

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 20th October, 1942.

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

MOTION—LIQUID FUEL.

As to Bulk Deliveries.

HON H. V. PIESSE (South-East)

[2.20]: I move—

That this House considers the Liquid Fuel regulations, which prevent delivery of petrol to consumers of bulk lots of less than 200 gallons, impose unnecessary hardship and an extra expense of threepence per gallon on consumers, and requests the Government immediately to take up with the Federal authorities the matter of allowing consumers to obtain delivery of quantities of not less than 44 gallons at one time and of reducing the bulk delivery of 200 gallons to a minimum of 100 gallons.

I have been requested by quite a number of consumers of petrol, and especially those holding industrial pumps, to bring this matter before Parliament and to ask the Government to assist the holders of those pumps by sending to the Eastern States a recommendation that a better arrangement be made for the delivery of petrol. On the 28th September, 1942, Pool Petroleum Pty., Ltd., circularised industrial pump-holders as follows:—

Pool Circular No. 16:

All Industrial Pump-Holders.—This is to inform you that as from commencement of deliveries against October ration tickets we will be unable to continue supply of motor spirit unless your consumption reaches 200 gallons per month. This is in accordance with a decision by the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel Control Board, which has the approval of the Prices Commissioner. It will therefore be necessary, if your monthly ration allowance does not reach 200 gallons, to make other arrangements for your requirements, as we cannot substitute any other means of supply. Under National Security Regulations Order No. 7, the supply of drums is prohibited except to primary producers, buyers in Classes 20, 21, 22 and 23,

or to the holder of a special permit to purchase in drums issued by the State Liquid Fuel Control Board.

As our minimum delivery in bulk will be 200 gallons, it will be necessary for you to see that your monthly deliveries are so arranged that at no time will you expect smaller delivery, i.e., if your monthly consumption is 500 gallons, you should either take 500 gallons in one delivery or two deliveries, both of which are in excess of 200 gallons. If your consumption is over 200 gallons but less than 400 gallons per month, it will be necessary to take the whole month's requirements in one delivery.

Should your monthly throughput be under but very close to 200 gallons, we suggest that you communicate with us immediately, with a view to seeing if any tolerance can be granted as a temporary measure.

The foregoing arrangements have been made because of the necessity to effect the utmost wartime economies, and as the decision is from the Commonwealth Liquid Fuel Control Board, it is essential that we comply.

Here I desire to mention that I am a director of an aerated water company, which has a fleet of nine trucks. Before the new regulations as to fitting gas-producers were promulgated, that company had fitted four of its trucks with producers, and by reason of that fact the petrol allowance was reduced to 10 gallons as regards those four trucks. The result is that the company's total allowance has been reduced to about 150 or 160 gallons. Anyone conducting an industrial business of this kind will realise that the hours of work being from 7.30 a.m. till 4.30 p.m., if the business has to arrange for the supply of its trucks with petrol from ordinary retailers' pumps—which doubtless this company will be compelled to do according to the circular I have read—it means that, in the case of the company I have mentioned 21 trips will be necessary during a month to fill those trucks with petrol.

It may be contended that Pool Petroleum Proprietary Ltd. put forward the conditions stated in order to save manpower and also to save its bulk-distributing vans from travelling undue distances; but imagine what the conditions will mean to industrial concerns, and how those concerns will be compelled to use trucks and labour, overtime necessarily being incurred in many instances! Moreover, where retail bowlers are being used and 20 or 30 trucks want to obtain petrol at once, delays will be experienced. With such short hours of work as obtain in the business I have alluded to, the result will be that eventually overtime must be paid.

Hon. A. Thomson: There will also be increased costs.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Yes. There is another point. For every gallon of petrol purchased by those industries that use under 200 gallons, an extra 3d. per gallon will have to be paid. That is another impost. On receipt of this circular, the manager of the company I represent contacted the petroleum company and asked whether tickets could not be accumulated as they are by farmers in the country until the amount exceeded the 200 gallons. This, however, was not permitted. It was stated that if we had a certificate from the Liquid Fuel Control Board we could take delivery in drums. The matter was referred to that board, but Mr. Driver, the chief assistant to the director, stated that the board had no power whatever to give any industrial concern authority to take the petrol in drums from the wholesale distributors or from the retailers. That is very important, because it means that wherever a truck allowance of petrol is provided the whole of that allowance must be put into that truck. Naturally men using trucks, even with gas-producers, will use petrol if it is available, in preference to using gas, which is a slower method. Therefore there will be no saving in the consumption of petrol which, in fact, will be increased.

I had a conversation with the chairman of a road board in the South-East Province and he pointed out that similar conditions prevailed as far as the local authority was concerned. He said that the trucks usually left half-an-hour before the usual starting time for work. If the retail bowsters were not open, they had to wait until they were available. From the road board's point of view, the position is serious, because very few boards are drawing a ration of 200 gallons per month. In its letter, Pool Petroleum Proprietary, Ltd., stated—

Should your monthly throughput be under, but very close to 200 gallons we suggest that you communicate with us immediately, with a view to seeing if any tolerance can be granted as a temporary measure.

I made inquiries at the Liquid Fuel Control Board office and the only tolerance the board can grant is a 10 per cent. variation. That is to say, a delivery of 180 gallons would be permitted, but that is the lowest quantity which, under the existing regulations, can be delivered. Many companies that have fitted gas-producers at the request of the Liquid Fuel Control Board have had their

allowance greatly reduced. Where we used to obtain 35 to 40 gallons per month for an average truck, today we are getting 10 gallons, and that is a serious situation because it will be impossible for people with great fleets of trucks to deal with the matter from a wholesale point of view. It is not so much the money that matters. The extra cost is bad enough, but what is serious is the loss of time, and the wastage and extra handling that will be involved. I have a letter from the Master Carriers' Association which reads as follows:—

With reference to your phone conversation of today regarding a ruling by Pool Petroleum that they will deliver not less than two hundred gallons of petrol to a commercial pump at one delivery, we would advise that strong protests are being made by our members against this autocratic decision which entails waste of manpower, petrol and motor vehicle wear by commercial users.

It appears that this decision has been made on the assumption that it will reduce running by Pool Petroleum's tanker vehicles, but little thought appears to have been given to the extra running that will have to be made by all firms operating their own vehicles which will be out of all proportion to that saved by Pool Petroleum.

My Association operates approximately three hundred vehicles in the metropolitan area. The running of these vehicles is curtailed to as low a mileage as possible in order to save petrol, manpower and also the vehicle. Petrol is stored by the majority of our members in their own pumps and the use of it is kept under very careful supervision.

Through the decision of Pool Petroleum, a member who takes say one hundred and seventy gallons per month would have to make seventeen trips to a garage, fill up there and return to his depot. There he would have to syphon the petrol out from his own vehicle into the storage tank. This means seventeen useless runs and the waste of petrol during the process of filling and emptying; it also leaves the possibility of loss by irregularities whilst in transit.

We would also mention that through being an essential service we have fitted gas producers to the majority of our vehicles; capital expenditure and heavier running costs have had to be met on those vehicles and now we are faced with the prospect of paying a further 3d. per gallon to garage proprietors for petrol purchased retail from their pumps.

Our contention is that a delivery of eighty gallons (80) per delivery could economically be made to commercial users.

I do not want to labour the subject, but I ask the Government to take this matter up with the powers that be in the Eastern States. It is no use taking it up with the Liquid Fuel Control Board or with the petroleum company because both are con-

trolled by regulations issued from Melbourne. I think the Government will realise the seriousness of the position facing those industries that have not the right to draw 200 gallons.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): I commend Mr. Piesse for having brought this matter to the attention of the House. This has to do with another of those very foolish regulations promulgated in the Eastern States, goodness knows why! The object is supposed to be to save manpower, but Mr. Piesse has indicated how it will have the opposite effect. I propose to move an amendment later to the effect that this House also considers that the method of distribution of motor oils is not in the best interests of the conservation of manpower. Once upon a time we were able to go to the petrol depot and obtain our petrol and oil supplies. Today we obtain our petrol from one place and then take our trucks down to another store which deals only in oil. To indicate how this method does not conserve manpower: The depot first of all takes oil in bulk or tins—whichever the case may be—from the railway station, and stores it at the depot. Then it is transferred to the stores or the retail distributors. The conditions are iniquitous and I cannot understand why anybody should impose them. The time is ripe for a Select Committee to be appointed by this Parliament to inquire into the anomalies of petrol quotas, and distribution of petrol and allowances to various people. These matters and that mentioned by Mr. Piesse could very well be the subject of an inquiry. I support the motion.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban): I congratulate Mr. Piesse on bringing before the House a matter that is extremely unsatisfactory to those concerned. I think this is just another example of regulations being made to suit a set of conditions in existence in larger cities but which are not at all suitable to a State like Western Australia or a city like Perth. In the larger capital cities there are interests controlling large fleets of vehicles that involved a petrol consumption—I refer to the period prior to the regulations controlling the liquid fuel supply—of many hundreds and sometimes thousands of gallons of petrol. When

their supplies were reduced as a result of the operations of the Liquid Fuel Control Board, those concerns still, in most instances, found themselves with a large quantity of petrol per month in excess of 200 gallons. Thus the regulations affected very few people in the larger centres. In this State, however, where folk control much smaller fleets, naturally almost everyone concerned found his supply reduced to less than 200 gallons.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: And many of them fitted their vehicles with gas-producers.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Yes, I suppose about 50 per cent. of the goods-carrying vehicles here were fitted with gas-producers. It seems to me it would be much more economical if tankers containing 500 gallons of petrol were to circulate among five petrol-pumping installations and commercial users, dumping 100 gallons at each of those five points. If that procedure were adopted it would save 10 trips at each point, which would represent 50 trips. Most of the trips between the operator and the bowsters would involve a journey of half a mile or more. It appears to be unwise and uneconomical to promulgate regulations that, while perhaps suitable for application in larger centres, are entirely unsuitable and present great difficulties in the smaller centres here. I commend Mr. Piesse for his thoughtfulness and consideration in bringing forward his proposition.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2) £1,350,000.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a Supply Bill to be passed through all its stages at the one sitting.

MOTION—COMMONWEALTH AND STATE RELATIONSHIPS.

As to Referendum Proposals—Withdrawn.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 15th October of the debate on the following motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter—

Whereas the Commonwealth established by and in pursuance of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act is, and is expressly declared to be, a Federal Commonwealth:

And whereas the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia by Sections 106 and 107 preserves the Constitution of Western Australia and the legislative powers of the Parliament of Western Australia:

And whereas the said Commonwealth Constitution by Section 128 provides *inter alia* that no alteration, increasing, diminishing, or otherwise altering the limits of the State, or in any manner affecting the provisions of the Constitution in relation thereto, shall become law unless the majority of the electors voting in that State approve the proposed law:

And whereas the proposed law, entitled "The Constitution Alteration (War Aims and Reconstruction) Bill," is calculated to impair and indeed obliterate the Federal nature of the Commonwealth of Australia and is inimical to the highest interests of this State and the people of this State and is calculated to abrogate the Constitution of Western Australia:

Now, therefore, this House resolves:—

- (i) That the people of Western Australia by every legitimate means at their disposal should ensure that the proposed law be not approved by a majority of the electors in this State;
- (ii) That in the event of the proposed law being approved in a majority of all of the States and by a majority of all the electors voting then and in such case, this House will not consider itself in any way bound by such proposed law (or by any laws, regulations, or proclamations, or any other deeds or acts whatsoever, purporting to be made thereunder or in pursuance thereof) if such proposed law be not approved by a majority of the electors voting in the State of Western Australia: And that on its own behalf and on behalf of the people of Western Australia, this House accordingly reserves the fullest liberty of action.

And this House further resolves that the present time is most inopportune to bring forward such a proposal as it must inevitably tend to divide the people when it is of the utmost importance that we shall be united in order to attain the nation's maximum war effort.

Personal Explanation.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [2.39]: I desire to make a short personal explanation. I have been notified that it is intended to move a somewhat similar motion in each House of Parliament. That motion will probably have a better passage than mine is likely to experience. Therefore I ask leave of the House to withdraw my motion. Unless it is withdrawn it will not be competent for a similar motion to be moved in this House.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

BILL—PUBLIC AUTHORITIES (POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th October.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [2.44]: While I fully recognise there are strong arguments in favour of the course proposed by this Bill, I feel satisfied there are equally strong arguments to the contrary. It would be a great mistake to suppose that the activities of public authorities are lessened because of the war. In many instances they are increased and I suppose that in almost all cases the difficulties of finance are greater now than in times of peace. In such circumstances it is important that close touch between ratepayers and their local authorities shall be maintained and that is best assured by periodical elections. Some difficulty is likely to arise from the fact that most of the local authorities have their elections staged at different periods. Some members are elected for three years and retire in rotation. The postponement of these elections is calculated to lead to a certain amount of confusion, although I regard that as a secondary consideration compared with the necessity to maintain close contact between the ratepayers and the local authorities.

There is a very close analogy between the postponement of Parliamentary elections and the postponement of elections in connection with public authorities. Without criticising the postponement of Parliamentary elections, as was decided upon last year, and without offering any opinion as to the wisdom or otherwise of a further postponement of those elections, I have no hesitation in saying that such postponements are calculated to weaken Parliament in the esteem of the public. That feeling is intensified if the public gets the idea from frequent and long adjournments that important business that ought to be transacted, although we are at war, is being unduly delayed.

If this Bill passes the second reading, I am convinced that there is one amendment that should be inserted in it. Provision is made whereby 10 per cent. of the ratepayers can demand by petition that the elections shall go on as usual. I think in addition to that power given to the ratepayers, similar power should also be given to the local authorities themselves. If by

resolution, carried by a majority of the members of a local authority, the opinion is expressed that an election should be held as usual, then it should be held. I do not think a local authority should be put to the bother, nor should anyone else be put to the bother, of getting 10 per cent. of the ratepayers to sign a petition before its wishes could be carried into effect.

Hon. J. Cornell: That would make it all the harder.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: What does the hon. member mean?

Hon. J. Cornell: I mean, if you required that there should be a majority of the local governing bodies.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I do not for a moment suggest that the right of 10 per cent. of the ratepayers to demand an election should be taken away. That would remain. All I propose is a small addition to Clause 3, paragraph (c), which says—

And if before the expiration of 30 days a petition is received by the Minister containing the signatures of at least ten per centum of the electors of any public authority . . .

I would not suggest that the right of 10 per cent. of the ratepayers to demand an election should be taken away. Let them retain that right, but let it be a privilege of the majority of the members of any local authority to say they think there should be an election.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I think Mr. Cornell thought you had suggested a majority of the local authorities.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: No. I referred to the majority of the members of any single local authority, not the majority of the local authorities. If they consider, in the circumstances of their particular locality, that it is desirable to hold an election, it should be held. There should be no necessity for 10 per cent. of the ratepayers to petition in that direction. I would not deprive the ratepayers of the right to petition. I say this without expressing any strong support at all for the Bill. It is a bad thing for any authority, whether Parliament or one of these minor authorities—I am not criticising local authorities in any way because I recognise the splendid work they are doing—to lose touch with the people who hold the power to elect their representatives to serve on those bodies. Undoubtedly the holding of periodical elections provides the best method of maintaining that touch.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): I oppose the Bill. This is another measure that is being brought down on the excuse of war conditions. It is highly undesirable that these elections should be postponed. I do not see the necessity for postponing the elections of local governing bodies on account of the war. It would be a great mistake if it were done. The only justification for the Bill would be that it would operate for only one year and on the understanding that everything would be all right next year. Once we start this sort of thing, how do we know when it will end? The war may last for five years, and this type of legislation may be brought down year after year.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What would be wrong with that if the war did last five years?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Too many things are being done on the ground that they are necessary because of the war.

Hon. J. Cornell: How would you give the disfranchised ratepayers a vote?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: If the war position deteriorated before an election was held, the Act provides machinery whereby the election might be postponed. I do not see the purpose of this Bill, nor do I admit that it would lead to the saving of any money. A little money might be saved in the making up of rolls. In my opinion, some road board secretaries have not enough work to do nowadays, on account of the small amount of outside manpower available and the few works that are going on. Their time would be well spent in putting the rolls in order.

Hon. J. Cornell: The same thing applies to Parliament.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: And there are no new roads to inspect, so that the secretaries are not as fully employed today as formerly. People desire that these elections be held. Already we have had by-elections which have been well patronised—if I may use that expression—as the people have gone to the polls. I do not think elections for local authorities would take up much of the ratepayers' time, nor lead to the use of much petrol in their attending the poll. Under the Act, a person may vote a week or a fortnight before an election if he thinks he will not be in the town on election day. For these reasons, I intend to oppose the Bill.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East): I support the Bill. I am a member of the Kalgoorlie local authority, which is the largest of its kind outside the metropolitan area. For Kalgoorlie to run an election costs a lot of money. Even to prepare the roll in Kalgoorlie would cost pounds and pounds, while the printing of the rolls themselves would cost, I think, £25.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You are adopting expensive methods.

Hon. W. R. HALL: When we do a job, we do it properly. At a poll in Kalgoorlie, we had 1,300 ratepayers in attendance, compared with only 40 or 50 in the case of some road boards just outside the metropolitan area. I believe in giving the ratepayers the right to exercise the franchise. Under present conditions and in view of the war position generally, I do not think the ratepayers today desire that these elections should be held. A large number of ratepayers are now members of the Fighting Forces, and much trouble would be experienced in ascertaining the qualifications of those people who now occupy the houses belonging to men who are in uniform. It is advisable that 10 per cent. of the ratepayers should be required to cause an election to be held. That provision would give people an opportunity to force an election. In Kalgoorlie we have no wards, the whole area being one big local authority. Some inconvenience might be caused if the 10 per cent. referred to were spread over the various wards that make up other local authorities. In the case of Kalgoorlie, the wards were done away with years ago.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What about Ora Banda?

Hon. W. R. HALL: There are no wards there, either. Considerable apathy exists amongst ratepayers concerning road board elections. It is difficult enough to induce people to go to the poll in ordinary circumstances, let alone in time of war.

Hon. H. Tuckey: That applies all over the State.

Hon. W. R. HALL: We know what has happened in connection with elections for the Legislative Council as well as for the Legislative Assembly. In the case of a local authority, which is controlling a large area and where the number of ratepayers is also large, a considerable amount of money would be involved in the holding of an election. Mr. Wood suggested that road board secre-

taries have not sufficient work to do. In the case of the Kalgoorlie local authority the officers have too much to do. The Commonwealth Government has put a lot of extra work on their shoulders. Throughout the State road boards have had similar experiences. In Kalgoorlie, it has been found necessary to instal additional staff.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That might apply to some districts but would not be general.

Hon. W. R. HALL: When Mr. Tuckey and I attended a recent road board conference, we found that the general consensus of opinion was that road board secretaries were getting more than their fair share of office work. I know that a lot of work has been set aside because men have been taken away and put into the Army. The Manpower Regulations have also affected road board work to a considerable extent. I have an open mind on this question, but I am going to vote for the Bill. In Committee some of the clauses may have to be amended. I do not see why the elections in connection with local authorities should be postponed for any length of time. Today members of road boards have already been called up for service with the Armed Forces, and that state of affairs is more likely to necessitate the holding of an election than would otherwise be the case. Three members of the road board with which I am associated have been called up.

Hon. A. Thomson: Who has taken their places?

Hon. W. R. HALL: They have applied for three months' leave of absence and that has been granted. I understand it is possible for any member of a board to maintain his membership subject to an application to the Minister, so long as a sufficient number of members is left. In the case of the Kalgoorlie local authority, the board consists of nine members, and it would be possible for it to carry on, I understand, with five. The members I speak of, when they get their leave, attend road board meetings, and the work is thus kept going. I support the Bill.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West): This is purely a war-time measure and I hope it will pass the second reading. It would have been preferable if the Government had decided to postpone the elections from time to time according to the circumstances brought about by war conditions. The safety of Australia is today hanging in the balance. It is no time for the holding

of elections. The Bill provides that an election shall be conducted if 10 per cent. of the ratepayers petition for it to be held. That is the safeguard, and leaves it open for an election to be held in any district where it is so desired. For some time past very little interest has been displayed in road board elections.

In my district two vacancies were advertised only two weeks ago. Although on one of the rolls there were 1,000 names, not a single nomination was received. The board, therefore, had to re-advertise the vacancies and ratepayers had to be persuaded to nominate so that the positions might be filled. That is brought about largely because people in country districts are overworked. They are not seeking seats on road boards or on any other kind of authority. They have already more work than they have time to carry out. In ordinary times, it is not easy to get ratepayers to nominate for seats. In the district to which I have referred there are seven wards, and I think that in only two out of those seven has there been a contest for many years past. As I have explained, we had to call for nominations twice and then ask people to nominate in order to fill the vacancies. I was surprised to hear Mr. Wood say that road board secretaries had not sufficient work to do.

Hon. G. B. Wood: I said some of them had not.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I have yet to learn where such secretaries are. In my district our road board secretary found it necessary to ask for sick leave. He was granted one month and it fell to my lot to endeavour to find a substitute. I went to the Public Works Department on two or three occasions and made other attempts to fill the vacancy, but failed to secure a substitute for even one day. The board concerned had to bring in the health inspector and allow the secretary's work to accumulate, and the secretary had to bring it up to date when he returned. When making inquiries at the Public Works Department I was told that the department was experiencing the same trouble throughout the State; it could not secure the services of a man to do relief work for even a couple of days. That goes to show that few people are available to do the work of road board secretaries, who have at present much extra work thrown upon them. For instance, they must attend to the work of the War

Damage Commission, recruiting work, A.R.P. work and many other branches of war activities.

I commend the Government for bringing down the measure, but I think it would have been better had the Government provided that the elections this year should be definitely postponed for 12 months. It is easy for some cranks to get a petition signed. I remember on one occasion a person got 20 ratepayers to sign a petition demanding a loan poll, which defeated a proposal for a loan of £4,000, an amount the district sadly needed. The people in favour of the loan did not take the poll seriously and so allowed the proposal to be defeated by one or two votes. Had an election been held the following day, hundreds of the people would have voted in favour of the loan. As I say, it is easy to get petitions signed if a person is engaged to get the signatures. The Bill makes ample provision for an election to be held should it be necessary, and I do not think any need exists to provide further safeguards. I hope the House will pass the Bill as it stands.

HON. F. E. GIBSON (Metropolitan-Suburban): As one who has had a fairly long experience of local government, I feel myself in a rather difficult position in approaching this Bill. I would hesitate at any time to take away from electors the right to say who shall represent them. My experience over the past few years has also led me to believe that when things are going along satisfactorily the electors are not prepared to interfere. Opposition to this measure has been brought about by some criticism of a local authority in the metropolitan area during recent months. A very large meeting was held in that district and there was a by-election for one of the wards, on which occasion 25 per cent. of the electors exercised their votes. This matter was discussed some months ago in my district, when the Government asked for the views of local authorities upon the measure which it was proposing to introduce. Our council on that occasion unanimously decided to advise the Government that it was in favour of the postponement of the elections.

Since then I have received communications from two local authorities in the Metropolitan-Suburban Province—the Mosman Park Road Board and the Nedlands Road Board—asking me to vote against this

measure; but I know the majority of those associated with local government bodies' organisations are decidedly in favour of the Bill. The proviso with respect to the 10 per cent. of electors is one that does not appeal very much to me. My experience has been that it is a simple matter to get 10 per cent. of the electors to sign a petition if it is submitted to them. The majority of people will placidly sign anything that is put before them and will not consider the implications of what they are signing. I much prefer the suggested amendment which Sir Hal Colebatch has expressed his intention of moving, that is, that should a majority of the members of a local authority desire an election to be held, then the election shall be held.

Hon. J. Cornell: Sir Hal Colebatch wants both.

Hon. F. E. GIBSON: No. He prefers his suggested amendment. I am not concerned about the first so much as the second, as I believe the second would safeguard the interests of the electors. In my own municipality, with which I am better acquainted than with any other, we had difficulty in securing suitable candidates for the city ward when a vacancy recently occurred owing to the death of a very old councillor. Three candidates nominated and less than 10 per cent. of the ratepayers voted. That apathy showed that the majority of the ratepayers were perfectly satisfied so long as things were going along well. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan): My local government experience has taught me, as it has taught Mr. Gibson, that generally ratepayers are apathetic regarding road board and municipal matters. Had there not been the proviso in the Bill enabling local government bodies to demand an election, I certainly would have opposed the measure. If the Chief Secretary will, when replying, assure the House that Sir Hal Colebatch's amendment will be acceptable to the Government, then I will definitely support the Bill. I agree with Sir Hal Colebatch and Mr. Gibson that it would be much better to give the local government body authority to decide the point by a bare majority than go to the expense of getting 10 per cent. of the ratepayers to demand a poll. As has been pointed out, it would be fortunate if 10 per cent. of the ratepayers could be found to demand an election. One

member referred to the difficulty experienced in getting people to nominate for vacancies. A large road district in the Midland area—I refer to Moora—has been without a representative for the town or central ward for some considerable time, because it has not been possible to find some person to nominate for the seat. Surely, if ratepayers are satisfied with the conditions, we can allow them to remain as they are, rather than put local governing bodies to unnecessary expense. I support the second reading in the hope that the suggested amendment will be accepted.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East): While there may be some justification for the arguments adduced by members in support of the measure, I have received a number of requests from local authorities in my district that the elections should not be postponed. I replied that I was not in favour of the proposed postponement. It has been said that ratepayers exhibit considerable apathy regarding road board and municipal elections, but that is the fault of the ratepayers. They have the opportunity to avail themselves of the facilities offered to them to be properly represented on road boards and municipalities. Mr. Gibson pointed out that on one occasion only 25 per cent. of the electors voted, and on another occasion only 10 per cent. That is not the fault of the system; it is the fault of the ratepayers, who were either satisfied or too apathetic to look after their own affairs. It may be that in some of the larger districts, such as the one Mr. Gibson represents, there are not enough public-spirited men to offer their services to the ratepayers. One-third of the members of a board must retire each year.

In effect, members of road boards are chosen on lines similar to those on which members of this Chamber are elected. One-third of the members of this House must retire every two years to face their masters. Consequently, there is continuity of service so far as the Legislative Council is concerned. A similar provision was inserted in the Road Districts Act and the Municipal Corporations Act, the object being that there should not be a clean sweep of the members with a new set of individuals taking over the reins of government. If a member dies or leaves the district, it is necessary to hold a by-election. In some districts such elections are

keenly contested. Recently, in the town in which I have the honour to live, one member of the road board who had acted for many years resigned, and no fewer than three candidates submitted themselves to election for the central ward. The case mentioned by Mr. W. R. Hall as having occurred in Kalgoorlie is rather exceptional. I think the figures he quoted showed that the first candidate received 150 votes, the second 95 and the third 41. It cannot be said that such figures disclosed apathy on the part of the ratepayers.

Hon. J. Cornell: Two hundred and eighty votes out of how many?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have not got the figures, but that election shows that the ratepayers were interested. Probably members of this Chamber may not get more than 180 votes.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Voting for this Chamber is not compulsory.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is no argument. If a member received 280 votes and he had a majority of one, he would be entitled to sit in this Chamber for six years.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: That is an argument in favour of compulsory voting.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have always been in favour of compulsory voting. I must confess that the amendment suggested by Sir Hal Colebatch appeals to me. If this Bill is to be regarded as a war emergency measure under which elections will be postponed, it may be necessary to go to the trouble of getting 10 per cent. of the ratepayers in a district to sign a petition in favour of holding an election, and that may be a difficult job in a scattered district like Kalgoorlie.

Hon. J. Cornell: It would be easy in that district.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That may or may not be.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Very easy.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I certainly favour the provision that a majority of the members of a local government body should decide the point. I would prefer the provision for the 10 per cent. to be struck out altogether. The argument has been adduced that it will prove too expensive for a road board to prepare a roll. If that is so, how will it be possible to get 10 per cent. of the ratepayers to sign a petition if one has not the roll to work on? Therefore the thing is absurd from that

point of view. Mention has been made about the expense and trouble necessary to prepare a roll of ratepayers. I presume that if the secretary is doing his duty he must have a list of the ratepayers in order to send out notices.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The roll is kept up to date.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That argument, to my mind, is fallacious. As far as I can see, the cost would amount to the expenditure on printing. If there is such a lack of interest on the part of ratepayers, why the necessity to postpone the elections? If they are satisfied with the sitting members, those men could nominate again and be re-elected unopposed. But if the road board has to carry on with five or six members, without proper representation, quite possibly local administration would be open to a considerable amount of mistrust. It might so happen that certain portions of a district would be absolutely unrepresented and without voice in the road board or municipal proceedings.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That would be the fault of the people themselves.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It is all the people's fault. When only 25 per cent. of electors vote we have reached the stage when we should have compulsory voting in connection with road board elections. I take my hat off to the excellent work done by road board members in the province I represent, and to members of local authorities all over the State. They render excellent service in an honorary capacity. They travel hundreds of miles and save the ratepayers' money, frequently to their own detriment.

Hon. H. Tuckey: A by-election must be held as usual.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If a by-election must be held, and if each road board is composed of about nine members—

Hon. W. R. Hall: There are usually seven to nine members.

Hon. A. THOMSON —I assume it would not be any more costly to have an ordinary election. If a road board consists of eight members, half of whom retire, or of nine members, three of whom retire each year, I cannot see how it will cost the road board authorities one penny piece more to hold an ordinary election instead of a by-election.

Hon. G. B. Wood: One returning officer does the lot.

Hon. W. J. Mann: The preliminary costs are incurred in preparing the roll.

Hon. A. THOMSON: There must be a roll in any case.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Reference is made to the "last existing roll."

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am opposing the second reading of the Bill. I certainly hope that the 10 per cent. provision will be deleted, because if the object is to save money by not having the rolls prepared, it will be difficult to get the requisite percentage of ratepayers. I would prefer to leave it in the hands of the board because if we must have it as a war emergency, and personally I think this war emergency business is almost ridden to death—

Hon. J. Cornell: It will be a reality very soon.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I will not contradict the hon. member. It does seem to me, however, that when we find a large section of the community in New South Wales appealing to the Prime Minister to permit more beer and more races, that shows there is certainly apathy in regard to the well-being of the State, and if anyone is desirous of attending a picture show in the metropolitan area tonight, he will need to be there pretty early to get a decent seat. This war emergency, as Mr. Cornell suggests, may be more serious than we are told. I do not like the position myself, but if things go on normally we should have an election. If, unfortunately, the emergencies of war arise, then the Government can use the National Security Regulations as it does today. The Government has said that, in view of the fact that the enemy is on our soil, it will oppose the holding of these elections. I cannot support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. G. W. MILES (North): It is the duty of Parliament to allow the electors to decide who is to represent them, and it will be a departure from the democratic policy for which we are fighting, if we deprive the electors of the privilege to say who is to govern in the years to come. That is one of the main reasons why I do not like this Bill. If it is necessary now that an election be postponed, I still do not like such an enactment being on the statute-book for the duration of the war.

Hon. J. Cornell: There is an amendment on the notice paper dealing with that.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I am in order in expressing my views on the measure. The Bill says that "time of war" means "the duration of the war and six months after." It is ridiculous to give any body, Parliamentary or otherwise, the authority to continue in office without going to the electors. As for the ten per cent. provision in the Bill, I think the ratepayers want some rights. I would be in favour of reducing it to five per cent.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The Communists would have an election every month.

Hon. G. W. MILES: We would not get five per cent. of Communists in this country. Possibly the hon. member would around Boulder, or in that area.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What about the last strike at Marble Bar in connection with beer? Who caused it?

Hon. G. W. MILES: I do not think that has anything to do with the question before the Chair. If the Bill is carried, I will certainly support the amendment suggested by Sir Hal Colebatch. The Bill as it is at present, is not right at all. It is like Parliament saying that it is going to remain in power. The war may go on for ten years and Parliament will postpone the elections! But even the Government had the decency to limit the postponement of its elections for 12 months.

Hon. A. Thomson: As does this Bill.

Hon. G. W. Miles: No. I am talking on the Bill as it is and not on the basis of amendments on the notice paper. Members should understand that, and particularly the Chairman of Committees. I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central): I would like to give my reasons for opposing the Bill. I emphasise the points made by Mr. Thomson. It is not difficult to visualise some local authority that may give entire satisfaction to the district it is serving. In such circumstances the members will be returned en bloc, and little, if any, expense is incurred. Such a set of circumstances does away with the expense aspect. I am not enamoured of Sir Hal Colebatch's proposed amendment because I can easily imagine a local government authority composed of seven or nine men, being a happy and contented little family, and deciding

amongst themselves that they are the picked and chosen representatives of the district, running the local government business with 100 per cent. satisfaction to themselves. They are not going to bother about going before the ratepayers!

The question of apathy has been referred to. I am conscious of this fact—although it is not apparent in my own case—that we do not need to go to the Kalgoorlie road district, or to the York district, to find apathy. Right here in the Metropolitan-Suburban Province apathy is displayed in connection with elections for this Chamber. Members should look at the returns. Any one interested will find that he does not need to go from the Metropolitan-Suburban Province to find apathy. Do not let us throw that up at the road board people. I am against the Bill and the proposed amendments. There has been too much of this war business altogether. It is the duty of those who are stopping here to see that affairs are carried on in a right and proper way. People should have the say in these matters while they can. When the time comes that they cannot have that say, there is an authority over East only too ready and willing to introduce National Security Regulations and say that the time has arrived when the people cannot have a voice in these matters.

On motion by the Honorary Minister. debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2) £1,350,000.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [3.29] in moving the second reading said: This is the second Supply Bill introduced this session and its purpose is to grant supply pending the passing of the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill. Supply was provided in the No. 1 Supply Act as follows:—

	£
Consolidated Revenue Fund ..	1,850,000
General Loan Fund	200,000
Advance to Treasurer	300,000
Total	£2,350,000

The expenditure for the first three months of the financial year provided by that authority was as follows:—

Consolidated Revenue Fund ..	£1,922,120
General Loan Fund	£121,926

The additional Supply asked for by this Bill is £1,350,000 from Consolidated Revenue Fund, and it is anticipated that this will be sufficient to finance our requirements until the Appropriation Bill is passed. No further Supply is required from the General Loan Fund, as the balance already authorised will be sufficient. The expenditure for the first three months of the financial years has been—

	£
Special Acts	1,159,264
Governmental	886,153
Public Utilities	1,035,967
Total	£3,081,384

Interest and sinking fund included in expenditure under Special Acts amounted to £1,034,628. Payment to the Hospital Fund of £68,938, being the proportion due for three months out of Commonwealth income tax reimbursement, is included in expenditure under the heading "Governmental." Revenue collected during the first three months of the financial year was as follows:—

	£
Taxation	673,428
Territorial	84,015
Law Courts	21,039
Departmental	195,336
Mint	15,793
Commonwealth	273,859
Public Utilities	1,521,375
Trading Concerns	25,598
Total	£2,812,443

Included in the item "Taxation" is £490,000 Commonwealth income tax reimbursement from the 1st July to the 20th September, 1942. To the same date the arrears of taxation amounted to £198,039 made up as follows:—

	£
State income tax	170,121
Goldmining profits tax	2,291
Financial emergency tax	4,787
Hospital fund contributions	20,840
Total	£198,039

The cash payment received from the Commonwealth amounted to £291,961, leaving a total income tax reimbursement of £490,000. An additional amount equal to the

arrears collected will be payable to the State immediately prior to the expiration of the Commonwealth States Grants (Income Tax Reimbursement) Act, 1942. The amount will bear interest at not less than 3 per cent. per annum from the beginning of the financial year next following the financial year in which the arrears are collected. The deficit for the three months ended the 30th September, 1942, amounted to £268,941, an increase of £55,622 as compared with the first three months of last financial year. That is a brief explanation of the Bill, which the Government is anxious should be passed as speedily as possible. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Administration Act Amendment.

2, Collie Recreation and Park Lands Act Amendment.

3, Jury (Emergency Provisions).

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—ALBANY RESERVE ALLOTMENTS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th October.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [3.42]: This Bill relates to Reserve 2676 which was created and set aside for recreation purposes in 1894. The boundaries were amended in 1901. In October, 1919, the Albany Municipal Council applied for permission to grant leases of portions of the reserve to private individuals for the purpose of erecting a number of sectional huts to cater for summer visitors. Subsequently, I believe, the council thought it would be wise to go further and permit lessees to build houses on this camping area.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That should not have been allowed.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: At about that time there was a great demand for land near Albany and large sums were being asked for blocks, apart from reserves, that were avail-

able. It was necessary to pay fairly high prices to acquire such properties and only wealthy people could afford to do so and build residences. Quite a number of people did so.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Including members of Parliament.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Then this reserve was encroached upon and the Government agreed that, for camping purposes, the Albany council should be permitted to lease the land. The blocks, however, were only to be leased. Various people took up leases for 21 years and erected rather substantial buildings. These buildings have been let from time to time to people who wished to spend a holiday at Middleton Beach.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: And they would use the buildings themselves, of course.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes, during periods when they could not secure tenants. Presumably at that time they were highly pleased to have the opportunity to secure the blocks for 21 years at low rentals, thus being enabled to side-track people who were asking high prices for their land. I know of various persons who made inquiries for blocks during the period in question, when there was a great demand for property in Albany. So that the difficulty might be met, the purpose of the reserve was changed from "recreation" to "recreation and camping." We are now told that power was vested in the Albany council to grant leases up to 21 years for that enlarged purpose. Permanent houses were built on some of the leaseholds—constructed to the approval of the Albany council, to which plans had to be submitted.

From what I have heard and seen, I gather that the buildings erected were mere wooden structures which could easily be removed if so desired; in fact, it is probable that the structures were built of wood with that end in view. No steps were taken by the Albany council to limit the occupation of these areas to camping purposes, which was the original idea. That was the object of the far-sighted people who created the reserve originally. I claim that the rights of the community have been encroached upon by the erection of houses for letting purposes, whereas the intention was that poorer people visiting Middleton Beach for a holiday should be enabled to acquire camping sites at minimum expense. The area of

the reserve is small, and most of the land around it has been acquired. Thus Middleton Beach is one of the few localities Albany has available for camping purposes.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: The beach is still available.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Who wants to camp on the beach?

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Hundreds of people.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Campers always try to get where there is shelter by reason of banksia or vegetable growth. One does not want to camp on the edge of the water, where one is exposed to wind and weather. The Bill asks us to grant the fee simple to individuals who were behind the scenes and had an opportunity to get in early. This land is to be resumed by the Crown, which undertakes that those who got in through backstairs influence at peppercorn rents may be able to secure what they obtained behind the scenes. The blocks should be put up to public auction, whereas now it is desired to dispose of them by private arrangement. We know what takes place as regards the valuation of many articles coming under the jurisdiction of the authority for fixing prices. I am told that at various auction sales assessors go round to inspect the goods, and that when an assessor has valued something at £35 whereas about £150 is offered for it, the auctioneer says the bidders must toss up among themselves. The same sort of thing may occur in connection with sales of these blocks. Sale by auction is the correct method for the Government to use in disposing of them. The foresight of the early settlers dedicated this land to certain purposes. That arrangement was departed from so late as 1919.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: Lessees were told that they could get renewals.

Hon. C. B. Williams: But not that they could get the freehold.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I do not like the nature of the proposal at all. We are here to safeguard the interests of those coming after us, and we must take great care that no imposition occurs. People visiting Albany for its wonderful summer climate should be enabled to camp at low cost. That consideration is now to be cast aside, and freeholds are to be granted to people who got in early. Other areas available for camping purposes are so small that it would be a shame for us to pass the Bill, the second reading of which I oppose.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East): I support the second reading of the Bill, knowing the circumstances in connection with the disposal of this land particularly well. Undoubtedly many years ago the Albany Municipal Council, in its wisdom, decided to lease this reserve in small blocks for the purpose of the erection of camps or wooden houses or any kind of building that the lessee desired. To me it was amusing to hear Mr. Hamersley talk about this reserve as the only portion of land available in Albany for camping purposes to the poor struggling cockies whom I represent. Right down from this reserve to the sea, over a distance of 400 yards, acres and acres of land remain available for camping, with water laid on by the Albany Municipal Council. The Katanning Road Board has its reserve area there, available for persons who desire to camp. The land referred to in the Bill is a section running parallel with the road to the main golf links, a bitumen road. There is a string of blocks facing that road, and a matter of four chains further on are these blocks. They certainly offer excellent camping ground.

Only 15 months ago there came to me a widow whose husband had built a house on a block there, the value of the house being £400 or £500. Her lawyer had told her that there was no chance of obtaining the freehold of the land; so she purchased another block of land in a higher position and pulled the building down and had it re-erected on that block. She had every authority to remove the building from the original block. Many people were about to adopt the same procedure, and therefore we members for the South-East Province, together with the member for Albany, were asked to use our best endeavours to see that this land was made available to those people. The Albany council still has the right to continue leasing until doomsday on the basis of the 21-years term, but with power to increase rentals. There are hundreds of acres of land available between the blocks abutting on the golf links and Emu Point, and that area is vested in the Albany municipality.

At one time we wanted to have a reserve thrown open for the Country Women's Association, which desired to build cottages for the benefit of children from all over the district. The then Minister for Lands, Hon. M. F. Troy, pointed out that with the con-

sent of the Albany municipality a block could be taken out of this reserve and buildings erected upon it. That was done; one home was erected on the site. The Labour Women's Association has also had a block granted to it, to which the authorities intended to apply the same procedure. There is no shortage of land in the neighbourhood, and many years will elapse before it will be required for camping purposes.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Are the additional areas Crown lands?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Yes, Crown lands vested in the Albany municipality. It is a perfectly good residential spot, and I do not understand why so much argument should occur over 10 or 20 acres of ground.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You will not touch on the principle of getting in under the lap.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: This is not doing that.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It was done 21 years ago, and now you want us to make it legal.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: It is more than 21 years since this land was originally leased. I do not know exactly on what date.

Hon. L. Craig: It was in 1919.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I know several of the people who have built residences there and the well-being of Middleton Beach requires that they should be given the freehold. Although Mr. Williams says this is the thin edge of the wedge—

Hon. C. B. Williams: Of course it is!

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: This is a small portion of land to argue about. We want to see every block built on and used to the fullest possible extent. Mr. Williams suggested that people want the land for the purpose of making a profit out of it. I can assure members that the majority of the people who have these houses are only too pleased to let friends live in them rent free. I know eight or nine who frequently let their neighbours live in their houses without any charge. I support the Bill and congratulate the Government upon having introduced it.

HON. C. B. WILLIAMS (South): I oppose the Bill. I do not congratulate the Government, and particularly a Labour Government, on introducing a Bill to give away to a few individuals the rights of the people. It appears to me to be very wrong

for any part of the foreshore to be granted to individuals.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: It is not on the foreshore.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: It is 400 yards from the beach. The hon. member admitted as much. I am neither deaf nor stupid. Where is it if it is not on the beach? I have been in Albany and I know the place referred to. About 21 or 23 years ago the Albany council let people in under the lap. They allowed them to build there, and now we are asked to legalise that and give those people the freehold. Where is it going to stop? Mr. Piesse referred to the fact that there are many acres of similar land that can be obtained under like conditions of tenure. Then, I suppose, in 21 years time another Bill will be brought down with the same object as this one, namely, to ratify the position and give people this freehold, which it was never intended they should have. It is the same as occurred regarding King's Park. Land was given temporarily and then for all time to selected people. It is useless one's becoming heated over the Bill. I intend to vote against it. If Parliament will ratify this measure, it will ratify anything!

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East): I do not think Mr. Williams is aware of the conditions relating to this area, otherwise he would not offer any opposition to the measure, but would agree that it is not just to penalise men and women who leased blocks of land from the council under the impression that that body had power to lease them for all time. It would not be fair to penalise people who have built houses on these blocks because the Albany council made a mistake 21 year ago. These people are entitled to some consideration, and I commend the Government for having taken steps to meet the position. They are not asking for the land to be given to them for nothing but are willing to pay for it on a just valuation. I commend the Minister for Lands for having met the wishes of those who have been urging for a long time that they should have the freehold of their properties.

Many of the people are from Gnowangerup, Katanning and Narrogin. They built houses in good faith and go there for the Christmas holidays. In course of time

they have made additions to their properties until they now have houses of some value. Surely Mr. Williams is not going to suggest that when the leases expire the houses should be confiscated! One lady was fortunate enough to be in a position to pay for the removal of her house to another block, but surely Mr. Williams is not going to ask working people—and quite a number of genuine working people have put money into these properties and improved the area—to undertake such a task.

The argument has been raised that this Bill will take away a portion of the camping reserve. Through the good services of the then Minister for Lands, Hon. W. D. Johnson, I was able to have portion of this area reserved for a fresh air league. Through circumstances over which I had no control the league died, or rather the increase in motor cars put an end to our ideas of sending children in large numbers down to this district for a holiday. Nevertheless the Country Women's Association has a portion of this particular area, and each year 30 or 40 children from the agricultural districts spend a fortnight or three weeks at the home conducted by the organisation.

This land is not right on the beach. The Albany council has a considerable area in front of it which was used for camping purposes to a considerable extent when motor cars were more numerous than they are at present. People who go there are allotted a portion of ground for which they are charged so much per week, sanitary conveniences and water being supplied. The land to which the Bill refers was leased to individuals by the council for a period of 21 years. They took up the land on the understanding that they had the right of renewing their leases.

Hon. L. Craig: They still have the right.

Hon. A. THOMSON: To their amazement they found that it had been ruled by some authority that the council had no right to grant these leases. I am quite sure the fairness of members of this House will not penalise those people who have built houses in all good faith. They should not be punished for the mistakes of a previous municipal council. The present council, which has been petitioned by the owners of the land, is in favour of the measure.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan): In matters of this kind one is naturally inclined to be influenced by the

opinions of members representing the particular district concerned. In this case it seems that the representatives of the locality in both Houses are warmly in favour of the measure. There is another reason that would induce me perhaps to welcome the Bill. Members who have sat in this House for any lengthy period will remember how members of the Labour Party opposed the principle of freehold in land, how strongly they insisted that the unearned increment must always remain the property of the State, how persistently they argued that the holders of leaseholds would be just as satisfied and would be much better off and even more prepared to make substantial improvements to their holdings than would be the case if they were held under the freehold principle.

I welcome this change of front on the part of the Labour Party. I welcome this acknowledgment that people cannot be encouraged to do the best with their property unless they are given some more lasting tenure of it than a leasehold. In spite of those two reasons, I do not feel any disposition to vote for the Bill. The reasons advanced for it were utterly inadequate. We have heard talk about the rights of the people who built these properties. What are their rights? They took leases for a period of 21 years, knowing exactly what they were doing.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Hear, hear!

Hon. SIR HAL COLEBATCH: We are told that they were induced to erect substantial premises. Who induced them? Were they induced by the old idea that leasehold is better than freehold? If so, why not let them stop? On the other hand, I consider that there is the strongest possible objection to the alienation of any land that is properly suited to the use of the public. So far, no argument has been advanced in this debate which would induce me to believe—

Hon. A. Thomson: Have you ever been on these blocks?

Hon. SIR HAL COLEBATCH —that these tenants have been penalised in any way, that anything has been taken from them that they had any right to believe was theirs. That being the case, since I cannot see that they have suffered any injustice, or that they have had any less consideration than they were entitled to, I cannot find any justification for altering the general principle

that land set apart for public use should be retained for the public. If for any other reason it is no longer desirable that these lands should be retained for public purposes, let that case be submitted and I might possibly be inclined to vote for the Bill, but to be asked to vote in favour of the measure on the plea that people who acquired leases of 21 years are now entitled to the freehold is an argument that does not appeal to me one bit.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): I would not have taken any part in this debate if I had not known the locality concerned very well for many years. Last January I walked over it and visited the camping ground, and between these blocks and the sea there is a distance of no less than 400 yards. There is ample camping ground between the blocks and the actual foreshore. Reserves and swings have been established for children and various other facilities for camping are provided. I cannot see that the alienation of this land from the reserve can in any way affect people who want to camp on the beach.

Hon. A. Thomson: Not in the slightest.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Fifteen acres would cover the whole area on which these houses are built. I have inspected a lot of them between there and Emu Point. Not only on the foreshore, but in the timber country there are hundreds of acres still reserved and belonging to the Crown. I have no concern with the people who erected houses on this property. I do not know any of them, but I believe they are entitled to some consideration. If this were the only land available I might be inclined to agree with Sir Hal Colebatch, but there is ample space for an army to camp if necessary. For that reason I intend to support the Bill and I commend the Government for introducing it.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West): Prior to this afternoon I was inclined to support the Bill because I understood it applied only to one or two instances for which there was ample justification. I am still a bit hazy about the position because a litho has been submitted to us showing 11 blocks. There were 12, but I understand that the Country Women's Association has been granted one, reducing the number to 11. Mr. Thomson now informs me that a further block has been made available to another

organisation thus reducing the number to 10. I know a little about camping areas, for I live alongside one of the best in the State.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That cannot compare with the situation at Esperance!

Hon. W. J. MANN: We have been very jealous regarding the camping areas in the Busselton district, but there we have not had any difficulties such as are indicated by the Bill as existing at Albany. The preamble to the Bill does not seem to fit in with the position disclosed. It is indicated that there are 10 blocks concerned, whereas the preamble refers to "many of such leases are still subsisting." Are there other areas covered by the measure? Why the reference to "many such leases are still subsisting"—that the Bill proposes to cover? Are there other leases held by the Albany council?

Hon. G. B. Wood: There are camping areas there.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Emphasis has been laid on the fact that camping areas have been created there now. Half the blocks shown on the litho are near the sea and only a very narrow strip separates them from the ocean.

Hon. G. B. Wood: That is correct. That is what you would expect at a camping area there.

Hon. W. J. MANN: If that is the only camping area the Albany people have, they are badly off.

Hon. G. B. Wood: There are plenty of other camping sites.

Hon. A. Thomson: Of course there are plenty elsewhere.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am not very clear about the position. It appears to me, as someone else suggested, that some wise people got in early.

Hon. C. B. Williams: And got the picked positions.

Hon. W. J. MANN: They put in their stumps, knowing full well that they would have to pull them up later on.

Hon. G. B. Wood: These camping sites extend around to Emu Point.

Hon. W. J. MANN: There is nothing to be said in favour of camping areas close to the centre of a town.

Hon. F. E. Gibson: People will have to pay on a basis of a fair value for holdings purchased.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The ideal site for a camping area is from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to five miles out of a town.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Then your argument falls to the ground in this matter.

Hon. W. J. MANN: According to the litho, the camping site is almost in the centre of Albany.

Hon. G. B. Wood: No, the litho refers to Middleton Beach.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am going on the litho and it appears to indicate that the reserve is well within the municipality. It seems to me that wise people got in very early in anticipation of going to the Government to have the position made right after a certain time.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You say it is giving away the rights of the people.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I do not go that far. I appreciate that the blocks referred to are not such as are covered by the term "camping area." As I know camping areas, the space required for each camp would be not more than a chain wide by a chain long. That is quite ample for a camp. The blocks indicated on the litho are much larger.

Hon. F. E. Gibson: On some of the blocks there are permanent homes.

Hon. G. B. Wood: There is a water supply on most of the blocks.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That would seem to make the whole position premeditated. If water has been laid on and other facilities provided—

Hon. G. W. Miles: Are they not quarter-acre blocks?

Hon. W. J. MANN: Some are larger than that. I oppose the Bill.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central): Mr. Mann informed the House that he was not very clear regarding this matter and he did not leave members in doubt on that score. It was quite evident! During the little military training I had, I went through a course in map-reading, and I would advocate that any member who endeavours to make something out of a map should also take a course in map-reading. Mr. Mann, after he got the litho, was evidently more confused in his mind than before. I submit to Mr. Mann and others that we believe in local government. We like to be governed by the people—this comes home to us particularly with reference to something that is looming before the State—who have knowledge of con-

ditions seeing that they are close to those they govern. We are going to the people themselves on that issue in the course of a few months. Let that not be forgotten!

Hon. C. B. Williams: You are assuming that.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: And let the little chap from Boulder keep quiet! Those most familiar with the subject that the Bill deals with are those elected to the municipal council at Albany. They are 100 per cent. in favour of the Bill. The member for Albany in another place is in favour of it. As Sir Hal Colebatch reminded us, the members in this House who represent the Province affected are also in favour of it. Why worry about it? All concerned in the immediate vicinity of the area are in favour of it, so why should the Bill not be passed? I am not personally acquainted with any member of the Albany Municipal Council, but can anyone in this Chamber contemplate the council being unanimous on such a question if the proposal embodied in the Bill did not seek to carry out the wishes of the ratepayers of Albany? That is the phase that appeals to me. It is not what this House or this Parliament thinks; the question to be decided is whether we shall give effect to the wishes of the ratepayers of Albany. I support the second reading of the Bill.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (in reply): Usually when dealing with matters affecting reserves, the closure of roads and so on, the various items are grouped in a comprehensive measure to give effect to the desires of local authorities concerned. On this occasion, because of the unusual nature of the particular issue involved, the Government agreed to bring the matter before Parliament in a separate Bill in order that members would have a full knowledge of all the circumstances surrounding the request by the local authorities at Albany. The seaport is very attractive from the standpoint of holiday-makers, but it has had a somewhat chequered career during the past 30 or 40 years. The particular area of land concerned is situated at Middleton Beach and is of small extent. The area comprises approximately five acres and the circumstances provide an excellent example of how a local authority can exceed its powers.

In this instance the Albany council, being desirous of improving the position from the standpoint of accommodation for visitors,

persuaded the Government of the day to change the purpose of the particular area concerned from that of "recreation" to that of "recreation and camping," in order to provide additional accommodation for visitors who might desire to camp close to the sea. Unfortunately the local authority went a little further by doing what was, quite unwittingly I believe, not in the best interests of the business men of the town or of the ratepayers. It subdivided the area and provided conditions under which the blocks could be leased, requiring that erections there would not be mere humpies but of a reasonably substantial type conforming to the conditions laid down.

I understand the council promulgated certain by-laws specifying the type of buildings that could be erected on the blocks when leased by various people. In order to comply with those by-laws, it became necessary for leaseholders to erect premises that were of quite substantial value, running into some hundreds of pounds in some instances. Unless they were prepared to erect buildings in conformity with the conditions laid down, they were not allowed to make use of the areas they had leased. With the passing of time the issue involved became a burning question at Albany.

Hon. A. Thomson: My word, we know that!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It has been the subject of discussion and correspondence over the years and, after exploring all the possibilities of the situation and considering the interests of the lessees, of the ratepayers of Albany and of the State as a whole, the Minister for Lands agreed to submit the matter to Parliament for decision. I believe the proposal in the Bill is absolutely the fairest that could be devised to solve the problem.

Members: Hear, hear!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Bill provides that, should the lessees not exercise the rights that will be granted to them the land shall revert to the Crown, and it also takes away from the municipality any rights that body may have had as a result of the investing order issued many years ago. It does not mean that it will be obligatory upon each leaseholder to purchase his block of land but an upset price will be placed on each block and the leaseholder will be entitled to purchase it at the price fixed if he likes.

Hon. V. Hamersley: How many of these leases are there?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think there are 15.

Hon. V. Hamersley: And the Bill is limited to those 15 leaseholders?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, the Bill is limited in its application to that area.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That does not coincide with the litho.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know if it does. Some member asked me for the plan, and I have supplied it. I think the plan will be found to be quite correct. It is not compulsory that people shall purchase the blocks on which they have built their dwellings. If the Bill is agreed to and they do not take advantage of its provisions, blocks so affected will revert to the Government.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: The leaseholds will continue to exist.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They will continue for 21 years, although some current leases expire next year. If the Bill is agreed to, a leaseholder will be given three months notice at the termination of the lease and in that period he will be required to remove any improvements effected on the block. Some of the leases will not expire for 12 years or more, which constitutes one complication. One of the conditions imposed by the Albany Municipal Council was that the leaseholders should fence their allotments. By so doing, they have denied to the people of the district the right of access to this area; consequently, the land is not available for camping, which is one of the purposes for which it was granted to the council. I have perused the file relating to the reserve and recognise that a serious problem is involved. This Bill is the only solution of that problem and I do not think we should stand in the way of its passage through this Chamber.

Members are aware that when questions are asked in this House dealing with reserves or closures of roads, the Government is invariably asked whether the local authority has given its approval. In 99 cases out of 100, the answer is in the affirmative, and this Chamber has said, "We are not going to interfere with the desires of the local authority in this particular case." Here the local authority has undoubtedly given its approval. All those

who have been associated with the solution of this problem, from the Surveyor General down, have agreed that this Bill is the only solution. Premises have been erected on all except three of the allotments. From the file, it appears that at least one leaseholder cannot be found, while another takes no notice whatever of communications addressed to him on the subject, and quite a number have been sent to him.

I have come to the conclusion, in view of what has been said and done in connection with this matter, that we ought to finalise it once and for all. The Government, at all events, is convinced that this is the fairest way of dealing with the matter. By this Bill we are doing the fair thing by the leaseholders; we are doing the fair thing by the local authority, which loses all right and interest in the area; and we are doing the fair thing by the State. As has been pointed out by Mr. Piesse, there is in the vicinity of this reserve a large area of land—hundreds of acres—suitable for camping. It is land that is actually used for camping, whereas this reserve is fenced off and has fairly substantial buildings erected upon it, on which account it cannot be used by the people generally. The leaseholders must not be blamed for that because they were obliged to comply with the conditions laid down by the Albany Municipal Council. I have no alternative to suggest and, in view of the great trouble that has been taken in this matter, and also in view of the fact that it has been a burning question for so long, I hope the House will agree to the second reading.

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—PERTH DENTAL HOSPITAL LAND.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 15th October of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

MOTION—BUTTER INDUSTRY.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 13th October on the following motion by Hon. H. L. Roche:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the butter industry in Western Australia, with particular reference to—

- (a) the circumstances and conditions that make it more profitable for producers to send their cream past their nearest factory to factories hundreds of miles away;
- (b) the conditions under which cream and butter are graded and check-graded;
- (c) the price being paid for second-grade cream and the present demand and price for the product thereof; and
- (d) any practical means whereby the transport of cream to factories could be expedited.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [4.39]: This motion calls to mind the Bill to amend the Dairy Industry Act that was debated at considerable length in this House in 1939. On that occasion I think we had one of the most informative and best considered debates that I have heard in this Chamber. At that time the condition of the dairy industry was parlous and those of us who represented dairying districts were not at all enthusiastic as to the solution of many of the problems then confronting the industry. Provision was made in the amending Bill for expert dairy instructors to visit dairy districts with a view to educating dairy farmers as to the best methods to be followed in order to put the industry upon a sound and suitable basis and to overcome the difficult position then existing in regard to the production of large quantities of second-grade butter and pastry butter.

The history of the dairy industry in this State is extremely interesting. We started late compared with the Eastern States and under conditions that were almost heart-breaking. It was then a source of pleasure to some people to proclaim loudly that this State was not suited to dairying and that we would never be able to produce choice butter. When I speak of choice butter I mean the grade of butter

that can be exported and that will bring a high price in foreign markets. Since that time a considerable improvement has taken place and many of the hopes that were then expressed have been realised. Although Mr. Roche is anxious to secure the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the industry, I feel sure that if such a committee were appointed it would not obtain much additional information that would be helpful.

At the outset, I do not wish it to be said that I am opposed to any effort to better the conditions of the dairy farmer, because most dairy farmers have to pass through distressing periods. The wheat farmer, who seemed to start off well, appears to be finishing in a less satisfactory position. On the other hand, the dairy farmer, who started under great disadvantages, is today a more or less satisfied member of the community. Mr. Roche asks that a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the butter industry, with particular reference to—

(a) the circumstances and conditions that make it more profitable for producers to send their cream past their nearest factory to factories hundreds of miles away.

On the face of it, there would seem to be no argument as to the proper course for a dairy farmer to follow; he ought to send his cream to the nearest factory. I understand, however, that that is applicable not only to Western Australia. The feeling amongst some dairy farmers that they can do better by going further from home seems to be Australia-wide. A proprietary factory has already been mentioned in this debate, and I suppose there is no harm in my referring to it. That factory is Watson's, and it draws cream from distances, in the province I represent, up to about 175 miles. Some little time ago I discussed the position with some of the dairy farmers, and I selected three men who were sending cream to Watson's at Spearwood—and if there is one area in my district which is a stronghold of that firm, these men come from it—and asked them just how they reckoned it paid them better to send their cream so far away.

I obtained no very definite replies, beyond the fact that they got about $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a pound more for their butter-fat. They were not able to give me any other good reason excepting that Watson's had always treated them well, and they did some trading

with that factory. They said, "When we purchase stuff from them they give us a fair deal, and we seem to get a good test." That, of course, is the prime consideration in selling butter-fat. If the farmer does not get a good test for his cream, he does not get a good price. I then took three farmers who were sending their cream to the Margaret factory, only eight miles distant. I said to them, "How do you reckon it pays you to send your cream to Margaret when you are getting slightly less for it?" They said, "It suits us and pays us. We reckon in the aggregate that we are better off. We certainly get $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a pound less, but we get a uniform test and one which is satisfactory." In conclusion they insisted that the Margaret factory suited them well.

In 1939 an amendment to the Dairy Industry Act was passed, and whether as a result of that Bill or not I do not know, but I believe it was partly due to that measure, we have had fewer complaints from dairy farmers in the South-West. That applies even to the question of transport referred to by the Chief Secretary. I believe the fact that we have had few complaints regarding transport in the last three years bears out the wisdom of the action we took on that occasion when we decided to delete the very lengthy Clause 11 (b), providing for an extensive system of transport, the determining of rates and routes, and the payment of carriers. Carriers were to be employed to take cream to factories in certain areas, and the dairy farmer had to bear the expense. The cost was to be paid to the carrier by the factory and deducted from the dairy farmer's cheque. That clause was deleted and the position as existing at present has operated quite satisfactorily.

I took the opportunity recently to discuss the question with an executive officer of one of the largest, if not the largest, butter factory in this State. I asked him how he was affected by cream going out of his district. He said, "Some cream goes out, but it does not all go one way. Some of the cream in Watsons' areas comes to us." He said that his factory was not very much concerned, and he was quite satisfied to let the position continue as in the past. If Mr. Roche's request for a Select Committee is granted I think the committee would have a much bigger task than is usually shouldered by Select Committees. In paragraph (a) he

asks that the committee inquire into the circumstances and conditions that make it more profitable for producers to send their cream past their nearest factory to factories hundreds of miles away. If we are to make inquiry into that aspect, this Select Committee will have to visit all these far-away dairying districts.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It would be very costly.

Hon. W. J. MANN: It would be a tremendous job and possibly could not be done. It would not be much use having a Select Committee sitting in Perth endeavouring to get evidence from the people for whom, I presume, the hon. member was speaking when he moved this motion. We can get all the information from the department, and I understand from the Chief Secretary that it is already available. If the Select Committee is to do anything worth while that paragraph will, in my estimation, be just the thing that we can ill afford to accept. We will not get any dairy farmers to come to the city to give evidence.

Hon. C. B. Williams: We would have to pay their expenses.

Hon. W. J. MANN: We could not get them to leave their farms. Dairy farmers in war-time dare not leave their properties for more than two or three hours in the middle of the day. They are working from early morning up till late in the forenoon. By the time they get cleaned up and see to the feeding they have to start again not later than 3 p.m. in order to prepare for the evening milking. I have in my possession a letter from a dairyman in a big way at North Dandalup. He requests us to do certain things, and points out that it is impossible for him to get away from his farm because of the shortage of labour. If we have a Select Committee that would do any good it must get down into the country. In paragraph (b) Mr. Roche asks that the committee inquire into the conditions under which cream and butter are graded and checked. That information is all available in Perth.

Hon. A. Thomson: There is the question of one firm paying more than another.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That is a big question and one could say a lot on it and then not be conclusive. One of the reasons why the firm in question pays the prices it does is because it handles a different type of product from the butter factories in the dairy-

ing districts. They manufacture a first-grade product. It is not essential for them to manufacture choice grade. I think there are only about three points between first-grade and choice. Watsons manufacture first-grade butter which is put on the market immediately and consumed. That practice would not do for the country factories because they would find difficulty in storing it.

If butter has to be stored for any length of time it must be choice grade. Watsons are in a better position than are the country factories which have to send their butter on a long railway journey, and it has then to be put into storage and be brought out months afterwards in perfect condition. Incidentally, there is a saving there for the Spearwood factory. It pays very low railway freight on cream, but the people who send up the manufactured butter are in the reverse position. They pay a high rate to transport their product. That is one reply to the hon. member who interjected just now. The third paragraph in the motion requests the Committee to inquire into the price being paid for the second-grade cream and the present demand and price for the product thereof. The Chief Secretary explained that position very clearly. The object is to do away altogether with the manufacture of second-grade butter. It is a most unprofitable product. The Commonwealth people have now taken a hand, and in the dairying districts, where dairying is feasible and can be carried out under the best conditions, little second-grade butter is being manufactured.

That opens up another phase. Some complaints have been made by people who are dairying in country manifestly unsuited for the industry. No matter how a man in the wheat-belt may try, and no matter how much money he may spend, it is impossible for him to get the same class of product as does the man in the cool and more temperate portion of the State.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Where you get green feed for a longer period.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes, where there is fresh and luscious feed. That applies particularly in the summer-time. The man in the wheat-belt might produce a fairly good grade of cream during the winter months, but when the summer comes he is out of court. It would be just as sensible to say that a man could become a good dairy farmer in the marginal areas as to say he could

grow potatoes at Port Hedland. Paragraph (d) of the motion asks that the committee inquire into any practical means whereby the transport of cream to factories could be expedited. Transport of cream to factories has got down to a fairly fine art, and I do not see how we can improve much on it. I am satisfied that the farmers who are endeavouring to carry on can be trusted to do what they have in the past and steadily improve the output and quality of their product. Mr. Roche's attempt to improve the dairying industry is well meant and I do not say at this stage that I will oppose the appointment of a Select Committee, but I do not think his action is well-timed and I would not be enthusiastic about any result we might get under present conditions.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.1 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 20th October, 1942.

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

QUESTION—GAS-PRODUCERS.

As to Importations.

Mr. SEWARD (without notice) asked the Minister for Industrial Development: 1, Is it a fact that a further consignment of Nasco gas-producers, believed to number 90 odd, arrived in this State by boat last week? 2, If so, in view of his statement on the 7th October that gas-producers cannot be shipped to this State, how does he explain this happening? 3, Is it a fact that the Nasco gas-producer is made from 16 gauge iron, whereas Western Australian manufacturers are compelled to use 10 gauge or one-eighth

inch iron? 4, If so, seeing that all gas-producers used in this State must first pass an approved authority, is approval given for the Nasco make? 5, If so, will he withhold approval from any make of gas-producer that fails to meet the required standards? 6, If not, and as such action would greatly assist local manufacturers, why will he not take that action?

The MINISTER replied: 1, Yes. 2, I was assured by Commonwealth Ministers, when in Canberra early this month, that no further shipments of gas-producers would be made to Western Australia. Attention is drawn to the message published in yesterday's issue of "The West Australian" regarding the creation by the Commonwealth Government of a Shipping Ministry, the main object of which is to ensure that every ton of shipping space available should be used to aid the war effort of Australia and the United Nations. 3, No. 4, The Commonwealth is the approving authority and approvals granted in any one State have automatic application to all States. 5 and 6, Answered by No. 4.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, leave of absence for two weeks granted to the Minister for Mines on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £1,350,000.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Premier, resolved—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable resolutions from the Committees of Supply and of Ways and Means to be reported and adopted on the same day on which they shall have passed those committees, and also the passing of a Supply Bill through all its stages in one day.

Message.

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

In Committee of Supply.

The House resolved into Committee of Supply, Mr. Marshall in the Chair.

THE PREMIER [2.25]: I move—

That there be granted to His Majesty on account of the services of the year ending the 30th June, 1943, a sum not exceeding £1,350,000.