

tunity to do its work. It is a pity that hon. members should be so prone to the making of comparisons between this State and Victoria. There could be no two States more dissimilar. It is like comparing a camel and a cow.

The Minister for Mines: Which is the cow?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Victoria. The member for Perth may know Perth, but he does not know very much about the rest of the State. In, say, Carnarvon the amendment would close the hotels. There is no population in the immediate vicinity, but many miles back are to be found the people who require all the accommodation the existing hotels can provide. I hope the clause will be agreed to.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. MANN: I move an amendment—

That the following be inserted to stand as paragraph (b)—“As soon as practicable after the 31st December, 1922, and once in every six years thereafter to ascertain the number of publicans' general licenses, hotel licenses, wayside house licenses, and Australian wine and beer licenses in each licensing district, and the approximate number of inhabitants in such district, and having regard to all conditions to fix the number of licenses necessary for public convenience to be retained in such district, and to certify the proportion between the number of inhabitants in such district and the number of licenses necessary to be retained as aforesaid, and the number of inhabitants per license so to be retained shall be deemed the statutory number for such district: And shall reduce the licenses in such district to such statutory number.”

I want to give the board direction how to carry out their duties, and to prescribe how the reduction shall take place.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The amendment is absurd. In each district different principles will apply and will vary almost from week to week. If a goldfield were to be discovered close to a railway line, the board would say the statutory number of licenses could not be exceeded. At Yalgoo there are five hotels for about 100 people, yet if a new find were to be made up there 20 or 30 miles out, there might be an immediate demand for 10 hotels instead of the existing five.

Mr. Mann: The amendment directs the board to inquire into all phases of the question.

Mr. WILLCOCK: In any case, the board would have to go up there, make inquiries and formally record their finding.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The amendment is impracticable. There are, along the railways, depots where there may not be more than a dozen inhabitants.

Mr. Mann: Such places will be taken into consideration.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The principle might work all right in the metropolitan area, but it would be utterly impracticable in the back country. The same applies to Mullewa

and dozens of other places which are railway depots for the back country.

Mr. Mann: This says “having regard to all the conditions.”

The Minister for Mines: But conditions are changing.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The provision could not operate satisfactorily.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There might be sound objections to the amendment but there are equally sound objections to the clause as printed. There are difficulties attached to fixing a population basis and making it apply to such a large State. However, there should be something in the nature of an instruction to the board as to the lines on which they shall proceed. The consensus of opinion is that a large number of hotels in Kalgoorlie should be closed, but there is nothing to prevent the board from commencing operations in Perth or Fremantle. It is our duty to give the board some guide. Surely it is not beyond the capacity of the Committee to do this.

The Minister for Mines: Clause 45 does that.

The Premier: Anything of that nature can be added to Clause 45.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It might be more appropriate to add it to Clause 45.

The PREMIER: I am open to consider any amendment which will assist the board to determine what should be done, but I cannot accept an amendment which practically means there shall be no reduction.

Mr. Mann: My amendment does not mean that.

The PREMIER: Largely it does. I am willing to report progress and I hope members will draft a suitable amendment.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.49 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 28th September, 1922.

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

QUESTION—DIPHTHERIA AT BODDINGTON.

Mr. JOHNSTON asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, What action has been taken by the Public Health Department to cope with the recent serious outbreak of diphtheria at Boddington? 2, Is it intended to comply with the request of the residents made four weeks ago for a medical officer to visit Boddington in connection with this matter? 3, If so, will the desired visit be expedited?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, All the usual and necessary actions have been taken in regard to the outbreak of diphtheria. 2, Dr. Stubbe, a medical officer of the Health Department, has visited Boddington on three occasions, and has taken the necessary steps. 3, Answered by No. 2.

MOTION—MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY, ACQUISITION OF CONCESSION.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON (Moore) [4.34]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House, if an equitable arrangement can be made, the lands and railway of the Midland Railway Company be acquired by the Government, and that a valuation of both the railway and the unalienated and partly alienated lands be made as soon as possible.

I find from a perusal of the records of the House that on the 8th August, 1905, a motion came before the House for the purchase of the Midland Railway Company's line. Nothing came of it, however, and the State is in the same position to-day as it was then. On 22nd February last a deputation from the Midland people waited upon the Acting Premier during the absence of Sir James Mitchell in England. The Acting Premier sympathised with the settlers, but they asked for more than sympathy. They wanted the whole of the Midland Railway concession taken over and made similar to other parts of the State. The matter previously came before Parliament in the time when Mr. Daglish was Premier, but nothing eventuated.

Mr. Lutey: The Government went out over it.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: The conditions to-day are different. The time is now opportune for a motion of this kind to be favourably considered. In the original concession, which consisted of three or four million acres of land, there are 1,500,000 acres still owned by the company. Of that area 750,000 acres are first class, 400,000 acres second class, and 350,000 acres third class. That land could be made immediately reproductive. We have definite proof of the productivity of the country. From Middle Swan to Crampton there is land capable of producing anything, and from here to Gingin the land is equal to that in any other part of the State for dairying. It produces wool and wheat

and minerals are also found there. The Middle Swan produces raisins and currants. The land indeed is of such a nature that in one portion or another everything the country requires can be grown. Around Mingenev and Mullewa there is country equal to anything in the State, as the Premier knows, but it has been lying idle for a long time. If this concession were taken over I am sure we could settle not only all the immigrants the Premier is bringing out, but reproduce in a very short time the six million pounds that it is proposed to spend upon them. In the season 1919-20 there were 11,410 horses in the district, 20,000 cattle, half a million sheep, and about 5,000 pigs. In 1920-21 the area accounted for 902,000 bushels of wheat, 94,000 bushels of oats and 14,000 tons of hay, and in 1921-22 about a million bushels of wheat, about 90,000 bushels of oats, and 20,000 tons of hay. These figures are authentic and will bear examination. People who can raise such crops and produce stock of that quantity are entitled to consideration at the hands of this House. The forecast for the period 1920 to 1923 was that there would be 136,000 acres under wheat, 15,000 acres under oats and about 1,900 acres under barley. I wish to acquaint members with the possibilities of the concession which the Government of the day saw fit to give to the Midland Railway Company. By way of minerals, there is gypsum at Dongarra and possibly large deposits of coal at the Irwin. I hope the Minister for Mines will wake up to the value of the coal deposits and provide some assistance for their development.

The Minister for Mines: What! That is a most astounding statement. I hope the rest of your statement will be more accurate than that. I should like to know who has been doing anything if we have not!

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: I am glad I have awakened the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: Go ahead!

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: I hope the Minister will go ahead and help us. I may be touching on delicate ground when I speak of coal, for there may be some interference with a section of the community. There is no doubt, however, we have the coal there. Its extent has not yet been proved, but the Government should assist in proving it. We do not get much help. From Midland Junction to Walkaway the people are treated as aliens. They are off the map. It is time that Parliament assisted that portion of the community which at present is labouring under difficult conditions.

The Minister for Mines: You have had more assistance with regard to coal than any other part of the State in similar circumstances.

The Minister for Works: They got £50 out of me.

Mr. Underwood: I gave them some.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: I am glad to have that assurance from the Minister, but

I should like to see definite proof of his promises. I am very glad that the question has come up, because it emphasises the fact that we people along the Midland railway, being so to speak alienated, and distant from the parental control of the Government, get nothing. I have already referred to the productivity of the country. We have an assured rainfall, of which I can give particulars if required. The railway as it exists at present satisfies a need, but if we are going to be democratic let us make one system of railways throughout the State. These 277 miles of line between Midland Junction and Walkaway are really in "No man's land." I wish to draw attention to the conditions under which the settlers along that railway work. We have in this country, and very rightly, an Agricultural Bank, which affords assistance to settlers. It is a most excellent institution. Unfortunately, the settlers in this portion of the State are, merely by reason of their geographical position, not entitled to assistance from that bank.

The Premier: The first mortgage is the trouble.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: Yes. We are a separate portion of the State, practically outside the State. If that portion of the country were taken over by the Government and the settlers were given an opportunity to avail themselves of the benefits of the Agricultural Bank, the cry of neglect would be heard no longer. Of my own first-hand knowledge I can say that quite a number of the settlers labour under grave disabilities. They want assistance, and without assistance they must go to the wall. It is that consideration mainly which causes me to raise my voice in this Chamber. In our district we have some of the finest type of settlers to be found in Western Australia. We have there also some of the finest land to be found in the country. Then why should not those people have some voice in the affairs of the State? Certainly they have some voice through their member, and, as one representative of that portion of Western Australia, I find that I get kind attention, but not many good results. In going around the city of Perth, too, I find that I do not get very much assistance for my district. Why should not we be made a portion of the community? Let there be just one State, without any "no man's land." I am sure that the consolidation of all our railways into one system would benefit the people and the State greatly, and would enable the business of the country to be carried on much better than is being done to-day. We are not out for spoon-feeding in our part of the country. We are out to help, and to help to the utmost. The best stock in the country is grown at Koojan, which is just outside Moora. Mr. Padbury, who resides at Koojan, went to Sydney with his stock and cleaned the plate there. And my district can grow food as well as stock. We simply want a

fair deal, and I am sure the majority of members will give us that fair deal. There is another phase of the question as it affects the railway. Between Mullewa and Mingenew there is some very fine land. I had the pleasure of travelling with the Premier from Mullewa to Mingenew, and during that journey we saw some of the most beautiful land possible. From Mingenew to Mullewa and from Moora to Pithara there is splendid country for settlement. I would like to have about 5,000 acres of it; I do not think I would look back. Perhaps 1,000 acres of that land would do me. It is land that can be cleared ready for the plough for about £4 or £5 per acre. In other portions of the State land is much dearer to clear, costing as high as £20 to £25 per acre. We could settle very large numbers of people on the land now available in the Midland district.

Mr. Davies: What are you charging for the land?

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: There are now 750,000 acres of first-class land available between Midland Junction and Walkaway. I am sure my statements will be substantiated by any member who knows that portion of the country. I will stand or fall by the statement that we have 750,000 acres of first-class land now available for settlement in the Midland district. There are 350,000 acres of third-class land or sand plain. Hon. members are aware that quite a lot can be made of sand plain; and this is good sand plain—not the sand plain which one sees in other portions of the State. If a plough is put into it, and it is turned up and cultivated, we get really good grass. At Mingenew at any time of the year, we find feed up to one's knee. I have quoted Mr. Padbury of Koojan, but we have other men who go in for stock. We win the first prizes for wool and sheep of all descriptions at the Royal Agricultural Show every year. In fact, when an exhibit takes the first prize at our local show, we go down to Perth with that exhibit and it wipes the floor with all other exhibits.

Mr. Underwood: You stand in the first rank for shorthorns.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: We stand in the front rank with everything produced from the soil.

Mr. Money: And you do that with a privately-owned railway.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: Yes, but we could do still better if the railway were State-owned, and if we got assistance from the Government. Being an alien, and standing by myself, I feel it is quite possible that members from other portions of the State may not quite like this matter being brought up. Whilst I have the honour to represent the constituency that I do, I trust I shall be able to bring before hon. members facts and figures which will induce Parliament to give the people of my district some measure of support in producing those things

which are necessary for the State. Now as regards the distance between the Lower Murchison and Perth, suppose a branch line were constructed from Mullewa to Miingenew, that would reduce the distance to be travelled to Perth by at least 90 miles. I put it to you, Mr. Speaker, as a man with knowledge of the conditions under which stock travel, that 90 miles in the conveyance of a beast from the farm to its ultimate market is a big thing. At present what do we find? stock are travelled over the competing line an unnecessary distance of 90 miles. I have travelled on stock trains, and know what I am talking about. Suppose the Midland concession were acquired by the Government, that stock could be brought to Perth by the shorter route, and landed here in much better condition. There is another aspect. I take it that every member of the Chamber is a humane man, who does not like to see stock travel further than is necessary. Under existing conditions in summer time, the travelling of stock over railways for long distances is bad. It is not only a question of militating against prices, but let hon. members think of the beasts! We have also to consider human beings. At the present time, apart from the general public, departmental officials travel via the Wongan Hills line. I do not wish to say anything detrimental on that score, seeing that that part is also within my electorate, but my mind is big enough to take in that which is good for the country. The fact remains that people travel and goods are sent via the Wongan Hills line, whereas their natural route is from Midland Junction to Geraldton. Also, in my electorate we have the line from Piawaning northwards which will eventually come out in the dim distant future at Pithara. I asked a question about this matter some time ago and I was informed that the procuring of rails controlled the situation. Suppose that line were cut out or diverted and we put in a line from Moora through Wongan Hills to Mullewa. If we did that, the whole question would be settled. We would have a network of railways that would satisfy and serve all the people of the district. Possibly one or two might be left out. To-day men are carting produce for distances ranging up to 22 miles. You will agree, Mr. Speaker, that that is not a fair thing. I am a stickler for anything that is just. If a thing is not just, I will turn it down. If it is just, we should stand up and maintain our position. At the present time, people are carting their produce over distances of 22 miles, and in some cases 35 miles. I am not exaggerating when I claim that if the whole concession were taken over, it would be better for the State. I regret that on the 8th August, 1905, when Mr. Daglish brought forward his motion dealing with the Midland Company's concession, he was not successful in having it agreed to. I do not know why that was so.

The Minister for Mines: We know!

Hon. M. F. Troy: Yes, we know all right!

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: There may have been some circumstances of which I am not aware, but I believe that was one of the blunders and one of the blots in our history. To-day we are reaping what was then sown. If we desire to have an opportunity to advance and do something for the State, so that we can assist the Minister for Agriculture to give effect to his cry "Produce, produce, produce," what do we find? Just a helpless community; no assistance; no anything; "damn-all."

The Minister for Works: Is there not a country town called Graball?

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: In addition to the cereal crops we can grow, we have mineral deposits. I know the Minister for Mines has some notes about our coal deposits. I want to impress upon him what is necessary to deal with those deposits. He probably knows more about them than I do and, therefore, he probably knows that some years ago the s.s. "Rob Roy" steamed from Geraldton to Fremantle on coal drawn from these deposits. Not much effort, however, has been put forth by the Government to develop that source of supply.

Mr. Underwood: I think you are not quite right there.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: I may be wrong, but that remains to be proved.

The Minister for Mines: I will give you some facts to swallow later on.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: If you can put them down my throat—very well. I will swallow them. I bring these matters forward to show what we can do in the part of the State I have been drawing special attention to. Probably, as the Minister for Mines infers, I am misinformed.

The Minister for Mines: You will swallow your words when you have the facts.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: At any rate, I am not going to be bluffed.

Mr. Underwood: Still, you are wrong.

Lieut.-Colonel DENTON: That may be so, but it has not been proved so yet. While I hold my opinions, I am prepared to stand up against the member for Pilbara, the Minister for Mines or anyone else. I am endeavouring to do the best for my constituents. I have placed before the House the disabilities under which we are suffering. We have in our part of the State sturdy men who blazed the track years ago. We have land that is capable of producing anything. To start with, from the Swan to Walkaway, we have splendid fruit country. We have some of the finest dairying areas in the State around Gingin. At Moora we have a fine agricultural area. In Dandarragan we have a place that put up a record for Western Australia, and Yatheroo will go down to history as one of the centres that made that portion of the State. Going further still, we have Yandanooka, which comprises excellent country. These areas can be prepared for settle-

ment and we want the settlers there. We want help to assure our progress. We have land that can be made productive in at least two years. In other parts of the State, much more time than that will be required before the land becomes productive. In these areas the country can be cleared by means of rolling operations. If a man has 1,000 acres, and if he is a straightforward, hard-working individual, he can have at least 300 acres under crop in one year, and within three years he can pay off his land and it will be reproductive. In that part of the State with encouragement we will have settlers who will not have to be carried on our backs. Before concluding, I wish to submit some figures to show the progress that has been made. I will deal with livestock first. In 1915 there were 10,146 horses in this part of the State and in 1921 there were 11,301. In 1915, the cattle numbered 9,930 and in 1921, 21,749. In 1915, there were 200,377 sheep and in 1921, 387,599. In 1915, there were 4,185 pigs and in 1921, 5,002. I draw attention to these figures to show that we are on the up-grade and do not intend to go back. There is another phase of my argument to which I hope members will give serious attention. I refer to the cropping, clearing, and holding of land in these parts, I will give the totals for the various headings to show what has happened in my district. In 1914-15 there were under crop, 139,505 acres; under permanent grass (artificially sown), 423 acres; new ground, cleared and prepared for next season's crops, 41,323 acres; land in fallow, 40,195 acres; acreage of other cleared land previously cropped, but used for grazing or lying idle,—I want the Premier to listen to this particularly—49,097 acres; ring-barked or partially cleared land, 197,349 acres.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Why lying idle?

Lieut-Colonel DENTON: I will deal with that later; I will astound the House with the next set of figures I will read. In 1921-22 the total area under crop was 118,404 acres; permanently grassed, 70 acres; new ground cleared, 22,629 acres; land in fallow, 42,044 acres. The point I wish to bring before the Premier is that we have 135,955 acres of land cleared and previously cropped, and now used for grazing. Of ring-barked or partly cleared land there are 201,259 acres. This is most profitable land. The settler can be put on it and earn a living straight away. With the assistance of the Agricultural Bank he can make a really decent living. I agree thoroughly with the Premier's immigration scheme, but we require to remember that while the southern portion of the State is geographically protected, the northern portion is without such protection. It is time we started to people our North. What better could be done than settle in the North some of those white people the Premier is bringing out from England? In those districts to which I have been referring there is an ample rainfall. At Gingin in 1921 the record was 29 inches, which is an average for about 30 years. At Watheroo they had 20 inches, an average over 21 years. At Greenough the rainfall was 26 inches, an

average over 39 years. It will be seen, therefore, that the rainfall is quite sufficient for cultivation purposes. Again, we have at Dongarra a most valuable lime deposit, and today we are sending down hundreds of tons of lime for the manufacture of cement. They have to come to our district to obtain the necessary lime. That was going on last year, but was stopped for a time. We are now sending down from Gingin from 800 to 900 tons of lime weekly, and from Bullsbrook not so much, but still quite a lot.

Mr. Underwood: A mere temporary expedient.

Lieut-Colonel DENTON: Scarcely that, because the lime was being sent down last year and is still being sent down. Consequently, it appears to me to be a permanent enterprise.

Mr. Pickering: What is the lime like?

Lieut-Colonel DENTON: The quality is there, and so, too, is the quantity. I hope I have made out a sufficiently strong case in support of my motion. Unquestionably, the time has arrived when greater consideration should be shown to the people in that part of the State.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—OIL PROSPECTING.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [5.25]: May I claim the indulgence of the House for the making of a brief statement?

Mr. SPEAKER: So long as it is not controversial.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is not controversial.

Hon. M. F. TROY: But the leave of the House must first be obtained.

Mr. SPEAKER: No objection has been raised.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I do not desire to raise an objection to the Minister's statement, but when an hon. member asks if he may make a statement, it is for the Speaker to put it to the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister asked the indulgence of the House to make a statement. I asked him if it were controversial, and he said it was not. There was no objection from the House.

Hon. M. F. TROY: But I am taking the point that the procedure was not properly followed. You should have asked the House if there was any objection. I have no objection to the Minister making a statement, but I do object to the Speaker saying, "Very well," when a member gets up and asks if he may make a statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House has not offered any objection.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The House has not been asked if it had any objection to offer.

Mr. SPEAKER: Does the hon. member raise any objection to the Minister's statement?

Hon. M. F. TROY: No, but I do object to the statement being made without the leave of the House first being asked.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister asked the indulgence of the House to make a statement, and he assured me the statement was not controversial. The House made no objection.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I take the point that the House was not asked. The Speaker should have asked the House, "Is it your pleasure that the hon. member be heard?" The House was never asked that.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister may proceed with his statement, unless any objection be raised.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Allany) [5.27]: It is within the knowledge of hon. members that for some time past prospecting for oil has been carried on by certain companies in various parts of the State. Recently samples were submitted to the Government for analysis. I have now received a copy of the report of the Government Mineralogist and Analyst. I think it is of sufficient importance to be made known to the House and to the public. I propose merely to read the report without comment. It is as follows:—

Report on Asphaltum from Freney's Lure at Mt. Wynne. On Monday, 18th September, Mr. Freney delivered to me a case of core samples sealed with Mr. Blatchford's official seal. This seal was broken by the Hon. the Premier, and the case opened in his presence and that of the Hon. Minister for Mines and members of the Freney Kimberley Oil Company. The case contained a section of an 11in. core from a depth of 120 feet in the bore near Mt. Wynne. This consisted of a firm white sandstone, thickly bedded and traversed by a number of roughly vertical and inclined joints. Nothing resembling bitumen has impregnated the sandstone, but in most of the joints were detritic and irregular films and coatings up to nearly an eighth of an inch in thickness of black and brown organic matter as well as kaolin and occasional small masses of pyrite. The carbonaceous matter was of two kinds, namely, (a) A brilliant black plastic asphaltum confined to a few exposed joints and continuations of them into the solid core. (b) A brown porous and fragile material of asphaltic affinities widely distributed in the joints. (a) Black material: The distribution of the black asphaltum is shown in the accompanying photos, which are two-thirds natural size. It was confined to the fissures and occurred within them as thin detritic masses, or thicker discontinuous masses of irregular outline. It was impossible to scrape off material completely free from adhering kaolin and quartz grains, but some of the purest

material obtainable was analysed with the following results:—

Proximate Analysis—

Bitumen	{ Petrolene ..	86.45 per cent.
	{ Asphaltene ..	12.93 "
Non-bituminous organic matter	.. ..	.62 "
		<hr/> 100.00 "

Ultimate Analysis—

Carbon	.. ..	80.05 per cent.
Hydrogen	.. ..	10.04 "
Sulphur, oxygen and nitrogen	.. ..	9.91 "
		<hr/> 100.00 "

Ash: 27.85 to 39.09 per cent.; mean 33.47 per cent.

The solution of the petrolene in hexane was distinctly fluorescent. This asphaltum was plastic at 20°C. and melted completely below 100°C. On dry distillation it yielded a large volume of dark brown oil. The chemical and physical properties of the substance agree in all respects with a true petroleum residue of the "soft asphaltum" type. This is usually looked upon as an indication of the comparatively recent presence of asphaltic oil in the near vicinity.

B. Brown Material:

This material was more abundant than the black asphaltum, but was similarly distributed, being absent from the solid rock but present in nearly all the fissures, though never completely filling them. It had very little resemblance at first sight to a petroleum residue, being light brown in colour, porous and fragile, readily crumbling to a powder. On heating in a closed tube over a flame, however, most fragments of it melted readily to a black pitch and all gave off a considerable amount of brown oil similar in appearance to that yielded by the black asphaltum.

A proximate analysis showed—

Bitumen	{ Petrolene ..	18.15 per cent.
	{ Asphaltene ..	16.59 "
Non-bituminous organic matter	.. ..	65.26 "
		<hr/> 100.00 "
Ash	.. ..	56.74 "

There is some doubt as to the origin of this brown material, but I am of opinion that it is an older asphaltum which has been naturally leached and oxidised.

(Sgd.) Edward S. Simpson, D.Sc., B.E., F.C.S., Government Mineralogist and Analyst.

BILL—WYALCATCHER-MT. MARSHALL RAILWAY (EXTENSION No. 2.)

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 7th September; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; Mrs. Cowan in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Next of kin of intestate without issue to include mother:

Mr. Latham had moved the following amendment:—After "father," in line 1 of paragraph (b), insert "where the net value of his or her estate does not exceed five hundred pounds."

Mr. LATHAM: At the present time if a father is deceased and one of the children dies intestate, the mother shares equally with the rest of the family. Under this clause, if the mother married again, the whole of the estate would pass to her and out of the family. The object of the amendment is to limit the amount. If the amount does not exceed £500, it will go to the mother. If it does exceed £500 it is only reasonable that the mother should share equally with the brothers and sisters of the deceased. I disapprove of a private member introducing a measure of this description. All such amending Bills should be submitted to the Crown Law authorities for report to a responsible Minister. This Bill might easily have been rushed through Committee without discussion. Paragraph (a) makes a great alteration. At present the father would get the whole of the estate absolutely, but it is now intended to remove any chance of the money being retained for the particular family to which it rightly belongs. There is nothing unreasonable in the amendment.

Mr. MONEY: In nine cases out of ten when a child dies and leaves property, that property would have been given to the child by its father. The object of the gift having failed, the intention probably was that the gift should revert to the donor. It is questionable whether we should make an innovation in favour of the mother. The statute of distribution was altered to some extent by the Act, inasmuch as in the case of an estate under £500 the wife or husband took the whole of it to the exclusion of the rest of the family. Victoria made an innovation on the lines of the amendment of the member for York. The Victorian Act provides that where the estate amounts to £500 or less, in the event of the person dying without wife or father, the whole of the estate shall go to the mother. I see no reason for objecting to that, but when dealing with estates in excess of £500, we have to look to many possibilities. It is quite likely that a mother might marry again.

Mr. Latham: Or she might be already married.

Mrs. Cowan: What about the father?

Mr. MONEY: A big fortune might go to the mother and not a farthing of it to the sisters or brothers of the deceased. A mother might marry again and come under the in-

fluence of her second husband, and the whole fortune would go with her, notwithstanding that the family had probably contributed largely to accumulating the fortune. The amendment will be a sufficient innovation to the principle. Assume that the amendment is carried and that there is a family of three and an estate of £9,500. The mother would take £500 and then share with the rest. I am satisfied that the family as a family should have a more equal distribution than the suggestion that has been put before us in the Bill that the mother should have the whole of the wealth to the exclusion of the remainder of the family. That would not be fair to the family generally. I am prepared to support the amendment of the member for York.

Mrs. COWAN: The member for York contended that the opinions of the responsible advisers of the Crown should be obtained on a Bill of this description.

Mr. Latham: I said it should be submitted to Ministers.

Mrs. COWAN: Instead of worrying Ministers with a matter of this kind, I preferred to get the opinion of the Crown Solicitor and the opinions of other authorities as well. The Crown Solicitor writes that the Bill is perfectly in order, and in answer to my inquiry he has this to say—

The Statute of Distributions, enacted in the reign of Charles II., has been amended as regards the property of a husband or wife dying intestate, not only by our own Administration Act, 1903, but wherever the statute is in force. The Bill under consideration deals with the distribution of the property of a child dying intestate and unmarried in the lifetime of his father and mother, or in the lifetime of a mother where the father is already dead. Under the Act of Charles II. the father takes the whole because at the time the Act was passed a married woman was incapable of acquiring property. In the words of Macqueen, in his treatise on "The rights and liabilities of husband and wife" (3rd edition, page 284) "The disabilities of marriage entirely precluded the wife from the enjoyment of property; whatever belonged to her while single, or came to her while married, passed absolutely to the husband. What was hers became his and what was his remained his own. She could possess nothing; she could alienate nothing in her lifetime; she could bequeath nothing at her death. Such were the rigid maxims of the English marriage law."

Hon. P. Collier: Oh, for those happy days!

Mr. Latham: Who is the author of the story?

Mrs. COWAN: The Crown Solicitor goes on to write—

And as stated in Eversley on "The law of domestic relations," at page 2 of the preface—"The wife was deemed but little more than a personal chattel of the husband." But now that a married woman is

capable of acquiring property in her own right, the property of a child dying intestate and unmarried, leaving a father and mother, should be divided between them as provided in paragraph (a) of the Bill. Paragraph (b) provides for the case of a mother when the father of a child dying intestate and unmarried is dead. Under the law as it stands, the father takes the whole if the mother is dead; but the mother (the father being dead) has to share the property of her deceased child with the next of kin, each taking an equal share. If it is thought right that the next of kin should participate with the mother, then, it seems to me, it would be equally right that the next of kin should participate with the father, where a child dies intestate and unmarried. I can see no reason for the distinction between a father and a mother in these circumstances.

I think the father and mother are the right people to inherit the property of the child who has died and has neglected to make a will. Most children would prefer that the property should go to the mother. Any chivalrous, nice-minded man would wish this to be so. The mother is responsible for bringing the child into the world and nurturing that child. Who are those who think that we should keep to the days of the old statutes of Charles II., the king who was so wonderful that it is said of him, "he never said a foolish thing and never did a wise one." The English law has been brought up to date. We find that only last year a Bill was submitted to the British Parliament known as Lord Birkenhead's Bill. Clause 148, paragraphs 4 and 5, are in the terms of the Bill I have submitted to this House. This therefore should be a sufficient answer to the amendment of the member for York. If the British Parliament thinks that such legislation is good enough, then it should be good enough for this Parliament to adopt. I know of no reason why we should be behind the British Parliament. The hon. member wishes us to do a thing which is nothing less than a retrograde step. On the subject of Lord Birkenhead's Bill the Crown Solicitor writes—

The amendments of the law where a child dies intestate, leaving parents surviving, or one parent (mother or father) surviving, are also set out in the memorandum annexed to the Imperial measure.

Paragraph 4 of the Imperial statute sets out—

If the intestate leaves both parents, but no issue, then subject to the interests of a surviving husband or wife, the residuary estate of the intestate shall belong to the father and mother in equal shares absolutely.

Paragraph 5 states—

If the intestate leaves one parent only but no issue then, subject to the interests of the surviving husband or wife, the resi-

duary estate of the intestate shall belong to the surviving father or mother absolutely.

I am only asking hon. members to do what is right. I have other legal opinion on the subject. One I obtained from my own son, who says that the Bill is perfectly in order and who adds—

The mere fact that the amendment proposed by the Administration Act Amendment Bill, 1922, will further alter the Statutes of Distribution is not in any way an objection in law to such an amendment being made, should the Legislative Assembly approve of the same. Should the Legislative Assembly choose to repeal the Statute of Distribution *in toto* so far as this State is concerned, it is at liberty to do so, as such legislation is of a purely domestic nature.

That point was raised on the last occasion. The opinion goes on—

The justice of the proposed amendment is so obvious that it seems difficult to understand the point of view of those objecting to it.

Mr. Nicholson, a member of another place, who has agreed to take charge of this Bill when it reaches the Legislative Council, expresses this opinion—

If the intestate dies leaving no issue surviving, but leaving a widow, and say father, mother, brothers and sisters, the widow in such a case gets in the first place £500 allowed under the Administration Act, 1903, and the balance of the estate after deduction of debts, etc., is apportioned as to one half to the widow and the remaining half to the father. Note the mother and brothers and sisters do not participate in such a case.

If, however, the intestate left no widow or issue him surviving, but leaving a father, mother, etc., then in such a case the whole estate goes to the father. The mother gets no share. This clearly is an inequality and injustice which should be remedied, and I am glad to learn from Mrs. Cowan that a proposal is on foot to remedy this injustice.

In the State of Victoria, the unfair position in which a mother was placed has been recognised and an Act known as the Intestate Estates Distribution Act, 1916, is now in force there and alters the law whereby a father is entitled to the whole of the property of his children dying intestate and unmarried or dying without leaving a widow or issue surviving.

The Victorian Act provides that the father and mother should share equally in the case where no issue survives. This is only fair and equitable. In the case where the intestate leaves a mother surviving, but no wife, husband, issue, or father, and where the net value of the estate does not exceed £500, then the whole of the estate belongs to the mother.

Sir Walter James, K.C., expresses himself thus—

The Administration Act, 1903, does modify the Statute of Distributions, and as your Bill seeks to make further alterations to that statute I cannot see how any technical objection can be raised to it.

I should think—with respect—that the House can deal with your Bill on its merits without infringing any of its Standing Orders, and without the least fear that when passed the Bill would be prejudiced by any over-riding legislation.

Many others competent to speak support my proposal. I hope the amendment will not be passed.

Hon. T. WALKER: There is no question about the Bill being in order. In England there has been embodied in the legislation all that the member for West Perth is now asking for. In our own laws real property does not now descend in the way that it did. It has become included amongst personal property, and its value is always considered in distribution. We have, therefore, radically departed from the Statute of Distribution. We also make wills for those who die without having made one. In fact, the intestate has a will already made for him. Under our Administration Act we place the man and the woman on a footing of strict equality. If the wife dies intestate, the husband gets £500 and the balance is distributed. If the husband dies, the wife takes £500, and so on. If a son or a daughter having property dies without issue and the father and mother are alive, they take even shares. If the father is dead, the mother takes it. The Bill is getting away from the old moorings where in the estimation of the law a woman had no soul. She could not hold any property until the Married Women's Property Act was passed. This Bill only follows along the lines of that Act. It declares that a woman in that sphere has a right to the possession of property and to absolute control of it, irrespective of whether she marries again or not. At present the father can take it all, but why should not the mother have the same privilege?

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Because she is more likely to be influenced, if she marries again, than the father.

Hon. T. WALKER: Not at all. If it is required to safeguard property in the interests of the children, it cannot be placed in better hands than those of the mother. If there is one distinguishing feature that lifts woman above the ordinary level of man it is her love for her children.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. T. WALKER: The women of this State, who perhaps have attained greater liberties than the women of any other Australian State, should be placed upon a legal footing of equality. The Bill does no more than that. Something may be said, or supposed, against any reform that is put forward. I hope the Committee will come to the level of

the Imperial Parliament, which is a conservative body. All that may be said as regards a woman marrying again if she benefits from the intestacy of a child, can equally be said of a father. The danger of a re-marriage leading to neglect of the first family is one that need not be seriously regarded, especially in the case of the mother. Throughout nature the mother is the shelter of her children's welfare, even to the injury of her own. A woman's common sense can be trusted in the matter of property coming to her as the result either of her husband's or her child's intestacy.

Mr. Latham: She gets a preference of £500. Who gets the rest?

Hon. T. WALKER: The children.

Mr. Latham: That is all we want to achieve by the amendment.

Hon. T. WALKER: There are no children involved in the matter.

Mr. Latham: But what about brothers and sisters?

Hon. T. WALKER: The hon. member was talking about the children. The father takes all in the case of intestacy of the child. What about the brothers and sisters then?

Mr. Latham: I have no objection to an amendment in their behalf.

Hon. T. WALKER: This clause asks that the mother be treated in the same way as the father. It makes both parents alike. We do not legislate for abnormal cases. All through nature the father will desert the brood while the mother sticks to them. That applies not to the human family alone. It is the father who has the free leg. As we become more civilised, we become more regardful of the welfare of our offspring.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The suggestion of the member for York that the Bill might be amended in order to give protection to the brothers and sisters is well advised, and I hope it will be possible to report progress and bring in the necessary amendment.

Hon. T. Walker: The amendment is on the Notice Paper and before the Chair.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: But a further amendment is required in order to carry out the suggestion that the brothers and sisters, if any, should be protected. It is impossible to read into the amendment any reference to a brother or sister unless it is provided for in the Administration Act.

Hon. P. Collier: The brother and the sister are provided for in the amendment because they share equally in anything over £500.

Hon. T. Walker: Yes, as next-of-kin.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As to the remarks by the member for Kanowna regarding fathers, the latter seem to come in for a good deal of criticism. There has been more than a suggestion that fathers are unable to carry out their duty. That is not quite in accordance with facts.

Mr. Hickmott: Judging from recent divorce cases, it does not seem like it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No man fails in his affection for the mother unless he be that peculiarly abnormal creature

furnishing the exception to prove the rule. In the home where there is no father, usually the unfortunate widow has a very hard life indeed. The member for Kanowna made his references for the sake of argument, and I would hesitate to think he believes that fathers as a class are less regardful of their duty towards their offspring than the mothers.

Mr. Marshall: You find no lack of affection on the part of the mother towards her children.

Mr. Chesson: Nor yet on the part of the father, if he is natural.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: On behalf of the fathers I wish to say a few words in their defence.

The Premier: But in this case there is no father; he is dead.

Hon. P. Collier: Surely an argument about fathers and mothers does not get us anywhere in connection with this Bill?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: In view of the understanding regarding the distribution, I support the amendment because I think sisters and brothers should receive some consideration.

Mr. ANGELO: In paragraph (a) the Committee have already decided as equitable that the father and the mother should share equally in the distribution. In doing that, we left the brothers and sisters out of the distribution and, generally speaking, if the father and the mother are alive, they are looking after the children and there is no necessity to provide for the brothers and sisters as there would be if the father or the mother were dead. If the father be dead, the mother requires looking after and in most instances the brothers and sisters should also have a helping hand because in such circumstances they would be thrown into the world earlier than would ordinarily be the case. If the mother be dead and the father alive, he should not receive the whole estate but the brothers and sisters should receive their proportion. I would like to see the subclause amended so that the father or the mother, as the case may be, would get a preference to the extent of £500. But regarding anything over that sum, half the additional amount should go to the surviving parent and the other half should go to the brothers and sisters.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: An amendment on the amendment might be moved to strike out £500, with a view to inserting £2,000.

The Minister for Works: Do you think anyone with £2,000 would die intestate?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If not, the amendment would be required. If a son or daughter died and the mother had been dependent upon them for support, £500 would not provide the necessary support.

Mr. Latham: She gets a share afterwards.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It does not say that. If it is covered by the Administration Act itself, it is all right. I should say the amendment would limit the amount to £500.

Mr. Latham: That is not correct.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If that is not correct, I am in favour of the amendment.

Mr. MONEY: The Administration Act could better have been designated a Distribution Act, and the Bill could have been similarly designated. It does not mention anything to be altered in connection with the Administration Act of 1903.

Mrs. Cowan: That is not necessary.

Mr. MONEY: I do not say that it is, but it would have been proper to regard it as an amendment to the Statute of Distribution.

Mrs. Cowan: Other lawyers did not think so.

Mr. MONEY: Then they were wrong. As to the amendment under discussion, it provides that if the estate does not exceed £500, the whole of it will go to the mother. But there is nothing in the amendment about the residuary estate over £500 and that has to follow the statutory law of distribution under which the mother, sisters and brothers would share equally in the balance over £500. The amendment is not quite worded as I at first understood. It does not give a preference of £500 when the estate is over £500, and I think it should be amended to make that clear.

Mr. Marshall: What about the mother dying and the father being alive; he takes the lot!

Mr. MONEY: In considering this matter we must have regard for the whole question.

Mr. Marshall: We know about it all right. You speak for yourself.

Mr. MONEY: Sisters and brothers are in no way affected. If the wife is alive she will take £500 and half of what is left, and the father and mother will divide the remaining half. The interests of the sisters and brothers are not affected. It is only the share that would go to the father, not the whole of the estate, which is affected. If it is wrong for the father to take the whole of the estate, let us give the brothers and sisters a share. The good mothers, whom we are looking after, will pass on to their children any share they may get from the deceased child. And it means no probate duty if, after coming to the mother, the money is passed by her to the other children in the course of three years. If, say, £6,000 goes to the mother direct, probate duty will be payable on that sum. But if the mother dies in two years, and the money goes to the daughters, probate duty will be payable again by the daughters. Thus the estate will be wasted in double probate duty.

Mr. Underwood: You are trying to dodge a tax.

Mr. MONEY: Of course if a bad mother gets the money, it will never reach the brothers and sisters, for she will spend it, or, alternatively, she will be married anew for her money.

Mr. PICKERING: I move—

That progress be reported.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	18
Noes	..	..	..	16
Majority for				2

AYES.

Mr. Broun	Mr. Money
Mr. Carter	Mr. O'Loughlen
Mr. Collier	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Davies	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Harrison	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Lutey	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. Mann	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Mullany

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Hickmott
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Latham
Mr. Chesson	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Simons
Mrs. Cowan	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. George	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Walker
Mr. Heron	Mr. Munsie

(Teller.)

Motion thus passed; progress reported.

BILL—PENSIONERS (RATES EXEMPTION).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 7th September.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [8.13]: The Bill presents a little difficulty inasmuch as, while I yield to no man in sympathy for pensioners, whether old age or invalid, still one has to regard the question in a broader view than that restricted to the particular instances which may have come under the notice of the member for Leederville (Capt. Carter). The object of the Bill is to exempt from liability those who are receiving old age and invalid pensions, to exempt them from payment of rates under the Municipal Corporations Act and under the Road Districts Act. The instance mentioned by the hon. member gives pretty good point to the remarks I am going to make.

(Capt. Carter: It doesn't stand alone.)

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member said the first he had in mind was a pensioner paying rates amounting to £7 7s. per annum. By interjection I said I assumed that included the water and sewerage rate, and the hon. member replied that it covered all rates.

Mr. Munsie: It would not require to be an elaborate house in Perth to pay that amount in rates.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That sum would give a rateable value of £30 or £34 per annum but an actual value of £50 or £54 per annum. I was under the impression that

in fixing the pensions, all property in the possession of an applicant was taken into consideration, and a deduction made in respect of it. Therefore there would not be very much for such a man to receive by way of a pension. When dealing with local bodies such as municipal corporations and road districts, however, the hon. member is really asking that the funds of the State should in an indirect way go to supplement the pension which may be granted. Much as one might wish to assist those who in old age are relying on the pension, those who would be compelled by this Bill to supplement the pension through the non-payment of rates have a right to be consulted. I am the more confirmed in that view, because I doubt whether many of the local authorities have had an opportunity to learn anything about the Bill.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Perth City Council know all about it.

Capt. Carter: And a lot of money has been expended in propaganda.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not aware of that; I accept the hon. member's word. The peculiar circumstances existing in the newspaper world during the last few weeks has prevented those who rely on the newspapers for information on these matters from getting it. During the last few days we have rejoiced in reading our morning paper and afternoon disseminator of news, but I do not know that any reference to this proposal has been made by the papers in a way which would direct the special attention of the local authorities to it. We should not legislate on a matter having so wide an effect until the responsible local bodies have had an opportunity to state their views. It has been brought to my notice to-day that some districts in the vicinity of Perth and some a little further out have communicated with members of the House and entered a protest against the Bill. While no one doubts the single-heartedness of the purpose of the hon. member in introducing the Bill, any good that the Bill might do would be greatly emphasised if it received the concurrence of the local governing bodies affected. After all, the House simply represents the views of the people, and the local bodies who undertake responsible duties without payment should understand exactly what is proposed. We should ask those representative bodies, who are closely and constantly in touch with the people in their districts, what they think of the proposal contained in the Bill, and if it transpired that they approved of it, the measure would be sure of receiving a bigger backing than the hon. member can expect at present. We are all in sympathy with those who are not too well blessed with this world's goods, but while we occupy positions as representatives of the people, we have to set our sympathy aside and judge the question from a true judicial standpoint, being careful not to infringe the rights and privileges of local authorities or take a step which may not meet with their full approval. I suggest that means be taken to communicate with every local body throughout the State. We could

obtain their views within a fortnight and then be guided by their suggestions.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [8.21]: I do not think the member for Leederville (Capt. Carter) has given this Bill the consideration it deserves. He stated in justification for introducing the measure that he had known of cases where the local authorities had taken action against old age pensioners for the enforcement of payment. This is the first time I have heard of such a thing being done.

Capt. Carter: Did I make that statement?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The hon. member implied it.

Capt. Carter: I did not even imply it. You are stretching what I said.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Did not the hon. member point out that he knew of an old person who had to pay £7 odd in rates?

The Minister for Works: Yes, 2s. 10d. a week.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If this person had to pay those rates, it is obvious that he was under compulsion to do it.

Capt. Carter: When you get a notice, you must pay.

Mr. Willcock: Notices are sent out that, if rates are not paid, legal proceedings will be taken.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I have not heard of one invalid pensioner having been forced to pay his rates.

Mr. Willcock: I know a lot of them are paying rates.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: We all know that. Under the Municipal Corporations Act and the Roads Act the property carries the rates, and I am of opinion that no municipal or road board representative would enforce payment in the case of an old age or invalid pensioner.

Mr. Richardson: They never do.

Mr. Willcock: These people are worried by getting notices.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: There is a lot of worry in this world that we cannot avoid. Those appointed to administer these Acts must carry out their duties and, if notices are not sent out, there is no claim for the rates. I have a certain amount of sympathy with the desire of the member for Leederville, but I cannot approve of the method he is adopting to attain his end. Local authorities cannot carry on their work unless they get revenue sometimes. Since the Bill was introduced I have made inquiries regarding the effect it would have in my district. I am informed that we have 117 to 120 old age and invalid pensioners in East Fremantle.

Capt. Carter: The letter sent out was one of the finest pieces of misrepresentation you could imagine.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I am not taking any notice of the letter sent out, though I have seen a copy of it.

Capt. Carter: I did not expect you would.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If we reduced the number in East Fremantle to 70, allowing that these persons live in houses of the small rental value of 12s. a week, it would mean a loss to the district of £300 a year. The town clerk informs me that the passing of the Bill would involve a greater loss than that, because the houses in which some of the pensioners reside have a far greater rental value than 12s. a week. At present it is impossible to get much of a house for 12s. a week.

Mr. Latham: They cannot pay 12s. out of 15s.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I admit that. I give place to no one in a desire to assist these people, but the difficulty is real. A man has to be 65 years of age before he can get an old age pension.

Mr. Willcock: If he cannot work, he can get it at 60.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: That is so. For a woman the age is 60. On a general average the relief proposed under this Bill would apply for eight or 10 years. When death occurred, the property would probably go to someone in good financial circumstances. Therefore, if we exempt the pensioners, it should be subject to a condition that the person who inherits the property after the death of the pensioner pays the rates for the period for which exemption was granted. In other words, the rates should be a charge on the property.

Capt. Carter: That is fair enough.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is impossible for a couple receiving 15s. a week each to pay out of their small pensions the municipal or road board rates, in addition to water supply and sewerage rates which are not covered by this Bill. I do not think any local authority ever enforces payment by pensioners. If anyone suggested that, he would not be fit to hold a position on one of these boards. It would be fairer to relieve the old people from the payment of rates for the time being, and make the rates a charge on the property after the present owners passed away. Some of these properties are worth £600, £700 and £800. The residence of an applicant for a pension is not taken into consideration in fixing the pension.

Mr. Davies: That is, so long as he lives in the residence.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Quite so. I know of persons with a few pounds invested in house property who are getting considerably less from their investments than they would get if they put their money into a home of their own and obtained the old age pension. Such persons as these would be compelled to pay the rates as they became due. I have endeavoured to get assistance in such cases from the Old Age Pensions Department but have failed to do so. The Federal Government are not paying sufficient under the present high cost of living. The sum of 15s. a week is not equivalent to the 10s. which was originally paid. Something must be done

to relieve these old pensioners in the matter of rates and other claims made against them. If the member for Leederville would amend the Bill in the direction I have indicated, it would meet with the approval of most of the local bodies and municipal councils in the State. There are no legal means whereby the local authorities can exempt these people. The main object of the hon. member is to make provision whereby they shall not enforce such claims. The suggestion I have made would overcome the difficulty. If an old age pensioner owns property worth £600 there is no reason why it should pass into the hands of some person—who, perhaps, had neglected his duty towards the pensioner—until such time as the rates due upon it had been paid to the local authority. In such cases the property should carry the burden of the rates before passing on to another party.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [8.33]: Up to a certain point I am in accord with the principle of the Bill, but I do not see why the tenant was introduced by the member for Leederville. I fail to see why, because the man who happens to live in a house is an old age pensioner, no rates need be paid upon it.

Capt. Carter: I will delete that.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The landlord would squeeze as much as he could out of the tenant, whether an old age pensioner or not, and no benefit would accrue to the old age pensioner. The suggestion of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) may be all right so far as it concerns the old age pensioner, but the invalid pensioner is also included in the Bill. The latter person may have begun to draw his pension at the age of 30, and may be drawing it for another 30 years, and, by the time his property passes into the hands of another, its value may be less than the amount of rates due upon it.

Capt. Carter: Is it safe to assume that the invalid pensioner would live longer than the old age pensioner?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I know of some invalid pensioners who have been drawing pensions for 16 years, and may be doing so for another 16. Some of these old people have received rate notices to the effect that unless the money is paid forthwith legal proceedings will be taken.

The Minister for Works: They are given a certain time in which to pay.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If they do not pay within that time they are threatened with legal proceedings. The principle of the Old Age Pensions Act is that if anyone through thrift has been enabled to become possessed of his own house, the property will not be taken into consideration in allotting the pensions, provided he occupies the house himself. We should extend that principle as far as we can. We cannot exempt these people from taxation, for if they had a sufficient income to be taxable they would not be drawing a

pension. With the exception of that portion relating to the tenant, I support the Bill.

Mr. STUBBS (Wagin) [8.37]: The principle contained in the Bill should commend itself to all. Suppose, however, all the invalid pensioners decided to live at the seaside; what effect would that have on the municipality concerned, who would have to pay for the upkeep of roads and footpaths, if the Bill were put into effect? The revenue would be seriously affected. I am sure the member for Leederville will agree to amend the Bill, making the rates a charge upon the property, and providing that the heirs to it should pay them.

Capt. Carter: I am willing to do that.

Mr. STUBBS: With that exception I support the Bill.

Mr. RICHARDSON (Subiaco) [8.38]: I am sure that members are in accord with the general principle of the Bill, but there are certain aspects to which they must give consideration. We are agreed upon the principle.

Mr. Latham: It is a good one.

Mr. RICHARDSON: Yes; but it is not the function of any local authority to look after the invalid and old age pensioners in Western Australia. That is a duty which belongs to the State and the Federal Governments. If we pass the Bill we shall be creating a new principle. In my own electorate there are many pensioners.

Capt. Carter: How many?

Mr. RICHARDSON: We are setting out upon a new principle, and it may lead to something serious. The suggestion of the member for North-East Fremantle is a good one, but I am doubtful if it would cover the situation. A local authority has to rely upon its rates from year to year in order to carry out the functions required of it. If it is to be deprived of, say, £2,000 a year from one source that deficit will have to fall upon the remaining ratepayers within the area.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Many of the rates will be paid by the people to whom the property will go.

Mr. RICHARDSON: If we are going to afford relief of that nature, no old age pensioner will pay any rate. I agree that 15s. a week is too small an amount upon which to expect a man to live, and out of which to expect him to pay rates and taxes. We should make representations to the Federal Government with the object of having the allowance increased. That would be a more reasonable way of dealing with the matter. If all the pensioners decided to live in one municipality it would be a serious thing for the local authority.

Mr. Latham: It is the function of people to be charitable.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I am just as charitable as the hon. member.

Mr. Latham: I am not speaking in a personal way.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I have put through five cases of this kind to every one the hon. member has put through. I am speaking from the point of view of the municipalities. My actions are well known and I resent an interjection of that nature.

Mr. Latham: I also am speaking from the point of view of the municipality.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I will show the hon. member that he is wrong. Is it fair that any body of ratepayers should be charged with the maintenance of old age and invalid pensioners?

Capt. Carter: Have you got them all in Subino?

Mr. RICHARDSON: Not any more than the member for Leederville has them in his electorate. It would not be right to charge the electors of that hon. member with the maintenance of these people.

Hon. P. Collier: As the old age pensioners die, so will the local authorities collect the rates.

Mr. RICHARDSON: For every one that dies one or two others probably take his place.

Hon. P. Collier: The payment is only deferred.

Mr. RICHARDSON: The first list continues. Although I am in sympathy with giving relief to old age pensioners, I hope the hon. member will agree to an adjournment of the debate.

Capt. Carter: I will accept the amendment of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. G. Angwin.)

Mr. RICHARDSON: If we adjourn the debate we may be able to find some means of giving consideration to the pensioners, who, I agree with the member for Leederville, are not able to pay rates. However, the ratepayers should not be burdened with something that properly falls to the Federal Government.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. R. S. Sampson—Swan) [8.46]: I hesitate to believe that there is any necessity for the Bill. No facts have been adduced to show that any old age pensioners have suffered.

Capt. Carter: You must have been asleep during my speech.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That would be quite justifiable.

Capt. Carter: It would be quite usual.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I thank the hon. member again. I hope that state of affairs may long continue. I find it difficult to believe that any local authority has caused to any pensioner pain or difficulty as suggested. The Road Districts Act of 1919, by Section 260, provides—

The board may, with the approval of the Minister, write off arrears of rates due in respect of any rateable land.

Mr. Latham: You know how much the boards would write off.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The board with which I am associated have never yet submitted to a Minister for Works a request for the writing off of rates and had it re-

fused. The Municipal Corporations Act, by Section 420a, provides—

A council may, with the approval of the Minister, write off arrears of rates due in respect of any rateable lands.

Members of local governing bodies have, as a rule, only one object, to do their duty fairly and properly. I am perfectly satisfied that no road board member or municipal councillor would be guilty of harassing any old age pensioner.

Mr. O'Loughlin: How much have your board written off?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: We have dealt with every case on its merits. As regards returned soldiers who have taken up virgin land, we are remitting their rates for 2½ years. Approval has been given for that. Two years being the limit in this connection, a further extension of six months was obtained after the half-year had gone by. In view of the sections I have quoted, there is no need for the Bill, which can only have a hampering and harassing effect. I hope the measure will be withdrawn.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [8.50]: I commend the member for Leederville (Capt. Carter) for having introduced the Bill. I will submit proof of the likelihood of cases of hardship under the existing system. I have here a letter which has reached me from the municipality of York, together with a copy of a letter received by that municipality from the Perth City Council. The latter body's letter which is signed by the town clerk, reads as follows:—

I am directed by the council to place their views before you in regard to the Pensioners (Rates Exemption) Bill now before the House. It is provided in the Bill that pensioners shall be exempt from payment of municipal rates in respect to land of which they are either owner or occupier. The council protests against the Bill, for the following reasons:—(a) The old age pensions are granted by the Federal Government, and if there is good ground for rendering additional assistance to the pensioners, surely the position is that the Federal Government should be asked to increase the pension allowance, and not, as provided in the Bill, make deductions from the local authorities. (b) The rates levied by the municipal councils and road boards are in the nature of payment for services rendered; consequently if would be eminently unfair to take the course suggested in the Bill.

Then the letter sets out a statement of old age and invalid pensions payable in the city of Perth.

(d) There is no proposal to exempt the pensioners from payment of water rate, which is a similar rate (for services rendered) to municipal rates. Why this exemption? (e) The Bill exempts the pensioner who is a tenant from liability for payment of rates. This would merely benefit the owner who is not a pensioner. Why? The council trusts that the Bill will not be passed; and that if

a case be made out for the granting of additional assistance to the pensioners, such assistance be rendered by the Federal Government.

We know very well that the maximum old age pension is 15s. per week. One of the best arguments I have heard put up in this Chamber was that delivered by the Opposition Leader on the basic wage question. I call that argument to mind in connection with these old age pensioners, who have to support themselves for a whole week on 15s., and in addition pay rent or rates as the case may be. We have no power over the Federal Treasurer. No resolution passed by this Parliament would have any effect on the Commonwealth Legislature. In view of that fact, if the Federal Government will not realise their responsibilities, let us do the next best thing and forego rates on the property of an old age pensioner until it is taken over by the beneficiaries. No argument should be put up against such a proposal. I am surprised at the slightest objection to it. The letter of the Perth City Council is simply destructive, and puts up no suggestion whatever for the rendering of assistance. In my electorate everybody is willing to do his or her bit in this respect. We recently had to put our hands in our pockets to build a hospital, and we are just as willing to raise the little extra money needed to pay the rates of old age pensioners. There should be no occasion to ask the Minister for permission to do certain things. Why should an old age pensioner be called upon to present himself with papers countersigned by a road board secretary or a town clerk and say, "I am an old age pensioner; please write these rates off." When I get hold of a contemptible letter such as that from the Perth City Council, it makes me wonder whether the people who put forward such arguments have any sense of their responsibilities. If there were no necessity for the Bill, such a letter would never have been written. The member for North-East Fremantle has suggested an entirely fair and equitable way of dealing with the matter. I hope that amendment will be accepted if the House does not consider the Bill as it stands quite suitable. Meantime I support the second reading.

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [8.56]: The member for Leederville said that this was an innocent little Bill. There is one phase of the matter which I desire to place before the House, a phase which I think has not been touched on by previous speakers. If I may digress for a moment, I should like to refer to a measure brought down last session to impose a hospital tax. It will be remembered that the proposal was that certain people should be taxed for the upkeep of hospitals, and that the measure was given a very hostile reception. Eventually it was referred to a select committee. The method there proposed was the same as that now suggested by the member for Leederville, to tax only one section of the people of a municipality or road board, namely the ratepayers.

I take second place to no man in this Chamber or anywhere else as regards the desire to render assistance—

Hon. P. Collier: I do not think we are called upon at all to give ourselves a boost about our sympathies. Surely it is not necessary for us to put forward our sympathetic feelings?

Mr. DAVIES: It is quite unnecessary, I admit; but that aspect was mentioned. The phase of the question I desire to stress is this: If we are going to carry the burden—and I say it is the duty of the State to come to the assistance of people who are unable to support themselves—there should be contributions by all the persons in the State, whether ratepayers or non-ratepayers.

Hon. P. Collier: Every man and every woman is a ratepayer—if not directly, then indirectly.

Mr. DAVIES: That is so; but those who are actually ratepayers will be more heavily taxed by reason of the passing of this Bill, simply because they are ratepayers. They are already rated in respect of the 15s. per week pension paid by the Federal Government, and there would be an additional tax on them under this measure. Will hon. members overlook the fact that we come to the assistance of widows and orphans in this State through our Charities Department? The Government now make a maximum allowance of 9s. per week to a widow, with a further maximum of 9s. for each child. I know of more than one case in this State where a widow has been left with six children, and the maximum allowance made to her by the State is 9s. per head. Are we to go to the assistance of such a widow if she has a home in a road board district or municipality? There is no mention of that in the Bill. If it is right to assist the pensioner, it is right to assist the widow. Let us pay regard to every aspect of the question. I commend the member for Leederville to this extent, that he wants to come to the assistance of the pensioners. But let us be just, and to that end it is necessary that some more comprehensive measure than the present should be introduced. Before the second reading is agreed to, I think that aspect should be gone into. I want to stress that phase because the Bill is not so innocent as it looks on the surface. Some reference has been made to what it means. I have received a letter from the municipality of Guildford, and it is interesting to see what it means in that small district. In their letter to me they state that in that municipality, with only 500 ratepayers, there are about 60 of these pensioners, and that means that the loss in rates to that municipality will be £150. That is how it will affect one municipality. If the call had been upon the whole of the population in that municipality to pay the additional tax of £150, it would not be so bad, but when we call upon only the men and women who own houses and do not ask the lodgers and single girls, who, perhaps, are earning more than some of the rate-

payers, to take their share, I think the matter should receive further consideration.

Mr. Chesson: Do not the lodgers help to pay the rent?

Mr. DAVIES: I admit that is so, but still the proposal under the Bill is to tax only a small proportion of the people. I regard the suggestion by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) as a good one. Another important aspect was referred to by the member for Subiaco (Mr. Richardson). It may not be known to hon. members, but if they were to peruse the statistics, they would notice that the pensioners are increasing in number and each year this means a heavier burden upon the people as a whole. Whatever is charged to-day, will be considerably increased in six years' time. What we may regard in an innocent sort of way to-day, may become an enormous tax in the future. I commend the member for Leederville (Capt. Carter) for the consideration he has shown to the pensioners in his Bill, but I suggest these aspects should receive further consideration.

Mr. MULLANY (Menzies) [9.4]: While I commend the action of the member for Leederville (Capt. Carter) in attempting to do something to relieve the position of some of the old age and invalid pensioners in Western Australia, I do not feel that I can support even the second reading of the Bill in its present form. Every hon. member will agree that not sufficient provision is made for people who are so unfortunate as to depend either upon the invalid or the old age pension. While the Bill is an attempt to relieve, to a certain extent, one section of the people in receipt of those pensions—that is, the section of the pensioners who own some property—there is no provision for relieving those old age and invalid pensioners who own no property at all, and whose number is infinitely greater than that of the pensioners who do own property.

Mr. A. Thomson: Some pay rent.

Mr. MULLANY: Yes; they live wherever they can.

Capt. Carter: How do you suggest we should assist them?

Mr. MULLANY: I think this matter should be gone into further, rather than to pass legislation which would extend assistance to only one section of these pensioners. As members of the State Parliament, we come into contact with many people who desire to receive the old age or invalid pension and we know the whole circumstances regarding those particular cases when the pensions are being assessed, and we know how the pension is apportioned to the individuals. I can understand the desire of the member for Leederville to give more assistance to the pensioners in Western Australia, but I cannot see why we should deal with only one section and that, the smaller and more fortunately situated section of those pensioners. I also agree with the contention raised by the member for Subiaco that this should not be a tax upon

municipalities only. If some proposal were brought forward enabling us to help the whole of the old age or invalid pensioners, I would support it, but I think the member for Leederville will agree that he has not gone far enough. He has only attempted to relieve the more fortunately situated section of the pensioners. To attempt to do that would be a mistake. I would like to see the debate adjourned so that the whole question might be gone into more exhaustively. If we pass the Bill, we will help only the more fortunately situated of the pensioners and exclude a far stronger section, numerically speaking, who are not in so advantageous a position as those the member for Leederville desires to relieve.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [9.8]: I wish to join with other members who have congratulated the member for Leederville (Capt. Carter) upon introducing the Bill, but I fancy by this stage he is ready to say: "Heaven save me from my friends." The sentiments expressed by the member for York (Mr. Latham) do him infinite credit. The member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) takes up the line of argument that we should not afford this small measure of relief to a section of the old age pensioners.

Capt. Carter: We are not giving them anything; we are relieving them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: He says that we are not to do that because we are unable to extend an equal measure of relief to another section of the pensioners who do not own homes. In other words, he says we should not attempt to see that one section of the pensioners should have butter on their bread, because there is a considerable section who eat dry bread.

Mr. Mullany: That is not so.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member should keep quiet. I did not interrupt him. Mr. Mullany: That is not what I said.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Menzies should not interject.

Mr. Mullany: I will interject.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is most disorderly.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The member for Menzies was allowed to have his say.

Mr. Mullany: I suggested the debate should be adjourned.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member should behave himself.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member does not like the matter being put before the House. Of all the plausible, hypocritical utterances I have ever heard—

Mr. Mullany: I wished to see the debate adjourned.

Hon. P. COLLIER: If the hon. member wants a duet, let him sing his song! He does not like to be told of the effect of his argument, which is, as I have indicated, that we are not to allow those pensioners who own a home, to have bread and butter because others have to eat dry bread. That was his argument.

Mr. Mullany: No, it was not. That is your interpretation.

Hon. P. COLLIER: There can be no getting away from that fact. The member for Menzies said that the Bill did not go far enough, and that the member for Leederville should have brought down a measure that was more comprehensive. The member for Leederville has done all that may be done under the Bill. It does lie within the province of the Bill to relieve these people of the local tax; it is not open to him, under the Bill, to assist that section of the pensioners who do not own their own homes. Then we come to the member for Guildford (Mr. Davies), who took the precaution, as he usually does, to profess his profound sympathy with the old age pensioners. No one had accused him of a lack of sympathy with them. Quite voluntarily, he explained to us he was burning with sympathy and dying with desire to do what he could for them. I always suspect these men who begin by protesting in that way. My suspicions were well confirmed before the member for Guildford resumed his seat. He says that the wealthy municipality of Guildford will suffer a loss of £150!

(Capt. Carter: To help 60 old people.)

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, but still the member for Guildford, who is dying with sympathy for these old people, says that the wealthy property owners of Guildford are going to suffer to the extent of £150 if we afford relief to these poor old fellows, who, no doubt, by their efforts and toil long years ago, enabled many of those whom the hon. member has in mind, to become possessed of the property they own. That is the attitude taken up by the member for Guildford. Then again he says that this burden will only fall on the poor property-owning section of Guildford! The hon. member has evidently not studied economies closely.

Mr. Davies: Hasn't he?

Hon. P. COLLIER: He does not know that everyone pays rates, the single man and the single girl as well.

Mr. Davies: You did not make that point regarding the hospital tax.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They purchase their requirements from storekeepers, who pass on their rates and taxes to the single men and women as well.

Mr. Davies interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. P. COLLIER: I like to hear those members, who are so sympathetic with the old age pensioners, interjecting when they get their views returned to them. The hon. member says that this burden will fall on the property-owners of Guildford. If, he contended, we could only rope in the single girls and the lodgers, he would support the Bill. The hon. member had a hundred "ifs" and "ands," while half-a-dozen times he commended the member for Leederville for introducing the Bill. It is a long time since he exercised his mental faculties to raise arguments against the Bill. "I commend

him for having introduced the Bill, but . . . but . . . but . . ." Fifteen hundred reasons why the Bill should not pass. That is the attitude of the hon. member. Even if it does fall on a section of the people, and even if it is in the first place the responsibility of the Federal Parliament to provide for these pensioners, I say it is not unbecoming of us to do our little bit to relieve them of those charges. A loss of £150 per annum will not entirely send the municipality of Guildford into the Bankruptcy Court. Then there is another argument, similar to that of the member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany). He says the Bill does not go far enough, that while these pensioners get 15s. per week, there are many widows maintaining children and in receipt of only 9s. per week. The hon. member objects to the Bill on the ground that widows are maintaining children and receiving State aid to the extent of only 9s. per week! His objection is similar to that of the member for Menzies. One would have thought that a member possessed of such deep sympathy would say "My feelings impel me to support the hon. member in his laudable motive, although it does not go far enough. I will endeavour to obtain a greater measure of assistance for the widows and children." That is the attitude which a member who is sincere would take. He would not withhold relief to those people because there is another section who are in distress and not getting a sufficient measure of assistance. That is not a line which a man who is genuinely in sympathy with these cases of distress would pursue.

Mr. Mullany interjected.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Very well, we shall have them all eating dry bread. Keep them on the dry bread limit. That is the argument with which the hon. member is perfectly satisfied. Keep them down on the starvation limit because there are widows with children and in receipt of only 9s. per week. And this from members who are bursting with sympathy for those in distress! Then we come to the Colonial Secretary: "This Bill is not required at all. It ought to be withdrawn, because there is in the Roads Act or some other Act a section which empowers the road board, with the consent of the Minister, to remit these charges."

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Never yet has there been a remission in favour of an old age pensioner.

The Colonial Secretary: No request has ever been refused.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No, the sympathetic road board to which the hon. member belongs has never failed to give the necessary relief. Of course not! But evidently they have never put themselves out of the way to notify the pensioners that they could get the tax remitted if they so desired. In view of the letter written by the Perth City Council and read by the member for York (Mr. Latham), in which members are urged to reject the

Bill on the score of the loss the council would incur—in view of that, does the hon. member say those pensioners are not going to be called upon to pay up? The very fact that in some quarters people are organising to defeat the Bill is in itself proof that the local authorities collect their rates and desire to continue to collect them. Fancy the Perth City Council, with two pages of closely type-written matter, urging members to reject the Bill! Fancy that council saying, "Well, although the Bill has not been passed, and therefore there is no statutory obligation on us to remit these rates, nevertheless we are not going to collect them at all"! Why spend money having this matter typed and posted to members if they do not intend to collect the rates from pensioners? I have no doubt whatever that if a pensioner went to an infinite amount of trouble to reach the town clerk, and if when he got into the august presence he took off his hat and bowed in a duly humble way and presented his request, he would be told that the matter would be placed before the mayor or some other functionary, and that he, the pensioner, could call again. I have no doubt that if in the last resort the pensioner, having no money for tram or train fare, hobbled along on his stick a mile and a-half and preferred his request for remission and was sufficiently persistent to keep on pressing for that relief, probably in the end he would obtain it.

Mr. Willcock: He might.

Mr. Pickering: By his persistency.

Hon. P. COLLIER: But we know perfectly well that when these old folk receive their final notices—many of them in their long lives have never received an official document—imposing documents bearing the great stamp and seal of the City of Perth, they become alarmed and rush out immediately to discharge their obligations. They have not become inured, as the member for Pingelly (Mr. Hickmott) is inured, to receiving official Government documents demanding payment, and philosophically papering the walls of their houses with those documents as the hon. member has always done. Those old folks have not been hanging on to the State cow for half their lives, and so, on receiving formidable looking demands, they become alarmed and rush out and pay. I question the sincerity of members who are professing their deep sympathy with a measure and at the same time trying to raise up all possible barriers and obstacles to its passage. The Bill does not go far enough. When in Committee I will endeavour to amend it, and I am sure the hon. member responsible for it will assist me. I should like to see the relief extended to the payment, not only of the municipal rates, but of water and sewerage rates as well.

Mr. Underwood: So should I.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Talk about harassing old age pensioners! On the goldfields, although perhaps without the knowledge of the Minister for Water Supply, a charge of 10s. per annum rent is made for water meters! That is something from which those in the metropolitan area are exempt. The Water

Supply Department, in addition to exacting rates from old age pensioners on the goldfields, harass those pensioners to the extent of repeatedly sending them ordinary notices and seven days' notices and final notices for the payment of 10s. per annum meter rent.

The Minister for Works: Do they pay for the water they consume?

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes, and they pay also the meter rent, which is a scandal, because the meters do not cost more than about £3. In many instances the Minister has obtained by way of rent three or four times the original cost of the meter.

The Minister for Works: That is not correct.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is correct, and the old age pensioners of Kalgoorlie and Boulder are paying the scandalous charge to-day. Last week I received a communication from a pensioner in my electorate, saying he had been pressed for payment of the 10s. meter rent, that he had gone and paid it, but that he wished me to see the Minister to the end that he might be exempt from this exaction in future. Yet we are asked to believe that there is no need for the Bill, that it ought to be withdrawn, because all the road boards will act as the Swan Road Board has done. If the Colonial Secretary had wished to enlighten the House as to the extent of relief afforded by the road board with which he is associated, he would have come along with the detailed information and said, "During the last 10 years we have relieved old age pensioners to this extent." He gave us no such information.

The Colonial Secretary: No steps have been taken to enforce payment.

Hon. P. COLLIER: That is an evasion! I do not think the Minister is frank. He means that the local authorities have not actually prosecuted pensioners. All the ordinary steps taken in regard to other ratepayers have been taken against pensioners. They have been notified in the usual way and asked to pay up. But because the road board has not actually gone to the length of prosecuting pensioners, the Colonial Secretary says no steps have been taken to enforce payment! That is a mere evasion. The Minister would actually claim as evidence of the board's sympathetic attitude that they do not go to the extreme of dragging pensioners into the court. They take all ordinary routine measures, but because they stop short at the door of the police court, the Colonial Secretary would take credit for generosity towards pensioners. That is the attitude of the Minister.

The Colonial Secretary: The Act gives the protection necessary.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Minister does not know anything about the Act, although for long years he has been associated with the road board. The Act merely gives the board power to exempt pensioners from payment. The Minister, although he has been only 12 months in Parliament, ought to know the difference between power to exempt and

actual protection. The Act affords pensioners no protection whatever, and the Minister ought to know that. He is evading the issue. I can only come to the conclusion that those members who have put up these miserable objections to-night are really anxious to secure payment from pensioners.

Mr. Mac'allum Smith: The Perth City Council has issued a distress warrant against a widow in Victoria Park.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I am not surprised at anything the Perth City Council might do. I add that in this action the City of Perth is not alone. It is in the interests of those old people that we should take away from the Perth City Council the power to issue distress warrants. In this country we boast of our wonderful potentialities, our wonderful wealth developed and undeveloped, of the great future which is opening before us all; yet here to-night we are spending time with member after member miserably whining, "We cannot afford a few hundred pounds for the relief of these old age pensioners." It does not do us very much credit. I commend the hon. member for having introduced the Bill, and I hope the amendment foreshadowed by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) will be carried.

Mrs. COWAN (West Perth) [9.28]: I intend to support the second reading. I am glad the Bill has been brought down. I have known some very unfortunate cases. There is certainly something wrong with the system that permits of such things. It is all very well to say the Minister can remit, but I should like to know how often the Minister does remit. But before it gets to that stage, those unfortunate people have to undergo the humiliation of taking steps for relief, which brings home to them the fact that they are in dependence on the community. Very often, too, they are quite nice people, overtaken by misfortune. It is a perfectly right and just Bill, and we should support its principles as we would also support the amendment indicated by the member for North-East Fremantle. I am glad this debate has taken place, because it will show those unfortunate people—nobody has ever put it to them before; I myself did not know of it—that if they go to the Minister they can, after much trouble, have their rates remitted. I should like to know how many cases have been remitted, and why it is not made easier for those people to reach the department with requests for remission and be quickly replied to, instead of having the humiliation of awaiting the decision and feeling anxious and miserable while they are so waiting. I strongly commend the member for Leederville for bringing in the Bill, and I shall certainly support it.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [9.30]: I have only one feeling on this matter, and that is that the Bill cannot be as far reaching as the House desires. There are altogether too few

old age pensioners who have become beneficiaries under the Act, and it should be the desire of the House to extend its active sympathy so far as possible in the reduction of these rates. I support the second reading.

Mr. SIMONS (East Perth) [9.31]: I support the Bill. Respect for old age and consideration for those who have fought the battle of life and pioneered this country and have now reached the sere and yellow leaf should prompt us to be generous. While some of the municipalities may experience a shrinkage of revenue, it will be so slight in proportion to the general income that a very mild re-distribution of rates in connection with those left to contribute to the city revenues will easily compensate for any loss which may occur through the passage of this measure. There is no question that the operation of the system of old age pensions has taken a course which was never intended by its framers. It has become increasingly difficult to obtain a pension. A pension is only granted after the severest inquisitorial examination.

Mr. Willcock: And one every year.

Mr. SIMONS: An examination practically open for review when many of the recipients have not the mental strength or bodily health to effectively defend their claims to what should be a right instead of, as is too often officially regarded, a privilege. I am aware that the distribution of old age pensions is a Commonwealth function, and therefore we cannot discuss the system in detail. However, this is one of the rare occasions when the State can do something to make the last years of the lives of its citizens a little easier. It is our function as a State Parliament without being maudlin or mushy to try to do something to make a little happier those whose footsteps are turning to that bourne whence no traveller returns. I am very pleased that the member for Leederville has given us an opportunity to supplement this function of pensioning which has been carried out by the Commonwealth authority.

Capt. CARTER (Leederville—in reply) [9.34]: I have heard such varied expressions of opinion to-night from various members that the difference of their attitude at the beginning and close of their speeches, as lightly touched on by the Leader of the Opposition, brought to my mind a few lines from Shakespeare which I have since turned up—

"Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee."

Some of the commendations levelled at me have been in very questionable shape. I

have been commended for bringing in the Bill until I have blushed with all the coyness of my youth for such a time that I could blush no more. But it has come to this that members, in the enthusiasm of their commendation have forgotten to support my Bill as I would have liked them to do. Probably the most remarkable feature of the whole debate has been the attitude adopted by the Minister for Works. He was in the most amiable of moods to-night and, for the first time in my short experience as a member of this House, desired to make us believe that he was at least willing to eat humble pie. I have never seen the Minister so keen to consult the people before we placed on them any further imposition. I have never known him to be so concerned that we should consult the wishes of every little local authority in this huge State of Western Australia.

The Minister for Works: The only humble pie was in your imagination.

Capt. CARTER: He went so far as to suggest that I should withdraw and ask permission of the local authorities to again bring this Bill before the House.

The Minister for Works: I think you should have the decency to consult them anyhow.

Hon. P. Collier: Or write to them.

Capt. CARTER: Or personally visit them. That has been the attitude of the Perth City Council. Being a little more broad-minded than they are, I would not do it, but they took the matter into their own hands, and distributed the circulars, so far as I can ascertain, to every local authority in the State.

The Minister for Works: I was not aware of that when I spoke. I have only learned it since.

Capt. CARTER: I am not suggesting that the Minister is responsible. I know that the Perth City Council are responsible for the propaganda levelled at this measure ever since it was first introduced into the House. I shall tell members the whole history of the case. I went in a straightforward way to the Town Clerk of Perth and told him of my intention and asked him for information with regard to the old age pensioners who owned property and were paying rates to the City Council. He said he would go into the matter, and if possible give me the information. That was about a month ago. I have not heard anything further from him, but I in common with other members received a letter similar to that received by the council at York and forwarded to the member for the district. That letter, in my opinion, contains certain very grave misstatements of facts. It gives numbers which I am not going to place before the House, because members can see them in the table set forth. I have just as much right to express my opinion, because they give no proof of the statements they make. They have grossly misrepresented the case

with a view to increasing the opposition to the Bill. It is not my intention, nor is it the responsibility of any member introducing a Bill, to go cap in hand to any local authority and ask their permission to do so. The whole question is one that this House and this House alone should settle. I was very pleased to hear the remarks of the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin). He is a man of much wider experience than I, and he suggested what in my opinion is an excellent amendment which I shall be prepared to accept in the Committee stage, namely that the exemption period during which an old age pensioner is living in his house shall be only until the time of his death and that it shall be a first charge on the property before it is sold or at his death, whichever may be the sooner. Such an amendment will cover all the objections which have been raised to-night. I have not heard one really logical objection to the Bill other than that it would impose a big charge on local authorities. I am pleased to accept the suggestion of the member for North-East Fremantle. I would go further than he went and say that it means giving credit over an average period of five to eight years. These old age pensioners who, towards the end of their lives are coming to the Government for this pension help, have but a few years before them—on an average five to eight years. At the end of that period or whatever the average may prove to be, the local authorities will get their money. Meanwhile certain relief of a practical nature will be given to people who are in dire distress. The member for Subiaco (Mr. Richardson) said I was introducing an altogether new principle into our legislation. In my opinion I have touched on a principle which is as old or older than Christianity, namely the principle of charity. We are not asking the local authorities to look after our old age and invalid pensioners, and the hon. member's statement about Cottesloe was about the weakest and most illogical argument which could be advanced. There is no suggestion or possibility of the sum total of our old age pensioners being grouped together in Cottesloe, Subiaco, Fremantle or anywhere else. As the proposal will not alter in any respect the distribution of our old age pensioners, it is not going to hit any one local authority harder than another. I was sorry to note the Colonial Secretary's attitude to the Bill. He quoted the Municipal Corporations and Roads Acts, and indicated sections which stated that under the authority or by permission of the Minister, bad debts might be written off. Why write them off? Why make them bad debts when this Bill, amended in the direction suggested by the member for North-East Fremantle, will make the concession in the nature of an exemption or loan for a period and will be a first charge on the property.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Eighty to ninety per cent. of the rates written off are in respect of property purchased by the Government after the striking off of the rates.

Capt. CARTER: It is possible the local authorities will find that their coffers will not be affected very much if the exemption period of, say, five years is agreed to. The member for Menzies (Mr. Mullany) mentioned that I was simply seeking to legislate for a particular section of old age pensioners; that a man with a house would not pay and the other man would. With the Leader of the Opposition I maintain that we are not giving anything to the man who has a house which, by his own industry, he has built up in his heyday and is now enjoying in his old age. We are relieving him, by way of a bonus for his industry, of certain disabilities or obligations. We are not giving to one at the expense of another; we are not giving to one to the neglect of another. We are loaning to one or relieving him of certain obligations.

Mr. Mullany: Your Bill does not suggest that.

Hon. P. Collier: You announced your willingness to accept the amendment before you spoke.

Capt. CARTER: Yes; I indicated my acceptance of the amendment when the member for North-East Fremantle was speaking. There can be no objection to the Bill. There is nothing insidious about it. It has all the innocence of charity. I have known cases and there are cases recurring daily of dire distress in our midst, and in the light of our experience of the heavy cost of living and the peculiar conditions under which we are living, this small exemption can well be granted by the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; Capt. Carter in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Short title:

Mr. DAVIES: If the title is passed as printed, will that prevent anyone from amending Clause 2 by the inclusion of other persons than those specified in the clause?

The CHAIRMAN: No.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2—Exemption from rates:

Mr. DAVIES: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 after the figures "1908" the words "and those in receipt of State relief" be inserted.

If it is intended to extend relief to old age pensioners it should also be extended to those in receipt of 9s. a week from the State Charities Department. Whether or not I safeguarded myself in the remarks I made on the Bill, I cannot be said to have made the dead fish utterance that was made by the Leader of the Opposition. A dead fish is that which goes with the tide.

Hon. P. Collier: I pay as much in rates as you do.

Mr. DAVIES: Because the hon. member lives in a more aristocratic suburb. A dead

fish goes with the tide and cannot swim against it.

The CHAIRMAN: We are not talking about fish.

Mr. DAVIES: I had not suggested that relief should not be afforded to old age pensioners, but that relief should be extended to other people I have mentioned. I certainly received a letter from the West Guildford Road Board, every member of which belongs to a union. They are opposed to the Bill on the ground that it should be extended in other directions, and not merely confined to a certain section of the people. I cannot understand why an attempt should have been made to score politically over a member in this connection. I have never attempted to score off any other member. The Leader of the Opposition readily went to the assistance of the member for Leederville, but he was silent respecting the member for North-East Fremantle who was also opposed to the Bill in its present form.

Mr. Lambert: On a point of order: The hon. member is not speaking to the amendment, but is making a second reading speech.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must confine himself to the amendment.

Mr. DAVIES: I wish the same co-operation was shown on this side of the House when a member is being attacked as is shown on the other side of the House.

The CHAIRMAN: It is competent for a member to move an amendment that is relevant to the Bill. If the amendment before the Committee is carried it will then be necessary to amend the title of the Bill.

The PREMIER: The amendment might exempt hundreds of people who are temporarily in receipt of State relief. People occasionally helped by the Charities Department are in a different position from those in receipt of old age pensions. I hope the Committee will not agree that everyone in receipt of State relief shall be exempt from municipal taxation.

Mr. DAVIES: I want to make a distinction between people in receipt of temporary relief, say in case of unemployment, and people in receipt of permanent relief. I desire to obtain this further relief in such a case as that of a widow whose husband died of tuberculosis in the Wooroloo Sanatorium, and who is in receipt of 9s. per week for herself and 9s. for each of her six children.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is 63s. per week.

Mr. DAVIES: But there are seven persons living on that amount. I ask leave to amend my amendment to read—

And those in receipt of permanent State relief.

Leave given; the amendment amended accordingly.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: In this State there are no persons in receipt of permanent State relief except such as are on the Estimates. Relief given through the Charities Department may be stopped any day, being entirely at the discretion of the Minister. Again, State re-

relief may be granted several times during the course of a year. In the case of a widow with children it is very difficult to arrive at the total income of the family if some of the children are working. On the other hand, the old age pensioner is limited to 15s. per week, unless he is assisted by any of his family, or is able to do some work; and in the latter case he is not allowed to earn more than 10s. per week. People are not likely to earn much after reaching the age of 65. If the wife of an old age pensioner is under 60 years of age, the maximum joint pension for the couple is £65 per annum. The amendment would entail a considerable amount of work in the municipal offices, which would have to be continually ascertaining from the State department, which would also require additional staff, the names of persons in receipt of temporary relief. No person can claim relief from the State, in the same way as the old age pension can be claimed. State relief is purely a matter within the option of the Minister.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The amendment seems hardly practicable. No doubt many persons in receipt of State relief would be deserving of the further relief proposed by the amendment. On the other hand, many such cases might not merit this additional assistance. In numerous instances people in receipt of State relief are drawing £3, £3 10s., and as much as £4 per week. On the goldfields they draw 25s. or 30s. per week from the Mine Workers' Relief Fund, and also 25s. or 30s. per week from the State, making a total of about £3 per week. Again, people are frequently in receipt of State relief for a portion of the year, possible three months or six months. If the member for Guildford desires to assist persons in receipt of State relief, the proper channel is not through the medium of this Bill but by way of an increase of the scale of State relief.

Mr. Davies: That applies to the Federal pension.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The objection might be met by increasing the rate to more than 9s. per week, but certainly not by putting everybody on an equal footing through the carrying of this amendment. I am glad that my previous remarks have had the effect of making the member for Guildford take a definite course for once in his life.

The Minister for Mines: He is generally pretty definite.

Mr. Davies: Perhaps I am too definite for you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member reminds me of that historical personage who—
In the course of one revolving moon

Was poet, statesman, fiddler and buffoon.

Mr. Davies: The description fits you nicely.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member is like the revolving lantern of a light-house, which faces every point of the compass in turn. Let us examine his position. I dare not impute motives, and I suggest that the hon. member is actuated by no other desire than that of giving the relief which his

amendment sets out. He raised no end of objections to the Bill on the ground that it was imposing taxation upon only a section of the people, namely, the ratepayers. He said it was going to cost the poverty-stricken Guildford municipality £150 a year. Yet by this amendment he seeks to increase the burden on the ratepayers, a burden which, he pointed out, lodgers and single men would escape altogether. He is going right back along the track of the arguments which he used against the Bill. Now he has shifted his ground once more, saying he was not opposed to the relief suggested by the measure. I will assist the hon. member by voting for his amendment if he will make it workable. I am not satisfied that in its present form it is workable. This amendment will not do it. It will give relief to those not entitled to it in many directions, while failing to give relief to others who are entitled to it. I suggest that the amendment should be re-drafted, so as to benefit those who are entitled to the assistance.

Mr. PICKERING: The amendment might be drafted along the following lines: "Such recipients of State relief as may be recommended from time to time by the State Charities Department."

The Minister for Mines: That is the position now.

Hon. P. Collier: The department would recommend them every time!

Mr. PICKERING: The Charities Department would know the deserving cases which were more or less permanent, and they could make the necessary recommendation.

Hon. P. Collier: The Charities Department would reduce their payment and pass it on to the local authorities.

Mr. PICKERING: That should not be the attitude of a Charities Department. We considered the measure at first along the lines suggested by the member for Leederville together with the amendment indicated by the member for North-East Fremantle, but we see that it may become more restricted than members desire. I think the amendment I suggest should meet the position as we are viewing it now.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the member for Guildford desire to withdraw his amendment?

Mr. DAVIES: Not for the time being, as I want to see where we stand. It means that we are asked to give relief to those already receiving assistance from the department, whereas the pensioners—

The Minister for Mines: That is very different.

Mr. DAVIES: It is not different in principle.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is entirely different.

Mr. DAVIES: I am open to conviction. The Bill is one to relieve invalid and old age pensioners. The member for North-East Fremantle has been in charge of the Charities Department and I want to ask him what would be the position of a mother

who has three young children and who may, or may not, be able to work.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It would all depend.

Hon. P. Collier: Some of those women can work and some cannot.

Mr. DAVIES: I want to help those who cannot work.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the trouble with your amendment; it covers all.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The State pays in accordance with what is required; the Federal payment is fixed.

The Minister for Mines: The difference is that the State allowance is fixed after ascertaining what the incomings and outgoings may be. That is where the difference comes in.

Mr. DAVIES: But it is never in excess of 9s. a week.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Yes, it is.

The Minister for Mines: Of course, it is.

Mr. DAVIES: The superintendent informed me that it was so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is for children.

Mr. DAVIES: No, for the mother.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is not so unless the system has been altered. I can give names of some who get 10s.

Mr. DAVIES: I should have the assistance of members and the Minister to get over this difficulty.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Members should have a proper understanding of the difference between old age and invalid pensions and the relief given by the State. In the former instance, irrespective of the charges levied from week to week on the individual, the old age pension is a definitely fixed amount. In the case of State relief, an officer thoroughly inquires into the position of the applicant with a view to ascertaining the outgoings and the receipts. Then the Minister is recommended to give so much per child per week and if there is any particular outgoing, an extra allowance is granted to the mother herself. I know some cases where the actual earnings in a home are more than they were before the father died.

Hon. P. Collier: And distinction is also made between those who pay rent and those who own their own homes.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Members cannot draw a parallel between the Federal pensions and State relief. It is absurd to attempt to do so; they are dealt with along entirely different lines.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope neither the amendment nor the suggestion of the member for Sussex will be carried, because there is no necessity for either. If any further relief is necessary, surely the State can give it quite apart from the Bill. I understand it is proposed to make this a charge against land until the beneficiaries or those purchasing the land dispose of it or benefit by it.

The Minister for Mines: I think we will be surprised by the transfers from son to father if this Bill is passed.

Mr. LATHAM: There is nothing to prevent this extra relief being made a charge against the land until the pensioner is dead. I cannot see the slightest necessity for either amendment unless it be to kill the Bill. I do not think that is the intention of either hon. member. If there is extra assistance required for these people, the relief from the Charities Department can be increased.

The Minister for Mines: Yes, we can take it out of the deficit.

Mr. LAMBERT: The member for York's argument is a peculiar one. If anything can be supplemented by the State, he and his party may be expected to advocate it.

Mr. Latham: Many of the old age pensioners would not accept relief from the Charities Department.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know that. It is a great error to provide in the clause that while making accrued rates a charge on the property we are to exempt a man when he is a tenant.

The CHAIRMAN: We will discuss that when we come to it. Just now there is an amendment before the Chamber.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not think any good purpose will be served by the amendment, but I cannot see any real difference between charitable relief and relief afforded in any other way.

Mr. DAVIES: The Minister for Railways said that widows and orphans are in receipt of more relief than are pensioners. That is not so. A pensioner may be drawing 15s. per week and earning another 10s., whereas a widow in receipt of State relief gets 9s. per week. I do not know of one in receipt of more.

Mr. Munsie: I know of one who is getting 15s. weekly from the State Charities Department.

Mr. DAVIES: The hon. member was on the committee that inquired into the State Charities Department, and he knows of but one such instance. I have no objection to giving relief to people in receipt of 15s. weekly, but I am averse to doing it at the cost of others in receipt of perhaps only 9s. weekly.

The Premier: We cannot pass too much on.

Mr. DAVIES: Apparently it is coming to be realised that what at first appeared to be an innocent measure is likely to prove something more than that.

Mr. Johnston: What difference will this make to Guildford?

Mr. DAVIES: Even in Guildford are some in receipt of State aid, and they will have to come to the relief of the municipality when these exempted rates require to be made up. It is necessary to look at the Bill from all angles.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You are looking at it from the wrong angle, and are only blocking the Bill.

Hon. P. Collier: You are defeating the Bill by this side issue.

Mr. DAVIES: While I am here I am going to stress that point. I was in the House

when the other measure was brought down, and I remember the hostile reception it met.

Hon. P. Collier: Your amendment will afford relief to many not in need of it.

Mr. DAVIES: The insertion of "10s. per week" might safeguard that point.

The Minister for Mines: Ten shillings per week for how long?

Mr. DAVIES: For, say, six months prior to the date for the payment of rates. To object on the grounds that the amount given by the State is in excess of that given by the pensions department is entirely wrong.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is true in the case of a family.

The Minister for Mines: I said the State relief was in accordance with the requirements of each case, but the Commonwealth pension was not.

Mr. DAVIES: If a man is getting 15s. a week and a family of three are getting 9s. each, which represents the greater amount amount per individual?

Mr. Mann: The point is that the one is past work and some of the others might be able to work.

Mr. DAVIES: The department give 9s. a week to a woman in addition to her children provided she remains at home with them.

Mr. MULLANY: I move—

That progress be reported.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You gain your end by trying to defeat the Bill.

Motion put and negatived.

Mr. DAVIES: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

That in line 2, "shall" be struck out with a view to inserting "may claim to."

There may be some pensioners who prefer to pay their rates rather than have them accumulate on the property. If they make a claim to have the rates deferred, they should be deferred.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

That the words "may claim to" be inserted in lieu of the word struck out.

It is my intention to move later on that the following be inserted:—"In which event such payment of rates shall be deferred and the rates shall remain a charge on the property and payable on sale of the property or death of the pensioner, whichever event shall first happen."

Mr. LAMBERT: I disagree with the hon. member. If we lay down a principle that old age and invalid pensioners should be exempt from municipal taxation, we should adhere to it. We should not make the rates a charge on the property. The property may be mortgaged and the mortgagee might object to the

imposition of this charge. I commend the member for Leederville for introducing the Bill, but to make the rate a permanent charge on property will spoil the good effect of the measure. The amount involved is only small.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It means thousands of pounds.

Mr. LAMBERT: If this is made a permanent charge on the property, shall we be giving old age pensioners anything?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is dealing with a proposed amendment and not the amendment before the Chair.

Mr. RICHARDSON: I like the idea of the amendment, but should not we lay down some time exemption? Rates have to be struck in advance. This proposal will involve Subiaco to the extent of about £2,000. We cannot strike a rate until we know whether the pensioners are going to claim exemption.

The CHAIRMAN: How does that affect the amendment under consideration?

Mr. RICHARDSON: The pensioners may claim or they may not.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Unless claims are made for exemption, the municipality will not know who the old age pensioners are. It can then form an approximate estimate as to what it is likely to lose. After the first year the loss would not amount to much.

The Minister for Mines: If a place is mortgaged, will the mortgagee suffer this? You may be doing the pensioner an injury.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Not one claim have I filled up where the property has been mortgaged. The words "may claim to be exempt" should meet all requirements.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move a further amendment—

That after the figures "1919" in line 4 the words "and the water and sewerage rates" be inserted.

I do not see why the local authorities should be the only people affected. The Government too, ought to be included.

The Minister for Mines: What about electric current?

The PREMIER: We have been very generous in giving away the rates of municipalities but before we go any further I think we should know where things are trending.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.56 p.m.