not made the amount large enough, because a person who was getting £500 four or five years ago would most likely be in receipt of a much greater amount than that today.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You cannot make any amendment to it in this House.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am not suggesting that I intended to, but I am disappointed that some higher figure was not introduced, because there seems no chance at the moment of the basic wage being stabilised. At the moment it appears to be going higher, in view of rising prices, and £750 now would be nothing like what it would be in another 12 months' time. The £500 introduced into the Act in 1946 would not find an equivalent in value in the £750 of today. Roughly, many workers today are earning £15 per week, and if anybody referred to a worker earning £15 a week a few years ago, he would have been laughed at. When the figure of £500 was introduced, the basic wage was £3 or £4. It has now gone up to about £10. The basic wage has been more than doubled and we are only going to increase the amount in the definition of "worker" by 50 per cent.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It has been previously raised.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, I think in the original Act of 1912 the figure was £400, but that is going back 39 years. After that, it was increased to £500, and in this Bill it is to be raised to £750; but in view of rising prices I think some higher figure should have been considered.

There is another point to which I wish to refer and that is the extension of the power to compulsorily resume land. Actually, in the 1946 Act we gave a five-year period and this Bill proposes to extend that period for another two years to 1953. I realise that the Government has found in the last year or two, owing to the great demand by the Housing Commission, that it is necessary to obtain much more land than it visualised would be required when the five-year period was put in the Bill. For that reason, I have no objection to the extension of the period for another two years, and I think it possible that we might require a further extension. However, we can meet that hurdle when we come to it.

The other point I shall touch on merely deals with the starting point for repayment of advances under the Act. Previously, it was from the first day of the month following the date of the payment of the final advance, but the Bill proposes to make the payment from the date of occupation. There is nothing much in that except that under the old system people probably got a couple of weeks' free rent, whereas now they will pay from the date of occupation. However, it is to their advantage, and there is no disadvantage in making the amendment suggested here. One or two items are not included. First, there is the extension of the period of payments to the State Housing Commission, such as repayments for buildings or dwelling-houses under that head, which have to be repaid within a period of 40 years.

The period of 40 years might have been all right when the Act was first introduced, because at that time the cost of a house was £450. Immediately following the war, and certainly within two years of the termination of the war, the cost was £850. Today, the same building would cost something like £2,000, so it will be seen that without an amendment of the period of the loan to beyond 40 years, the persons concerned will have to find very much higher monthly repayments. If we make a comparison between the original £400 cost and the cost today of £2,000, it will be realised what a difference there is in the repayment.

As I said earlier, I will admit that wages are very much higher; but so is the cost of everything else. Although the cost of a dwelling has gone from £850 to £1,000, thus greatly increasing the amount of the repayment, in most instances wages have not been increased in proportion. So it will be a greater struggle for persons who purchase a home under this scheme to pay

the amount that will be required than would originally have been the case. I would have thought—and I made the suggestion last session, I think—that the Government would have given consideration to lengthening the period of repayment from 40 to 51 years. That would have brought the conditions into line with the terms of repayment in connection with the purchase of Commonwealth-State rental homes.

That extra 11 years would have made a great difference in the monthly repayments and would have relieved the burden that most young families have to bear today. Some people will say that such folk will never own their homes in 51 years' time. But how many would do so in 40 years? All they can hope to do is to have an equity in their homes without having the horror of someone knocking at the door and saying, "You have to get out." There are certain restrictions regarding evictions, but I do not know what will happen after next week when this Chamber has had its say.

Hon. H. Hearn: What has that to do with this Bill?

Hon. N. E. Baxter: We will do justice to it.

Hon. G. FRASER: That all depends on what is meant by justice. What the hon. member considers justice I would probably deem a hardship, and vice versa. We cannot anticipate what will happen. We have heard here that all controls should be lifted. If they were lifted within six or 12 months, the people of whom I have been speaking would be subject to prewar conditions, under which a landlord could give them merely seven days' notice to quit.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Are you talking of landlords or home owners?

Hon. G. FRASER: Landlords. I am saying that young people can purchase under this system a home of their own. While they cannot be evicted—

Hon. H. K. Watson: You implied a moment ago that they could be.

Hon. G. FRASER: No. I might find it hard to make the hon. member understand. I am sorry if I was not clear enough on the point. All I am suggesting is that we need to lift the burden from these people by raising the period of repayment from 40 to 51 years so that the monthly burden of repayment will be lessened. That is necessary so that young people getting married will be able to have these homes and not have to suffer as they do now in the renting of an ordinary home, in connection with which they can be given seven days' notice to quit.

Hon. H. K. Watson: You did not say that before.

Hon. G. FRASER: I dealt with it on those lines.

Hon. H. Hearn: We have some imagination.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am sorry if I did not make my intention clear enough.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Do not make any apologies. They know what you mean!

Hon. G. FRASER: What I have said is worthy of consideration. Forty years is a very long time, and few people can hope to own their homes today. But I was saying, when I was rudely interrupted by my hon. friend, that they will at least be getting an equity in the place and they will be saved—these were the words I used—from someone knocking at the door and giving them seven days' notice.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is a principle with which I entirely agree.

Hon. G. FRASER: Good! I am pleased to know there are at least some grounds on which we agree. I would request the Minister to ask the Government to consider the phase of the question to which I have drawn attention. It is too late this year, but an improvement could be effected in future years. That should be done, particularly in view of rising costs. We do not know whether, in three months' time, £2,000 will be sufficient.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: It might be down to £1,700 then.

Hon. G. FRASER: I wish I were as optimistic as the hon. member. The prospects are that the figure will be higher, and that will be a greater burden.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: What about the interest charges over a longer period?

Hon. G. FRASER: I am told that interest rates are decreasing. It has been suggested to the Government that it should be more active in the building of workers' homes. I want to stress the need for greater activity, and would ask the Minister to explain why there has been a cessation in the building of such homes. The building of a group of houses in one portion of my electorate was agreed upon, but we have been waiting for some months for something to be done in the matter. It has been in the air for some time, and the only information I can obtain is that the building of workers' homes has been suspended. I want to ask the Minister the reason for that. It has been said there is no money, but I would impress upon the Government the necessity to obtain funds, I do not care from what source.

The Minister for Agriculture: Can you suggest where the Government could obtain the money?

The Minister for Transport: I wish you could tell us how.

Hon. G. FRASER: I know that the Commonwealth Government has clamped down on loan moneys but there must be other avenues.

The Minister for Agriculture: What are they?

Hon. G. FRASER: I am not a financial expert. Probably the Perth Building Society or the Fremantle Building Society, or some of the bodies whose standards we are trying to improve by legislation, have a lot of loose cash lying around and would be only too pleased to advance it to the Government. What about using money from the State Superannuation Fund?

The Minister for Agriculture: It would be a drop in the ocean.

Hon. G. FRASER: If it were only a drop, it would be something. Nothing is being done in connection with these homes at the moment. The only information I could obtain was that 28 had been constructed at White Gum Valley; but they were not built for the State Housing Commission, but were war service homes which were utilised as workers' homes because the State Housing Commission broke its promise regarding the building of homes at Fremantle. When we objected to being pushed aside in that way, 28 of those war service homes were passed over as workers' homes.

I do not know of any other building of this kind that has taken place in the State. We have been waiting for a group to be erected for the last six months. I understand that there is a builder ready to do the work and the price is correct, but we are told the work cannot be done because there are no funds. There must be some money somewhere. The State Superannuation Fund could be invested in workers' homes. I appeal to the Government to do something, because this is the only avenue by which quite a large number of wage-earners on the lower range can hope to obtain their own homes. Every member will agree that the best citizen is the person who endeavours to get his own home. I think all members will endorse that.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. G. FRASER: This is the only avenue through which the man on a low salary can hope to own his home; because, under other schemes, the deposit required is so heavy that the average worker cannot look at it. Even under the Commonwealth Bank scheme—and that has been tightened up, too—a man had to find 15 per cent. of the capital. With homes costing anything from £2,000 to £4,000, the sum which the prospective owner is required to find is too high for the average man. That is the cheapest scheme. If people go to a building society, I think the most they can obtain is somewhere about 70 per cent. of the cost; they have to find the other 30 per cent. If they go to the bank the advance is even less. Under the war service homes scheme the cost of building is too great. Under the group scheme, £2,000 is provided and the individual has to supply the excess. Since houses are costing up

to the £3,000 mark, that means a man has to find £1,000, apart from the cost of furnishing the home.

Workers must have recourse to the State Housing Act under which premises can be built and sold to them, the only deposit required being one agreed upon between the Commission and the individual. If necessary, the Commission could accept a deposit as low as £5. Irrespective of whether or not a man has any money, he can obtain a home under that scheme. Naturally, in the course of its investigations, the Commission would ascertain whether the applicant was suitable. It is desirable that we should build homes for worthy citizens, even if they can find only £5 deposit. The best citizens are those who are rearing large families, and they have the least opportunity of accumulating funds.

I hope the Government will get a move on with regard to the building of these homes and will do the job that the Act intended should be done. I would like the Minister to let me know when we can look forward to the commencement of the houses that are to be built at Fremantle, and whether he can give us some idea when the cash will be available. I believe this measure is one upon which we can be in agreement practically 100 per cent. That will be quite unusual after our experience of the last week or so, and in comparison with what will probably happen in the next week or so. I hope there will be no difficulty over the second reading.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [5.28]: In supporting the Bill, I would like to ask the Minister what the position will be in regard to land for building purposes. Land that has been acquired with Commonwealth-State money will not be available for use under this scheme. If that is the case, we are likely to be very short of land for this purpose. Unless arrangements can be made with the Commonwealth to forgo some of the land that has been acquired, this scheme will not go very far. We should endeavour, with Mr. Fraser, to persuade the Government to get this scheme under way.

A year ago we passed a Bill to enable houses to be built under the workers' homes scheme, but none has been erected. Unless we impress upon the Government the necessity of doing something, another 12 months will pass and the situation will be unchanged. I would rather see workers' homes being built than Commonwealth-State rental homes. The reason I rose to speak, however, was to ask the Minister the position with regard to the land situation. The position will be serious if the land that has been bought with Commonwealth-State rental home money is not available for use under this scheme. In those circumstances, I want to know where land is coming from for workers' homes. I support the Bill.

The Minister for Transport: Approaches are being made to enable buyers to purchase homes outright. In my reply, I will give fuller particulars.

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

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 8th November.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [5.30]: I am pleased that we have before us a Bill which will enable our returned soldiers to secure the freehold of the land they have taken up under the soldier settlement scheme, but there are one or two features of it that are not clear to me and about which I am not too happy.

Clause 2 seeks to repeal the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act of 1945, which means that the agreement between the Commonwealth and the returned soldier will be terminated. Paragraph 7 of the agreement in that Act deals with the valuations on which the lease is based and reads—

In making the valuations, the officers shall have regard to the need for the proceeds of the holding (based on conservative estimates over a long term period of prices and yields for products) being sufficient to provide a reasonable living for the settler after meeting such financial commitments as would be incurred by a settler possessing no capital.

This measure seeks to repeal that provision and in lieu, in Clause 5, states—

On behalf of the State the Minister is hereby authorised to enter into and the Governor is hereby authorised to carry out any such agreement with the Commonwealth.

That means that the Minister or the Governor may enter into an agreement which is not written into the Act and of which this House has no knowledge. Until such agreement is placed before the soldier settler, he will not know anything about it, and that may be a very bad fault.

Under present-day conditions we know exactly what the soldier settler has to pay, but we do not know what he will have to pay under the freehold. Now he will be able to take out a 99 years' lease with the right of purchase in ten years' time, but I think the man who desires to purchase his property should be told what his commitments are to be. I do not like the ten-year provision, though I believe most of the men concerned are quite happy about it. My objection is that although many of them would be in a position today to start paying off their properties—in some cases I think they could make them freehold tomorrow—no one knows what the position will be in

ten years' time, and if conditions have then reverted to what they were in 1930 and 1931 these men will have no possibility of securing their freeholds.

Another point is that within the ten-year period the soldier settler may experience sickness or some other form of adversity and be forced to leave his farm, whereas if he held the freehold, he might be able to arrange for the property to be worked for him. He might wish to keep the farm going for the benefit of his family, but would have no hope of doing that if he had not the freehold. In that case he would simply have to go and the next applicant in line on the list would be given the property.

We have at last, after four years, been successful in obtaining this agreement with the Commonwealth for the purchase of the properties. In the first place the Commonwealth would agree only to the leasehold system, but has now said that in ten years' time the settlers will have an opportunity of securing freeholds. The only trouble is that if conditions change sufficiently within that ten years, the men concerned may lose the opportunity of paying off their properties. I would like the Minister, when replying, to tell the House what terms and conditions will be laid down in the agreement so that these settlers may know what they are up against.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [5.35]: I have heard the same comments as were mentioned by Mr. Logan about the desirability of these settlers being able to secure the freehold of their properties whenever they are able to. As Mr. Logan said, many of these men could now make big payments, but ten years hence they may not be in that position. I wonder whether the State and Commonwealth Governments have given consideration to some of the lighter lands in the Esperance district being used for settlement under these agreements. We know that already about 1,500,000 acres of land is being developed and that 650 farms will be available under the scheme at present operating.

A great deal of money has been spent on clearing the huge timber off some country and that will make the farms very expensive, whereas the light land in the Esperance area is exceptionally easy to clear and properties there could consequently be paid off at a much earlier date. The field day recently held in that district showed what could be done with the land there, and I would like the Government to endeavour to come to some agreement with the Commonwealth with regard to that area.

On motion by Hon. J. McI. Thomson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.38 p.m.