

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 20th September, 1949.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Motion: Condolence, late Hon. Sir John Kirwan	2203
Assent to Bills	2204
Questions: Brickworks, as to supplies for Government buildings	2205
Building supplies, as to preference to Government works	2205
Government employees, as to reduction in Works Department	2205
Vermin, as to further experiments with virus	2205
Bills: Fisheries Act Amendment, 1r. .	2205
Electoral Act Amendment (No. 3), 3r., passed	2205
Brands Act Amendment (No. 2), 2r., Com., report	2206
Buildings Operations and Building Materials Control Act Amendment (Continuance) (No. 2), 2r., Com., report	2207
Traffic Act Amendment (No. 2), 2r.	2223
City of Perth Scheme for Superannuation (Amendments Authorisation) (No. 1), 2r., Com., report	2224

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

MOTION—CONDOLENCE.

Late Hon. Sir John Kirwan.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.33]: Since we last met a very great and dear friend of all of us in this House has passed on and I would like to move—

That this House desires to place on record its sincere appreciation of the services rendered to the State by the late Hon. Sir John Kirwan, K.C.M.G., and to express its deep sympathy with the widow and members of his family in the irreparable loss they have sustained by his decease; and that the President be asked to convey the foregoing resolution to the members of his family.

Those of us who were privileged to know Sir John for a long period, appreciated more each year his worth and the wonderful work he had done for his fellow citizens not only in this State but throughout Australia. As we all know, from time to time he visited the Old Country, and when he returned from such visits he was always anxious and willing to advise us on conditions obtaining elsewhere.

Sir John held the office of President of this Chamber for some 20 years. Prior to that he was for three years Chairman of Committees and, in all, was for 38 years a member of this House. Earlier again, he was the first member for Kalgoorlie in the Commonwealth House of Representatives. That is a record of which anyone would be proud. His achievements outside Parliament included the writing of extremely interesting and valuable books. Also, as a journalist he kept the people informed. It is men such as he that we so much value in our public life; a man against whom not one of us has heard a word.

He always maintained the dignity of this House and was punctilious in seeing that the rules and privileges were maintained at all times. There were many occasions when difficult Bills were being presented to this House by different Leaders, and it was through his courtesy, kindness and control of the Chamber that all measures went through without any undue unpleasantness. I feel sure that all members will join with me in passing this motion that I submit, conveying sympathy to his widow and sons.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [4.37]: I would like to support the Minister in the motion which he has just moved. I would have remained silent but for the fact that, representing a Goldfields province, I feel the people of that part of the State would appreciate their representatives taking this opportunity of expressing the high esteem in which the late Sir John Kirwan was held by them throughout his long lifetime. I had the great privilege of knowing him all my life. His name, when I was a boy at Esperance, was a household word because in those days Esperance was waging a forlorn struggle for its development and the construction of a railway.

I know that we, as children, regarded our greatest champion as being Sir John Kirwan, in association with others such as the late Mr. Thomas Walker. As I grew to manhood I always had the greatest affection and regard for the late Sir John, which was increased when I got to know him on the Goldfields and later when I became a member of this House. He was one of the pioneers of the Goldfields. That is a word which connotes a great deal in the place

where we come from, and he was a constant advocate for everything which the Goldfields people thought they were rightly entitled to.

He was an extremely capable journalist and altogether an excellent advocate for the Goldfields. I am sure that it is no exaggeration to say that the name of Sir John Kirwan will be cherished and will live as long as the Goldfields continue, along with the names of other illustrious men who contributed a great deal to the welfare of the Goldfields and, indeed, to the State of Western Australia.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [4.40]: I desire to support the remarks of the Chief Secretary, particularly as I succeeded to the seat occupied by Sir John Kirwan for so many years and to the gold pass that he held. When I won the Labour selection ballot for the South Province, I was very pleased at the action of Sir John in coming forward and offering me some very sound advice.

The late hon. gentleman was a great worker for the Eastern Goldfields. He went there in 1895 and I followed in 1896, and so we had known one another and worked together for many years. In becoming a representative of South Province, I had a great man to follow, a man who was well liked by all who came into contact with him. When I was in Esperance recently, expressions of regret were voiced at his passing, though at his age death is not unexpected, much as we may regret the passing of such a man. The name of Sir John Kirwan will never be forgotten in this State.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [4.42]: I wish to add my tribute to the wonderful service rendered to the State by the late Sir John Kirwan, and particularly to express my appreciation of the high standard he maintained to ensure that the Legislative Council of Western Australia should not reach the level of some other legislative bodies notable for the bitterness of the criticism employed in debates. When I entered this House after having sat for several years in another place, I received much friendly advice from him; and we can all agree that he, not only as a member of Parliament but also as a citizen, served his adopted country, doubtless with advantage to himself, but assuredly with advantage to the State.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South) [4.43]: As one of the younger members of the House representing the province for which Sir John Kirwan sat for so many years and served so faithfully and well, I support the motion. The task of filling the place of such a man is certainly one of no mean magnitude. I did not know Sir John very well, but his name was introduced so often during my tours of the district when friends asked me to convey their good wishes to him, that there could have been no better indication of the esteem and respect in which he was held by the whole of the people on the Goldfields. Even in the new areas his name was well known for the good work he did.

THE PRESIDENT [4.44]: Before putting the motion, I wish to express my endorsement of the remarks made by the Chief Secretary and other speakers concerning the late Sir John Kirwan, and especially the references to his association with the Legislative Council. As has been stated, Sir John set a very high standard in this Chamber and filled the position of President with dignity and with credit to himself. I ask members to show their sympathy by rising in their places.

Motion passed; members standing.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

- 1, The Westralian Buffalo Club (Private).
- 2, Mental Institution Benefits (Commonwealth and State Agreement).
- 3, Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment (No. 2).
- 4, Administration Act Amendment (No. 2).
- 5, Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment.
- 6, Water Boards Act Amendment.
- 7, Plant Diseases Act Amendment (No. 1).
- 8, Superannuation, Sick, Death, Insurance, Guarantee and Endowment (Local Governing Bodies' Employees) Funds Act Amendment.

QUESTIONS.**BRICKWORKS.**

As to Supplies for Government Buildings.

Hon. H. HEARN asked the Chief Secretary:

Did the State Brick Works burn special kilns of bricks for the Old Women's Home and other Government buildings, and if so—

(a) Was the brick output decreased in consequence;

(b) were any of these special bricks used in inside walls;

(c) are the public able to buy these special bricks?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: ,
Yes.

(a) No. They were burnt in the down draft which is additional.

(b) Those unsuitable for face work.

(c) No. Insufficient are manufactured to match existing works.

BUILDING SUPPLIES.

As to Preference to Government Works.

Hon. H. HEARN asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Although the Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act specifically binds the Crown, is it correct—

(a) that Government building has not been subject to the same control as private building;

(b) that Government buildings of secondary importance, through having first call on materials, have been able to proceed unhampered whilst private industrial concerns of major importance and housing have been held up for materials?

(2) As the Government has insisted on limiting costs on permits being granted, has any such limitation been placed on Government buildings?

(3) Is there any costing system in force whereby the cost of any particular Government building can be established?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) (a) Yes.

(b) No.

(2) By Housing Commission—No. By Treasury—Yes.

(3) Yes.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.

As to Reduction in Works Department.

Hon. H. HEARN asked the Chief Secretary:

What reduction, if any, has taken place during the past two years, in the number of men employed by the Public Works Department under the day labour scheme?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:
One hundred and sixty men.

VERMIN.

As to Further Experiments with Virus.

Hon. A. L. LOTON asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has his attention been drawn to the statement appearing in "The West Australian" on Monday, the 5th September, made by Mr. Dedman, Minister in Charge of the C.S.I.R.O., in reply to representations by Mr. Hamilton, M.H.R., respecting experiments with myxomatosis cuniculi, the virus for spreading disease amongst rabbits?

(2) In view of the attitude of Mr. Dedman, will he give early and favourable consideration to further experiments being conducted by the State Department of Agriculture?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (for the Honorary Minister for Agriculture) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Consideration is being given to experiments by the State Department of Agriculture in connection with rabbit virus disease.

BILL—FISHERIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).

Read a third time and passed.

[The Deputy President took the Chair.]

BILL—BRANDS ACT AMENDMENT.

(No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th September.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [4.57]:

This Bill gives very little scope for discussion, since all it proposes to do is to provide a new starting date for the registration of brands and to limit the period of registration to 10 years, at the expiration of which it will be necessary for re-registration to take place. There are, however, a couple of points I wish to make.

I would like to see the time limit for the expiration of existing registrations fixed at the 30th June, 1950, instead of the 31st December, because we find that re-registrations under various Acts are necessary at different times of the year. For instance, a license for a motorcar expires in June, whereas a bull license expires in December. So it goes on. I would like it to be decided that all licenses and registrations shall expire on the 30th June or the last day of December. Another point I would like to make is this: Section 22 of the Act states that—

The registrar shall, as soon as possible after the thirty-first day of December in each year, cause a brand directory, containing all the brands registered, transferred or cancelled up to that date, to be compiled, and published in the "Government Gazette."

I do not know whether that is being done. If it were, I think that most of the difficulties outlined by the Honorary Minister for Agriculture when he introduced the Bill, would be overcome. The Minister said that there are now 54,000 brands on the register. If the provision that I have quoted had been complied with, that huge accumulation would not have been possible.

I note that it is necessary for a fee of 7s. 6d. to be paid for the registration of a brand. I would like to ask whether that will be applicable to a person who already has a registered brand but wishes to come under the provisions of the Bill, or whether it will be necessary for him to pay only 1s. The Bill states that at the expiration of the 10-year period it will be necessary to pay only 1s. for re-registration; but those people already have a registered brand, which applies also to earmarks. If they have to pay 7s. 6d. to register again, it would seem

that the Bill is simply another of those petty schemes to add something to the finances of the Treasury. We had several such measures in the early part of this session, dealing with trivial sums, and their only merit was that of collecting a few paltry pounds for the Treasurer. I do not think it should be necessary for anyone who has a registered brand and has complied with the requirements of the Act to make further application and pay an additional 7s. 6d.

Unfortunately the Honorary Minister for Agriculture is not present, but I hope the Chief Secretary will look into the matter and give the House some satisfaction on this point. The parent Act stipulated that the State should be divided into two or more districts and that the same brands could be used in both districts, subject to the approval of the registrar. I have made inquiries and have been advised by the registrar that the State has not been divided in that way, although provision for it exists.

I regret that the Bill has not a wider scope, because I think the time has arrived when consideration should be given to the compulsory branding of sheep. Such legislation has been introduced in New Zealand, where it is now an offence to put wool, branded with an approved branding material, in with other wool, and this State could have a similar provision. However, I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [5.3]:

I agree, with Mr. Loton, that stockowners should not be expected again to pay for the registration of their brands. I take it the purpose of this Bill is to facilitate matters for the department. The register is in a bad state and the department is right in trying to do something about it as there are scores of brands that have not been used for many years, but I do not think a stockowner should be asked to pay a further fee of 7s. 6d. A nominal charge of 1s. for re-registration would be sufficient. It is already obligatory to brand one's sheep and it is unlawful to send unbranded sheep to a saleyard; but this law, like many others, is not closely policed and people often send to the saleyards sheep that are not marked. I hope that when replying the Chief Secretary will give an assurance that the fee for re-registering will be a nominal one of 1s. and not 7s. 6d.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.5]: This may be a case of fools rushing in where angels fear to tread, as I do not know much about brands, but when introducing the Bill the Honorary Minister for Agriculture said there were something like 54,000 brands on the register. The Bill gives the registrar power, after 1950, to cancel the registration of ownership of any brand. The users of brands are all over the State and it is more than likely that some of them will know nothing about this amending legislation. It is also possible that in consequence many will not apply for re-registration.

With 54,000 brands on the register, if the registrar cancels all those not re-applied for by the owners in 1950, it is possible that a number of brands still being used by the owners will be re-allocated to new applicants, and that could lead to many complications. Is it the intention of the department to notify individually the persons whose brands are being cancelled? Many of them may be deceased persons who have not used their brands for years. But there should be some safeguard provided so that the department, after a reasonable time, should communicate with all who have not applied for re-registration. That would go a long way towards preventing duplication of brands.

I do not think there are more than three or four people in my own district who ever see the "Government Gazette" in which such notifications are made. I have often had complaints that notices of a public nature are published only in the "Gazette." In such cases they might as well not be published at all, in view of the very small number of people who see that publication. I hope that when replying the Chief Secretary will tell the House what means are to be adopted for notifying persons when cancellations are made.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban—in reply) [5.9]: I cannot follow the argument of Mr. Loton, who said that the date laid down was the 31st December, 1950. The provision in the Bill reads—

The registrar may, whether he does or does not comply with the provisions of Sub-section (1) of this section, cancel the registration of the ownership of any brand which is not re-registered during the decennial year next following the year of its allotment.

So he can do it at any time during the year 1961.

Hon. A. L. Loton: I asked why they should not register on the 30th June instead of at any time during the year.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Obviously the man who goes on the land in March wishes to get a brand straight away, without waiting till June, and he must pay a fee of 7s. 6d.—that includes an earmark—and it is his forever, or until the registrar does certain things. The Bill provides—

Re-registration of the ownership of brands may be applied for and effected in the manner prescribed and on payment of a fee of 1s. for all brands shown in the register as used by each owner on any one run or farm.

So there is no 7s. 6d. involved in this case. That is for the original application only. Mr. Fraser said that under the Bill the registrar could, apparently wipe an owner entirely off the slate, but that is not so; and I do not think the hon. member has read the relevant section of the Act, which gives the owner adequate protection as regards cancellation.

Hon. G. Fraser: The amendment gives the registrar power to cancel the registration.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The reason for that is that there are so many brands registered and many of the owners may no longer be available to have notices served on them. I admit that there could be some abuse, but it is not likely. Even though a mistake might arise now and again, it could easily be rectified. The pastoralist watches his own brand and those of other people closely. I do not think the questions raised by members during the second reading debate need cause them any fear, as the matters they referred to are all cleared up in the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE)

(No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 6th September.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East [5.15]: When I was in another place I remember the introduction there of the Industries Assistance Act. It was said to be merely a temporary measure, the object of which was to help the agricultural industry. If my memory serves me aright, for 44 years we have had Bills submitted annually to continue the operations of that measure. I am inclined to think that the Bill before us is one that will seek to continue the principal Act for a similar period. We are told that so many houses are required and that artisans are not available, as a result of which it is necessary to restrict building operations.

When this legislation was before the House previously, I opposed it in many directions. The Act contains a provision that no permit is required in respect of work the cost of which does not exceed £50. Is it not amazing—I put the query with regret—that the Government has not made at least some effort to improve the position? We know that wages have gone up; the 40-hour week has been instituted; it is difficult to obtain materials. I have closely investigated the whole matter and I find the materials in respect of which we are mainly in short supply for building purposes, have to be obtained from the Eastern States and are mostly manufactured from steel. Most decidedly the adverse effects of the recent strike are having their repercussions here in the retarding of building operations. I do not think one could buy a sheet of iron today in Western Australia.

Hon. G. Fraser: You could not do so before the strike, let alone afterwards.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes; there were certain supplies available, and it is useless to try to cover up the position in that way.

Hon. G. Fraser: I am not trying to do that.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. A. THOMSON: I do not want to cross swords with Mr. Fraser, but we must face facts. It is certainly time people in Western Australia did so, in view of the present situation. At Albany during the week-end I discussed matters with a gentleman interested in building operations; and we called at every shop possible before leaving Albany but we could not get any iron at all. On the way up we called at each

store we passed, and the reply was always the same—they had not seen any nails for ages. It is useless to say that the strike has not affected the position.

Hon. G. Fraser: I merely said that it did not represent the whole trouble.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It did, to a great extent. I suggest to Mr. Fraser that he should visit the shops in the city and ascertain how much rod steel there is in this State.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: That position applied before the strike.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The shortage was accentuated by the strike. People here suffered great discomfort regarding lack of coal, which was due to the strike. The fact remains that most of the lines that are in short supply here are produced in the Eastern States.

Hon. G. Fraser: What about bricks?

Hon. A. THOMSON: An ample supply of bricks could be manufactured in this State.

Hon. G. Fraser: But it is not.

Hon. A. THOMSON: And I am wondering whose fault it is. We know many migrants are coming to this State, and I certainly welcome them. On the other hand do we find the Commonwealth Government making any attempt to train returned men in the manufacture of bricks? It may be doing so, but the fact is not apparent. In the country districts the people are suffering in consequence. The whole trouble is that, owing to war restrictions, we have become more or less accustomed to being ordered here, there and everywhere, to being told we must get a permit for this and that—and so the people are disgruntled, but merely say, "What is the use?" I am sure that we could produce all the bricks we require in Western Australia. We have the necessary materials, and all we want is the requisite labour.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That is not the position on the Goldfields. The people there cannot get the materials.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Let us make a comparison. On many occasions in this House I have spoken of the lack of opportunity for many of our returned soldiers to learn a trade. Unfortunately today the excuse is advanced that no more trainees can be taken

on because of the shortage of materials. In those circumstances, it is asserted that we must conserve what we have so that there will not be too many requiring the use of bricks. Compare that present-day treatment of our returned men with what happened in the past. The Commonwealth Government is mainly responsible for the position and the unions are also to blame in that these men are not allowed to be trained. In effect, a close preserve is assured for a number of people, which reacts against their fellow citizens and even against the interests of the workers themselves.

When immigrants arrive in this country, the Commonwealth Government assures them that if they go into the rural areas they will be paid full award rates and so forth. That is all right so far as it goes, but our own men, who served the country well, are not able to secure full award rates and, in fact, are not permitted to work at all because of all these restrictions from which we are suffering. Not only can this State produce all the bricks required locally, but we are more favourably situated than any other part of the Commonwealth with regard to timber supplies for house building.

I desire to pay a tribute to the Government for the very excellent work it has done in connection with the housing scheme, particularly within the limitations imposed upon it and in consequence of the operations of the State Housing Commission. With regard to the latter, I prophesied that it would grow into a huge department. Never before was a prophecy more borne out by the facts. The Housing Commission has developed into a huge department mainly because of this legislation. I opposed it when it was first introduced, and at that time I was accused of making an attack on the then secretary of the Workers' Homes Board. I had no such intention, but there was no use my saying so. I was supposed to be antagonistic to Mr. Bond. I certainly am not opposed to the Commission, bearing in mind the limitations imposed upon its operations.

The Commission has done splendid work, but nevertheless it has grown and grown. The result is that, under present-day conditions, all incentive has been lost. When the legislation was originally before Parliament I advocated—and I repeat it today—that it should be made possible for people who had

the desire and could get the requisite materials together, to do what was possible in Western Australia 50 years ago. A man should be able to buy a small block and start off with the erection of a couple of rooms, adding to the dwelling from time to time until in the end he would have a comfortable home. I could take members round Cottesloe Beach, South Fremantle and elsewhere, and point out to them hundreds of homes that had been started in such a manner.

Nowadays, however, with all the restrictions and hampering conditions, we compel men to wait until such time as permits are granted and they can eventually occupy homes, but they have to ask themselves whether they can afford the 35s. a week they are called upon to pay. Nevertheless they appreciate that they have to face up to the situation. It would have been much better had we assisted such men to build their own homes, gradually adding to them until they could meet their requirements. They would then be in a position to live much more comfortably than they have been doing during the last three or four years. In my humble opinion, the present restrictions imposed on building operations are most detrimental.

I agree with what Mr. Fraser said when addressing this House two or three years ago. He then produced a plan, with facts and figures, and pointed out that at that time the building of houses was to cost £100 more than should have been charged. If that applied then, how much more does it apply today? I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill unless the Minister, when replying to the debate, is able to advance definite concrete proposals as to the relief to be accorded in the future.

Is it not farcical that men in the rural areas have to apply to the Housing Commission for a building permit, and the Commission has then to apply to the local authority for its approval. Such circumlocution is no good. Surely to goodness the local authorities, which have taken care of building construction over the years, are just as anxious today to see that the right type of building is erected.

Hon. G. Fraser: They are stopping a lot of construction today in many districts.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The ratepayers have the remedy in their own hands. I could not imagine anyone on the Goldfields object-

ing to such accommodation, nor could I imagine anyone doing so in the province I represent.

Hon. G. Fraser: The ratepayers have not got it in their own hands while there is plural voting.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I want to make my position quite clear. I have no intention of making a long speech. Every member has made up his mind how he will vote; but the Minister must be able to convince me that even one more house can be built while the present restrictions on building materials continue before I will alter my decision. What is actually happening today? In all good faith, the Housing Commission approaches responsible contractors in the metropolitan area and says, "Will you build 40 or 50 houses?" They reply, "Certainly, we will." What do these contractors do then? They immediately give an order for 1,000,000 bricks, and so we find the brickworks cluttered up with orders which, if we were able to dissect them, would disclose that the demand was not as great as it might appear to be on the surface, as all the bricks are not immediately required.

The Government should encourage in every way possible the construction of brick cottages in the country instead of timber and asbestos houses, as in the latter case the greater part of the material has to be brought to the country from the mills or the metropolitan area. All that could be avoided if the buildings were constructed of brick. There are many other points upon which I could touch, but I shall make reference to only one more. Mr. Simpson and Sir Charles Latham quoted extensively from a plan which showed that a business firm could build houses which would provide comfortable accommodation for 90 per cent. of the married men who at present were living under adverse conditions, the cost being £700 to £800.

We should aim at reducing the cost of building, yet we find that it is constantly rising; it was £1,200, now it is £1,750. Who pays for the increase? Not you or I, Sir. It is the working man who has to occupy the homes that is called upon to pay a rental of 35s. or 36s. per week. If he were allowed to build a self-help home with a couple of rooms and a lean-to, much of the difficulty would be overcome. All he would have

to do would be to send in a plan to a local authority and say, "This is the plan of the house I propose to build and it will cost me so much. By building this portion only, I shall reduce my cost to a minimum."

Hon. G. Fraser: Some road boards will not permit that to be done.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The point is that we are all compelled to do certain things today, and therefore we should compel the local authorities to face up to the position.

Hon. H. Hearn: Uniform bylaws!

Hon. A. THOMSON: That might overcome the difficulty. I want the cost of housing to be reduced; but as far as I can see there is at present not a dog's chance of its being reduced even by one penny. Rather, it is gradually creeping up. What will be the position of people in years to come? What hope will the man on the basic wage, or a man with a decent margin over the basic wage, have of paying his rent and gradually reducing his principal? What hope will he have of owning the house in his life-time? I would not like to be facing such a position.

Under the Workers' Homes Scheme, workers had a much better chance of securing a home at less cost and of a much better type than is being built today. Should the Bill be defeated, I am of opinion that things will adjust themselves. I shall certainly not vote for the Bill unless I know whether the Government intends to ease the controls. Let the local authorities do as they did in pre-war days and agree to the building of homes in the way I have already mentioned. Finance can be raised.

We know that the Commonwealth Bank has frozen millions of pounds of the private banks' money. I am certain that the private banks would be only too glad to lend out that money on long-range terms at four and a half per cent. They would jump at the opportunity. In fact, it is what the Commonwealth is doing today. It is using cheap money. There is no shortage of money, but there is a shortage of building materials, which I think will ultimately adjust itself. Unless the Minister gives me substantial reasons, by making some definite announcement of what the Government proposes to do in the way of easing these restrictions, I must vote against the measure.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [5.38]: When I asked members approximately eight weeks ago to agree to the adjournment of the second reading of this measure for five weeks, I was hopeful that, if the motion were successful, its passing would convey to the Government the attitude of members of this Chamber towards control of building materials. Up to a point I think I can claim that I achieved a certain measure of success; because I am led to believe that a special Cabinet meeting was called the next morning to discuss, I understand, the housing position. I might only be guessing, of course, but my guess is as good as anyone else's. A special meeting of Cabinet was called, and I was hopeful, as I think every member of this Chamber was, that the Government would make an announcement with respect to the easing of controls.

Hon. G. Fraser: Did you say "every member of this Chamber"?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Most members of this Chamber; I am sorry, Mr. Fraser. Unfortunately, the Government did not make an announcement. Despite the fact that the Building Industry Congress and the country road boards and municipalities all held meetings and passed resolutions favouring the easing of controls, we have had no announcement from the Government on the subject.

Hon. A. Thomson: Mr. Playford in South Australia granted an exemption.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I was going to mention that. During the last fortnight we have heard of the easing of controls in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria.

The Chief Secretary: Do you mean controls or permits?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Permits. The easing of permits would mean an easing of controls.

The Chief Secretary: I am afraid it would not.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I shall read to the House a cutting from "The West Australian" as follows:—

Adelaide, Sept. 16.—To make the control of house building as liberal as possible, a Bill would be introduced in the State Parliament to allow house building up to £1,500 without a permit, said the Premier (Mr. Playford) in a broadcast tonight.

Under the Bill, any person could build a house for his occupation on his own land so long as the area of the house did not exceed

1,200 square feet. Other buildings, such as hotels, theatres, shops, factories, etc., would still be subject to strict control.

Hon. G. Fraser: Provided the person got the materials.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: That is all we want in this State. Let people use initiative and secure the materials, instead of having to apply to the Housing Commission for a permit and lose much time in writing letters, which always seem to be necessary. Even then he may find that some other person who put in a permit later has been fortunate enough to secure a home before he has. I have not changed my opinion on this Bill. I think that if some of the controls were lifted many more people would be getting homes, and that is what I am interested in.

I want to see persons occupying their own homes. I do not care how small they are, so long as the people own them. I do not wish to see people making application for Commonwealth rental homes; I want them to get to work and build their own houses. I have been told today that some of the men who have taken advantage of the Servicemen's Land Settlement Scheme are paying as much as four figures for their dwellings. From what I heard, some of them are not prepared to accept a home with such a heavy indebtedness on it. I do not know what the Chief Secretary will have to say in reply, but it will have to be something convincing before a considerable number of members of this House will change their opinions on this measure. I shall vote against the second reading.

HON. R. J. BOYLEN (South) [5.45]: I support the second reading of the Bill. I consider that the lifting of controls would make it impossible for the average person ever to get a home. They should be continued until such time as the supply equals the demand. On the Goldfields, the lack of building materials has probably been more apparent than in other country areas or the metropolitan area. In some instances, contractors have laid the foundation blocks and, because of their inability to procure other materials, have had to wait for weeks or months before continuing. I have known houses to be almost completed, but not finished because a few materials were still required. In one instance, four houses were

practically completed, but could not be inhabited because water piping was not available.

If the controls were relinquished, a chaotic state of affairs would exist throughout the State. The Government has realised the necessity for controls by reimposing them in connection with bricks and cement. If timber and other materials were decontrolled, it would be found, between the time of their decontrol and the reimposition of control, that a good deal of hardship would be felt by people requiring homes. Many Goldfields homes, as well as those in country districts, are built of wood and iron. Some have been erected for 40 or 50 years, and are today in need of repair.

Most of the houses built on the Goldfields 40 years ago have white flooring, which is now worn out or so affected by white ants as to need replacing. Many of those places are unsafe as a result. Although only a small quantity of timber is required to put them into proper condition, it is becoming increasingly difficult to get materials. I am certain the situation is being watched very carefully by the Housing Commission. I do not know what might happen with decontrol.

Hon. H. Hearn: Things might improve.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: They might not. Many married couples attempting to rear children are forced to live with their parents. It is not fair to the older generation, or to the younger generation, either. Many people living in these circumstances would have more inducement to have children if they had their own homes. The country would not then be robbed of future citizens, and we would not need to concern ourselves so much about immigration. If the controls were lifted, there would be an inducement for building materials to be used for purposes other than home construction. They would most certainly be used to improve business premises. While that may be of advantage in some circumstances, it would not generally be a necessity. They would probably be used for building seaside cottages, which would be occupied for only one or two months of the year. Their construc-

tion would retard the building of homes in which people would reside for 12 months of each year.

The people making the sacrifice are the ones we represent here. There will be a hue and cry if controls are not reimposed, for some time to come at least. Permits should be available for the erection of smaller homes, similar to what Mr. Thomson mentioned a few minutes ago. People could spend £500 to £700 on a house and then, as their family got larger, they could apply to have the home enlarged, if, by that time, control had not ceased altogether.

I know of a young woman and two children who live with her parents on the Goldfields. They have had to accommodate her by turning the diningroom into a bedroom. Her husband, a returned soldier, is a medical case under the Repatriation Commission. He is doing a rehabilitation course in Perth and earning about £5 15s. a week, and has been waiting to get a Commonwealth-State rental home. His doctor stated recently that he hesitated to say where the man would finish as he was becoming neurotic because of the separation from his wife and children.

There are many such instances. Numbers of people who have worked on the fields all their lives are anxious to retire to a seaside resort. Esperance is the one most favoured by the people I represent. If building materials were decontrolled, those people would have no chance of getting to the coast. For these and other reasons, I propose to support the second reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban—in reply) [5.56]: The remarks of members have been very interesting, but I fear their knowledge of the difficulties of the housing position is somewhat meagre. No-one can possibly deny the deplorable shortage of dwellings, but much credit must be given to the Minister for Housing and the Commission for their efforts to overcome the shortages of labour. The officers of the State Housing Commission and the Minister have a far greater knowledge of the position than can be expected of any member of Parliament.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is absolute rubbish!

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am sorry if the Commission and the Minister for Housing have not more knowledge than the hon. member, because he has not made his knowledge available to them.

Hon. H. L. Roche: They would not listen to him if he did.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Did the hon. member try it?

Hon. H. L. Roche: I have not the knowledge he has.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am pleased to see that there is one hon. gentleman who so much criticises the Commission, who has not its knowledge, and admits it.

Hon. A. L. Loton: The hon. member did not say that.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Let the Minister go.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I ask members to be kind enough to allow me to explain the facts. Some have been good enough to say they will listen to me, and, perhaps, support the Bill. I say without hesitation that no-one has a better knowledge of the conditions regarding the deplorable lack of dwellings than has the Housing Commission and the Minister for Housing.

Hon. A. Thomson: You said, more than members of Parliament, and I took exception to that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I repeat, a great deal more than many members of Parliament. As members are aware, a full-time chairman has been appointed, and he is a man of out-standing ability as an organiser, and with a full knowledge of the requirements of urban and rural areas. The very best advice is always sought by the Minister and the Commission. Not long ago, some 250 people connected with the building trade—builders, merchants and architects—met and unanimously agreed that all controls should continue. I think that was the day before the debate on the Bill was adjourned.

We cannot get better advice than that. I attended such meetings myself. Many architects and builders have their own views as to what should be done, and some seem to come from the selfish angle. I am not saying that is so, but that is what it looks like. They could not agree. The shortage of materials and labour is so great that it has not been possible to build the new hospitals so urgently needed, or the schools, administrative buildings or industrial buildings. Every

effort is being made to construct dwellings. Of course some schools must be built to keep pace with the rising population in the metropolitan and country areas. It is interesting to note that in 1947 only 97 self-help dwellings were built, but in the last quarter ended the 31st December, 1948, they were being built at the rate of 1,000 per annum. So the story unfolds.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: There would be more if there were no controls.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The outcry about housing is a popular one, but the only suggestion made to remedy the shortage is to lift controls. Have members thought of the position of iron products now and in the near future? Have they thought of cement, and bricks? These matters have been exhaustively inquired into, and we find that iron products—baths, sinks, stoves, piping, etc.—are unprocurable in Australia in any quantity at present. Inquiries have been made overseas. No stone has been left unturned to get essential materials. Take cement. The local company has had machinery on order for over 12 months, but it will be many months before it will be delivered. This should double the output.

Hon. A. L. Loton: There was a considerable quantity available for kerbing.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: We see plenty of kerbing in the city.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Will members allow me to proceed? We have placed large orders for cement in England, at twice the cost of the local article. The cement works, with Government assistance, have been endeavouring to install some mining machinery, and it is anticipated that it will be in working order by the end of the year.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: You will not get mining machinery now, will you?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We have it; we are endeavouring to have it installed. It is coming from Wiluna. Members can see the extent to which we are going.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: You just got it in time.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We have had it for some months; we have been trying to get it installed. We cannot do everything at once. Take asbestos sheets. We are expecting 100,000 sheets of corrugated asbestos to come from the United Kingdom. We have already secured 5,000 sheets of flat asbestos,

and are endeavouring to get more. We have placed large orders for cement from England at twice the cost of local cement for Government works, so as to limit Government demands on the local product. The manager of the State Brickworks was sent to England two years ago to get machinery. Unfortunately, he died. A new manager was appointed and he has been sent to England by air to obtain and expedite delivery of the latest machinery, but delivery takes a considerable time.

When that machinery arrives, it will mean a considerable increase in the output of bricks. The present State Brickworks machinery is very much out of date, but it is anticipated that it will be able to carry on for some little while. Mention was made of the Coolgardie Brickworks. We have ordered from them 1,000,000 bricks per annum, but we have not yet got one.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: We were told they closed down because they could not get orders.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The information the hon. member gets is not always correct.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They closed down on account of the faulty construction, I believe.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know what the trouble is, but we have ordered 1,000,000 bricks per annum from the Coolgardie works.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They are rebuilding the plant now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It was suggested there should be backloading, but that is not a practicable proposition because we have not sufficient locomotives. Locomotives are being used for the ordinary transport of goods from the transcontinental railway and pyrites are being backloaded from Norseman. It was suggested that the production of tiles was two years in arrears. That is not so, and I understand that they are approximately three months in arrears. Mr. Hearn criticised the Housing Commission because of permits which were refused in different parts of the South Perth area. Of course, that has nothing to do with the Housing Commission. Local governing bodies have the right to refuse permits under certain circumstances, and members will recall a Bill being introduced in another place and the tremendous outcry it caused. It is not easy to alter existing laws.

Timber has been mentioned and also the State Saw Mills. New timber mills are being erected. A timber mill costs approximately £200,000 and is designed to operate in the forest for a period of not less than 40 years. It must first be approved by the Forests Department because reforestation must keep up with cutting. That is what is called a "sustained policy." If we were to let that policy go, we would wipe out our forests in a matter of a few years. The mill houses which are built are designed for 50 years' service. Unfortunately we had a great setback recently because of a mill being burnt down at Jarrahdale.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Would it not have closed down in any case? Was it not practically cut out?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No, I do not think so. The State Saw Mills are required to cut three-eighth inch cases for fruit as well as to provide building timbers, but it is anticipated that all shortages of building timbers will be overcome by the end of the present year. Mr. Roche criticised the cutting of sleepers. I am informed that sleeper sawmilling permits are, for the most part, granted for areas previously cut over for general sawmilling, together with some marginal forest. A condition of these sleeper sawmilling permits provides that the logs must be docked in the bush to sleeper length—not exceeding 9 ft.—before being removed to the mill. It would not be profitable to have any other type of mill in that country. Experience has shown that effective utilisation of short length logs is obtained only by sleeper mills. As sleeper orders range in length from 6 to 9 ft. there is, in effect, little waste in the bush on account of multiples of lengths and in general through utilisation of remaining marketable timber.

At this stage I would like to quote an extract from a letter dated the 17th March, 1949, received from the Commissioner of Railways, which indicates the sleeper position in Western Australia. It states—

The parlous state of railway maintenance is too well known to need emphasising and the sleepers at present held by the department are only a fraction of what are needed for rehabilitation requirements. Given a moderate contingency of track workers as in prospect with displaced persons, all available sleepers will be put on the road in quick time. I desire to stress the need of maintaining and augmenting sleeper supplies for use at the earliest possible moment in order to keep our

tracks in safe operating condition. The risk is that there will be insufficient sleepers for the purpose. I have no fear of our obtaining too many.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That was written to prevent you from exporting.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: They are exporting them now, are they not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A certain number are being exported but I want to impress upon members that sleepers are taken from cut-out forests, as a rule. Much of this timber comes from private property over which we have no control. The export of sleepers has nothing to do with the Forests Department, and therefore we cannot prevent it. We cannot prevent them from going to other States or the Commonwealth because that is a matter for the Commonwealth. Conferences have recently been held with the timber millers and these people have been very generous. They have minimised their exports even though they had been, in many instances, committed. These people have contracts already let and they must be fulfilled.

At that time the Commissioner was advised that in view of the existing emergency it was expected that the railways would help meet the general timber position by accepting a reduction in the allocation of sleepers for Western Australia until such time as production of scantlings could be increased by way of the establishment of new mills in the lower South-West. In order to increase the quantity of scantlings for the housing scheme, sawmillers agreed some time ago to reduce production of sleepers in general purpose mills to an absolute minimum, with the result that today the bulk of the sleepers produced in Western Australia is cut in the sleeper mills. Although in the past a small oversea export quota has been produced, the time is rapidly approaching when the whole of the output of the sleeper mills will be required for Australian railway services, such as those of the Commonwealth, South Australia and Western Australia, and any change from sleepers to scantlings in these small sleeper mills would be neither economical nor desirable.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Sleepers on the railways will not build homes.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is quite evident. The shortages in iron and imported goods from the Eastern States have been intensified considerably since the coal

strike, and even though the strike has ended it will be a long while before the steel works will produce and longer still before we can get those materials here. Two million feet of steel products are on order from continental sources and it is hoped that the first shipment of portion of that order will be loaded next month. Also 110 tons of water piping have been ordered from France and are expected to be loaded this month.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Did you say 110 tons?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, we cannot get any more. We are trying to get it from everywhere. We are also obtaining iron and steel rods and other steel products from Japan. Members must bear in mind that New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania have doubled their pre-war timber output. In Western Australia the output is 75 per cent. of that registered pre-war because of the shortage of manpower and equipment, especially tractors, machinery and steel.

Hon. H. L. Roche: There must be some cobwebs about.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There must be, but I wish the hon. member would brush them away. It is necessary that production of timber be stepped up, and this is being done as quickly as possible. As members know, many new timber mills are being established and we hope to catch up on demand. The Government cannot be blamed because the production of timber is only 75 per cent. of what we had pre-war. We hope that in 18 months we will have new brick-making machinery and that will be in full working order as soon as possible. We are hoping that that machinery will produce 300,000 to 350,000 bricks per annum as against the present output of 200,000. We are also hoping that the old machinery will keep going for the next three or four years and so help us to catch up with the lag.

Two years ago our building rate had exceeded the pre-war rate and was 2,120 houses per annum. On the 30th June, 1948, the building rate had risen to 2,923 houses per annum and in the last quarter of 1948 the rate was 4,030. That was more than double the pre-war rate. It must be borne in mind that in the second half of the year the building rate is always higher

than it is during the first half. I think the reason is that there are not so many holidays in the second half of the year.

This year we had many circumstances which adversely affected the building rate. Members will recall the power stoppages and then later on we had the coal strike. We must also remember that we now have an added burden on our housing programme because of migrants brought in by the Commonwealth Government. These people are most welcome, but their requirements have to be added to our housing programme and during the year ended March last this State gained an additional population of 6,178 people through migration. Between the beginning of this current month of September and the 30th June next, 1,100 families, not individuals, will arrive, and all those people will eventually have to be housed.

The Commission has evolved a number of new techniques in building, and this has meant the construction of duplex houses, expansible houses and the encouragement of owner-builder or self-help houses. Two years ago owner-builders were constructing houses at the rate of 167 per annum, but for the twelve months ended June last they were constructing houses at the rate of 849 per annum or five times as many as two years ago. Contracts have been let for 400 pre-cut timber houses. They will be of a size suitable for a man, wife and one or two infant children, and can be expanded later on. Further, the construction has been authorised of either double or four-flat hutment buildings and tradesmen are being imported from England. Last year 1,000 Commonwealth rental homes were constructed and 2,228 private houses were erected. We are very proud of the fact that in proportion to the population we have built 50 per cent. more houses than any other State. Pre-war, 2,000 houses per year were built.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: When you left the Chair, Mr. Deputy President, I was pointing out that pre-war, 2,000 houses a year was the normal requirement, but last year we built 3,200. Therefore, we built 1,200 houses over and above the pre-war normal requirement. This State has been more controlled than any other State in Australia. In the other States, to some ex-

tent, free building of houses has been permitted for some time. The most controlled of the other States is South Australia where one is allowed to build without a permit or can automatically obtain a permit for the building of a house up to ten squares. In Tasmania one can build a house of any squarage without a permit and in other States the squarage ranges from 12½ to a larger figure.

The Commission and the Government have given consideration to this from time to time over the last two years, and at present further consideration is being given to it to determine whether some additional liberalisation in building opportunity might not make for a greater contribution to the total number of houses built—in other words, whether an increased opportunity may not bring about that incentive and enterprise on the part of intending home-owners, the people engaged in the manufacture of building materials and the builders themselves, who will make an addition to the total volume of houses produced. That, however, is a matter upon which no determination has yet been made.

The question of liberalisation of building controls is a matter which is being studied by the Commission and the Government. It involves many important considerations, and the anxiety of the Government and the Commission is to satisfy themselves before making any extensive change of policy, that the results will be beneficial to home-seekers as compared with the policy which has hitherto been followed and which has, at all events, ensured orderly building in the State.

The position in other States is not free from difficulty. Although those States have liberalised building permits by a certain squarage, members may have seen in the Press last week that two members of the Government Party in Victoria are demanding that a committee be appointed to inquire into the Victorian State Housing Commission's building administration. One of these, Mr. Leckie, declared that the housing position in Victoria had got completely out of hand. In the meantime, the Government and the Commission here have been pursuing a policy of freer issue of permits for the small type houses and it is proposed to extend the issue of permits under the self-help or owner-built scheme to approximately 1,000 permits a year. This enables a small type

home to be built of seven squares under the main roof and of two squares verandah space. I think that was what Mr. Thomson was suggesting he would like to see.

It should be reasonably borne in mind that the policy pursued by the Commission has so far ensured an expansion in the building trade at least comparable with that in the other States and the building of Commonwealth-State rental homes at a cheaper rate than in the other States. In this State also we have had a finished rate which has compared favourably with other States and the standard of our Commonwealth-State rental homes has been at least equal—and it has been generally suggested—superior to those in other States. I would further add that under the policy hitherto obtaining those in most need of accommodation have been given the first opportunity of getting a home or obtaining a permit to build for themselves, so that building opportunity has gone to those who, by reason of their living conditions, can be said to have first claim.

The Commission's new programme of factory-built pre-cut timber-framed houses, which is being developed, should make an additional contribution to the building schedule. Although the Commonwealth will make arrangements for the contract pre-cutting of this type of dwelling, opportunity will be afforded to people to acquire pre-cut dwellings in order to erect them for themselves. Without this Bill, there will be no means of controlling materials in short supply such as cement, galvanised iron piping, galvanised corrugated iron and steel products required for building purposes. There will be no means of making provision for country and northern areas or to meet the special needs of house builders, primary producers and others engaged in essential industries.

I would like members to appreciate that there is no State which has not maintained their Building Operations and Building Materials Control Acts and in every State in Australia building materials are controlled. This Bill is necessary in order to ensure that materials in short supply are used on work for essential purposes and to prevent their being used for unessential building. Queensland has an Act giving powers of material control which can be exercised when required. Although the Act

provides for the control of building materials other than timber, this part of it has not yet been proclaimed. There exists however, a voluntary arrangement under which control is more or less exercised over distribution so that housing receives the highest priority.

Wide powers have been given to the Chief Controller of Timber, but he has not yet found it necessary to exercise them. I therefore ask members to pass this Bill. The Government would view its defeat with the gravest apprehension respecting the consequences which I feel must follow any failure to pass this legislation. I feel members will take into consideration the views expressed in this House for an easement of controls in house building, and I can assure them that this matter will receive the most careful consideration of the Government and the Housing Commission.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

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

Ayes	...	..	..	..	16
Noes	...	..	..	..	8
Majority for					8

AYNS.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. Sir Frank Gibson
Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. J. M. Cunningham	Hon. Sir Chas. Latham
Hon. H. A. C. Daffen	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. C. H. Simpson (Teller.)

NOXS.

Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. A. L. Loten	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. H. Hearn (Teller.)

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 38:

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I move an amendment—

That all the words after "by" in line 2 be struck out and the following words inserted in lieu:—"deleting all words after the word 'until' in line 1. and substituting the words 'the thirtieth day of September, one thousand nine hundred and fifty and no longer.'"

The Bill is designed to continue the operation of the Act until the 31st December, 1950, but I propose to restrict the duration to the 30th September of next year. The amendment would be an indication to the Government to bring down next year, not a mere continuance measure, but one to amend the Act and bring it more into line with present-day requirements. The Chief Secretary has intimated that we are the most controlled State in the Commonwealth in the matter of permits. Only this week New South Wales, in which State the permit system has been liberalised for quite a time, has still further extended permits for home building. Outside of Sydney and Newcastle no permit is required, and within the Sydney and Newcastle areas, a home up to 1,500 square feet may be built without a permit.

We have been told by the Chief Secretary that the Minister for Housing invariably sought the best advice. I challenge him to inform us whether the Minister sought advice from the Building Advisory Panel on exempting up to a certain squarage, and, if so, what was the nature of the advice and whether the Government intends to act upon it or ignore it. An amendment is also needed of the amount that may be spent on an existing house without a permit. The present amount is very small, whereas in New South Wales it has been fixed at £500 without a permit. There should be an easing of this restriction. The Government has tried practically everything except putting into effect the policy on which it was returned, namely, individual effort and private enterprise.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not aware that the Government ever said that the Act would continue only until the end of the year. That is the only point we are discussing. I was surprised at Mr. Watson's doubting the veracity of the Minister for Housing as expressed through me that he had sought the best advice. I am not aware whether he sought advice from the Building Advisory Panel, but various bodies have given advice and much of it has been conflicting. I attended the Building Industry Congress and conflicting advice was given there. We cannot accept all advice on account of the conflict of views.

The hon. member has asked that the duration of the Act be reduced by three months. That seems petty. If, in May of next year, it appeared that controls should be continued, Parliament would have to be called together earlier than usual in order to get the measure through by September as a considerable time would be occupied by the Address-in-reply, which must take place. I have assured members that control will be discontinued as far as possible, taking into consideration the requirements of all the people for the betterment of the housing of those most needing it. The Government will not release control for the purpose of allowing people to improve the homes they already have. We must continue control where necessary in order to house people now living under such shocking conditions. If it is possible to remove control, we shall do so.

Hon. G. FRASER: I oppose the amendment, which is a cheeseparing proposal. What the hon. member desires could be achieved without this legislation. The Government will act according to the material supplies available and will see that everybody gets a fair deal. Mr. Watson admits that, after September of next year, some control may be necessary. No Government would heed a protest from this Chamber if conditions would not permit of the lifting of control. Why tinker with the matter and raise false hopes in the minds of the people? Does Mr. Watson expect someone to wave a magic wand so that restrictions on material will be unnecessary next year? Has the hon. member no confidence in his own Government's desire to fulfil its promises if at all possible? Did not his Party promise that controls would be lifted wherever possible? We have confidence that the Government would carry out its promise on the hustings if such were possible.

The amendment would place the Government in an impossible position. Next year we hope that politics will be back to normal, that the session will start early in August and that no gag will be applied. By the end of September, the Government will not be in the position to introduce Bills, because of the Address-in-reply debate. Why stultify the Government?

Hon. F. R. Welsh: Why worry?

Hon. G. FRASER: Why place the Government in a difficult position by prescribing that the Act must expire on a certain date when we know that controls will have to be retained much longer? Why not face up fairly to the position? Housing will necessitate control for many years.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: For 20 years.

Hon. G. FRASER: I said "many years." I have sufficient confidence that any Government would release any item of material as soon as that were possible. The Government will be advised by the Housing Commission. If it does not conflict with its policy the Government will take the counsel of those advisers and in 12 months' time we shall be in almost the same position as today. Why hamstring them? Why not let the Bill run to its usual time and, when we assemble next year, have ample opportunity to review the position and make a decision as to what to do for the ensuing 12 months? Nobody here can visualise that materials will be so plentiful in the coming 12 months that these controls can be lifted. Have we not had the example in the past year of the Government trying to carry out its policy of lifting controls and then being forced to reimpose them? Someone will say that was due to the strike. But that is not correct, because the shortage in that particular item existed long before the strike occurred.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I can understand the hon. member expressing himself as he did because he belongs to a Party which believes in controls and regimentation. But there are members here who have other views. I am one of those who do not believe in regimentation and controls, and I am going to support the amendment. I gave an undertaking to the Government that I would support the second reading. I was led to believe at that stage that there would be some amendments that would relieve the feeling I have that some controls were unnecessary. I have been disappointed, but I am prepared to stick to my undertaking. However, I did not agree not to support this amendment. I do not want the Leader of the House to run away with the idea that it is necessary to have the Address-in-reply dealt with before any legislation is passed. That is not the case. Standing Order 36 of other places states—

No business beyond what is of a formal character shall be entered upon before the Address-in-reply to the Governor's Opening Speech has been adopted.

That is perfectly right; but Standing Order 418 provides that—

In cases of urgent necessity, any Standing Order or Orders of the House may be suspended on motion duly made and seconded without notice provided—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would point out to the hon. member that the Standing Orders of another place have no association with the activities of this House.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I know; but it was the other place to which the Chief Secretary was referring when he said that the Address-in-reply would have to be dealt with.

The Chief Secretary: Do we not have an Address-in-reply?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes; but our Address-in-reply has been frequently suspended under Standing Orders.

The Chief Secretary: When?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: We know that there is a provision in the Standing Orders of another place permitting members there to suspend Standing Orders for any purpose considered urgent. Here we have only 30 members and short speeches, which means that the Address-in-reply can be dealt with very quickly if the Government is anxious to get the Address-in-reply through. I consider that any member of this place who feels there is a need to continue this legislation will assist the Government.

The Chief Secretary: If not, he would ask for an adjournment of the Address-in-reply after one speech had been delivered; that is, if he wanted to delay progress.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes; but the usual custom is to meet the wishes of hon. members, whoever the Leader of the House is and to whatever Party he belongs. But, after all, the members of this Chamber are commonsense individuals, quite reasonable in their outlook; and they would be prepared, if the necessity existed, to assist the Government. But I do not think for one moment that we are justified in permitting the Government to continue restricting people to the expenditure of £50 in one year without a permit. Governments in the past

have got Bills through after an election quite easily. I know instances when Parliament was called together early in July to enable the Government to get legislation through because there was an early date fixed in connection with a continuance measure.

The Chief Secretary: I take it that you will appreciate there will have to be an early sitting of Parliament if this amendment is carried?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not think so. Parliament usually meets in July. I am going to see that this sort of thing is stopped as quickly as possible. I do not believe that there is any need for the restriction imposed today upon building materials and permits. I can understand Mr. Fraser expressing himself as he did because he belongs to a Party that believes in regimentation. We have had that everywhere that his Party exists. It applies in the Old Country and in the Federal House and we are getting it in every State Parliament. Yet in New South Wales, where there is a Labour Government, controls are being removed.

Hon. G. Fraser: Have you been reading "Comic Cuts"?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No, but I have listened to some! I support the amendment.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I cannot support the amendment, which does not mean anything. I do not believe anybody here thinks that we will be able to release controls by the 30th September next year. Much has been made of the lifting of permits in other States, but without the lifting of controls over materials that does not mean a thing. The fact that they have lifted permits in the other States only means blackmarketing.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There cannot be blackmarketing if there are no controls.

Hon. L. CRAIG: People with money who have permits to build get materials by blackmarketing methods. Anybody who has been in Victoria and New South Wales recently will know what is going on. Well-to-do people who are capable of blackmarketing are building seaside places worth up to £3,000 and £4,000, when they already have good homes. We do not want that to happen here. The fact that permits have been lifted in the Eastern States is the reason we are doing better than any other State with regard to building.

Our achievements in connection with homes erected, and the quality, are outstanding. The people of this State have a lot to be thankful for to the Government for the good job done in housing, and I am surprised that this Chamber is trying to take power away from the Government and endeavouring to stop it doing the good job it has been carrying out, suggesting that the issue of permits will remedy matters. It will not do so; it will only aggravate the difficulties. Control of materials has not been released in any other State.

Altering the date from the 31st December to the 30th September does not achieve anything. A Bill will have to be dealt with in the next session of Parliament in any case, and it is not likely to be passed by the 30th September unless we have an early session of Parliament. We might find that on the 25th September the Bill would be thrown out and control, not only of permits but of building materials, would be taken away. Imagine the chaotic condition that would ensue in respect of houses in process of being erected! There would be a wild rush from people with a lot of money to buy materials at any price, and work on houses being erected would be stopped within a day.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: How long would that last?

Hon. L. CRAIG: It might last for a good while. I cannot see any point in the amendment. We will have to deal with a Bill to continue the operation of the building controls in September or October of next year, and if we do not like it and throw the measure out, at least there will be a month's or two months' notice. To say that these controls shall end in September will cause great embarrassment to the Government, and I do not think members on our side of the Chamber should seek to do that.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I support the amendment because, if it is carried, it will be an indication to the Government that the majority of members would like to see something worthwhile done by the Administration to remove controls and restrictions on building.

Hon. G. Fraser: Put it up as a notice of motion and get it carried like that instead of in this round-about way.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: There is nothing round-about in this amendment. Mr. Fraser could have seen it on the notice paper, except that September has been substituted for June. It seems to me that the Government has not been able to fulfil its promises regarding housing, and from the assurances we have had from various Ministers, particularly the Minister for Housing, the Government appears to have tried everything except the one principle on which it is reputed to stand. That principle is apparently not one to which it subscribes.

Hon. G. Fraser: The Government found that circumstances were such that it could not carry out the promises it had made, that is all.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: That might be the reason. It is not the same as that which actuates the hon. member's Party, which believes in controls for the sake of control.

Hon. G. Fraser: Who told you that yarn?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: The Government has not been asked to release all controls. It has been asked by members here and by institutions outside to release controls on the cheaper types of houses, and it is not prepared to do so. It is afraid to try to stimulate building by releasing some of the controls. I suggest that when Mr. Watson queried the sources—if he did query them—to which the Minister went for his advice, when reference was made to the best advice possible, he meant that there was some question as to whether the advice obtained was the best.

Hon. H. K. Watson: The question is whether, the advice having been received, it was followed.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I wonder whether the advice of the Builders' Advisory Panel at the Housing Commission is the best available to the Minister. Over a year ago, I heard that panel had recommended an easing of the controls, but that has not been implemented. I understand that lately they made other recommendations, but on this occasion apparently the Minister changed their minds for them. I support the amendment.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I do not think the majority of members are satisfied with all the controls under this legislation and I do

not think that this amendment, if agreed to, would embarrass the Government. We will probably meet in July next year and that would allow three months before the measure expired, giving whatever Government might be in power time to bring down a further Bill, if necessary.

The Chief Secretary: How do you make it three months?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: This measure is so important that even if it meant calling the House together earlier than usual, that would be justified. Tonight we have been told about certain people in Perth having all the knowledge, but there is great opposition to these controls throughout the State. There is no guarantee of what is likely to happen. If the Commission, in its wisdom, wished to ease the controls, it could do so; but, otherwise, the present position will continue next year. I have previously protested against continuance Bills, which we cannot amend. If the amendment is agreed to, it will be an invitation for the problem to be dealt with on its merits in September next. I am concerned about the people we represent. It is ridiculous to say a man cannot spend more than £50 on building in one year. I support the amendment.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: We have been accused of trying to throw the Bill out in order to toss controls overboard, but that is not the position.

Hon. G. Fraser: Then why vote against the Bill?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: We have waited eight months for the Government to modify the controls, but it has done nothing of the sort.

Hon. G. Fraser: Why try to throw the Bill out?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I know something of the ideas of the Housing Commission, and they have not been put before us tonight. The Chief Secretary said we were building self-help homes at the rate of 1,000 a year.

Hon. G. Bennetts: In the metropolitan area.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Then he said the Government was going to step the rate up to 1,000 a year. This afternoon, the Minister for Housing told me they were going to

issue permits for up to 1,000 self-help homes a year, but the Chief Secretary said they were already doing that.

The Chief Secretary: Small houses. The hon. member was not here when I spoke.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I was here and heard every word the Chief Secretary said. I had it in mind to support the second reading of this measure, but, after waiting eight weeks for some relief from controls, I have no alternative but to support the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am sorry to see the turn the debate has taken, because it shows little confidence in the Government. It has been said that the Government has not implemented the platform upon which it was elected, but the fact is that events have proved such that controls cannot be lifted, although pressure is brought to bear by people in certain walks of life. That will not influence the Government if it thinks it essential for the welfare of the community that controls be continued. Mr. Tuckey said he would vote for the amendment because his people wanted it, but the Government is thinking of the State as a whole and not of any particular district. The greatest difficulty lies in the position of people in the heavily-populated cities and towns.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: You should encourage country building.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We do. If the hon. member studies the numbers of permits granted in the metropolitan area and the country, he will see that the percentage for the country is higher than that for the city. He mentioned the position of the North, but where is the acute housing position there, as compared with that in the metropolitan area? The present Minister for Housing is resigning shortly and the new Minister will have to learn the ropes.

Hon. A. L. Loton: We understand some of them are jockeying for the position.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope the hon. member does not get it! At any time, except immediately following an election, it might be possible to deal with legislation such as this in a period of three months, but it must be remembered that this Bill has just been adjourned for five weeks.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Would not Mr. Gray have better luck?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: What will happen if the measure is brought forward in August or September?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: If we have the same stubborn Government, the measure will have the same fate.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That will be the case if we have members who go to the electors saying they will support the Government and then oppose it when they get here. The amendment would shorten the period of control by three months at the utmost, but would put whatever Government was then in power to considerable inconvenience if controls had then to be continued. I hope the Committee will not agree to the amendment.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The Chief Secretary has just said we are endeavouring to pass a vote of want of confidence in the Government. I congratulate Mr. Fraser on making political capital out of the debate, though he is not the only one to do so. I will not be in this House next September, and this may be one of the last votes I will exercise in this Chamber. When speaking to the second reading of the Bill, I stated definitely that my vote would depend on the reply of the Chief Secretary.

For weeks now we in this House have been asking for an indication of the Government's intentions with regard to giving some relief from these controls. I have heard all the Chief Secretary has said on the matter and regret that he has not given one word of encouragement to me to do anything but vote against the second reading, as I did. While members wish to be loyal to the Government, some of us feel we must also be loyal to the principles for which we have always stood.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And to the people.

Hon. E. H. Gray: To some of the people.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have been in Parliament for 35 years and have always stood for the rights of private enterprise. At this late hour in my political existence, I have no intention of changing, and will not be accused of changing.

Hon. G. Fraser: Whichever way you vote, this will not change the position.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is a matter of opinion. Many of us have requested that some relief be given in this regard to

justify us in voting in favour of controls. As one who has been opposed to controls from the beginning, I feel that I must support the amendment. Having failed to obtain a definite assurance from the Minister in charge of the Bill in this House that it is the intention of the Government to afford a certain amount of relief, what else can I do? Must I swallow my lifetime principles and accept an assurance that something may be done, whereas, as far as we know, no effort has been made to meet the requests we have proffered?

I want to make my position clear so that it may be placed on record. If we accept the amendment, it will mean the granting of an extension covering twelve months. No-one would suggest that controls should be entirely removed. No-one knows that better than I do. We must control the erection of expensive homes, but if we are to be content to sit down until the time arrives when every man and woman has his or her home, which means that controls must continue—

The Chief Secretary: No-one suggested anything of the sort.

Hon. A. THOMSON: —it will simply mean that there will not be much progress towards freedom in the matter of building.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Then, in your opinion, you believe the present Government has not done any better than the Labour Government.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am pleased to hear that interjection, because it serves again to indicate that some members wish to make political capital out of this matter. I have definitely said that the Government is entitled to every praise and confidence respecting the conditions it inherited. I maintain that. Even if the Labour Government had remained in power, while it might have done as well, it certainly could not have done better than has the present Administration. All we ask is for some definite assurance to be recorded in "Hansard" that will provide justification for some of us to cast a vote for something of which we are definitely not in favour.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	..	12
Majority against	..	..	..	1

AYES.

Hon. J. M. Cunningham	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. A. L. Lorton	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. H. A. C. Daffen	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. Sir F. E. Gibson	Hon. R. J. Boylen
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT. (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban) [8.40] in moving the second reading said: This is a short Bill to bring the Traffic Act into line with the Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act, which was amended so that with each motor vehicle license a compulsory third party insurance cover shall be issued, the premium being paid to the licensing authority with the licensing fee. It was also provided that no policy should lapse after 15 days from the expiration of the license, in order to give the owner time to renew his license and policy.

Under the Traffic Act license plates must be returned to country licensing authorities within 14 days if it is not proposed to re-license the vehicle. In the metropolitan area the period allowed is 21 days. It is desirable that the periods of grace in each Act be identical and the Bill, therefore, provides that the term within which license plates must be returned, both in the country and the metropolitan area, shall be 15 days.

Hon. A. Thomson: The same as in the country.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The period will be the same under both Acts. The other amendment in the Bill provides that an unlicensed vehicle may be driven or towed to a place for the purpose of repairs without fear of penalty, if a permit to do so has been obtained in the metropolitan area from the Police Department or in the

country from the local authority. A third party insurance cover would be automatically issued with the permit. Recently there was a case that brought this matter to a head. A man was driving an unlicensed vehicle to be repaired and, of course, not being licensed it was uninsured. I understand the vehicle had been out of commission for some time.

An accident occurred as the result of which the passenger was very severely injured. In that case, fortunately, the passenger was compensated, but it could very well have been that the owner of the vehicle was a man of straw. It is considered that owners of cars in such circumstances should be given the opportunity to insure against such possibilities, and an automatic insurance cover will be taken out when the permit is granted. The intention is to charge half-a-crown for a permit, which will provide automatic insurance. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—CITY OF PERTH SCHEME FOR SUPERANNUATION (AMENDMENTS AUTHORISATION) (No. 1).

Second Reading.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [8.43] in moving the second reading said: It will be within the recollection of members that some years ago Parliament passed an Act to establish a superannuation scheme for the City of Perth, embracing all the employees of the municipality, both with respect to its Electricity and Gas Department and its general municipal departments. They will also remember that last year Parliament passed an Act confirming an agreement whereby the State Electricity Commission took over the electricity and gas undertaking of the City of Perth. In consequence, it became necessary to make a few sectional alterations in the terms and provisions of what is known as the scheme for superannuation established by the City of Perth under the City of Perth Superannuation Fund Act of 1934, as amended by various subsequent measures.

The Act, as it stands, provides that the superannuation board shall consist of a member of the Electricity and Gas Committee of the Council. As there is now no

such committee but merely the State Electricity Commission, the provision in the parent Act is being altered accordingly. Similarly, it was provided that the other member of the superannuation board should be the General Manager of the Electricity and Gas Department. As there is now no such position, it is proposed to substitute the words "the City Treasurer of the City Council for the time being." The Bill also provides for a consequential definition of the word "officer." The only other point with which the Bill deals is an amendment of the provisions of the existing scheme regarding the annual contribution.

At the moment the present Act provides for the payment of an annual sum not exceeding £1,700 from the Electricity and Gas Department and an annual sum not exceeding £1,800 from other departments of the council. The amending Bill provides for the deletion of the sum to be paid from the Electricity and Gas Department, as the necessary sum in connection with those officers and wages employees will now be provided by the State Electricity Commission under the terms of the purchase of the electricity and gas undertaking.

Hon. L. Craig: Is this just transferring the obligations from the Electricity and Gas Department to the State Electricity Commission?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: It is really not doing that. The obligation has been transferred. It is really giving consequential effect to the actual transfer, which was contained in the agreement we passed last year. The scheme for superannuation contained full provision to cover both classes of employees. Last year, by the agreement, the Commission agreed to take over the liability and, having done so, these amendments will bring the existing superannuation scheme into line with the actual facts. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 8.50 p.m.