

Later on, owing to some happening such as, for instance, a war, the boy might enlist in the Army and be transferred to Queensland. John B and Mary A would know absolutely nothing about their relationship. It is very rarely that more than one child is adopted at once. Most adoptions are of single children, although there are rare cases of more than one being adopted by the one set of parents. There could, of course, be such a rare instance resulting in a rare happening that would be quite extraordinary. By what means it would be possible to acquaint two young people of the fact that they were connected by birth, it is difficult to appreciate, short of the requirement for the two children to be adopted by one parent. Apart from that I know of no method that could be devised to overcome such a rare possibility as that suggested by the hon. member. Having discussed the problem at some length, and in view of the remote possibility of such an occurrence ever taking place, I concluded it was better to allow the matter to stand, because no remedy that I could see could be found to meet the position.

Mr. TRIAT: Back in 1896 the legislation then passed included a protective section, which I read to members during the course of my remarks. There is no doubt that the possibility of such an occurrence was in the minds of legislators in those days. I uphold the principle of secrecy regarding these matters, but I think there should be no secrecy from the standpoint of the people who adopted the children with regard to the real parentage. If the adopting parents had knowledge of the real mother and father, in the event of two of the children desiring to marry in the circumstances I have outlined, they could take action to acquaint the children with the facts and prevent the marriage.

Mr. Marshall: The adopting parents might not be alive when the children wanted to be married.

Mr. TRIAT: That is so, but we could not help that. We cannot provide for everything. It would be lamentable if the Committee were to pass a law that would admit of the possibility I suggest. I think the gal fraternity might be able to devise means of overcoming the difficulty, and the Act could be amended on a future occasion.

I am glad the Minister did have the matter in mind.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The only suggestion I had in mind was as I outlined to the Committee. I do not think action through the Registrar General would meet the situation. Whatever precautions are taken, the risk will remain.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 9.51 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 2nd August, 1949.

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

QUESTIONS. EDUCATION.

As to Boulder State School Yard.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN asked the Chief Secretary :

(1) Is the Minister aware of the condition of the Boulder State School yard ?

(2) Is it the intention of the Government to bituminise this yard ?

(3) If the answer to Question (2) is "No," what provision will be made to dispose of waste water from drinking-taps running across the yard, causing mud to be brought into the class-rooms ?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied :

(1) Yes.

(2) Proposals for an expenditure of £3,000 on the improvement of these grounds are now under consideration.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

ABYDOS STATION.

As to Finance, Production and Stocking.

Hon. R. M. FORREST asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture :

(1) What was the cost, not including interest on capital, incurred in the conduct of Abydos station in the Port Hedland district, for each financial year since its purchase by the State ?

(2) What was the financial return derived from this station for each year as stated ?

(3) To what extent, if any, is the C.S.I.R.O. associated with this property for the purpose of research ?

(4) What was the number of sheep shorn in the seasons 1948 and 1949 respectively—

(a) ewes and wethers ;

(b) hoggets ;

(c) weaners and lambs ?

(5) Is it a fact that the Government recently purchased a mob of store wethers from Sherlock station, which is coastal grass country, to place on Abydos, which is poor spinifex country ? If so—

(a) upon whose recommendation was the purchase made ; and

(b) what was the price per head paid for the sheep ?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied :

(1) Revenue Expenditure—

	£	s.	d.
1946-47....	5,124	4	11
1947-48....	12,208	13	2
1948-49....	8,086	8	0

Loan Expenditure—

1947-48....	32	17	1
1948-49....	1,869	11	11

(2) Receipts—

1946-47....	155	15	1
1947-48....	354	12	3
1948-49....	6,423	2	4

(3) The C.S.I.R.O. is not at present associated with this property. It is understood, however, that research officers will be available when the stations are in a satisfactory condition to enable research to be carried out.

(4) The details as requested are not available. In 1948, 3,586 ewes, 967 lambs and six rams were shorn. To the 30th June, 1949, which is the latest figure available, 2,736 sheep were shorn with eight months' growth of wool.

(5) The wethers were inspected by the manager of Abydos Station and came from typical Abydos spinifex country. With better conditions existing at Abydos they should do well. The price paid was 22s. per head.

ALBANY MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

As to Position of Board.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP asked the Chief Secretary :

Was the Under Secretary for Health correctly reported in "The West Australian" of the 23rd July in stating that if the board members of the Albany Maternity Hospital wished to resign, the Government would not be averse to taking over that institution ?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied :

No. The committee asked whether, in view of their complete dependence upon Government finance, they served any good purpose, and whether it would not be better for them to disband and the department run the hospital as a Government institution. The Under Secretary expressed appreciation of the committee's efforts in management and in encouraging local interest in the hospital, and asked them to continue. This they agreed to do.

RAILWAYS.

As to Kalgoorlie-Perth Service.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN asked the Chief Secretary :

(1) Is the Minister aware of the inconvenience caused to many Goldfields people, when their holidays are due, by having no west-bound Kalgoorlie-Perth express running on Friday nights ?

(2) Will the Minister consider changing the running of this train from Tuesday or Thursday night to Friday night ?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied :

(1) No.

(2) The present timetable can be regarded as experimental and is subject to alteration, according to the fluctuation of passenger traffic, which is being closely watched.

COAL.

(a) As to Mine Workers' Pensions.

Hon. W. R. HALL asked the Minister for Mines :

(1) What is the basis upon which contributions are made to the Coal Miners' Pension Fund by—

(a) coalmining companies ;

(b) coalminers ;

(c) the State Government ?

(2) What is the age of retirement for coalminers ?

(3) What are the amounts of pension paid out to the fund to—

(a) married men ;

(b) married men with children under sixteen ;

(c) single men ?

The MINISTER replied :

(1) (a) 8s. per week in respect of each mine worker employed.

(b) 4s. per week.

(c) For the current financial year the Government's direct contribution will be £4,000.

As from the 30th June, 1950, the Government's direct contribution each year shall be such amount as shall be deemed necessary, no contribution in any year to exceed £16,000.

(2) Age 60 years.

(3) The maximum amounts payable are—

(a) Married men—£4 10s. per week.

(b) Married men with children under sixteen years of age—£4 10s. per week, plus 8s. 6d. per week for each child.

(c) Single men—£2 12s. 6d. per week.

The Act provides that where a mine worker or a dependant is also eligible for a Commonwealth social service pension, the rate of pension paid under the Act shall be the maximum that will not interfere with the payment of the full Commonwealth social service pension.

(b) *As to Percentage Acquired by Government.*

Hon. W. R. HALL asked the Minister for Mines :

What percentage of the total amount of coal produced from all mines in Western Australia does the State Government acquire ?

The MINISTER replied :

Approximately 85 per cent.

GOLDMINING.

As to Pensions for Workers.

Hon. W. R. HALL asked the Minister of Mines :

In view of the fact that the Government has established a pension fund for coalminers, has it given consideration to the question of establishing a similar scheme for persons employed in the goldmining industry ?

The MINISTER replied :

No.

MOTION—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT.

To Disallow Application Fees Regulation.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [4.40] : I move—

That Regulation No. 27 made under the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act, 1939-1948, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 8th July, 1949, and laid on the Table of the House on the 13th July, 1949, be and is hereby disallowed.

It will not make much difference to the Government if this motion is agreed to, but it will have a tremendous effect on the people to whom it will apply. It deals with people who are sharing accommodation. New Regulation 27 provides for an

increase from 10s. to £1 in the application fee when the rent to be paid exceeds £2 per week at the date of occupation. I think that when the original regulation came into force, most members understood, as I did, that it was to prevent frivolous applications wasting the time of the department. That was the basic idea behind the regulation that fixed the fee of 10s. to be paid on application to the department for the determination of a fair rent.

There were some complaints about the fee, but it was generally understood that it was prescribed for the purpose I have mentioned. The Minister in another place stated that there were 380 applications for determinations of fair rent during the last financial year. I state again, as I said last week, that that is a comparatively small number in view of the fact that there are at least 6,000 families in urgent need of new accommodation. I hope that as the result of the debate on the motion in this Chamber, the Minister in another place and Cabinet will take the steps necessary to widen the administration of the department controlling rents, in order to give facilities to enable these persons to be rescued from their present predicament.

I do not think the matter can be stressed too strongly as I am speaking on behalf of at least 6,000 married people with children—people who have been granted priority permits and who are living at present, with their children, under crowded and unhealthy conditions. I understand that two-thirds of them are resident in the metropolitan area. By close cooperation it would be possible for the department controlling rents to do a wonderful job for these people. I realise that this regulation can be defended as a business proposition, inasmuch as the Minister stated in another place that the people who had made application to the department had saved over £6,000 in rent. I can understand the Minister saying that it is reasonable to ask people to pay the fee of £1 if they are paying rent to the extent of £2 per week.

These people have, I suppose, an average of one and probably two children to a family, which would give a total of at least 18,000 persons suffering through having to live in crowded accommodation. That is quite apart from all the other applicants for houses. The inspectors have gone to the homes of these 6,000 persons and par-

ticulars are contained in the files and records of the State Housing Commission. By cooperation between the two departments considerable amelioration could be given to the predicament of those unfortunate people. Thousands of these citizens are afraid to approach their landlords owing to the hostile atmosphere that would be caused by any such action. Most of them are young married people who belong to the new generation that has grown up since the war.

Hon. H. Hearn: And who have known no freedom.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: They are suffering from the results of the foolishness of people in the past, and the mistakes of our forefathers. No matter what explanation we try to give, we must face the position and realise that these young people, who have grown up and will take our places in the future, are at present in dire straits. They are trying to rear families under unhealthy conditions which make it almost impossible for them to live as they should be able to in a country such as Australia. To ask these folk, hundreds of whom are paying over £2 per week in rent, to pay an increased fee of £1, is to me an indication that we do not recognise their plight.

The money side of it is bad enough but the effect of this regulation would have a detrimental effect on the minds of the people concerned, and I think we should be quick to realise the impasse that has been reached, where the State Housing Commission cannot find accommodation for the people. Surely it is up to us to show them some consideration on every possible occasion, and I think that increasing the fee to £1 is like rubbing salt into a wound. I was surprised when I saw the regulation tabled and I hope the House will agree to this motion and disallow the proposal. Never in the past have there been so many of our people in trouble owing to lack of housing accommodation. I would remind members that proper housing is the foundation upon which we must expect to build decent citizens of the future. I would not like to see the regulation allowed to stand. We should show these people that we are in sympathy with them. I sincerely hope the Chamber will agree to the course I propose.

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

MOTION—HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION DISTRIBUTION AND FINANCE.

To Inquire by Royal Commission.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [4.50] :
I move—

That this House requests the Government to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into and make recommendations upon—

- (a) the administration of hospitals throughout the State, both governmental and committee-controlled, as well as private institutions ;
- (b) the distribution of hospitals throughout the State in relation to public requirements ;
- (c) the effect of Commonwealth legislation and price fixation upon hospital finances and maintenance.

In moving this motion and asking the House to accept it, I am reminded of events which have happened in the recent past and those that are now casting their shadows upon hospital affairs, believing that they do bring about a situation concerning which we should all take stock. I do not suggest that the Royal Commission should be other than a fact-finding one. I consider that all who have the future of hospitals in this State at heart should join in formulating a plan which we should afterwards, as a State, strive to implement.

Hospital organisation and the care of the sick constitute a complex matter calling for a long and profound study by all those who associate themselves with it. The figures which the Premier presented in his Budget Speech a few evenings ago must make everyone realise the growing cost of medical services. Yet for those costs to date we have a half-finished central hospital, a total absence of planning for hospitalisation throughout the State as a need, and a growing public concern at the increasing number of private hospitals closing or threatening to close their doors.

For ten years or more the idea of regional hospitals with the resultant division of the State into hospital zones has been discussed, but without any definite plan being achieved. Centres which have asked for advice as to the building of a regional hospital have up to date received no reply or, if a reply has been available, have remained in considerable doubt, if permission was granted to them to establish a regional hospital, as to how they would finance it. Is the local authority to meet the major share of the cost, or is the cost to be met from among the population of the zone which is to be served by it ? Concern has been expressed by councils such

as that at Bunbury, because they desire to know whether the whole cost of such a regional hospital would be charged to them or whether it would be on a per capita basis of the population served by that hospital. If so, how then will the cost of the subsidised hospitals in the zone be met ?

These questions, so far as I am concerned, still remained unanswered. I cannot recall any statement having been made as to what constitutes a regional hospital or what population is required to maintain one. How many beds should it provide ? How will the specialist services be provided ? It is obvious that some work will be possible only in the metropolitan public hospitals. What work ? It depends on what decision is arrived at in this regard as to the number of beds required and as to what service is to be given in such hospitals. I do not wish to weary the House by repeating what I have said here before as to such planning, but I would emphasise that in any plan of regional hospitals the Royal Perth Hospital must be the key.

If the plan is to provide, as it should, modern advances and investigations such as biochemistry, pathology and radiology and the like for the regional hospitals in the State, the Royal Perth Hospital is, and must remain, the key centre and it is from that hospital that the trained personnel must emanate. This hospital, I estimate, before it is completed and before all the ground around it is resumed, will cost this State somewhere in the neighbourhood of £2,000,000. And this hospital cannot render adequate modern services unless it is prepared not only to treat those who come to it from distant parts, but also to make, through the services of trained personnel, such modern and investigational surveys possible to the people living in the distant parts of the State.

For this purpose, therefore, the Royal Perth Hospital must be the training centre for the technicians that will be required to make available these services. This hospital, on which a very considerable sum of money has already been spent, has not yet in any way materially increased the number of beds available for the treatment of the sick. Therefore, if this State is to receive an adequate return for the money which has been invested in that institution, it must be available to provide, not only within its walls but outside, those

modern services which today make a hospital. It must be remembered that the conception we had in our youth of a hospital as being a place in which we were laid to recover or to die, has long since changed. It has been said that with the advances of modern investigational medicine, the admission of a person to hospital is taken as evidence of failure on the part of the investigational and ancillary services of a hospital to provide ambulatory treatment.

One of the factors which I consider the Royal Commission should inquire into is whether, in this far-flung State of ours, with such a thin population, a simple plan based upon regional hospitals is to be adequate. I do not believe it is, and in the report which I gave to the Government soon after my return from abroad, I suggested that such institutions as medical or health centres in the far-flung parts of the State would be essential. I would report to members just one or two brief passages from a book which I consider to be today the most up-to-date treatise on the subject of hospital care. This book was made possible by the Commonwealth fund of the United States and it is entitled, "Hospital Care in the United States." In one of the paragraphs this statement is made—

In order to provide for the health needs of the people in small communities in which it is impractical to establish hospitals of minimum size (approximately 50 beds), health and medical service centres (varying in type) should be established.

In this part also they refer to the question of integration of these hospitals and this is a paragraph taken from the book—

Integration of Rural Hospitals in a State-wide Plan.

Economy of operation and quality of medical care in small rural hospitals and medical service centres can be best achieved through the integration of such institutions with larger hospitals and medical schools. This integration involves; (1) Planning the location and size of rural hospitals in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of facilities; (2) setting up state and regional co-ordinating councils to assist in the development and maintenance of relationships among hospitals; (3) establishing consultation services for the administrators of rural hospitals from the administrators of larger general hospitals in order to maintain a high level of administrative control of the business phases of hospital operations and effective administration of the professional and technical phases of hospital service; (4) interchanging service and pooling of equipment among hospitals in order to reduce the cost of hospital operation; (5) integrating certain services and departments which small rural hospitals and

medical service centres cannot support on a full-time basis alone, e.g., pathology, radiology, accounting, purchasing, dietetics; and (6) cooperating in making the maximum use of all hospital facilities during periods of high demand for service, particularly serious in the case of small hospitals because of the difficulty of maintaining high occupancy rates.

One realises therefore that there must be some plan of integrating these hospitals, so that hospitals situated in zones must integrate with the small health centres, which are suggested for the smaller outlying districts. I believe that, before we do anything at all in this matter, a survey of the State should be made. One of the wisest things that other countries—the United States and Canada—have done is for the central Parliament to ask for a survey to be made of each State's needs before any special money is granted in the way of assistance for a plan for the development of hospitals.

There is today the possibility of having the services of people made available to help us. Mr. W. K. Kellogg, of the Kellogg Foundation, left his money, which will eventually amount to 100 million dollars, so that medical services could be improved, and there was no restriction on where the money was spent. Dr. Graham Davis, of the Foundation, who was recently chairman of the American Hospitals Association, has been appointed to take part in the Canadian plan, and I was led to believe that there would not be the slightest difficulty in obtaining his services for Western Australia, probably without any cost to us. Consequently there is a possibility of our getting expert advice and having a survey made of our State. I consider that, rather than continue as we have been doing over all the years that I have been in this State, we should have some definite vision before us if we intend to proceed with a hospital plan.

Looking at the question of integration of hospitals in our State, I noticed that recently it has been planned to spend a reasonably large sum of money on alterations to the hospital at Yarloop. I should like to know whether this will fit into a State integration plan. If it did, I would not for one moment object, but does the creation of a nurses' quarters at Pinjarra at a cost of £20,000 envisage that centre as one for a future regional hospital? World-wide opinion is against the building of hospitals of fewer than 50 beds. They are in a modern sense inefficient and uneconomical.

Has it been decided what area is to be served by the future hospital at Pinjarra and what service is to be given there? Has the matter been planned on that basis? If so, there must be some idea in the minds of our administrators of a plan for a hospital service for the State. Yet, so far as this House is concerned, we are not aware of any plan if this sort having been actually accepted.

Another happening of recent date is that the South Perth Road Board is considering the building of a 14-bed hospital. As I have said, it is considered inefficient and uneconomical to build a hospital of fewer than 50 beds, and I believe that if the road board is permitted to build a 14-bed hospital, it will be making a millstone to hang around its neck, and any nurse who attempted to maintain it as a private hospital would soon be rendered insolvent. Surely there must be some body to advise on a matter of this sort and steer the road board clear of the mistakes that have been made in the past. Today, we know that a petition from Fremantle bearing 8,000 signatures is being presented in another place praying for a maternity hospital in that area. If we had some body charged with the duty of advising on these matters, a body on the lines I have suggested, I am prepared to say that the present situation would not have arisen. Where such a situation did arise, there would be a competent body composed of men of experience to which an appeal could be made.

In my first speech in this House I suggested that we should have a board to control hospital standards in conformity with the Charities Board of Victoria. A small commission would probably be able to do this work very well. I have not changed the views which I expressed on that occasion and which I embodied in my report to the Government, but it is more in keeping with present-day requirements that a commission be formed, and that there should be an advisory board to the commission so that the needs and wishes of the people over this wide State should be made freely available to this commission.

Our hospitals should not be too far removed from the people. In my report I expressed the hope that Federal control of hospitals would be exercised in an advisory capacity, whereas the administration should be in the hands of the State; but there should be a public body to advise those in

control. I was for long enough a member of the board of management of the Royal Perth Hospital to realise the advantage that would accrue from having a few public men imbued with the spirit of service—not a large number—assisting in the administration. I quote again from the American report, which states—

(11) The hospitals operated by State, county or municipal governmental units should be conducted under the supervision of or have the advice and counsel of boards broadly representative of the public.

This view I have made known to the House before and there is no reason to change it. I believe that we could provide a body such as I have outlined—a small executive on which there should be a medical man, an architect and an accountant. On the commission there should be representatives of other interests, including the hospital zones. Existing legislation, as I view it, tends to remove the feeling that the individual has some interest in his hospital. It might not be out of place to repeat that as yet no real progress has been made in the field of medicine as a result of the State moving into control. The tremendous advance of the last century has been the result of private benefactions, leaving research workers quite untrammelled. One of the things I deplore is that people are getting the impression fixed in their minds that hospitals are Government institutions in which they need not show interest, because it is the duty of the Government to provide them.

It stands surely beyond criticism that such a body as I advocate would have a more intimate knowledge of the hospital requirements of the State and its future needs, and would be able to render the State a better service than it is getting at present. I may repeat that, excellent though the present system may be for the collection of funds, I have never felt that a Lotteries Commission was the most efficient body to distribute to hospitals and charities the money received. The provision of hospital beds in relation to the public need is a task in itself where the population is scattered and where in mining districts, towns such as Cuddingwarra of the past and Wiluna of the present day are apt to rise and fall overnight. Such conditions call for the exercise of a considerable amount of care and thought. During the war period, the medical arrangements for the Murchison were not satisfactory, and I have received

information recently that leads me to believe that they are not much better now. On the surface it would appear that a medical centre based upon the Big Bell hospital would be the solution to many of the problems.

Another matter that I consider would be studied by a competent body is possible increased provision at the Geraldton Hospital, so that many of the cases from the North-West requiring treatment may travel the shorter distance as against being brought to Perth. In these days of air transport this may prove to be less of a problem or, alternatively, one that could be partially answered by the provision of more facilities at Carnarvon. It has often appeared to me that the laboratory at Broome might, if transferred to Derby, render greater service. I am definitely of opinion that modern service should be made available to the medical men practising in the North and endeavouring to maintain the health of the people there.

I think I have said sufficient to outline the reasons for the inclusion of the first two clauses of my motion. There are still to be considered the impact of Commonwealth legislation and price-fixing of hospital services. The Hospital Benefits Act is badly named, as I do not believe it does anything to assist hospital finances. It is an Act that, in plain terms, means the abolition of the means test as a basis of admission to hospital. It has been extended to private hospitals as a measure of financial relief to persons requiring hospital care. In principle, it may have something to recommend it in that it obviates the interrogation of sick people on their admission to hospital. It means that any person, no matter what his financial position may be, may now enter the ward of a public hospital and there be treated without the payment of maintenance costs of the medical service.

This digs deep at the roots of the honorary staff system which has rendered such sterling service to hospitals, not only here but also throughout the world. Worse, however, it destroys the sense of responsibility of the individual to make some provision for a rainy day, or to contribute to the upkeep of the institution. It brings once more to the mind of the individual the provision of services by that beneficent factor of modern life—the State. I consider that it is a

pure piece of socialist legislation. We should not, however, condemn it simply because of that.

Let us see what assistance it is rendering to hospital authorities. It was introduced at 6s. per bed per day and later was increased to 8s., and it is purely designed to recoup the hospital for the amount of money which normally would be received from the fees paid by patients. But it has difficulties. This recompense from a central organisation at Canberra is much slower to meet the rising costs of an institution than would be the case if a hospital rendered its own accounts to its out-patients, or asked for contributions from them. The recent rise of 6s. 2d. in the basic wage is going to mean a large increase in the cost of maintenance of public hospitals, yet no portion of the cost will be received unless an increase in the 8s. a day is allowed by the Commonwealth Government. If such an increase is made, it will only come about after an interval. There is no means of meeting these costs unless there is a continuous adjustment by the Commonwealth of emoluments to the States in consequence of the depreciation of our money.

Whereas previously individuals going to a hospital might have been able to contribute, in these days when the basic wage has risen so much they should be able to contribute considerably more. But the reimbursement from the Commonwealth is on a fixed amount. Those of us who are associated with hospitals have regarded this as a very poor means of subsidising hospitals, and we consider that this State, as well as others, was unwise to accept it. It also has the disastrous effect of shutting out private benefactors, because it is well-known that contributions to a Government institution are much less than those to privately-run organisations which are not under Government control.

We will find that the acceptance of the free medicine Act by the public hospitals, although the Government has recommended it, is also unwise. I consider that the receipt of 3s. 6d. per out-patient attendance will not in any way meet the rise in the cost of medicine. Perhaps the Commonwealth Government will answer that it is not intended to meet that cost, but only to meet the amount that would have been received from the patients as fees, when attending as out-patients. Again I say it is a most unfortunate Act because it

does nothing whatever to relieve the State institutions of any of their burdens. On the contrary, I believe the Commonwealth legislation has added a burden in many ways to the State.

I would recall to the notice of members the words of the Premier, when introducing his Budget. He mentioned the rising costs of the Health Department and stated that there was an increased tendency to ask for public hospital accommodation and treatment. It would be interesting to know how much of this increase has been due to the effect of Federal legislation. The plans of the Commonwealth with regard to migration are also adding an unfair charge to our public hospital finances. It is true that a number of migrants who arrived here have already been affected with pulmonary tuberculosis, and it is equally true that they have no direct effect on the hospital finances because in the recent agreement, which this House passed, it was provided that any increase in the cost of conducting the Wooroloo sanatorium, from a certain day onward, would be met by the Commonwealth.

But one must realise that the migrants are occupying Wooroloo beds to such an extent that it is possible that we shall be forced, as a State, to use beds for the treatment of tuberculous patients that were not normally intended for that purpose. So, indirectly, the cost will come back to us. But the cost in relation to the general health of the migrant does come straight back to our hospitals. One has only to attend the hospitals as a physician, as I do, to realise that it is going to take the migrant in this country a considerable time to become acclimatised.

It is admitted that already the newcomers to this State represent about 15 per cent. of the out-patient attendance. In-patient beds are being used to a large extent by the recent arrivals. The Commonwealth makes no contribution to that cost at all, beyond the 8s. a day which it gives for every bed. My own belief is that the Fremantle Public Hospital and the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children will also find the same rising incidence in the use of beds. I am of the opinion that we should make an approach to the Commonwealth Government asking it to meet the cost of carrying the migrant until he or she becomes acclimatised.

Hon. H. Hearn: Have you any figures as to the use by migrants of beds for tuberculous patients at Wooroloo?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: No, but I know they can be supplied by the Minister.

Hon. H. Hearn: I suggest they would be very interesting.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It is estimated that the newcomers represent 15 per cent. of the out-patients. We must realise, too, that this is making an enormous demand upon the hospital beds. The actual daily bed average of the Royal Perth Hospital has risen from, roughly, 350 a year ago to something like 420 to 430 today. So we have an added 80 people per day asking for hospital accommodation. The Commonwealth pays only 8s. a day, but I ask members to recall that the cost per bed at the Royal Perth Hospital must be approaching 30s., if not more. So we can see that there is a certain amount of reason in asking for an inquiry into these various matters.

I am quite certain that if we obtained evidence from the country hospitals, we would find that the effect of the Commonwealth legislation there would be the same. It is interesting to realise the amazing change that has come over this State in a matter of ten years. If we take Hollywood Hospital, which has a bed list of about 400 patients, we find that, with the increase at the Royal Perth and other hospitals, there are today some 500 more people sick in bed than there were in 1939.

Hon. W. J. Mann: How do you account for that?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It can be partly accounted for by the fact that there is practically no nursing whatsoever being done in private homes today. Also, because of the difficulties which make it almost impossible to care for sickness in the home, the demand for hospital accommodation has been greater than ever. If we conduct an inquiry into this matter, we must do so from the point of view of the difficulties as they exist today. Of the 440 occupied beds at Hollywood, I would say that not more than 60 per cent. are availed of by persons suffering from direct war casualties. The remaining 40 per cent. would be civilians who acted in certain capacities for the Services, or relatives of those who were on service, and who are under treatment in accordance with Commonwealth legislation.

I think it is about time that the people in this State knew of the relationship between Western Australia and the Commonwealth in regard to hospital services. Perhaps the best guide as to what is happening is to be found in the change of appellation of the Commonwealth medical officer in this State. During the war, his title was altered from Chief Quarantine Officer, to Senior Commonwealth Medical Officer within the State. In recent weeks, I understand he has received the title of Deputy Director of Health, the Director of Health being the medical man next to Mr. McKenna in Canberra. So, one can obviously say that the trend of this policy will be for the Commonwealth officer for the State to become a deputy director of medical services directly under the Commonwealth organisation.

If we have some well thought out plan of hospital care for the State, it may be that the Commonwealth will accept it. But if, when the time arrives, this State has no more of a hospital plan than it has today, then I am afraid we will be asked to accept some scheme drawn in Canberra. For our own sakes we should have a plan, the result of our own thinking, ready for such an occasion.

My last term relates to the recent closure, or threatened closure, of hospitals on account of price fixation. At first the closure of these hospitals—and quite a number have closed since the war—was because of the inability to obtain nursing staff. But that is not the case to anything like the same extent today. The cause has shifted to the cost side, and the difficulties that have been imposed upon matrons in maintaining their hospitals under the price-fixing regulations. What appears to be the main grievance of the matrons with whom I have discussed the matter is the delay that occurs between the time when they make an application for an increase, and when the increase is granted. The average period seems to be 90 days.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That applies in commerce, too.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It is generally accepted that the amount granted will not be the total that was asked for, and, therefore, by the time the increase is allowed the spiral of costs has mounted further, and an additional increase is necessary. As one matron said to me, "It would be much easier for me to close my hospital and

convert it into flats, as others have done. I would receive just as great a return by doing that." We cannot allow our hospitals to be closed in that way.

I have made it my business to inquire, to some extent, into the position of Lucknow hospital. In my opinion the matron has received, as a result of her enterprise and investment of capital, very little more than she would have earned in salary as matron. The amount she has been able to wipe off her indebtedness has been possible only by very severe personal saving. She has been advised that it should be possible to reduce certain of her staff, and to exercise economy in food accounts.

Hon. G. Bennetts: By prices officers.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Yes. The job of being matron of a hospital is very arduous, and anybody running a hospital must take the risk of investing capital in the institution, and then of having to maintain it in the face of extreme difficulties. It might be impossible to obtain staff. It sometimes happens that a cook is not available and the matron has to do the cooking. I have, on many occasions seen the matron become the cook and the washer-woman, and then sit up all night in charge of the midwifery block. If a matron is going to look after a hospital in that manner, she needs more than just the mere salary she would receive were she not accepting such responsibilities.

I believe the fixing of prices for these institutions would be much better if it were in the hands of a hospital commission such as I have suggested, as the members of such a body would have made a life study of the requirements of hospital conduct and organisation. As a result of my inquiries, I have reached the opinion that the actual wages cost per bed today in a private hospital in the metropolitan area varies from £4 10s. to nearly £5 per week. To that must be added the cost of food, rent, repairs to buildings, replacement of stock and the payment of interest on capital involved, as well as other things. Their demand that the cost of a shared room be £6 15s. to £7 15s., depending on whether three or two occupy the room, and to £8 15s. for a single room, calls for exercise of the strictest economy.

(Resolved: That motions be continued).
I apologise for being so lengthy.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You have not been talking for an hour.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Let me repeat that this calls for the strictest economy. The recent rise of 3s. 3d. per week in the basic wage for female labour will add, in my opinion, £2 per week to the cost of labour at the Lucknow Hospital. The matron must bear that cost personally until such time as the Prices Commissioner gives her permission to raise the fees. No hospital can carry on in this way for very long.

It may be said, as I have heard it expressed, that the day of small private hospitals has gone and that they have served their purpose. Let us accept that viewpoint for one moment. Is it wise to discard these small hospitals, which have done such a service over the years, until we have replaced them with something which we, as a people, accept? Even though we envisage 50- to 100-bed hospitals forming a ring around the city, they are visions of the future. With our building difficulties, they most certainly will be a vision of the future, and I ask myself whether it would be wise to discard these private hospitals at present. It may not be! With further thought we may add to their uses and that thought could be given by a Royal Commission which would advise us as to the uses of which would advise us as to the uses of those hospitals and their place in the life of our community.

It is my expressed opinion that institutions such as the Mount Hospital, though not operating for profit, are hard-pressed to make ends meet and are barely able to provide for the interest on their indebtedness. Yet that hospital is allowed to charge up to £10 10s. per week for a room, while at Lucknow they are permitted to charge only £8 15s. for the same type of accommodation.

Hon. H. Hearn: What about the intermediate ward at the Royal Perth Hospital?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I will deal with that in a moment. The only difference can be in respect of rates and taxes. In any private ward of a hospital there must still be the same nursing attention the whole clock round; there must be the same food given to the patient; and so the cost cannot vary so considerably. However, there may be another aspect. Let us look at the intermediate service at the Royal Perth Hospital, as Mr. Hearn suggested. A charge of £12 12s. is allowed for a single room without a bathroom. Is it possible that we have reached the stage where large institutions are too expensive? Have we reached the

stage where large superstructures are climbing their costs to a point to which the public cannot reach? If the Royal Perth Hospital is permitted to charge £12 12s. per week, the Mount Hospital £10 10s. per week and Lucknow £8 15s. per week, on what basis were these amounts decided?

Hon. H. Hearn: Does the Prices Commissioner decide the basis?

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I suppose it is on the ability to pay.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I am not criticising anybody, but I believe that a Royal Commission such as I have suggested would be a much more competent body to put these matters on a proper footing. Here is a point which I would like to emphasise. We must not forget that the Royal Perth Hospital does not have to meet any interest because, I understand, the Lotteries Commission bears those expenses. If that is so, and the hospital must charge £12 12s. for a single room, then we must surely think that it might be unwise to finish the second half of the new building, and instead build 100-bed hospitals around the suburbs. If that were done, we could reserve the Royal Perth Hospital for specialised treatment and as a central hospital, and have the smaller hospitals to cater for the other cases. However, we are committed to complete the building of the Royal Perth Hospital because the new wing is incomplete and could not continue for long in its present condition.

Whether we have reached the stage where, in a city like this with a small population, we cannot afford to have structures such as these, is a matter for investigation. I think I have said sufficient on that score to make members realise that there is much about which we should be concerned. However, before I leave the question of costs, let me make a guess at the annual cost of maintaining the present building at the Royal Perth Hospital for the current year. I know the hospital well because I have been a member of the staff for a number of years and was a member of the Hospital Board for some time. I would guess that the annual cost for the current year would not be less than £425,000. That is a staggering figure and one which will have to justify itself in regard to the services rendered.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Is that including interest on capital?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP : I believe it may be, but it is difficult to estimate. I do not know whether it is realised that very little of the old Perth Hospital was built by the State. Three of the original wards were, I believe, erected after the first world war for the Repatriation Department. The department sold that portion of the building to the Perth Hospital at a small cost, so it is very hard to estimate the capital expenditure. In conclusion, let me make one appeal and refer to the immediate need for a thorough investigation into the care of the chronic and the aged sick.

Hon. A. Thomson : Hear, hear !

Hon. J. G. HISLOP : This is a matter that must be made immediately one of very deep investigation and thought. I would like to invite members of this House to accompany me on one of my rounds of the old buildings of the hospital which house the aged. On many occasions the average age of those occupying Ward 2 has been over 70 years. Here I would like to record my praise of the splendid work which the nurses, many of whom are scarcely out of their teens, do in caring for these aged people—many of them poor travesties of what they have been. The care and patience showered upon these old folk is to the credit of these young women.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham : They do more than their friends or relatives would do for them.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP : They do. It is a heartbreaking task to see these individuals, repaired after a stay in hospital, leaving the institution only to come back the next day, or in a few weeks' time, simply because the conditions to which they went after discharge from hospital, were not in keeping either with their physical state or age. If ever anything was required today, it is a place where we can send these aged people after discharge from hospital so that they may receive care other than that which is necessary in a hospital. To send one of these people, just able to get about, back to life in a room, to care for himself, is to ask for an early breakdown and a return to hospital. Very often this type of person has to cook his own meals or eat in a cafe in the city. To find the correct solution will necessitate careful inquiries because as yet there is no guide.

Hon. E. M. Heenan : What do they do in America ?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP : When I was abroad I referred particularly to this problem and asked what they did to overcome it. They told me that it was a nightmare to them and they had been unable to find a solution. They considered that it was something which had been brought about amongst the British speaking people by the changing economy and the alteration in the size of families. They, too, would be just as grateful for anything that we could find out in this State, as we would be for any advice that they could give us. It was considered a problem that should be overcome by each community as quickly as possible. I can give one example. What is the use of having a home for the aged folk in the metropolitan area and asking people from the Goldfields to come down ? We have to meet this as our own problem, and we have to find the correct solution. It will take a very wise man, with the help of every citizen, to overcome the problem of caring for the aged sick.

I have completed my remarks and I trust that I have put my case before members in a clear manner. I hope, too, that the Government will realise that there is a lot to be examined and a tremendous amount to do in the future. We want help from all those who can give it and we want a plan to which we can adhere, something towards which we can strive. I believe that a Royal Commission, investigating the questions which I have put before the House, will be of great benefit to the State. I consider the matter is of great urgency if only from the point of view of preventing the closure of the small hospitals because of regulations which are of wartime origin. If we can do anything, as an urgent measure, to see that no fewer beds are made available to the public, we shall at least have rendered one service to the community.

On motion by Hon. Sir Frank Gibson, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Guildford Old Cemetery (Lands Revestment).
- 2, Adoption of Children Act Amendment.
Received from the Assembly.

BILLS (4)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Wheat Pool Act Amendment (No. 3).
- 2, Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act Amendment (No. 3).

Transmitted to the Assembly.

- 3, The Westralian Buffalo Club (Private).
- 4, Mental Institution Benefits (Commonwealth and State Agreement).

Passed.

BILL—COAL MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.51] in moving the second reading said: This is a short Bill but one of some importance. It is proposed to amend the principal Act so that persons holding certificates of competency as mine managers under the Mines Regulation Act can obtain similar certificates under the Coal Mines Regulation Act after only twelve months' underground experience in coal mines instead of the five years required at present. The Coal Mines Regulation Act specifies that no person shall be granted a certificate of competency unless he shall have had practical underground experience in coal mines for at least five years, this including at least twelve months at or in the coal face as a miner or a shiftman.

The educational qualifications required to obtain a mine manager's certificate of competency under the Mines Regulation Act are very much higher than those demanded of a holder of a first-class certificate of competency under the Coal Mines Regulation Act and ensures that no person shall obtain such a certificate who has not been intensively trained. It has proved, and this will probably hold good for some time to come, extremely difficult to obtain first-class certificated managers for our collieries. Attempts to secure qualified men from the Eastern States have met with little success. It might be possible to obtain qualified men from Great Britain but this procedure is somewhat of a gamble and ignorance of local conditions might prove a severe drawback, to such appointments. In fact, efforts have been made to obtain the services of a coal mining engineer from England but without success, the reason for that being the tremendous demand in the Old Country for men of that type.

It is considered that twelve months in a coal mine would be sufficient underground experience for a trained mining engineer who has had the underground experience in hard rock mines—that is to say, in gold mines—to meet the requirements demanded for a certificate of competency under the Mines Regulation Act. The State Mining Engineer agrees whole-heartedly with this proposal, which has its genesis in a request from Amalgamated Collieries, Ltd. This company had taken into its service a man named Vierk, who had been employed previously as an underground manager for Kalgoorlie Enterprise Mines, Ltd. and who was desirous of sitting for a first-class certificate of competency for coal mines. In view of his qualifications and underground experience, the company did not consider it necessary for him to serve five years in coal mines, including twelve months in the coal face.

I think members will agree with me that a man competent enough to act as underground manager in a goldmine at Kalgoorlie should, after twelve months' experience in a coalmine at Collie, be equally competent to carry on and hold a certificate of competency under the Coal Mines Regulation Act, instead of being required to have five years' experience, as I have indicated. It will also be agreed that higher educational qualifications are required of the holder of a certificate of competency under the Mines Regulation Act and the only difference between that certificate and the one issued under the Coal Mines Regulation Act is that the holder of the former has had no experience underground in a coalmine. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

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

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 27th July.

HON. R. M. FORREST (North) [5.55]: I intend to vote against the second reading of the Bill. It is now four years since the war ended and during the period when hostilities were continuing there were certain controls that the Government had to

exercise. The people were asked to deprive themselves of certain liberties and rights during the war period, but they were told that at the end of hostilities most of the controls would be lifted.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : What Government said that ?

Hon. R. M. FORREST : What do we find ? Year after year we are asked to continue the control legislation, and I really do not know how we shall ever end the existing state of affairs if the House is to adopt that course every twelve or eighteen months. It seems to me that we shall never be free from controls. We were told that if rationing of clothes were ended no-one would be able to get a suit, a towel or any other fabric. We were told that prices would skyrocket with the result that the rich man would get the lot and the poor man would have to go without. It can be said today that there are more clothes on the shelves than for many years previously. We were also informed that there would be chaos if petrol rationing were to cease. I do not think there has been much difference and I believe that, with restrictions lifted, petrol consumption has been lower.

The Chief Secretary : Unfortunately, that is far from correct.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : Of course, that is not the position at all.

Hon. R. M. FORREST : We were also told that if controls were lifted from land values, no-one would be able to get a block upon which to erect a home. I do not think that is what has happened.

The Chief Secretary : That was said with regard to houses, not to land.

Hon. R. M. FORREST : I understand that there are 22,000 people who require homes. Under the present system I believe that in three or four years' time the total will have risen to 50,000. I took the trouble the other day to make some inquiries regarding this phase and I sent telegrams to three separate towns in the North. I despatched them to Carnarvon, Port Hedland and Wyndham. My object was to find out how many private homes had been built at those centres during the last three years. The reply I received from Carnarvon was that three cottages had been built but none during the preceding ten years. From Port Hedland I received information that one Commonwealth building had been erected and that

an old building at the aerodrome had been taken down and put up again in the town ; but apart from those, there had been none erected. From Wyndham I received the reply that only one private house had been erected and three Sydney Williams huts had been occupied as dwellings. Those are the Wyndham figures for the last three years. Members know that Wyndham and other towns in the far North were evacuated during the war years ; but the telegrams which I have read clearly indicate that very little has been done for the provision of homes since the people returned to the towns.

Hon. H. A. C. Daffen : How many houses did you say had been built at Carnarvon in the preceding ten years ?

Hon. R. M. FORREST : None, except the three I have mentioned.

Hon. H. A. C. Daffen : That is an improvement !

Hon. E. M. Heenan : That would be a building boom at Carnarvon !

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture : What have the members been doing ?

Hon. R. M. FORREST : We in the North consider there should be no restriction on house building there, especially when we know that thousands of houses have been erected in the metropolitan area. I would like this debate to be adjourned for a month so as to give the Government the opportunity to bring in an amending Bill to lift all restrictions in the country, say, for a distance of 50 miles from Perth. That would have the effect of encouraging building in country districts. It would be well to fix a radius of 50 miles from Perth, because within that area there are some holiday resorts where perhaps a welter would be made of house building. I hope some member will move the adjournment of the debate for one month.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Central) [6.3] : I have listened with great interest to the contributions to the debate from those members who have favoured continuance and those who have opposed it. As a matter of fact, I agree with both sides that there is much to be said for and against continuance. The whole question is one of extreme importance to everybody. I doubt whether sufficient factual material has been placed before the House to guide

those members who might be, as I was for a while, undetermined as to which way they would vote.

I was much impressed by what Mr. Dimmitt had to say, partly because I am instinctively against control. I favour unrestricted free enterprise, because I think, on a long-term view, that is far and away the best solution of this tremendous housing problem. On the other hand, I think that on the short-term view, a sudden cessation from controls to what Mr. Craig termed a free-for-all scramble, would be too sudden to allow of an orderly adjustment as from one system to the other. But I am mainly influenced in my decision to support continuance at the moment by the effect that it would have on the portion of the State which I represent.

The housing problem in Geraldton has been acute for some time ; although I think, as I have stated, the conditions in the metropolitan area are still more acute and are likely to be so for some years to come. On the 1st March last I received a letter from Mr. Carter, the town clerk of Geraldton, setting out details of the houses which Geraldton had been allotted in comparison with those allotted in other areas in various parts of the State. These comparisons may be of interest to members, so I will quote them. They are—

Town.	Popula- tion.	Houses com- pleted and occu- pied.	Under con- struc- tion.	Total.
Geraldton	5,974	19	28	47
Bunbury	6,245	102	35	137
Collie	4,507	80	33	93
Northam	4,653	47	5	52

Hon. A. L. Loton : For what year are those figures ?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON : At the 1st March of this year. Mr. Carter, in his estimate, said that he considered 200 houses were required to cover the immediate needs of Geraldton, while another 80 would be required to replace sub-standard dwellings. I mention these figures, as they go to show that these areas in the North are remote from the sources of supply ; they are much worse off than are the areas which are closer to those sources. I think members will agree with me that the materials which Geraldton has been able to acquire for the construction of the houses built there compare unfavourably with those acquired by

Bunbury, which is much closer to the source of supply. If controls were lifted, that position, instead of becoming better as far as Geraldton is concerned, would become worse. I wish to quote a small paragraph from the report of the Deputy Director of Housing, at page 6. He says—

One of the factors influencing costs, and certainly the completion rate of houses, is hoarding of supplies bought up by contractors wherever and whenever available and held in anticipation of requirements perhaps many months ahead. Hoarding does not occur to any appreciable extent in Western Australia where statutory control precludes release of any materials in short supply except by the authority of the State Housing Commission.

If the Bill were passed without thoroughly considering the factors for and against continuance; it would amount to a vote of no-confidence in the present Housing Commission and, in particular, our own Minister for Housing. It is only fair to place on record the fact that with the materials available he has done an excellent job. We can consider afterwards whether perhaps a release from controls could have enabled a better job to be done.

When the present Minister for Housing (Hon. R. R. McDonald) took over control in 1947, the building rate was 2,120 houses per annum. In 1947-48 that rate was stepped up to 2,923 ; while during the last quarter of 1948 it had increased to 4,030 per annum. In the progress that it has made in the construction programme, Western Australia has been head and shoulders above any of the other States. According to the report from which I have just quoted, the completed rate for Western Australia, per 100,000 persons, was 334 dwellings. Victoria came next with 226, while the Commonwealth average for all the six States was 221. In costs per square Western Australia again led. For brick houses constructed under the State Housing Commission the figure was £117 per square, against £112 per square for privately built homes. The comparable rates for the other States were as follows :—

	Housing Commission.	Private building.
	£	£
Queensland	147	156
Victoria	147	184
New South Wales	169	180

In timber structures, Western Australia again led with £106 per square. Queensland came next with £115 per square, then Tasmania, £127 ; Victoria, £131 ; and

New South Wales, £153. Western Australia again was the lowest State so far as rentals were concerned, 32s. 6d. to 35s. per week. The figures for other States were—

Queensland	.....	35s. to 40s.
Tasmania	.....	35s. to 40s.
Victoria	.....	40s. to 45s.
New South Wales	.....	45s. to 50s.

There has also in this State been an appreciable increase in materials required for building. Taking the pre-war figure as 100, the following table shows the increase :—

	Pre-war.	1946.	1948.
Bricks	100	47	102
Cement	100	66	107
Fibrous plaster	100	105	179
Tiles	100	93	195
Asbestos sheets	100	....	283

As regards timber requirements, the Commission was handicapped in the early stages because the Jardee mill was burnt down. It produced 13 per cent. of the State's output. However, it has now been reconstructed and, with seven other mills which will be coming into production before the end of the year, it looks as if the timber position will sort itself out very well.

The Housing Commission did release controls as far as it was able. It released controls of timber, bricks, paint, nails and cement, although controls have had to be reimposed on bricks and cement because of strike-caused shortages. The Government has also introduced a self-help scheme and it is interesting to note that in the December quarter of 1948 homes to the number of 580 were under construction. The occupied dwellings in Western Australia for 1947—the latest figure available—numbered 122,367. Comparable figures are—

	1947.	1948.
Houses commenced	2,405	3,075
Houses completed	1,792	2,771
Houses under construction	1,521	1,841

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Before the tea suspension I quoted certain figures showing that, by comparison with the other States, Western Australia had done an excellent job under the circumstances. The question now is: Is that job good enough or could it be improved by lifting controls? I am of the opinion that the answer, on a short-term view is, no, and on a long-term view,

yes. I do not think that the full impact of this very serious housing position is fully realised. Just recently the Premier said that during the last 10 years the population of this State had increased by 60,000. The whole of that increase was reflected in the increased population of the metropolitan area. The country part of the State had remained comparatively static. That has created a terrific problem.

Apart from Geraldton in particular—and I should say Bunbury, Albany, and perhaps the Goldfields—there seems to be comparatively little house building activity throughout the State. There is not the same urgent demand for housing. But we know that quite a number of residents in the country—farmers and others—who are in a much better position now on account of the increased price for their produce, have decided to leave their country homes—in some cases to their sons—and have come to live in the metropolitan area. No-one is more entitled than they, after the work they have done for the country, to expect to enjoy the amenities of the town.

But that has added to the housing problem here. I think that that total increase, which is equal to 25 per cent. of the metropolitan population a little over 10 years ago, is more than the same percentage of increase in the Eastern States capitals. Let me put it this way: If we are faced with the necessity of providing housing and all the amenities—public utilities and commercial and industrial buildings—that a town of 60,000 would require, we begin to realise the magnitude of the job. Apart from that, we are faced with the necessity of making provision for housing over 10,000 migrants annually. When those migrants come along they are, in many cases, men with families—just the sort of migrants we want—and they require houses and are entitled to go to the top of the priority list.

At the moment we have 12,000 applications for houses, of which over 3,000 are regarded as urgent. In view of the delay in the filling of housing needs, the question arises: How long have these small families and couples who want to get married and require houses, to wait before there is a possibility of meeting their needs? This is an emergency situation and must be tackled from an emergency point of view. The question we have to consider seriously is whether we can stimulate production to

the extent of providing houses of the standard that apparently is now fixed, or whether we will have to reduce our housing standard so that a sufficient number of homes can be built from the materials likely to be available.

Quite rightly, Mr. Craig stated that if controls were lifted there would be an immediate free-for-all application, because, without question, the extra people in the metropolitan area have made a greater demand on the commercial houses or industrial enterprises, and it is only reasonable to suppose that some move will have to be made soon, or in the reasonably near future, to build those utilities, those industrial and commercial enterprises up to the standard whereby they can cater for our needs. In talking about standards, I have here plans and specifications of a four-roomed house. Five of these buildings are being erected at Bassendean and the cost per house, without a fence and with the owner providing the land, is £700. The construction is weatherboard. There are four main rooms. There is a living room 16 ft. by 12 ft.; one bedroom 12 ft. by 12 ft. and one 12 ft. by 8 ft.; a kitchen 18 ft. by 8 ft.; and a front verandah 28 ft. by 8 ft. There is a detached laundry and bathroom and the E.C. There is a tiled roof and one iron chimney. The houses are being built by private enterprise.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Unlined?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The houses are lined with plasterboard.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And ceiled?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Yes. Each house is built to come within the income range of a man who is not getting too much money but who looks forward to the prospect of building and paying for a home of his own.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is a pity they are putting in iron chimneys instead of brick ones.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Maybe! But these houses are being built to avoid extra costs. The plan has been approved by the local road board and the people who have contracted to get the houses are perfectly happy with the set-up.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Are they pre-fabricated?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: No. Mr. Deshon of Guildford is erecting them. He has all the necessary materials and is quite pre-

pared to build more if the Housing Commission can make available some blocks which it now holds. Two or three years ago a proposal was submitted to the Government for the building of similar houses which at the time were estimated to cost, I think, about £200. They were to have been unlined, but the building panel decided they would be below standard.

As a matter of fact, the point was raised in this House whether the Government wanted to go ahead with the erection of slum dwellings. But in face of the emergency which confronts us, it would appear that something of that style of house might have been very desirable; and I think the Housing Commission could give consideration to the question of resuming land and having small houses of this type built in what I might call a garden suburb. Such buildings could be leased on a tenancy basis or sold on the condition that the owners maintained them in good order and built gardens around them.

The houses that it was proposed to build would all have been similar, and there would not have been competition between home and home to see which could have the best and which would have the most expensive furniture. Those homes would have been ideal for young couples to live in while putting a bit of money aside to buy a more expensive house in the future. The buildings could have been added to as time passed or as the family conditions required. I think that in view of the magnitude of this problem, some scheme of that kind will have to receive very serious consideration.

With regard to some commodities which we have obtained from the Eastern States, we know that supplies from that source are very much behind schedule and that at present the Broken Hill Proprietary Coy's works are closed down on account of the disastrous coal strike. Lysaght's, who manufacture iron, are dependent on B.H.P. for their raw materials. Stewarts & Lloyds have a plant already built which they claim could catch up on the supplies of piping if the raw materials were obtainable. It all comes back to what B.H.P. can supply. We cannot control that; but it is of interest to us because it is from that source that we draw a lot of our raw materials.

I am satisfied from what I have said that it would be very inadvisable to lift controls for the immediate present, although

I am inclined to think that a deadline date should be fixed by which we should expect the Housing Commission, or perhaps the Government, to consider lifting controls entirely. I know that it is bound up with the question of production; but if a reasonable time were allowed to stimulate production channels so that we could have some idea of what materials might be available, the question could be kept constantly under review and controls lifted as speedily as possible. Because I am not in favour of their being lifted immediately, I intend to vote for the Bill.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [7.43]: I have listened with considerable interest to the varying contributions made to the debate; and I think, from the remarks passed, that there is a very strong body of opinion in the House which feels that, whilst it is necessary to continue controls for industrial works and governmental works, there is no good reason at all why controls should be continued over materials or over houses of up to, say, 14 squares or, in other words, houses of up to five rooms costing about £2,000. That I understand is the position in Victoria where no permits are required for the building of houses up to 14 squares.

In addressing myself to this question, I propose to accept the advice of Mr. Craig and keep my feet on the ground. But I was a bit disconcerted to hear his criticism of those who expressed support of the view I have just advanced, to the effect that they were wantonly throwing out this Bill. I understand that the Oxford Dictionary definition of the word "wanton" is "to act capriciously or without motive." I would suggest that in expressing the views that Mr. Dimmitt, Mr. Roche and other members did, they were in no way acting wantonly. There was a motive, which I suggest was that it is base for a man to suffer when he ought to act and that it is wrong to put Government control over the most natural and primitive instinct of man; namely, the instinct to build himself a home. We should realise that it is the perfect right of this House to deal as it sees fit with every measure that is brought forward and to express itself as it thinks best. I would be sorry to feel that any measure brought before the Chamber was dealt with wantonly by members.

It has been said that the defeat of the Bill would mean the end of the Housing Commission, but that is not correct. This is a measure simply to continue the existing controls. The State Housing Commission was created under an entirely separate Act of Parliament to continue the functions of the Workers' Homes Board. We should reflect for a moment on how these controls were originally brought into operation. The control of the building of homes was conceived by those two experts in controls, Dr. Coombs and Dr. Lloyd Ross, in 1942, when they had the idea of controlling not only the building of homes but the sale of petrol, sugar, butter, clothes and so on, capital issues, exports and everything else they were satisfied they could deal with in that way.

Those controls had been in force for only three years when Dr. Coombs, then Director of Post-War Reconstruction, realised that the successful control of home-building was impossible, and the Commonwealth dropped it like a hot brick and handed it over to the States. I regret that the State Government of Western Australia took over the then Commonwealth control *holus bolus*, without modification, and has continued it to a large extent up to the present time. The principal Act was passed in 1945, on the understanding that it was to continue for one year and no longer. Since then there has been an annual pilgrimage to Parliament to have the legislation extended for a further year. The Act under which the Housing Commission was created requires that an annual report shall be presented to the Minister and that it be presented to both Houses of Parliament as soon as possible thereafter. If members had those reports before them they could address themselves much more thoroughly and efficiently to questions such as that with which we are now dealing, but I have made diligent search and, so far as I have been able to ascertain, no such report has been presented to Parliament since 1946, in which year we received the reports for the years ended the 30th June, 1944, and the 30th June, 1945.

Another reason suggested as to why we should pass this measure is that the Minister for Housing has done a grand job up to date. I would be the first to admit that he has been a most industrious, conscientious and efficient Minister, but if that which a person is administering is wrong in

principle and unworkable in practice, no matter how conscientious, industrious or efficient the administrator may be, the system must fail to operate satisfactorily. The complaints and illustrations that have been offered to the House during the course of the debate have demonstrated amply that the system of controlling home-building is not operating successfully in this State. Just as good or bad habits grow on all of us, it seems to me that the Minister's association with these controls has blinded him slightly to some of their faults and failings.

We should not fool ourselves over the Bill, which is brought down ostensibly to carry the legislation on for another 12 months. In one breath we are told that extension is required for 12 months only and, in the next breath, we are presented with facts and figures demonstrating that shortages exist at present and are likely to continue for many years to come. If we are in favour of controls we should be honest and pass the Bill without any limiting provisions. We should let the legislation stay on the statute book indefinitely, because there will be shortages and crises for the next 50 years; but if we feel that the time has come to lift or modify controls substantially, I suggest that the Bill should not be passed in its present form. We should not mistake busyness for business.

In the course of his second reading speech, the Chief Secretary said that there were 8,000 applications for homes before the Housing Commission in 1947, 13,000 in 1948, and 23,000 in 1949. If the same arithmetical progression is to continue, apparently there will be 46,000 applications next year, 92,000 the following year, and so on, and the Housing Commission and its premises will become bigger and better each year. If I understand him rightly, Mr. Cunningham expressed himself as being in favour of the continuance of control because it would enable members of Parliament to make representations to the Housing Commission or the Minister on behalf of particular constituents who seemed to be suffering under severe disabilities. I would suggest to the hon. member that that borders close on advocating the state of affairs that Winston Churchill warned us to be careful of, namely, a state of society where nobody counts except the politician and the civil servant.

Illustrations were given by Mr. Logan, Mr. Daffen and Mr. Roche of the difficulties of persons in the country who wanted to build their own homes, and the troubles they experienced in obtaining permits to erect even humble dwellings. They made it pretty clear that but for the inability to secure permits those people would have had little trouble in securing sufficient materials to build homes for themselves in the country by their own efforts.

Hon. H. A. C. Daffen: I could not have made myself very clear on that point.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I come now to the question of why permits are restricted and suggest that there is a good answer to that question in a newspaper report of a speech by Mr. Nelson Lemmon, Federal Minister for Housing, only last week. He indicated that during the coming year the Commonwealth Rental Homes Scheme is going in for the biggest programme in its history and is to spend some £17,000,000. Incidentally, he thanked the Housing Commission of Western Australia for its cooperation which, being interpreted—I imagine—means its submission to the desire of the Commonwealth to become the biggest landlord in this State.

The question that presents itself is whether we are to stand for a principle that will promote and facilitate the Government becoming the principal landlord in the country at the expense of the individual who wishes to build his own home, or whether we should give the individual greater opportunity than he has today. I think another reason why there is a shortage and why the man who wishes to build his own home has difficulty in securing a permit is that the Housing Commission, as agent for the Commonwealth Government, is probably exercising fairly rigid control and is using no small amount of material in building barracks and other structures for the housing of immigrants. There are in this State 23,000 applicants for homes and I suggest it is beyond the ability of any man or body of men to administer justice to that number of applicants.

Hon. H. Hearn: Not civil servants, surely?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I think it is beyond the capacity of any man to deal honestly and fairly with that number of applications. It is simply trying to control something that cannot be controlled. Instances have come to my notice of waste

under the permit system. A man who receives a permit to build his own home is told that the front room must be left for erection at some future date. When that is done the gap is blocked up with valuable material that cannot be used at a later stage. It has been suggested to me that the quantity of material used and wasted in that way would often go a long way towards building another room.

I know of a case where a man was granted a permit for a five-roomed house but was told that the fifth room must be left without floorboards and without lining. When he completes the job he will be put to much more expense than would have been the case had he been allowed to finish it in the one operation. The point is that politicians cannot work economic miracles. We should let nature take its course for a while and remember that this is not the first time there have been shortages in Western Australia. We had serious shortages 20 years ago, but they were not controlled and the ingenuity and resourcefulness of thousands of private individuals—not of a Housing Commission—overcame them. The sooner we get back to that state of affairs the better it will be for the homeless people in our State.

After all is said and done, that is the task which is exercising the minds of members of this House; that is, as to the most orderly and efficient way in which to provide homes for the homeless. I feel, with previous speakers, that it would have been better, if, instead of bringing down a Bill for the continuance of this legislation for a further 12 months, the Government had introduced a Bill to lift the controls on materials and to avoid the necessity of applying for permits for the erection of houses up to, say, 14 squares. Even now, it is not too late. What I would like is to see the debate on this Bill adjourned for a month to permit the Government to bring down another amending Bill to give effect to the principle which I have just enunciated. I would therefore like some member to test the feeling of the House by moving for the adjournment of this debate for three or four weeks to, say, the 1st September. I am not in a position to do that myself, having spoken to the Bill, but if some member would feel disposed to do that, I think that the Government could then give serious thought to the question of introducing a further Bill along the lines I have indicated.

Personal Explanation.

Hon. H. A. C. DAFFEN: Under Standing Order No. 385, where a member has already spoken to a question, he may again be heard to explain himself in regard to some material part of his speech which has been misquoted or misunderstood. I want to say briefly that Mr. Watson, no doubt with the best intentions, quite misquoted me as to my remarks on permits. Insofar as the shortage of materials is concerned, I think that is the main thing that controls the situation. I know from my own knowledge—

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member may only reaffirm or explain what he previously said.

Hon. H. A. C. DAFFEN: In regard to permits?

The PRESIDENT: Yes.

Hon. H. A. C. DAFFEN: That is my intention. From my own knowledge, I know there are far more permits issued than there are materials available to meet them, so I could not have said what Mr. Watson suggested in that regard.

Debate Resumed.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move—

That the debate be adjourned till Thursday, the 1st September.

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

Ayes	12
Noes	11
Majority for	1

AYES.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. Sir C. G. Latham	Hon. A. L. Loton (Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. J. M. Cunningham	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. H. A. C. Daffen	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. E. M. Heenan (Teller.)
Hon. E. H. Gray	

Motion thus passed: debate adjourned.

BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [8.9] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has been brought down virtually at the

request of the staff of the Rural and Industries Bank. Last year, the staff approached the Arbitration Court for an award based on the salary conditions applying to and enjoyed by employees of the Commonwealth Bank and private trading banks. The officers of those banks receive automatic annual increases in salary over a comparatively lengthy period of years, whereas the staff of the Rural and Industries Bank, who, under Section 36 of the Rural and Industries Bank Act, 1944-47, are officers of the Public Service, were paid under the Public Service system of automatic annual increases for the first seven years of adult service, and thereafter according to the responsibility of the positions they held.

The Arbitration Court was approached by the Civil Service Association and, in a unanimous judgment delivered on the 22nd November, 1948, the court agreed to the application but considered that, in the interests of the management and the staff and the bank's ultimate destiny, the staff of the Rural Bank should be removed completely from relationship with the Public Service and be treated industrially in a manner similar to officers in banks with which the Rural Bank is a business competitor. To effect this state of affairs, it would be necessary for officers of the bank to forfeit several privileges they enjoyed as public servants. For instance, trading and Commonwealth bank officials do not receive long service leave, although they have three weeks' annual leave instead of the two weeks as provided for in the Public Service.

Then again the court declared that if the Rural Bank staff desired private bank conditions, they could not expect to obtain Public Service benefits as a matter of course. The court proposed that the bank's staff give this matter mature consideration and that if a majority desired acceptance of full trading bank conditions, it would recommend that the legislation binding the staff to the Public Service be amended. This was done, and 94 per cent. of the bank's staff requested a conversion to trading bank conditions. To implement the court's judgment, it then became necessary to amend the Rural and Industries Bank Act, 1944-47, the Public Service Appeal Board Act, 1920-48, and the Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Act, 1945-46, all of which conferred Public Service privileges on officers of the bank. It was too late last year to introduce

this amending legislation, and so an unregistered agreement was entered into at the court by the parties to implement the judgment as from the 22nd November, 1948.

The Bill now before the House is identical with that agreement. It proposes to repeal Section 36 of the principal Act which provides that, apart from the bank commissioners' prerogatives of appointment, promotion, transfer and dismissal, officers of the bank shall be subject to the provisions of the Public Service Act. A new Section 36 is substituted, providing that as from the 22nd November, 1948, all rights of officers under the Public Service Act shall cease. All long service leave accrued up to the 22nd November, 1948, or payment in lieu, may be taken at the discretion of the commissioners. Sections 37, 38 and 39 are also repealed, these being no longer necessary in view of the conversion from Public Service conditions. In moving the second reading of this Bill, I would point out that there are two other Bills which are corollaries of this and will have to be passed. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (PROMOTIONS APPEAL BOARD) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [8.13] in moving the second reading said: Under the parent Act, civil servants have a right of appeal and, of course, the staff of the Rural and Industries Bank have to be excluded from the provisions of that Act. This is another Bill dealing with the transfer of the Rural and Industries Bank staff to private bank conditions. It removes their right of appeal to the Promotions Appeal Board when passed over for promotion to any position, and this has been agreed to by the officers of the bank. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

**BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD
ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W.

Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) (8.15) in moving the second reading said: This is the second Bill to which I referred as being complementary to the Rural and Industries Bank Act Amendment Bill by which statutory power is given for the transfer of the Rural Bank staff from Public Service to trading bank conditions. One of the privileges which the staff forfeit is the right of appeal to the Public Service Appeal Board against classifications of positions by the Public Service Commissioner. Trading bank officials have a certain right of appeal to an Arbitration Court board of reference and Rural Bank officers will have access to this board. The Bill will amend the principal Act by removing from the Rural Bank staff the right of appeal to the Public Service Appeal Board. This was one of the conditions agreed to by an overwhelming majority of the bank officers when they acceded to the Arbitration Court's proposal that they transfer to full private bank conditions. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. A. C. Daffen, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.17 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 2nd August, 1949.

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

PETITION—FREMANTLE MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman presented a petition from residents of Fremantle praying for the construction of a maternity hospital for Fremantle districts.

Petition received and read, and ordered to be taken into consideration at the next sitting of the House.