

It is always a bad thing in any community if, a great number of the people in that community are without faith and confidence in a system of control under which they are forced to live. In such a situation we would find the seeds of situations which are in no way pleasant or desirable.

This motion is, therefore, one which I think should have the support of every member of the House. I would be gratified if the members of the Government would give it most serious consideration, and see their way clear to agree to the direct representation of the consumers on the one hand and the business and trading interests on the other hand. We would then have in this State the Arbitration Court system for the control of wages and salaries and a prices control system both based upon the same principles, both set up in the same way, and both giving direct representation to the same set of interests in the community. That I consider is most desirable and practicable and, if the Government would assist the House in that direction, we would find that we would have a better prices control system which would operate more effectively and thus safeguard the consumers. Secondly, it would, in some small way at least, assist in preventing prices from rising as high as they will rise if the present system of control is continued.

On motion by the Attorney General, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2 p.m. on Thursday.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 30th June, 1949.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

(a) *As to Permits and Materials.*

Mr. ACKLAND asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Did the member for Murchison on Tuesday week strongly criticise the practice of issuing building permits for homes in advance of available materials?

(2) Was he not a member of the Wise Government which produced only 1,581 homes in its last 12 months of office, and yet issued building permits at the rate of 2,500 a year (*vide* report of Mr. Wallwork, Commissioner for Housing and Building)?

(3) Did not the excess of permits existing when this Government took office cause considerable embarrassment to the Minister for Housing?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes, he was a member of that Government.

(3) Some difficulty was experienced early in 1947, particularly regarding bricks, and as the problem of material supplies had been increased by industrial troubles in 1946.

(b) *As to Provision for Farm Scheme.*

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Housing:

What legislation has been introduced by the Government for a Farm Housing Scheme?

The MINISTER replied:

Apart from the War Service Land Settlement Scheme, which is under the joint administration of the Commonwealth and the State, no specific legislation has been introduced for a farm housing scheme. The State Housing Commission, under the Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act, 1945, has power to issue permits for houses on farms as well as other houses, and the Commission, in the case of necessary housing for primary producers, endeavours to provide as far as practicable permits for such housing.

TUBERCULOSIS.

As to Clinic Examinations.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Health:

(1) What is the number of people who have been examined at the Chest Clinic in Murray-street since its establishment—

(a) males;

(b) females?

(2) How many have shown signs of tuberculosis—

(a) males;

(b) females?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No records are kept of whether persons examined are males or females.

The total number examined

at the Chest Clinic was—	
(using miniature films)	16,432
Examined by Mobile Unit	7,513
Examined initially on large films	4,915
Total	28,860

(2) Total found to be suffering from active tuberculosis

205

WATER SUPPLY.

As to State Consumption and Irrigation.

Hon. E. NULSEN asked the Minister for Water Supply:

(1) Will he inform the House—

(a) how much water was consumed from Government controlled supplies in Western Australia (except irrigation) for the years ended 1947-48; 1948-49;

(b) how much water used for irrigation came from Government controlled supplies for the same period?

(2) How much revenue was received from

(a) and (b) separately for the years 1947-48; 1948-49?

The MINISTER replied:

	1947-1948.	1948-1949 (Mid. June only).
(1) (a) Country Water Supplies	2,858,430,712 gallons	2,807,060,000 gallons

The above returns represent water drawn from reservoirs, etc., and do not indicate water sold.

Serpentine is a gravitation scheme and not master metered or metered for servicers. The annual rate converted into rebate water would represent, say, one million gallons. This figure is included in the above totals.

	1947-1948.	1948-1949 (Mid. June only).
Metropolitan Supply	9,837,980,000 gallons	9,915,410,000 gallons
(b) Irrigation—	1947-1948 Gallons.	1948-1949 Gallons.
Collie Irrigation Area	6,450,000,000	7,900,000,000
Waroona Area	2,110,000,000	2,400,000,000
Harvey Area	4,720,000,000	5,900,000,000
Total	13,280,000,000	16,200,000,000

(2) Revenue Received—

	1947-1948.	1948-1949 (11 months to 31-5-1949).
	£	£
Country Water Supplies	449,949	419,632
Irrigation	14,492	16,272
Metropolitan Water Supply	649,313	703,000

NATIVE AFFAIRS.

(a) *As to Houses at Moola Bulla.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

(1) How many houses for natives are under construction at Moola Bulla?

(2) What does the building material consist of?

(3) Where was this material purchased?

(4) What is the total expenditure on this venture for the past six months?

(5) At what date did this work commence?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Material has been acquired and the construction is expected to commence when the final mob of bullocks for the meat-works is on the road.

(2) Material being used is—lime concrete for foundations, pugged ant-bed, cement-washed walls, cement for floors and secondhand galvanised iron for roofs.

(3) A quantity of secondhand galvanised iron was purchased at Broome and it is understood additional supplies are now available. Some supplies of cement were on hand at the settlement and an additional supply is expected to be shipped later.

(4) Approximately £85, omitting the cost of cement, for which an account has not yet been received.

(5) Answered by No. 1.

(b) *As to Suspected Cases of T.B.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

How many known or suspected cases of T.B. are there amongst natives in the South-West Land Division?

The MINISTER replied:

Seventy-five.

(c) *As to Expenditure on Buildings at Cosmo-Newbery.*

Hon. A. A. M. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Native Affairs:

(1) What is the total expenditure on buildings for natives at Cosmo-Newbery in the past three months?

(2) At what date did this work commence?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £138.

(2) The 18th April, 1949.

TOBACCO.

As to Distribution Committee and Quotas.

Mr. LESLIE asked the Premier:

(1) What are the names of members of the Tobacco Distribution Committee in Western Australia?

(2) By whom are the members of the committee elected or appointed?

(3) Who is the chairman or presiding officer of the committee?

(4) How frequently does the committee hold meetings?

(5) Where are meetings of the committee held?

(6) Who is the secretary, or chief executive officer of the committee?

(7) Where is the office of the committee situate?

(8) Upon what basis does the committee arrive at the quota of tobacco and cigarettes allotted to retailers?

(9) In allotting quotas to retailers in country districts, does the committee take into consideration the increased demand for tobacco and cigarettes consequent upon increases in the local population?

(10) From what source, if any, does the committee obtain the necessary information upon which to base its allotment of quotas to retailers in country districts?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) to (7) This committee does not operate under Commonwealth or State legislation but I am advised that when the Commonwealth committee operating under National Security Regulations ceased, a voluntary committee was established by tobacco interests to carry on a form of tobacco rationing to wholesalers and retailers. The address of the committee is Box L 916, G.P.O., Perth.

(8) I am advised that the committee has continued the base year of the 1st October, 1939, to the 30th September, 1940, which was originally determined by the Commonwealth Government.

(9) I am advised that this aspect is taken into consideration.

(10) I am advised that the committee utilises all official sources of information, including figures from road boards, police and census.

Mr. May: It is an underground organisation.

The PREMIER: It is not under State control.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It should be.

COAL.

As to Farms on Wilga Reservation.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) Concerning the Wilga coal basin and his reply to my question dated the 23rd June, 1949, will he state why the surface of the land reserved in the Wilga coal basin cannot be utilised for farming purposes, the same as similar coal-bearing land is used in England and other countries?

(2) Does he consider that the reservation of this land is in the best interests of the State?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) Recent experience shows necessity for coal-bearing land being retained by the Crown for coalmining purposes owing to the provisions of the Mining Act.

(2) Yes.

TIMBER.

(a) As to State Saw Mills' Sales and Production.

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) What was the percentage of increase in gross profits on joinery sales at Nedlands and at Mount Hawthorn State Saw Mills in 1947 and 1948?

(2) What was the increase in load production at Carlisle State Mill for the years ending June, 1947 and 1948 and to the 31st May, 1949?

(3) What was the increase or decrease of production at bush mills for these years?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Joinery sales ex these depots are transfers from Carlisle at selling prices. Information not available.

(2) Production at State Saw Mills' Carlisle Mill was as follows:—

Year to June, 1947, 22 loads; Year to June, 1948, 2,271 loads; 11 months to May, 1949, 2,370 loads.

(3) Production of sawn timber at State Saw Mills bush mills was:—

Year to June, 1947, 39,807 loads; year to June, 1948, 39,532 loads (six months on 40-hour week); 11 months to May, 1949, 33,161 loads (40-hour week).

(b) As to Leases and Area of Wandoo Forest.

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) What areas of Crown timber lands have been leased to—

(a) Wundowie;

(b) Boddington Tanning Extracts;

(c) Tanning Extracts at Toodyay?

(2) Could the lease granted at Toodyay hinder further expansion at Wundowie?

(3) What is the total area of wandoo forest in this State?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Timber on Crown lands within 15 miles radius of Wundowie is being held in reserve for the charcoal-iron plant.

(b) Industrial Extracts Ltd. hold a permit to cut wandoo for the production of tannin extract from an area of approximately 139,384 acres near Boddington.

(c) Industrial Extracts have applied for cutting rights near Toodyay. As yet no permit has been granted.

(2) If further expansion of Wundowie means going as far afield for timber supplies as Toodyay, then the granting of a permit to Industrial Extracts would possibly affect the charcoal-iron industry.

(3) Wandoo occurs on approximately 1,180,000 acres.

(c) As to Price for Tannin.

Mr. REYNOLDS asked the Minister for Housing:

What price is obtained per ton for tannin in—

(a) Western Australia;

(b) Eastern States;

(c) Oversea? ?

The MINISTER replied:

The information is not available.

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) I can appreciate the solicitude of the hon. member and would help him if I could, but I regret that existing conditions do not permit me to give other than a negative answer.

(b) *As to Standing-Down of Employees.*

Mr. BRADY (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is he aware that the employees on the work at Mundaring Weir have received notice of the termination of their services?

(2) Is it not possible to employ them on other jobs pending power being again available?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) This again is the first I have heard of the matter, apart from my general knowledge that such things must necessarily be happening in the prevailing circumstances. Consequently I ask the hon. member to put his question on the notice paper.

BUS SERVICES.

As to Employment of Daimler Diesels.

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) In view of the present emergency and its effect upon transport will he take steps to arrange for the six Daimler buses lying idle at the car barn in trafficable condition to be put into service forthwith?

(2) If not, why not?

(3) Does he realise that approximately 400 passengers per trip could be transported by these vehicles?

(4) Does he know that there are available sufficient drivers qualified to take over the buses, and that 36 additional men could be retained if the buses were used?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) No. Certain structural alterations were made to the chassis of these vehicles, and until a certificate of satisfaction with the work is received from the manufacturers, the licensing authorities will not license the vehicles. The required certificate has been requested.

(3) and (4) Yes.

LAND RESUMPTION.

As to Consulting Member for District.

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

Does he not consider that when important decisions are made such as the resumption of approximately three-and-a-half acres of the foreshore at East Perth adjacent to the Power House for the State Electricity Commission, the purchase of a two-storey building at Summer-street, East Perth, for a native girls' home and the resumption of four-and-a-half acres as announced in the Press this morning, adjacent to the tramway car barn, requiring the demolition of 27 dwellings and other buildings, these matters should be referred to the member for the district, who represents the people in the localities concerned, so that his views might be ascertained and that he might be advised before a final decision is reached and the announcement made in the Press?

The MINISTER replied:

I do not consider that there is any compulsion upon the Government to acquaint the member for the district, although there might be circumstances in which the adoption of that course might be desirable. This is the first I have heard of the matter, either from the hon. member or departmentally, and in the circumstances I ask him to give notice of the question.

LIBERAL AND COUNTRY LEAGUE.

As to Office Accommodation.

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Premier:

Does he consider that the acute shortage of accommodation for commercial and industrial purposes is being assisted by the Liberal and Country League's opening numbers of propaganda offices in various parts of the metropolitan area and country districts?

The PREMIER replied:

In answer to the hon. member's purely party political question, I am not aware that the Liberal and Country League has deprived any business organisation of accommodation.

RAILWAYS.

(a) As to Administrative Appointments.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) How many persons from outside the State have been appointed to executive or administrative positions in the Railway Department during the last 12 months?

(2) What are their names?

(3) From what States or countries did they come?

(4) To what positions have they been appointed?

(5) What salaries are being paid to them?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Five.

(2) (a) Hall, A. G.; (b) Clarke, C. W.; (c) Benson, A. F.; (d) Turner, J. N.; (e) Thomson, A. T. M.

(3) (a) Victoria (formerly of Pakistan); (b) India (not yet taken up duty); (c) New South Wales (formerly of India); (d) Victoria; (e) New South Wales.

(4) (a) Commissioner of Railways; (b) Assistant Commissioner of Railways; (c) Assistant Chief Mechanical Engineer (motive power); (d) Chief Statistical Officer—accounts and audit branch; (e) Communications Engineer—civil engineering branch.

(5) (a) £3,000 per annum; (b) £2,000 per annum; (c) £1,000 per annum; (d) £675 per annum; (e) £792 per annum.

(b) As to Appeal Board Allowances.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What allowances are paid to—

(a) the chairman,

(b) the Commissioner's representative,

(c) the employees' representative

on the Railway Appeal Board when the board is travelling or hearing a case?

(2) In the event of there being any difference, why is this so, especially in view of the fact that both employers' and employees' representatives are of the same status?

(3) Will he take steps to place both representatives on the same basis?

(4) Is the employees' representative required to pay anything towards the cost of a sleeper on a train?

(5) Do the other members of the board make any payment?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) £1 per day; (b) travelling allowance as prescribed in the award applicable to the representative—at present 17s. 6d. per day; (c) travelling allowance as per award applicable to the representative, but where such would be less than 12s. 6d. per day, rate is increased to that figure.

(2) For time absent from official duties on Appeal Board business, representatives are paid their normal salaries or wages, and the same practice is followed with travelling allowances, subject to the minimum rate of 12s. 6d. per day mentioned in 1 (c).

(3) Not considered necessary.

(4) and (5) No.

ST. JOHN AMBULANCE.

As to Police Assistance.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister representing the Minister for Police:

(1) Are the police at Northam, or any other place, permitted to act as emergency drivers of St. John Ambulance vans or to travel with the drivers of those vans in cases of accident?

(2) If they are not permitted to do those things, would he provide the reasons?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) and (2) In the case of an emergency and when an ambulance driver is readily available, a police officer who holds a driver's license would be permitted to drive an ambulance.

There is no objection to a police officer travelling with the driver of an ambulance in cases of accident.

COAL STRIKE.

(a) As to Power for Dairy and Poultry Farmers.

Mr. GRAYDEN (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Will it be possible to arrange for electric power to be made available for half-an-hour a day to dairy farmers to enable them to pump water to fill their tanks to to water their cows?

(2) Will it be possible to arrange for electric power to be made available for half-an-hour a day to poultry farmers to allow them to pump sufficient water for their poultry?

COAL STRIKE.*Statement by the Premier.*

The PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [2.28]: I beg leave to make a statement regarding the strike position. I have not any late news to give the House as to when the strike is likely to end, but numerous inquiries are being made of the Government and of me as to when the strike is likely to end and many cases of hardship and inconvenience are being brought under our notice. All members know of the great hardships which many people in this city are suffering, and I can assure those people that the Government has every sympathy with them and that everything possible is being done to assist them. Suggestions have been made that the power should be turned on at certain hours and that people should be given light at certain hours in order that housewives may prepare meals and mothers attend to young babies, and that attention might be given to invalids. So I could continue to recite many more suggestions that have been made.

Perhaps it is hardly necessary for me to say that Cabinet has spent hours discussing these very matters. Furthermore, we have brought into these discussions the members of the Electricity Commission as, of course, it is the Commission that is responsible for the supply of power and light in the metropolitan area. These thoughts occurred to me as soon as the strike began. I inquired whether it were possible to supply light during meal hours to what might be termed essential industries. In view of the stocks of coal that it has on hand, the Commission does not consider it safe to supply more power than is now being supplied. After all, the health of the community is paramount, and no-one can forecast how long the strike will continue. We do know that the communistic influence which was responsible for starting this strike will also use every possible effort to prolong it. That being so, every possible care must be taken to see that provision is made for the pumping of sewage, for light to the larger hospitals and for certain water pumping.

If a risk were taken by the Government and it overrode the decision of the Electricity Commission in this matter and if our coal stocks ran out, we might be faced with

the position of raw sewage running into some of our streets. In addition, we know what the sewerage position is in public as well as in private places. We could easily have in this city a very serious outbreak of diseases, particularly enteritis, typhoid fever and others that have been mentioned to me. I therefore want the public to know just what are the grave consequences they may face if it were decided to relax in any way the restrictions already imposed. I hope that during the next day or two, or even within the next few hours, common sense will prevail and that the strike will end. I also hope that our own coalminers will return to work.

In passing, I desire to say that I know the men at Collie. During the dark days of the war I was intimately associated with them and was impressed by their loyalty. Hours did not count so far as training to defend their country was concerned; they attended parades at night, and well into the night, in preparing themselves to face the enemy should the need have arisen. They also gave up their Sundays, all day, to training, and, indeed, when they were off work they also devoted that time to training. So I have no doubt whatever about their loyalty to their country, but I do suggest to them that they should seriously consider the present position, because we know they have been led into this strike by a communistic influence holding ideals which are entirely foreign to all those for which they stand. That being so, I am hoping they will take a strong stand and decide to get away from this evil influence which has manifested itself during the last few days. There is nothing more—unfortunately—that I can tell the House or the public. Should I receive any word from the Prime Minister, or from any official source, I will let the House and the public know immediately.

Members: Hear, hear!

**BILL—MARKETING OF BARLEY ACT
AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE.)**

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [2.36] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is introduced to continue the parent Act for a further term of three years. The parent Act will

expire on the 9th December this year, having been passed in 1946. It was introduced by the member for North-East Fremantle, then Minister for Agriculture in the previous Government, and has worked very successfully. In the absence of complaints from any section of the industry, including the buyers, it seems that all concerned are satisfied with the measure. As the industry has requested this continuance for three years, I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Kelly, debate adjourned.

BILL—CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—North Perth) [2.38] in moving the second reading said: As members know, the purpose of the Charitable Collections Act, 1946, is to organise and regulate the collection of moneys for charitable purposes. Before anyone can collect money for such purposes, permission must be obtained in the manner provided by the Act. The Act also contains a provision for the appointment of an advisory committee to consider the activities to be conducted under the Act and to tender advice to the Minister. Last year permission was given to the Woorlooloo After-care Committee to raise funds by means of a Queen Carnival. That committee entered into an arrangement with an organiser to conduct the appeal on a remuneration basis of 10 per cent. of the moneys raised. This matter was considered by the advisory committee, who thought that so great a proportion of money given for charitable purposes as 10 per cent. was excessive remuneration for its collection. However, it was found that a firm contract had been entered into by the appeal committee with the organiser and that therefore, as far as that appeal was concerned, no remedy was at hand.

It was anticipated that an amount of £20,000 would be raised by this appeal and it was thought that so big a proportion as £2,000 should not be utilised in organising expenses or in payment of any organiser. As the Act stands there is no means of regulating the amount paid to any organiser, and the Bill provides that before any

organiser can be appointed in connection with a charitable appeal the Minister administering the Act must give his consent to the appeal, and also to the provisions of any contract between a committee or person authorised to collect money and anyone employed in connection with the collection.

Mr. Graham: More Government interference!

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. This is being done on the recommendation of the advisory committee. There is another small amendment which provides that the accounts of any appeal may be inspected by an officer of the Chief Secretary's Department or the department having charge of the administration of this Act, in addition to the Auditor General. It is felt that the departmental officer responsible for administering the Act would be a more suitable person to investigate the records and accounts relating to any appeal than would be the Auditor General. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Styants, debate adjourned.

BILL—PLANT DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [2.43] in moving the second reading said: This Bill was introduced in the Upper House. It is quite a small measure and its purpose is to replace the word "parasite" in the Act, by the word "pest." So that the application of the term "pest" will not be wider than is intended by this measure a definition of the word has been included. Without this definition, the term "pest" could logically include such vermin as rabbits, kangaroos, etc., which obviously are beyond the scope of the Act. The amendment will broaden the Act to cover anything that is likely to attack plants.

The term "parasite" as applied in the definition of disease under Section 4 of the Act has a restricted meaning, and is usually applied to specialised organisms which spend the greater part of their time permanently attached to or in association with some other organism, termed the host. We know that many insects are parasitical on

other insects but there are parasitical insects, like the lady-bird, which are most useful.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You would not call that a pest!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is not a pest. I was going to explain what a useful insect it is in many forms of production, particularly viticulture and horticulture, because it attacks practically all the scale insects. It is a parasite on the scale insects that attack the different fruits. It punctures them and sucks the life out of them. There are other similarly beneficial parasites.

The weakness in the Act was pointed out by the Crown Solicitor, who is doubtful whether power exists under the Act in its present form to enforce control measures against many insects which are commonly dealt with under the Act. The term "pest" in place of "parasite" will give a wider meaning to disease to cover all eventualities. There is nothing contentious in the Bill which simply enables the Act to embrace all insects which are pests. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. T. Tonkin, debate adjourned.

BILL—MARKETING OF POTATOES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [2.47] in moving the second reading said: This Bill was introduced in another place and sent to this Chamber for approval. The object is to make provision for the payment of a levy on potatoes used for seed purposes. Under the Marketing of Potatoes Act of 1946, potatoes certified by an officer of the Department of Agriculture as suitable for seed are exempted from sale through the Western Australian Potato Marketing Board. However, since the Act was passed, the Potato Growing Industry Trust Fund Act has been passed, making it necessary for all growers to pay 1d. per cwt. to the Trust Fund.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I see we are on a quota again for potatoes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know. The position at present is that potatoes sold for seed purposes are exempt from this levy, but this Bill is designed to bring them under the control of the board in order that the money may be collected. I think it is wrong for the grower who sells potatoes for seed to escape paying such a small levy when payment has to be made by all other growers. Section 25 of the Act states—

'The board may grant a permit to any grower authorising him to sell potatoes to a person or persons (not being the board) subject to such conditions and restrictions as the board determines.

Instead of free selling of seed potatoes in future, they will have to go through the board; but, with the safeguard in the Act which I have just read, the board can allow a grower to sell his potatoes for seed to another grower. The matter would have to be referred to the board so that the levy could be collected. I think the House will agree that this is quite a fair measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. B. Sleeman, debate adjourned.

STANDING ORDERS.

Direction by the Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: I wish to draw the attention of members to Standing Order No. 126 which provides—

No member shall allude to any debate of the same session upon a question or Bill not being then under discussion, except by the indulgence of the House for personal explanations.

In view of the fact that the session of last year is being continued in this year, I remind members of the Standing Order and ask them to police their speeches so that they will not, as they automatically want to do, continually refer to matters raised last year as the proceedings then and now are in the same session.

BILL—LAND SALES CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [2.52] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is introduced to amend last year's Land Sales Control Act which will expire on the 31st December next. The Government is asking the House to pass the continuance Bill to extend the operation of this legislation for another year.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It is really out of order.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Members will, no doubt, like to know how the control of land sales has operated since it became a responsibility of the State Government. They will recall that certain categories of property were excluded from control by regulations made under Section 14 of the parent Act. Briefly, these included vacant land not exceeding one acre; premises used solely for business; and licensed premises, including registered clubs within the meaning of the Licensing Act. However, control was maintained over residential properties and farm lands. I should like to mention that there has been no public outcry or reaction regarding the categories which were decontrolled, and I feel certain that the action taken at that time has been justified.

I think members will agree that, with the greater number of building blocks available, the market very quickly reverted to a buyers' market. Evidence of this was published in "The West Australian" of the 16th of this month. Blackmarket sales in connection with vacant building blocks have been completely wiped out. However, this is not the case with residential properties, and it is very difficult to stamp out black-marketing in this regard. But I estimate that the number of blackmarket transactions does not exceed five per cent. Unfortunately this will be the position until the supply of houses equals the demand, and, at the moment, it would seem that this desirable state of affairs is still a long way off.

The technique adopted varies considerably, and according to the success of measures taken by the Land Sales Control Office to deal with those known to be in the "racket." The purchaser usually sought for is the new arrival who might not be familiar

with the value of property in Western Australia, and who is anxious to get a home. He is the most likely to do business with the "go-getter" salesman and pay over money considerably in excess of a reasonable price. The new arrival, who leaves a country on a sterling standard, with £4,000, has an additional thousand to play around with as a result of a favourable exchange, and he is enabled to indulge in a black-market transaction without serious monetary loss to himself.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: This Bill will not cure anything of that sort, will it?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: He gets the house, and if an attempt is made by him to get money back after the deal has been completed, he is usually told that he is likely to be prosecuted for a breach of the Land Sales Control Act by being a willing party to the transaction.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The Bill will not make any difference to that position, will it?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: As the Leader of the Opposition knows, it is a difficult Act to police. We are doing our best under the present conditions, and as I have already pointed out, the position is no worse than when it was under Commonwealth control.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You would have an awful job to measure that, would you not?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: A few complaints have reached me in connection with the black market, and all have been investigated, but it is extremely difficult to obtain proof in black and white that a breach of the Act has taken place. Prosecutions under the parent Act are governed by the Justices Act, which places a time limit of six months from when the offence takes place. I have had quite a few cases brought under my notice, and I have set out straight away to investigate them with a view to taking some action, but people who have been victimised under this Act do not come forward immediately. They seem to think the matter over for some considerable time, and all the cases that have so far been brought under my notice conflict with the Justices Act inasmuch as they took place outside the six months' time limit, and that debars me from taking any action.

The picture I have painted seems to be somewhat "black," but despite this serious aspect of blackmarketing, I think members will agree that the control should be continued for at least a further twelve months. Some control is very necessary because if it were lifted the blackmarket prices being paid in some instances would become the "market value," and this would affect building costs considerably. This in turn would force rents up, and also inevitably affect wages. An inflationary trend would almost certainly continue until supply equalled demand; and we can be certain that this is not likely to happen during the twelve months asked for by this continuance Bill. I have some Press cuttings which will support the statements I have made regarding the value of building blocks. I do not propose to read them, but just the headlines. "The West Australian" of the 16th June contains the following:—

Blocks Not Sold. Little Demand for Good Land.

They were blocks that were put up in the Midland Junction area. I have other Press cuttings here to support the remarks I have made. I know that this is a contentious measure. I have given it every possible consideration. I feel that we must re-enact it, and keep as firm a hand as we can on the transactions that are taking place.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They did not re-enact it in Victoria.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, they did not regarding residential and city blocks, but they are keeping control of rural lands there, and they are also retaining control of rents. We can do that under our Fair Rents Act. We have that legislation, which will be most important in regard to the control of rents if the day ever comes when the lid is lifted in relation to the value of city and suburban residences. Although this is a difficult measure to enforce completely, it still has great use in the control of values and I hope the House will agree to its being continued. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

DISCHARGE OF ORDER.

On motion by Mr. Leslie, the Administration Act Amendment Bill (No. 1) was discharged from the notice paper.

BILL—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th June.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [3.2]: This Bill is intended to supersede the present Municipal Corporations Act and the present Road Districts Act, insofar as the existence, powers and operations of local government authorities in Western Australia are concerned. The Bill is rather terrifying in size but, quite naturally, most of it simply re-enacts legislative provisions already contained in and operating under our two local government Acts. I find that there is an intense degree of dissatisfaction, among many local authorities, with the major new provisions of the Bill. The dissatisfaction of some local authorities is so strong that they believe they would prefer to carry on under the existing legislation to being compelled to operate under the provisions of the Bill if it were to become law.

I have received communications from several local authorities, setting out their views of the measure and giving, in some instances, lists of amendments that are not only formidable in extent but also almost overwhelming. One such communication is from the Municipality of Northam. It asks for every effort to be made to extend to the 15th September the latest date upon which the Minister for Local Government is prepared to receive suggested amendments. I understand that the Perth City Council also is anxious to have the same date set with regard to the receipt of amendments. I have received from the Northam Road Board a communication listing 10 amendments required by that body to be made to the Bill. The Subiaco Municipal Council has sent me a list of 23 amendments that it requires. Our notice paper already contains 34 amendments proposed by the member for Perth and the member for Kalgoorlie. A further communication is from the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council, which lists 33 amendments required by that body.

The Premier: Do you agree with them all?

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE: A further communication is from the Great Eastern Ward Road Board Association. That association is comprised of the following

road boards:—Bruce Rock, Yilgarn, Nun-garin, Mukinbudin, Corrigin, Westonia, Wyalkatchem, Merredin, Koorda, Kondinin, Kellerberrin, Goomalling, Tammin, Cunderdin and Kununoppin-Trayning. This communication contains 55 suggested amendments.

The Minister for Local Government: Some of the amendments are the same in all the communications.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: This communication also contains approval of 27 other amendments as suggested by the executive conference of the Road Boards Association. Another letter is from the Country Municipal Councils Association and is accompanied by a schedule containing 80 suggested amendments to the Bill. A few moments ago the Premier asked whether I agreed with all these amendments. I suggest that neither the Premier nor I will be able to study them sufficiently to enable us effectively to understand what they are all about, and certainly neither of us will be able to study them sufficiently to enable us to make up our minds whether we should support or oppose all or any one of them.

By interjection, the Minister for Local Government said that some of the amendments contained in one communication would probably be contained in communications from the other sources. No doubt they are, but it will require considerable time on the part of every member who wishes to be properly informed about these suggested amendments, to ascertain which are contained in any two or in all of the communications. I have also received a letter from the Fremantle City Council and I would like to read portions of it—I would rather read the whole of the letter but I desire to economise in time as much as possible. The letter states —

I have been directed to place before you a resolution of this Council passed by a Special Meeting of the Council held on Monday the 27th June.

(1) That this Council while realising that it may be desirable to have one Local Governing Act for the State contends that Local Authorities should be given reasonable time and opportunity to consider the full implications of the proposal and views with deep concern the enactment of the Bill at present before Parliament in its existing form.

The Council believes that the Minister's suggestion for amendments to be submitted while the Bill is before Parliament will only lead to confusion as Local Authorities throughout the State will be presenting various conflicting amendments in respect to the same clauses.

Furthermore, it is the opinion of this Council that the only satisfactory method of obtaining a properly considered Local Government Act covering the requirements of all concerned including rural and metropolitan local governing bodies, is to appoint a Select Committee to receive evidence from all interested persons and Authorities particularly those experienced in Local Government.

That letter is signed on behalf of the Fremantle City Council by its Town Clerk. In the minutes of a meeting of the finance committee of the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council, which sat as a special committee to consider this Bill on Wednesday, the 8th June, there is, towards the end of the document, the opinion of the chairman of the committee, Mr. R. G. Moore, who is also the Mayor of the Kalgoorlie municipality. These comments should be recorded because they indicate the very strong feeling by which representatives of local governing authorities throughout the State are moved in regard to this Bill and especially in connection with certain new proposals contained in it. I quote—

Perhaps the most important of all the Council takes strongest possible objection to the additional power it is sought to confer on the Minister. The Act seeks to make the Council subservient to the Minister in all essential details and at the same time impose an extra burden of work and expense on the Council.

It would also seem that having been shorn of the majority of its powers and relegated to the position of a mere pensioner of the Commonwealth Government the State Government now seeks to wrest from the local authorities discretionary powers vested in them since the inception of local government in Western Australia.

Whilst there may be some few measures to commend the Bill it is considered that in the main the Bill has been ill conceived as well as being restrictive in its import. The Municipal Corporations and Road Districts Acts are good pieces of legislation and if administered properly would ensure good stable local government. The doubtful value of the uniformity aimed at in the Bill would in practice prove of very little real value.

In my opinion the Government deserves to be strongly criticised for having brought this Bill before Parliament at this time and in this form. It is abundantly clear that

there has been far too little consultation between the Government and the representatives of the local governing authorities within the State. There might have been a considerable amount of consultation, at some stage before the Bill was drafted, between Government officers and representatives of local governing authorities. If there was, the consultations must have been very deficient either on the part of the Government officers concerned, on the part of the representatives of the local governing authorities concerned or perhaps on the part of the representatives of both sides. In any event, it was the bounden duty of the Government itself to ensure, before the Bill was presented to Parliament this year, that consultations were held and carried through on a very high level; on a ministerial level as between the Government and the local governing authorities of the State.

I strongly protest, as a member of this House, at having to receive great bundles of communications, and these are not by any means all of them. It places, not only upon my shoulders, but also upon the shoulders of every member of the House, an impossible burden during the period between now and the time when this Bill will be taken into the Committee stage to enable it to receive consideration clause by clause. I understand that this is the major piece of legislation to be considered by this Parliament this year. The Government was aware of that months ago. In fact, Mr. Speaker, as you remember, the Minister told us in December of last year of the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill of this kind next session. As it happens it is not next session at all, but from that date it is certainly the next year. We were given to understand at that time, as we have been given to understand on occasions since, that local governing authorities would have ample opportunity and plenty of time to study the provisions of the Bill because copies of it would be made available to them in ample time.

Even during the last few weeks there have been conflicting and misleading statements made from Government sources regarding the matter. In the letter I received from the Country Municipal Corporations Association it is stated:—

That copies of the Bill were not received by members of the association before the 20th of April of this year.

I understand that some local authorities did not receive copies of the Bill until early in May of this year. I know it might be thought by Ministers that the receipt of copies of the Bill even as late as early in May of this year should enable all local governing authorities to study it clause by clause and to come to firm decisions, either as to supporting clauses or to having amendments made to them or, alternatively, to suggesting their rejection altogether. However, we know as a result of our experience that the matter is not nearly as simple as that. For instance, take any one of the local governing authorities in country districts. I would say unhesitatingly that they could not possibly understand the import of many of the clauses in this Bill. It is easy, I admit, for local governing authorities in the metropolitan area because they have special sources of information quickly available to them which are not quickly available to country local governing authorities.

In my opinion, it would take the average local governing authority in Western Australia many weeks to study properly and to appreciate correctly the more important provisions in this Bill. Another disability imposed upon local governing authorities in their study of this Bill lies in the fact that only one copy of the Bill was sent to each of them. I am not attempting to lay any blame on the Government for that because I understand the Government Printing Office is working under extreme pressure and has been so working for many months, but I am bold enough to ask why vital State Government printing is not receiving a higher priority and more attention at the State's own Government printing works than it appears to have been receiving for some months past. No difficulty will be experienced in understanding how hard it has been for many local governing authorities to study properly the contents of this Bill with only one copy available to each.

To a large extent local authorities have had to depend upon the advice given to them by small sub-committees which they have formed to study the Bill, and upon whatever other advice they can get from outside sources. I say, without any hesitation whatever, that few local governing authorities in Western Australia have had a fair and

reasonable opportunity to study the provisions of the Bill. Many of them are fearful about parts of the Bill; they are in doubt about portions of it, and there is, throughout Western Australia, a much greater amount of doubt and confusion than has ever existed regarding any Bill brought before this House in the past. That is not a proper or reasonable way to treat local governing authorities, nor is it a reasonable way to treat members of this House who will finally be responsible to those authorities and to the country for the form in which this Bill becomes an Act. As the Government does not take me into its confidence except on an exceedingly small number of matters, I do not know whether its legislative programme would almost completely collapse if this Bill were not to be proceeded with in Committee this year. We all have had an idea that this was to be the "seagoing craft," if I may so describe it, which was framed and built to carry the Government safely through the short period during which it desires to sit this year.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It might perhaps be a vermin Bill.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Whether this be the one piece of legislation which the Government is relying upon to fill in time, when time has to be filled in, or not, I seriously suggest, for the consideration of the Minister for Local Government particularly, and the Government as a whole, that it be not proceeded with quickly in Committee if the Government finally decides to take the Bill through that stage this year. I have read the Bill as well as I am able, especially the new provisions in it, and it is clear that some of them are desirable and would be advantageous generally to local authorities and therefore to their ratepayers, but others are not by any means as desirable, nor would they, in my opinion, confer any worthwhile advantage in practice upon local governing authorities generally or upon the people they govern and represent. If there is one Bill upon which the Government and the people most concerned by the measure should reach almost unanimous agreement, it is one dealing with local governing authorities. After all is said and done, we as a Parliament can be regarded as the father of the local governing authorities; we establish them, we give them the charter, in the form of legislation

from which they draw their existence and gain their power and authority, to carry on local government affairs.

Instead of the Government, on behalf of Parliament, having reached almost unanimous agreement with the local governing authorities as to what should be contained in a new local government Bill, we find that there is the utmost division of opinion between local governing authorities and the Government itself. It might very well be that many of the amendments suggested and yet to be submitted by local governing authorities will be acceptable to the Government. If that be so, surely the measure of agreement that will be arrived at by the Government's accepting those suggested amendments, could have been reached before the Bill was finally presented to Parliament.

The Minister for Local Government: By what means would you have reached them?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: By the same means as they will be reached now. Does not the Minister realise that if the local governing authorities had been given a reasonable opportunity to study the main alterations proposed to be made in the legislation under which they function, they would have put forward suggestions to the Government asking that this particular principle, as set out in the draft Bill, be amended in certain directions, that some other new suggested principles be not proceeded with, or that some new principle not already proposed in the legislation should be included in it?

The Minister for Local Government: What is the objection to Parliament deciding that question after they have made their representations?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Normally there would not be any objection to that at all. However, as I pointed out earlier, there are such a great number of amendments now being suggested by local government authorities as to be formidable if not overwhelming in their effect upon members of Parliament, who will be expected not only to study closely every clause in the Bill but every suggested amendment that is forwarded by, or on behalf of, local governing authorities within the State.

The Minister for Local Government: Quite properly so.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I suggest to the Minister that the task is bordering on the tremendous, and I say very frankly it is so great as to make it utterly impossible to give proper and safe consideration to all the amendments by every member of this House. It is all very well to say that on the 15th July or some earlier date the Bill can be taken into Committee and we can proceed with a clause to clause consideration of the measure. In a physical sense we can certainly do that; but under such conditions, no member of the House would feel he was doing the situation justice. No member could possibly be confident that he was following the right course of action in respect of every amendment or, indeed of a majority of them. We might take the Bill through Committee all right, but I suggest it would be largely unacceptable to all the parties concerned and certainly would be back before Parliament next session for a record number of amendments of varying size and degrees of importance. Is that the right way to handle this vitally important matter? It has to be remembered that the road boards throughout the State have carried on for many years under their separate Act, and municipal councils have done the same thing under their particular Act.

There is no desperate urgency about repealing the two existing separate Acts and passing through Parliament a uniform measure under which both road boards and municipalities will operate in future. I think there is still a great deal of room for high level consultations between the Government and representatives of the local governing authorities in connection with this matter. It is not enough in a vitally important question of this kind for the Government or the Minister to set up a committee of departmental officers, and charge it with almost sole and complete responsibility to carry out the necessary consultations with the representatives of the local governing authorities and then, out of those consultations, frame a measure of the size and importance of the Bill now under discussion.

I suppose every member of the House has had sufficient experience of Government officers—I do not say this in any condemnation or even criticism of them—to know that, by and large, they take the de-

partmental point of view. They are saturated in it as is their duty. Consequently, we can quite easily understand the point of view that a committee of that description would be likely to present to the Government.

The Minister for Local Government: There were only two Government officers out of six on the committee.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am aware of that.

The Minister for Local Government: And of those two one was there only in an advisory capacity.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: That may be so.

The Minister for Local Government: They were not there to run the committee.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I did not suggest, nor do I intend to do so, that they ran the committee.

The Minister for Local Government: You seem to suggest that the committee was heavily over-weighted against the local authorities, and that was not so.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: No. If the Minister had waited a moment or so, he would have found that I would have tidied up that particular point to his complete satisfaction.

The Minister for Local Government: Very well!

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: What surprises me is that the Minister, with his usually almost inexhaustible patience, should have exhibited so much impatience about this particular point.

The Minister for Local Government: I thought that for once in your political history you were being slightly unfair.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I do not suggest that the Government officers ran the committee, that they overwhelmed the others, nor yet that they talked the others blind, or anything of the kind. What I am suggesting is that in the drafting of the main new provisions of the Bill, the Government appears to have attached ever so much more weight to the advice of the departmental officers as against the advice of those who represented local governing authorities.

The Minister for Local Government: The recommendations in most cases represented the unanimous opinion of the committee.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If that be so, it seems that the Government, at the suggestion of the Minister, must have included in the Bill many proposals that were not approved by the committee.

The Minister for Local Government: Nothing was so included. Some of the proposals were not accepted. You will find that in my second reading speech.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I hope the Minister will not continue to be impatient.

The Minister for Local Government: You have forgotten that I did mention it.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Minister is telling us for the second time that all the new provisions of the Bill were approved by the joint departmental and local authorities committee, although some of the recommendations made by the committee were not accepted by the Government and therefore are not in the Bill.

The Minister for Local Government: Very few.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: That could have a very important bearing upon the proposals recommended by the committee.

The Minister for Local Government: No, they were separate proposals.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Then it is obvious beyond any shadow of doubt that the representatives of the local authorities on the joint committee were not closely enough in touch with local authorities generally. If they had been, it would have been impossible for at least a hundred amendments to be forwarded to me by local authorities for my consideration, many of the amendments being very important in principle. I think every letter I have received from a local authority has protested very strongly against the principle in the Bill that aims at giving the Minister additional power over local authorities. I ask the Minister, in view of his interjections, whether the joint committee made any recommendations for increased power to the Minister as set out in the new proposals contained in the Bill.

The Minister for Local Government: I added no provisions; neither did the Government.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The position becomes worse as we go along, ever so much worse. If what the Minister says is correct

—and I in no way doubt what he has said —it is evident beyond any doubt that the representatives of the local authorities on the joint committee that made recommendations to the Government lamentably failed faithfully to represent to the Government the proper and accurate points of view of most local authorities.

The Minister for Local Government: With very few exceptions, the ministerial powers are included in one or other of the Acts now, and we have brought them together with a view to applying them to both.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I noticed that the Minister opened that interjections with the words "with very few exceptions." It is the exceptions to which the local authorities are making such strong objection.

The Minister for Local Government: I think the chief one I wished to include is the one dealing with electric light supplies.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am not interested at this stage in the particular provision in the Bill that the Minister is concerned about.

The Minister for Local Government: I was seeking to be quite accurate. That is the point.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: There is great necessity for accuracy in this matter, because the Minister's interjections have led me to believe that whatever consultations took place between the Government and the local authorities in the framing of his proposed legislation have been almost valueless. It is not enough for the Minister to say that, with few exceptions, most of the provisions in the Bill empowering the Minister to override local authorities have been taken from the existing Road Districts Act and Municipal Corporations Act. We have to remember that those statutes have been in existence for many years. True, they have been amended fairly frequently. In addition it has to be remembered that local governing authorities are not the comparatively small and unimportant organisations they were 20 years ago. The standing, authority and powers of local authorities have been substantially extended over the years with the result that, in their activities and operations, they now cover a much larger number of matters and far more important matters than they did 20 or more years ago.

The Minister for Local Government: For that reason, matters requiring the consent of the Minister have been increasing steadily over the years in amending legislation.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: In the circumstances, it might be very necessary to give the local authorities less governmental interference than they have had previously, although I am still open to be convinced one way or the other upon that point. I have had sufficient experience of a practical nature to teach me that any Government would be foolish in the extreme to give local authorities all the legislative power they would desire to have. I quite appreciate that it is necessary in the interests of the Government itself, in the interests of all those people who have no vote in local government affairs, and even in the interests of some of the local authorities themselves that the Government, through the Minister, should have the right and the requisite supporting legal power to do certain things when circumstances warrant the exercise of that power.

Nevertheless, I feel that, in view of all the information that has been made available to me by local authorities, and especially in view of the information that the Minister has made available to the House this afternoon by way of interjection, there is the greatest need for the local authorities or their representative associations to be consulted again very closely regarding the whole of the new proposals and amendments which have been included in the Bill. To ensure that this new approach shall be on a sufficiently high level and in order that we, as members of Parliament, might have complete faith in the consultations and the reports that will come to us following the consultations, the best course to adopt now is to appoint an all-party committee of this House in the form of a Select Committee to be the consulting authority on our behalf. Suggestions in this direction have already been made by a number of local governing authorities, particularly the Perth and Fremantle City Councils.

I was not so much impressed by the suggestion which they made at that time for a Select Committee, although I was impressed by their other suggestion that the latest date for the receipt of amendments to the Bill by the Government should be extended, I think, from the 15th June or the

15th July to the 15th September. However, the Minister's interjections this afternoon have convinced me beyond any shadow of doubt that the only safe course, and easily the best course, for Parliament now to adopt is to place in the hands of an all-Party committee of this House the responsibility of consulting with the local authorities, or their associations, in order to achieve the utmost measure of agreement possible on the many and serious difficulties which now exist between the Government and the local governing authorities as to the new provisions in the Bill. As the Bill is 98 per cent. non-Party political—

The Minister for Local Government: Hear, hear!

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: —there need be no fear at all but that such a committee, representing all Parties of the House, would bring back to us in a reasonably short time a report which would be practically unanimous. I am now convinced that that is what we require to guide and assist us to safe and proper conclusions with respect to the controversial provisions in the Bill, if we, as part of the Parliament, are finally to approve of the Bill during the sitting this year. I should hope that the Minister and his colleagues in the Government would be prepared to support this course. The member for Perth gave me to understand recently that, acting for the Perth City Council he would move, when the proper time came in this debate, to refer the Bill to a Select Committee. I am sure in my own mind that there would be far less delay and far less loss of time in dealing with the Bill if we followed that method than there would be if we took the Bill through its normal procedure in Parliament.

I ask members to consider only for a moment or two just what a problem they would have when this Bill was in Committee, trying to appreciate the significance of the hundred or more separate amendments which would be before them for consideration. The task would be an impossible one to perform efficiently, satisfactorily and safely. With a Government anxious to rush into the safety of recess within a few weeks, I say it would be imposing an altogether unreasonable burden upon members to ask them to take this Bill into Committee without their being then in possession of a report from an all-Party Select Committee.

For my part, I am not prepared to accept a fair share of the responsibility which should be mine for the passing of the Bill if we are compelled by the Government to take the Bill through its normal procedure and consider it clause by clause in Committee, unless we have in our hands before such discussion is commenced the report of a Select Committee, or of some other committee of equal standing, on the Bill, to act as a guide in considering the new proposals in the Bill, which are of a controversial character and as to which there seems to be very serious division between local authorities, or some of them at any rate, and the Government.

Therefore, I suggest to the Government in all seriousness and in an anxiety to help members of this Chamber and of another place, and also to assist local authorities—as well as the Government itself—that it should give serious and final favourable consideration to my suggestion that a Select Committee should be appointed as quickly as possible to study the Bill, to consult the local authorities and their associations about it and to report to the House at the earliest practicable date. It seems to me that the Government could have had no conception of the opposition of local authorities to this Bill, otherwise there would have been much more high-level consultation about it between the Government and them.

If a Minister introduces a Bill which he is aware will be controversial because of Party considerations, he knows what is ahead of him and is prepared to meet the situation; but this Bill is one upon which we ought to be unanimous to the extent of 95 per cent. Yet we find that it is being opposed on all sides and that the Government is being strongly condemned by the local authorities not so much for its handling of the Bill in Parliament but for its preparation of the Bill and its failure to give those authorities adequate time and opportunity to study the measure. It is therefore up to the Minister and the Government to find some other way of meeting the situation.

The best way, it seems to me, particularly in view of the Minister's interjections this afternoon and of the new and startling information made available to us, is, as I have said, to appoint a committee of members from both sides of the House to investigate the Bill, consult closely with the

accredited representatives of the local governing bodies and report back to the House in, say, four weeks' time. I am sure the Bill would then go through Committee much more quickly in the over-all time than would be the case if we followed the normal procedure, even if we include the time which the Select Committee would take to carry out its investigations and its consultations with the local governing authorities. I know the Premier is very worried about this matter. His statement in "The West Australian" the other day was quite a good attempt on his part to cover up. It was a sort of peace offering to the local governing authorities; but it was not effective.

I think the Premier knows the influence of the local governing authorities, especially in country districts, in regard to elections, particularly from the point of view of anti-Labour members. I can quite imagine that the Premier himself would be anxious to see the more extreme differences of opinion existing between the local governing authorities and the Government resolved satisfactorily. Even though, from the Party point of view, I might prefer to see those differences widened rather than resolved during the next few months, I think that the subject is so non-Party and so important as to make it necessary for me and every other member of the Opposition to try to follow a path which seems to indicate the best and quickest possibility of bringing about the greatest degree of unanimity possible as between the local governing authorities, the Government, and Parliament in relation to the new and more controversial provisions of this Bill. I support the second reading and hope that even before the member for Perth moves for the Bill to be referred to an all-Party Select Committee of this House, the Government will indicate its willingness for that course to be followed.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [4.3]: One of the discussions to which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made reference—that held at Merredin—I was privileged to attend with other members of this House, and I think it can be said that if one impression was to be gained from that conference more than any other it was that the possibility of reaching anything like a satisfactory degree of unanimity amongst local authorities regarding the provisions of the Bill is a pretty remote one. Differ-

ences of opinion exist and will continue to do so. I am not averse to the Bill going to a Select Committee for a further inquiry, but I frankly confess that I cannot see such a move achieving unanimity. The Bill is essentially one upon which this House must decide. It is a Bill for the Committee stage regardless of the length of time that stage must occupy.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: It cannot go beyond September; you know that.

Mr. LESLIE: That is what the hon. member thinks.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is what you know.

Mr. LESLIE: I wish I did. It is a Bill upon which the judgment of members of Parliament, backed by the information which they obtain from the majority of the people they represent—local governing authorities and ratepayers—must be passed. Ours is the responsibility of making the laws and we must be prepared to carry that responsibility and act in accordance, in all good faith, with what we consider right and proper. Many members of this Chamber and of another place have been members of local governing authorities—some still are—and have a working knowledge of the requirements of the Act.

Even within a road board or a municipal council differences of opinion arise. I have attended a road board meeting at which this Bill was discussed and members failed to obtain unanimity as to whether a particular amendment was desirable or not. I have frankly given up hope of our ever reaching that degree of unanimity where we can say in this Chamber that we are going to pass a law—if that is the wish of the member for Northam—which we know will not cause any offence to anybody and therefore not risk the possibility of an adverse vote from any individual. It is impossible to reach such unanimity on this Bill.

We have heard quite a lot about local authorities having discussed this legislation but I have not heard of any of them calling a meeting of ratepayers and asking them what their wishes are in connection with the measure; and, after all, they are the people who are primarily concerned, because members of local authorities are elected not to be a local governing body

for themselves, but to look after the ratepayers and residents of their districts. The people of the district are the ones whose wishes must be taken into consideration, but I have not seen any attempt by the Perth City Council, the Claremont Municipality, the Subiaco Municipality or the Wyalkatchem Road Board, or the Koorda Road Board, or any other local authority to discuss this measure with ratepayers since it has been presented to them—and they have had time to do that.

All I can see happening is that if a committee is appointed, the passing of the Bill will be a little longer delayed—that is, if it is going to be passed. I hope it will be passed because the local governing authorities in my electorate—I know of others, too, but I speak of those with whom I am in constant touch—are desirous of having something better than the existing Road Districts Act under which to work. The time is long overdue when the Act should be brought up to date and amended to improve present-day conditions and to anticipate future conditions. The road boards will experience great regret and disappointment if Parliament fails once again to tackle this problem.

So far as I can see it, and can understand most of the amendments proposed by local authorities, the Bill is one that very largely concerns the executive officers of the local governing authorities and how they shall carry out their responsibilities. It is very largely a machinery Bill. There are certain limitations upon, and certain powers given to, the road boards as such. But the portion of the Bill under those headings is very small; most of it sets out the methods by which the road boards are to operate.

I suggest that when the framing of this Bill was gone into, the same as with the Road Districts Act and the Municipal Corporations Act, those concerned must have had in mind the requirements of the people living in the districts; and we also must have in mind the needs of those people. I do not know from whom a committee could take evidence, but I venture to suggest that every second witness from a local governing authority would have a different suggestion to submit in connection with any one particular matter. Let us take the name. The Bill suggests that all municipal councils and road boards

shall be called councils. A municipality is to be a "municipal council" and a road board is to be a "district council." I do not like the term "district" and I know many others agree with me. We have district councils of all kinds. We have them even with the Labour Party.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: And the R.S.L.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes. This will be another district council. If we talk of the Wyalkatchem district council or the Bruce Rock district council, what is it? It might be any council of a dozen. It has been said that there should be some other name. The term "shire council" has been suggested. Well, we have no shires, and I do not think that our State operates under the same system as obtains in England or in the other States. I am prepared to suggest the word "area," and I am prepared to fight for it because I think it is a most appropriate name for a road board district. It is an area council. We would then have the Wyalkatchem area council, or the Koorda area council. Every member in this House and every road board could have a different idea as to what the name should be. I am satisfied that the road boards will not like the term "district council."

Mr. Read: It is not the name, but the rules.

Mr. LESLIE: I agree, but I mention the name to point out the tremendous difference of opinion that can exist on one little point. I cannot see that there will be agreement, no matter how long we inquire into it, unless we can say to the people that we have investigated and that is the position. If an inquiry is made, it will have to cover the Bill from the first to the last clause, and everything will have to be taken into consideration. I am very disappointed in one particular regard in connection with the Bill.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: Only one?

Mr. LESLIE: I have only one major disappointment. I had hoped that we would have one Act of Parliament, compendium, or set of laws, under which the local authorities would operate. In that I would like to see included the Vermin Act and the Health Act.

The Minister for Local Government: It would be involved then; it is bad enough now.

Mr. LESLIE: Today it is possible for the Road Districts Act to lay down one set of conditions, and for the Health Act to have a section which, while not in conflict with the Road Districts Act, is at least not correlated, and so does not make for ease of working. We have portion of the Cattle Trespass Act in this. If we took all the laws that a local governing authority is required to administer and put them in the one Act, we could say, "You do not need to refer to any other Act. This, to all intents and purposes, is your Bible."

Hon. A. H. Pantou: You would want a pretty big one.

Mr. LESLIE: Yes, but I suggest that, in spite of its size, it would be far easier of operation than what happens today where the local authorities have to refer from one Act to another, and, before they know where they are, they have to seek legal guidance because, by attempting to do something under one Act, they may be infringing another. I had hoped that this Bill would incorporate everything that comes within the ambit of a local authority and its executive officers. Unless we are prepared to do something in that regard, I think we will find we will perpetuate the trouble from which we are trying to escape by bringing down this comprehensive Bill.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: In another session they would want further amendments.

Mr. LESLIE: I agree that we would have amendments from one session to another, and a lot of them. I suggest it would be five years at least before we would be able to settle down and say, "We have an Act which is operating more satisfactorily than less, and which is acceptable and will not require a lot of amendments in the future." I believe we shall take years to get it, even if we have another committee, or half a dozen committees of inquiry. Anomalies, I think, will arise while we are endeavouring to operate under this law. That occurs with most Acts. It is no use thinking that once we pass this legislation this year we can kiss it goodbye.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: When you get into the Commonwealth Parliament, you can put up a uniform Bill to cover the whole of Australia!

Mr. LESLIE: That would be all right if I happened to be a unificationist.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You will be like the rest of them when you get there.

Mr. LESLIE: I believe that the best Government, and the best form of government, is that which is closest to the people, and that is why I want to see the powers of local governing authorities left with them as far as possible so long as they are going to do the job in the interests of the people that they, in their turn, represent. Many members of road boards forget that they represent hundreds of people who are living under the conditions that they, as road board members, lay down. I say again that the best form of government we can have is that which is closest to the people. It is, therefore, extremely unlikely that I would ever be an advocate of a uniform law. We could not have it with the differing conditions that exist. One could very nearly say that we require one law for the wheatbelt and another for the Great Southern area. But we can arrive at a happy medium in our local sphere, and that is what this Bill hopes to achieve. I shall support the second reading.

Possibly when we get to the Committee stage I will have quite a number of amendment to deal with, in accordance with requests from local governing bodies I represent, in an attempt to bring about a correction of some of the undesirable features that exist. I only hope that any views I might submit in that direction will be in accord with the views of the majority of members, but I have my doubts about that. I might put up an amendment that is wanted by only half-a-dozen of the road boards and not by the others. I treat the Bill as a non-Party measure and the suggestion of the member for Northam is acceptable to me. If he thinks some good will come of it, I am happy about that, though I have my doubts.

On motion by Mr. Needham, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 4.25 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 5th July, 1949.

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

QUESTIONS.

FREMANTLE HARBOUR.

As to Proposed Railway Deviation.

Hon. G. FRASER asked the Chief Secretary:

Owing to the lack of definite information in the Tydeman report, will the Minister obtain the following information:—

(1) The exact point the proposed deviation will leave the main Perth-Fremantle railway line at North Fremantle?

(2) What route the new line will take through North Fremantle to the proposed new bridge?

(3) At what position the proposed new bridge will finish at East Fremantle; and

(4) What route the new line will follow till it again links up with the present Perth-Fremantle railway?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (for the Chief Secretary) replied:

Until surveys are completed, no more definite information can be given than that shown in Appendix 23 of Colonel Tydeman's report.