

I feel that the House has a duty to examine the position thoroughly, in the absence of a definite statement of government policy, and because of the wide implication of this measure it will be my intention, if it passes the second reading, to move for the appointment of a select committee to examine the Bill and its effects.

On motion by Mr. O'Brien, debate adjourned.

### ADJOURNMENT.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam): Before moving that the House adjourn, I wish to advise members that the Government will ask them to sit tomorrow night.

*House adjourned at 10.40 p.m.*

### BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING ACT AMENDMENT.

*Third Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.34] in moving the third reading said: I had intended to get some information in connection with this measure, but during this week a couple of days have been taken up with several other matters and I have not been able to obtain the information sought. If the hon. member who raised the point is anxious about it, he can move for the adjournment of the debate, and I will get the information for him by next week. I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

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

### BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA MEDICAL SCHOOL APPEAL FUND CONTRIBUTIONS AUTHORISATION.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

### BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT (No. 2).

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: There is only one point covered by the Bill, and that is a liberalisation of the franchise of this Chamber. The intention is to liberalise the franchise so that the wife or spouse of a householder or freeholder shall be entitled to enrolment. It merely widens the Constitution to permit of the husband or wife, as the case may be, of the householder or freeholder voting at elections for this Chamber.

Down through the years, when amending Bills of this nature have been introduced to Parliament, they have always originated from the Legislative Assembly. During the debates, we have had complaints that, as those Bills dealt with the franchise of this Chamber, they should be introduced in this House. So, as a constant dropping of water wears away a stone—

Hon. H. Hearn: And the same thing applies to this Bill.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY**:—we have, on this occasion, decided to introduce the Bill in this House.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Does it apply to de facto wives, too?

## Legislative Council

Thursday, 13th October, 1955.

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

### BILL—PARKS AND RESERVES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed*.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We say "spouse." I should think that both that and the other phase will meet with members' approval, and I cannot see any reason why the proposition should be rejected. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

### BILL—JUNIOR FARMERS' MOVEMENT.

#### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST** (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [4.38] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to further sponsor and encourage the Junior Farmers' Movement and assist in giving effect to the objects of that organisation. The movement commenced in 1935, was reorganised in 1946 by a full-time organiser, and has now grown to approximately 80 clubs with an aggregate membership of approximately 2,000, comprising about 1,200 boys and 800 girls. A membership fee of 2s. 6d. per head is charged, and clubs cater for young people up to the age of 25.

Ever since the inception of the organisation the Education Department has been financially involved and has always assisted by seconding schoolteachers to act as organisers. At one time there were five teachers acting as organisers; but at present, out of the nine organisers, only the State organiser and one part-time organiser are teachers.

A gratifying feature has been the enthusiasm displayed by the clubs; but unfortunately there has been a tendency for the social side to be developed at the expense of agriculture. As a result of the number of complaints received, an investigation was made which included an informal meeting of interested bodies convened by the Director of Education. Following this inquiry, it was quite evident that neither the State nor the movement was obtaining full benefit from the money the Government was spending to provide staff and assist the organisation.

The Government at present provides approximately £6,000 per annum through the Education Department, made up as follows:—

	£
Salaries .....	3,300 approx.
Travelling, etc. ....	2,000
Office requisites .....	200
Office accommodation and assistance with camps at various times throughout year .....	500
	<hr/> £6,000 <hr/>

Following his inquiries and discussions, the Director of Education recommended that a State advisory committee be established and that the bodies enumerated in the Bill be represented. The Bill therefore provides for the appointment of a body to be known as the council for the advancement of the Junior Farmers' Movement. The council will consist of 11 persons, two ex officio members—one from each of the Departments of Education and Agriculture—and nine nominee councillors consisting of one nominee of each of the following organisations:—

Institute of Agricultural Science.  
Farmers' Union.  
Royal Agricultural Society.  
Country Women's Association.  
Perth Chamber of Commerce.

Advisory Committee of the Western Australian Federation of Junior Farmers' Clubs, and three nominees of the W.A. Federation of Junior Farmers' Clubs.

The Minister will appoint a councillor as chairman. Ex officio members will remain in office until their tenure is terminated by the Minister. So that councillors will retire in rotation, the term of office of a councillor nominated by the Western Australian Federation of Junior Farmers Clubs will not exceed two years; and of the remaining six nominee members, first appointed following passage of the Bill, two will be appointed for one year and two for two years, after which the normal term of office for these six members will be three years. At the inaugural meeting the chairman will draw lots to see which nominee councillors will serve for periods of one, two or three years.

The Minister may issue directions to the council, but although the Government will continue to assist financially, the council will not be an agency, or instrumentality, of the Crown and the Government is not undertaking the responsibility of furthering the objectives of the movement.

The Bill establishes a fund to be called the junior farmers movement fund account, which will be kept at the Treasury. Gifts and other income, together with amounts appropriated by Parliament, will be paid into the account; and, with the approval of the Minister, the council will use the fund for administration purposes and for the payment of loans or subsidies with the object of encouraging or advancing the Junior Farmers' Movement. Proper accounts will be required to be kept and the annual report and Auditor General's report will be tabled in both Houses of Parliament.

The principles of this measure have been considered by the Minister's advisory committee to the junior farmers' federation and this body unanimously approved

of them and provided a great deal of assistance in the preparation of the Bill. The measure is worthy of consideration by all members; and I am certain they will find no cause for complaint in relation to its provisions or what it seeks to attain. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

#### **BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (LIBRARIES).**

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

#### **BILL—PRICES CONTROL.**

##### *Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.45] in moving the second reading said: This is one of the popular Bills of the session. Members will recollect that in 1939, with the object of preventing the possibility of exploitation of the public, the then Labour Government, on the outbreak of war, introduced a Profiteering Prevention Bill, which passed all stages within a few weeks of the declaration of war. Shortly afterwards, however, the Commonwealth Government, under its defence powers, imposed price controls by way of National Security Regulations, and in each State a Federal prices control administration was established.

During the war years—and up until 1948—this administration had the effect of holding prices at comparatively stable figures. Wages, of course, during that period were also to a large extent pegged.

When the Commonwealth held the referendum in 1948 on the question as to whether the people desired to give the Commonwealth power to continue control it was defeated. However, it was apparently considered throughout Australia that price control should continue, and uniform legislation was passed in practically all States, so that controls could be maintained.

In Western Australia, the then Liberal and Country Party Government introduced a measure which was effective to the 31st December, 1949. The regulations adopted by the Commonwealth were carried over to the State administration. In the years 1949 to 1952 inclusive, the Liberal and Country Party Government passed a continuance Bill each year. In 1952, however, the Government included in such Bill a provision for the repeal of the Profiteering Prevention Act, and this was accepted by Parliament.

In the first session after the present Government took office a continuance Bill to control prices was introduced. It was,

however, defeated in this House and the Prices Control Act ceased on the 31st December, 1953. Since that time Queensland and South Australia have continued with price control. While the Act was still alive, New South Wales suspended policing of the measure for a period; but owing to the upward trend of prices, recently decided to renew active control.

The provisions of the Bill now before the House contain those of the measure passed in 1948; and, in addition, the Commonwealth regulations which were adopted by the State in 1948 have been included in the measure. It is the view of the Government that this legislation is necessary because of the continued upward trend of prices of many essential goods and services. The Government considers it has a clear obligation to give the general public all possible protection against any industry or trade which may be tempted to charge unduly high prices, with high profits, on essential goods because of prevailing circumstances.

When the agitation by vested interests to abolish controls was noticeable, publicity was given to statements by trade associations that price control had outlived its usefulness and if abolished would lead to reduced prices because of competition. Some associations, however, adopted a different attitude. As examples of this, the following extracts are quoted from the "Grocers and Storekeepers' Journal" of March and September, 1952:—

##### *The Evils of Price Cutting.*

1. Price cutting is a poor means of education of the public. Once a store sets a price-cutting policy, the customers expect a continuance. Price cutting shows disloyalty to trade associations and manufacturers who endeavour to give the retailers a worthwhile margin. Price cutting gives authorities the impression that margins are sufficient, and hinders applications by manufacturers and associations for better controlled margins for the retailer.

2. The council desires to draw the attention of members to a very vital subject which it feels they should consider most seriously. The subject is percentage margins. As members are aware, their association has, since 1948, been responsible for establishing the retail prices of decontrolled grocery lines.

It is most important that members should realise that their association has been largely responsible for the profit margins which they have been trading on. The association has fixed the margin on decontrolled goods and done all in its power to secure reasonable margins on controlled goods.

Having set for the trade what the Council considers to be fair and adequate margins on which the trade can reasonably operate, the council now looks to every individual grocer for his unreserved co-operation.

If the trade is to retain the margins now operating, every member must set his face against any recommended prices which come from any source but the association.

Subject to the incidence of price control it is considered that the organised retail trade has an undoubted right to fix the retail prices of decontrolled lines. Perhaps it would be better to say that nobody has the right to ask the retailer to sell goods at an inadequate margin.

I might add that views such as those I have quoted were not confined to the grocery trade.

Since the State Arbitration Court pegged the basic wage in 1953, the net increase in the wage as disclosed by the statistician's figures relating to variation in price levels has been 30s. The items included in this figure are:

	s.	d.
Rent	15	10
Food and groceries	12	2
Clothing	0	11
Miscellaneous	1	0

Of this amount of 30s. the people of the State who are subject to State industrial awards and agreements have lost 24s. 1d. per week as a result of the freezing of the basic wage; and there is, of course, no guarantee that the court will grant further increases.

The cost of price control during 1953, the last year of operation, was about £55,000, this being equal to .41d. per week for each member of the population, or 1s. 9½d. per year. It is considered that at this cost the average citizen would be fully reimbursed if the Bill were passed, as it would have the effect of saving the people in the aggregate a much higher figure. I would emphasise the following points:—

- (1) Present conditions make it essential that price control should continue to be an instrument of national economic policy.
- (2) Whilst it is not the policy of the State Government to perpetuate controls for their own sake, experience clearly shows the danger of indiscriminate action in this sense, as well as the very doubtful benefits of so-called free competition in many industries under present conditions.

(3) The Government has a clear obligation to continue to protect the public against an unwarranted exploitation of trading conditions by unscrupulous traders.

(4) The infinitesimal expenditure upon price control is amply justified by the results achieved.

While there is no doubt that groceries, for instance, can be bought at competitive prices at a number of stores, this does not apply everywhere in the State and all people cannot patronise these stores. For the reasons I have outlined, the Government desires to have this measure passed so that prices can be dealt with when necessary. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

#### BILL—SWAN LANDS REVESTMENT.

##### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST** (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [4.55] in moving the second reading said: The State Housing Commission acquired by resumption prior to 1953 and by private negotiation, an area of land at Bassendean, which is now known as the Ashfield estate. After acquisition, the commission conferred with the Town Planning Board and the Bassendean Road Board and planned a resubdivision of the whole area into suitable blocks and provided new roads in appropriate positions. Under pressure of urgency, building operations were proceeded with and homes have been built on the new lots; 87 houses have been completed and further contracts have been let. To surmount certain legal difficulties, it has been found necessary to introduce this Bill.

The majority of the land had been subdivided previously, but it was considered necessary to resubdivide it to comply with modern town-planning requirements. This involved the obliteration of various surveyed roads and rights-of-way in favour of new roads in better positions. Certain reserves for drainage between lots in the original subdivision are no longer required, and the land in these reserves has been incorporated in the new lots.

Some of the land acquired by resumption under the Public Works Act, 1902, prior to coming into operation of the Public Works Act, 1953, was affected by the provisions of Section 15 of the Public Works Act, 1902, which provided that, upon resumption of the land, the rights of the owner in the lesser minerals were not taken. The Bill provides for the revestment of the whole of the land, together with the lesser minerals as referred to in

Clause 3 of the Bill. The whole area has been made the subject of Lands and Surveys original plan No. 6554 and thereon numbered as Swan Locations Nos. 5589 and 5590. It is proposed to issue to the State Housing Commission a Crown Grant for Swan Locations Nos. 5589 and 5590. The resubdivision of the locations will be shown on Land Titles Office plans Nos. 6622, 6623 and 6624.

Plans of the area have been distributed to the leaders of the parties in the House, and for any member who desires to peruse them they are there to be seen. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

### **BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES, BOUNDARIES AND SERVANTS, SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS.**

#### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT** (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.59] in moving the second reading said: The introduction of this Bill has been brought about by the decision of the Government to adjust the boundaries of certain metropolitan local authorities and to amalgamate others of these authorities.

The Bill is necessary to overcome difficulties which have arisen through deficiencies in the existing local government legislation and to provide some measure of security to employees whose positions might be affected by the amalgamation and adjustments. As members will note, the short title of the Bill indicates that the provisions of the Bill are supplementary to the Road Districts and Municipal Corporations Acts.

Under existing legislation, action can be taken to transfer an area from one local authority to another or to amalgamate two or more local authorities. This would enable one authority or part of one authority, to be united to another in the form of a separate ward. This, however, might not be satisfactory as it could upset the balance of wards.

Several of the local authorities to be amalgamated have already agreed to establish in their new districts a new system of wards altogether. This would mean that one of the proposed new wards could comprise parts of two or more of the present local authority districts. Under existing legislation this cannot be done, except in a complicated manner; and one of the purposes of this Bill is to bring this about so that present wards can be amended, with the result that there will be equitable representation on the united authorities.

In previous amalgamations, such as those of the Collie municipal and road districts, and the Busselton municipal and Sussex road districts, it was necessary to arrange for certain members of the two authorities to represent the united authority until such time as a general election could be held. This meant that for about eight or ten weeks, a more or less caretaker board was in control. Although this did not have any grave repercussions, it was not as satisfactory as could be desired.

To overcome such a state of affairs the Bill provides that the election can be held on the day of amalgamation and the new local authority can operate immediately with its permanent quota of members. The Bill also proposes that municipal and road board elections can be postponed whenever it is considered desirable.

Municipal elections are held on the fourth Saturday in November, and road board elections are in April. It would be most undesirable that these should be held and that others should then have to be held when the amalgamations took place. Such a procedure would also entail a waste of district moneys. The 1st July next has been selected for the change-overs as this would avoid the complications in regard to the rating year which might ensue if another date were chosen.

Clause 3 deals with the appointment of persons to make inquiries into municipal administration, but is primarily concerned with inquiries into whether the Governor should or should not exercise any power conferred on him by either the Road Districts Act or the Municipal Corporations Act for the adjustment of boundaries of districts.

The most important object of the Bill is to provide some security for employees of municipal councils and road boards where an adjustment of functions occurs as a result of amalgamations on boundary alterations. The idea sponsoring these provisions is that an employee's remuneration, superannuation and leave rights, employment and conditions of service, so far as is practicable, are not to be altered to his detriment because of the adjustments. In order that an employee who is justifiably dissatisfied may have his grievance considered and rectified, a right of appeal to the Minister is included in the Bill.

The Bill provides that no employee shall be dismissed or have his service adversely affected as a result of an adjustment of boundaries. All officers will continue to be employed on the same type of work or as near to it as possible. No alteration will be made to their remuneration or conditions of employment for a period of two years. Any officer, however, can be dismissed if guilty of misconduct.

Special conditions apply where a person has been employed for at least a year prior to any adjustment of boundaries.

These provide that if, within two years of the adjustment, his services are terminated for a reason other than resignation or misconduct, he shall be paid a gratuity equivalent to four weeks' remuneration for each year of continuous service as a local authority employee. This gratuity will be calculated on the average weekly salary of his last 52 weeks of employment and the total gratuity must not exceed the salary he has received in his last 52 weeks of service.

If a person who has had at least one year's service prior to the adjustment resigns after a year and within two years of the adjustment and the local authority has not made him an offer in writing of two years' continuous employment for at least the wages he received before the adjustment, he shall also be paid the gratuity I have mentioned.

If a person before the adjustment was employed under a contract of service entitling him to compensation on the termination of his services under the contract, the full amount of compensation shall be paid if he is discharged after the adjustment takes place, even if the amount of gratuity payable under the Bill is exceeded. These protective provisions are based on those adopted in New South Wales following adjustments of local authority boundaries in that State.

It is proposed that the amalgamation shall take place on the 1st July. It just works out that the 30th June is a Saturday, and it is intended that the elections shall be held on that day, so there will be no drag as occurred in another instance when certain local authorities had to be put in, really, as caretakers, for a few weeks. Because of the elections being on a Saturday and the new authority coming into existence on the Monday, there will be nothing of that kind on this occasion. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. N. E. Baxter, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 5.6 p.m.*

# Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 13th October, 1955.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

## QUESTIONS.

### WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME.

*Settlers on Leases, Rocky Gully.*

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) How many of the war service settlers at Rocky Gully are now "on lease"?

(2) Of those "on lease" what are the highest and lowest values respectively on which rent is calculated, and how many acres are there in each of such properties?

(3) In determining the values on which in those cases rent has been calculated, has any sum been written off? If so, how much in each case?

(4) What are the actual rentals in each case?

(5) Are any other settlers there not now "on lease" expected to go "on lease" in the near future?