

the court that I approve of is that it grants the highest basic wage which industry can possibly pay.

The Minister for Housing: This is to retain a high basic wage.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: No, it is not. Eminent authorities have said that the mere fact of raising the basic wage does not necessarily mean that the worker will gain any advantage. The result is that electricity charges go up, tram fares go up, and so on. The only way a basic wage-earner can be given a higher standard of living is to take something away from someone else.

We have to lower margins and it must be admitted that over the years margins have been lowered. I am not going to argue that policy. Alternatively, we could increase production. Everyone must agree that any step taken in the interests of the people as a whole must result in some hardship which should be spread over the whole of the community. However, it is a question of how we can achieve that. Parliament is not so capable of deciding the most difficult economic questions. The member for Leederville made an interesting speech, but it was highly technical.

Hon. L. Thorn: Of course it was, especially when he referred to us as harlots! It is about time he was fumigated, I think.

Mr. Moir: What about yourself?

Hon. L. Thorn: That is all right. They ought to put him in a fumigator and then in an incinerator.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Toodyay must help to maintain the decorum of the Chamber and not interject.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Therefore, I do not think the mere fact of automatically increasing the basic wage would increase responsibility.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendments Nos. 14 and 15; that it did not insist on its amendment No. 16; that it agreed to further amendments Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4 made by the Legislative Assembly to Council's amendment No. 26, but disagreed to further amendment No. 5 to Council's amendment No. 26; that it disagreed with the Assembly's alternative amendment to the Council's amendment No. 29 and that it insisted on its amendment No. 29.

House adjourned at 9.52 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, 18th August, 1954.

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

QUESTIONS.

MILK.

As to Licensed Suppliers and Quotas.

Hon. C. H. HENNING asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) What was the number of dairymen licensed to supply milk to the metropolitan area—

- (a) on the 28th February, 1954;
- (b) on the 31st July, 1954?

(2) How many established a maximum daily quantity during—

- (a) the months of March, April, May;
- (b) the months of April, May;
- (c) the month of May?

(3) How many are there now supplying who did not establish a quota during March, April and May?

(4) How is the quota fixed where a dairyman did not supply during the full fixed period of establishing an M.D.Q.?

(5) How many are there who established quotas during 1953, dried off their herds during the summer, 1953-54, and have been granted new quotas?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Dairymen supplying treatment plants—(a) 482; (b) 491. Dairymen-Vendors—(a) 5; (b) 6.

(2) Dairymen supplying treatment plants—(a) 475; (b) 5; (c) 2.

(3) Nine.

(4) It is fixed according to the average daily quantity supplied.

(5) Two, and they established a quota during portion of the period.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT SCHEME.

(a) *As to Tabling File.*

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Minister for the North-West:

Will the Minister lay on the Table of the House the complete file of the war service land settlement scheme for the period the 30th June, 1953, to the 30th July, 1954?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes. After the War Service Land Settlement Scheme Bill has been introduced in another place.

(b) *As to Losses*

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) What amount of loss has the State Government asked the Federal Government to meet, in connection with the war service land settlement scheme, under the 3/5th contributions for writing-off?

(2) Has any amount been paid by the Federal Government to the State Government to cover losses made under the scheme?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) All finance is provided by the Commonwealth. Under the conditions under which finance is made available, the State is responsible for 2/5th of the Commonwealth losses on acquiring and developing farms.

(2) The State land settlement authority will not receive any recoups from the Commonwealth.

METROPOLITAN REGIONAL PLAN.

(a) *As to Distribution to Local Authorities.*

Hon. H. HEARN asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Is the Minister aware that information concerning the metropolitan regional plan is in the hands of at least one local authority, some estate agents, and private individuals?

(2) Is the Minister prepared to allow such leakages which give scope for exploitation of land?

(3) What measures, if any, is the Minister taking to ensure the prevention of such leakages?

(4) Will the Minister arrange that information be given simultaneously and equally to all local authorities affected by the plan?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) No. As far as I am aware, no local authority, estate agent, or private individual has seen or will see the final regional plan before it is presented to the Government.

(2) No.

(3) I have taken all possible steps to ensure the prevention of such leakages.

(4) Yes.

(b) *As to Consultation with Local Authorities.*

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

Are plans which form part of the metropolitan regional plan made available for consultation and information of local authorities concerned?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

No. These plans will not be made available until after consideration by the Government.

AGRICULTURE.

As to Field Trials on Early Lambing.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Are any field trials being conducted in this State by either—

(a) The Agricultural Department;

(b) The C.S.I.R.O.

to ascertain the benefits, or otherwise, of early lambing for improved lambing percentages?

(2) Will the Minister obtain and make available to members the results to date of a similar experiment being conducted in Victoria, the result of which experiment was discussed during an A.B.C. broadcast in the Country Hour on Monday, the 16th August?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No trials are being conducted by the Department of Agriculture or the C.S.I.R.O. to ascertain the effects of early lambing on lambing percentages. The likely conception rates can be forecast for different conditions and times of the year, but final tailing percentages are markedly influenced by neo-natal losses largely dependent on nutritional and grazing conditions available to the breeding flock.

(2) The A.B.C. advises that the broadcast in question dealt with some experiments at Kybybolite in South Australia, but no details of the experiments or the broadcast are in Western Australia. Enquiries are being made to obtain this information.

NARROWS BRIDGE.*As to Tabling Plan.*

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

Will he lay on the Table of the House the plan of the proposed bridge over the Narrows and the proposed approaches to it in all directions within a mile radius?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

At this stage it is not possible to comply with the request. Cabinet announced on the 11th August, 1954, approval to carry out preliminary surveys and investigations preparatory to design. At the moment, therefore, there is no finality over so large a radius.

DEFERRED PAYMENT CONTRACTS.*As to Completion and Financial Details.*

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) Have all the contracts let to G. Esselmont, the Concrete Construction Co., and Jennings Construction Co., under the deferred payment system, been completed?

(2) If all contracts have not been completed—

(a) What work is still outstanding?

(b) What amount is still to be paid to contractors in respect of—

(i) contract figures;

(ii) interest?

(3) What is the total amount paid by way of interest under this system to date?

(4) When is it expected that these contracts will be completed?

(5) Upon the completion of these contracts, is it the intention of the Government to proceed with other works of this nature under this system?

(6) If so, will builders residing in the localities where work is proposed to be carried out be given the opportunity of engaging in contracts under the deferred payment system?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) One contract was let to G. Esselmont, has been completed, and is under maintenance.

Three contracts were let to the Concrete Construction Co.; two are completed and under maintenance; and one is half completed.

Twenty-six contracts were let to the Jennings Co.; of these, 20 have been completed and one is under maintenance; and six have been completed except for minor items.

(2) (a) See answer to No. (1).

(b) (i) £25,248.

(ii) Nil.

(3) £1,652 2s. 6d.

(4) The Concrete Construction Co. should complete within two months. The Jennings Construction Co. should complete within a few weeks.

(5) No.

(6) See answer to No. (5).

MINISTERIAL TOURS.*(a) As to Notification of Members.*

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

In view of the answer given by the Chief Secretary yesterday to my question regarding the tour of the Guildford-Midland electorate by the Minister for Education, does he consider that members of the Legislative Council are entitled to the same consideration as members of the Legislative Assembly when Ministers of the Crown are conducting ministerial tours throughout the various districts and provinces?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

The question is a rather long one to answer at a few moments' notice. I am not aware of what the customary procedure is with Ministers in another place. Speaking from my own experience through the years, I should say the usual procedure is for them to notify the Assembly member for the district. As regards Ministers in this House, it is only natural to assume that they would also notify Council members for the province. I do not know whether it is a sort of two-way traffic; but I shall take the matter up with other Ministers and see what the procedure is, and if possible have it arranged in such a manner that there will be no complaints from Council members in future.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: A really diplomatic answer

(b) As to Consideration for Council Members.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

Will he answer my question whether he considers that members of the Legislative Council are entitled to the same consideration as is given to members of the Legislative Assembly?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

From Ministers in the Legislative Council, yes; but what the position is regarding the Legislative Assembly, I cannot say.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: I rise to introduce a Bill by which I hope to amend the Traffic Act, 1919-1953, the particular section needing amendment being 46A. This section, in effect, sets out

the conditions that must be observed if it is desired to transfer, drive, or tow a vehicle from place to place when the vehicle or load exceeds a width of 7ft. 6in. This has been found to inconvenience many people, particularly those engaged in agricultural pursuits, and to some extent those engaged in horticultural pursuits. In 1950, Section 46A was added to the Act. That section reads—

No vehicle having a greater over-all width, including the load, than eight feet, shall be licensed, or driven, on any road.

Provided that, with the permission of the Minister given on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Police and under such special circumstances and conditions as may be set out in the permit, a vehicle having a greater overall width including the load than eight feet may be licensed and driven on any road.

And where, prior to the commencement of the Traffic Act Amendment Act, 1950, a permit has been given by the Minister authorising or purporting to authorise the licensing and driving on any road of a vehicle exceeding seven feet six inches in width, including the load, the authority so given or purporting to have been so given, is hereby ratified and validated.

In 1953, it was found that certain types of vehicles or implements did not come within the scope of the Act, and an amendment was made to Section 46A substituting for the words "or driven on any road" the words "driven, used or towed on any road." The amendment proceeded to provide that, for the purposes of this section, "vehicle" includes any implement. This amendment was made to ensure that the farmer or horticulturist, when moving his implements along a road, came within the scope of the Act. Later on, regulations were promulgated which provided that, instead of the farmer having to apply for a permit to the Commissioner of Police in Perth, the local authority could grant it.

I should like members to cast their minds back to the time, a month ago, when Mr. Thomson moved for the disallowance of two regulations dealing with this matter. One argument advanced was that if a man wished to use, drive or tow an over-width vehicle on a road, or shift an implement along a road, he must obtain a permit each time. When a farmer has a property on one side of the road, and another property on the other side or further along the road in another district, he often does not know within a few days when he might want to move his implements.

The Chief Secretary: He could get a permit for a period up to six months.

Hon. A. R. JONES: He might have a machine arriving by rail that he required to use urgently, and he would have to go to the local authority and make arrangements to transfer it by road if it exceeded a width of 8ft.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: If it were over 10ft. in width, he would have to apply to the Commissioner of Police.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That would apply to most farm implements. There is very little that one need say in support of the Bill. All I am asking is that a farmer should not be required to get a permit every time he wishes to shift a vehicle or implement along a road. To do so causes inconvenience; and he has to take out a licence for a tractor used for towing an implement, together with insurance cover, so that everything in that respect is in order. All I am seeking in this Bill—

The Chief Secretary: You are asking that the farmer be given a right to use the road.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is correct. If Section 46A is amended as I hope it will be, it will then read—

No vehicle having a greater over-all width, including the load, than eight feet shall be licensed, driven used or towed on any road. For the purpose of this section "vehicle" includes any implement except an implement used or to be used in agricultural or horticultural pursuits while such implement is being driven, used or towed on any road in a district or sub-district outside the metropolitan area.

The Chief Secretary: Why should the farmers have a privilege over and above every other user of the road?

Hon. A. R. JONES: This measure would leave the position open, so that anyone wanting to move a vehicle into or out of the metropolitan area would have to apply to the police authorities for a permit to do so. The Bill would not interfere in that regard. The Chief Secretary has asked why the farmer should be privileged. I say he should have the privilege sought in this Bill because it is to apply only in his own district, or when he wishes to move a vehicle or implement from one district to another.

Hon. H. Hearn: It would increase his efficiency.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Yes. I do not think it could do any harm to anyone, because the tractor with which the farmer tows the implement or vehicle must be licensed and insured against third party risk.

The Chief Secretary: That applies to all the other people who must obtain permits.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The secretary of the Motor Vehicle Insurance Trust has informed me that that organisation will accept the responsibility, provided the tractor is insured, for any implement or vehicle towed by the tractor. Therefore the measure would not increase the risk to anyone on the road. Were the Chief Secretary a farmer, he would have a better understanding of the position.

The Chief Secretary: What about the mining companies which have to move heavy machinery from one part of the Goldfields to another?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. A. R. JONES: I understand that anyone possessing an over-width vehicle—I saw several between here and Fremantle this morning—which operates consistently can receive a permit for a period up to six months and I think that should be sufficient. A firm operating such a vehicle from a business house and using the roads consistently is under no hardship, because it has the necessary staff and is situated within a few miles, at most, of the City Council or the police authorities, and can therefore easily make application; while, in many instances, the farmer may be anything up to 30 or 40 miles away from the local authority concerned. For those reasons I think that what is sought in the Bill could reasonably be granted.

I consider it is quite in order that people such as the oil companies, moving over-width loads, some of which extend to perhaps ten feet in width, should apply for and be granted permits, because they traverse so many districts; but this Bill is intended to cover the farmer in his own district, when he wants to move a vehicle or implement. If he wished to transport the vehicle or implement from north to south and had to come through the metropolitan area, he would, of course, still have to apply for a permit to do so.

I do not think the Chief Secretary has raised any real argument against the Bill; but no doubt we will hear his version when he speaks either for or against it. There are other members also who will speak on the measure, and so I will conclude in the hope that any points I may have missed will be dealt with by other speakers.

I desire to emphasise—for the benefit of those who may feel that if damage is done, or an accident is caused on a road by a vehicle or implement being towed or transported, the position would not be covered—that there would be full insurance cover, provided the farmer took out the licence and the necessary insurance for the tractor. Were that not done, the person making the claim for damage or accident would, of course, have a claim at common law if the farmer or the employee driving the tractor or vehicle was at fault.

I trust the measure will be given a safe passage through this House because, if agreed to, it will save a great many people the inconvenience of having to seek permits or else operate outside the law. Unfortunately, some of them at present do that, as they are not within easy reach of the local authority to whom they should apply, and do not do so every time they desire to move a machine on the road. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. N. E. Baxter, debate adjourned.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. McI. THOMSON (South) [4.55]: This is the type of legislation which, if passed, would lead to the ultimate strangulation of the insurance business as we have known it to operate in this State for many years past.

The Chief Secretary: Have you been gazing into the crystal?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: No; but I believe that if the Minister and those who support him face up to the facts—

The Chief Secretary: That is what we want you to do.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: That is what I am going to do. If they face up to the facts, they will not deny that the policy of the Labour Party and the Labour Government is one of socialisation.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That is the policy of some of your party, too.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I say it is the ultimate aim of the Labour Party to implement that policy. It is only natural that when a Labour Government is in office it will introduce legislation of this type, the ultimate effect of which, if passed, is the socialisation of the particular industry it affects.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: So what!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: Mr. Barker says "So what!" But the Minister has asked members to face the facts, and that is what I think I am doing.

The Chief Secretary: It is just as well you think so.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: The Minister is permitted to disagree with me on that point, because it is something on which we will possibly never agree. The fact remains that, if we pass legislation of this nature, it will be one step further towards the goal that the Government is endeavouring to reach. The Labour Party exercises the utmost patience in matters of this nature; and I am sure it

is the desire of the Government ultimately to devour the private enterprise which has operated so efficiently in this State for many years, and which has rendered such undoubted and undisputed service to the community. If the Government is honest, it will admit that one of the foremost planks in its platform is to implement a policy of socialisation.

Hon. H. Hearn: But they do not talk about that. They keep it dark.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: It is nevertheless a fact. I would remind members that the present Government will not always be in office and that in future we may have other Governments of perhaps even more radical views than the present one. It is because of the responsibility that we, as members of this House, have to the future citizens of the State that it is our duty to safeguard their interests, as we see them.

The Chief Secretary: As you imagine you see them.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: No, as we see them. I do not expect the Chief Secretary to see them in the same light as I do—

The Chief Secretary: Heaven forbid!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: —because he and I differ on the question of politics, and therefore I do not expect him to endorse my views. Nevertheless, I see the necessity to indicate my views clearly because of the impact this type of legislation will have on the community of Western Australia. We have a clear example of what has been done in Queensland, as a result of Government monopoly in this class of insurance. The Queensland Labour Government, because of its continuous occupancy of the Treasury bench, has obtained a monopoly of the workers' compensation insurance in that State, and because of that fact—there is no gainsaying this—

The Minister for the North-West: Would it not be because the rates are cheaper?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: For the information of the Minister for the North-West—although he probably knows already—I would point out that the rates of workers' compensation insurance in Queensland, because of the monopoly held by the Government in that State, are the highest in the Commonwealth.

The Chief Secretary: How do the benefits compare?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I will give the Chief Secretary that information. Before doing so, however, I will cite one or two illustrations to show the comparisons between the rates and benefits under workers' compensation insurance in Queensland and Western Australia. These are the 1953 figures. I could not get the figures for 1954 because they were not available. In Queensland, the percentage rate for aerated water factories is 42s. as against 36s. in Western Australia.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: How many aerated water factories are there here?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: There are many aerated water factory employees in this State who are covered by workers' compensation insurance, but that is not the point. There is an important principle involved that is far more important than the question of how many aerated water factories there are in this State, and the number of workers employed.

The Chief Secretary: Before you get off the rates—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I appreciate the Chief Secretary's interest in what I am saying, Mr. President. I will now refer to boilermakers. The rate for them in Queensland is 52s. 6d. as against 22s. 9d. in this State. For builders, the rate of compensation in Queensland is 49s. 6d. as against 32s. 6d. in Western Australia. I am sure members will be interested in the rates for bus crews. In Queensland, the rate for them is 31s. 6d., as against 7s. 6d. in Western Australia. For electricians, it is 38s. 6d. in Queensland, and 33s. 6d. in Western Australia. For fishermen, it is 99s. in Queensland, and 31s. 3d. in Western Australia. So we have a glaring difference between the rates charged in the State that has a monopoly of workers' compensation insurance, under Government control, and those charged in Western Australia by private companies.

It must be admitted that we are paying considerably less here for workers' compensation; and we are not calling upon industry to carry an added burden which, of course, has its effect on the prosperity of the State. By continuing to load industry as we have done—and as the State of Queensland has—with excessive charges, we will be pricing ourselves out of the world markets because of the high cost of production. In fact, we have done that already. So much for the workers' compensation rates in the States of Queensland and Western Australia.

When we compare the compensation payable on death in this State with that paid in Queensland, it will be seen that there is a great difference in favour of the workers' compensation insurance system in Western Australia. If we pass legislation such as this, we will ultimately reach the same position that exists in Queensland. The fixed sum of compensation payable on death in Queensland is £1,500, with an additional amount of £50 for each child or stepchild under 16 years of age. In Western Australia, the amount payable on death is £1,800—an increase of £300—plus £60 for each child or stepchild under 16 years of age. It can be seen, therefore, that in this State we pay £300 more than in Queensland, and £10 more for each child.

Is not that clear-cut evidence of the excellent benefits we are giving our workers under present conditions?

I will now refer to the liability for the partially incapacitated. Again, it is found that there is a difference of £350 in favour of Western Australia, as against the amount paid in Queensland. The figure for total incapacity in Queensland is £1,750; and in Western Australia, it is £2,100. I have used those figures to indicate to the House what happens when workers' compensation insurance comes under State control compared to the system operated by private companies in Western Australia. These figures must, of necessity, be borne in mind when considering legislation such as this.

It is all very well for the Chief Secretary to say that we are crystal-gazing in regard to this Bill, and that it will have no effect on the community; but I suggest that it is just another step towards socialisation. Because of that fact, I believe we should be very cautious, and leave the position as it is today, especially since the private insurance companies are giving good service.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You are playing into the hands of the private insurance companies.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: No; that is not correct. Very often we hear that incorrect statement made. The insurance companies play a very important part when the Commonwealth calls for subscriptions to its loans. I think Mr. Bennetts will agree that the State derives huge benefits from Commonwealth loans to which these private insurance companies subscribe liberally on every occasion.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I do not know about that.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: It is of no use saying that there are no benefits to be derived from the operation of these private companies.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It is to their advantage.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask the hon. member to keep order. He will have a chance to speak directly.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: What do we find whenever the State enters the field of industry and commerce?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: You do not want them to lose money, do you?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I am not going to argue that point. The function of a Government is to govern wisely and well; so why is it necessary for it to enter into the insurance field in competition with private enterprise?

Hon. E. M. Davies: You would not be aware why the State Insurance Office was created in the first place, would you?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I am quite aware of that. It was on account of the position existing at the time. However, that is no reason why we should now strive to have only one insurance office in this State.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Where is that mentioned in the Bill?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: It is not in the Bill, but that is what I am fearful of.

The Chief Secretary: An elastic imagination!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: That is what the Chief Secretary said before.

The Chief Secretary: That is original.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: That interjection has not upset me in any way. Although State trading concerns have taken their place in industry, I consider that, when circumstances make it possible, they should retire and leave the field to private enterprise.

Hon. E. M. Davies: God help the workers!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: The fact that the State Saw Mills have been in operation has not meant that the people have benefited. It can never be said that because of economies that have been effected the State Saw Mills have been instrumental in helping purchasers of their commodities, because, as a matter of fact, they sell those commodities at the same price as is charged by private concerns.

Hon. H. Hearn: They are in the association.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: Yes.

Hon. H. Hearn: To keep up prices.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: That is the very point I was going to make. If I want a quantity of timber for building—scantlings, dressed material, mouldings, or joinery—or the completion of a structure, the prices are submitted to me on a form identical with that provided by the private timber companies, and the figures are exactly the same. That is because the State trading concern is in the association and cannot afford to have any different charge.

The Chief Secretary: It has not closed up all the other companies, has it?

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: No.

The Chief Secretary: Neither will the State Insurance Office close the other insurance companies.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: It has not done so; but I would remind the Chief Secretary that what has happened in Queensland could happen here. The Chief Secretary may not be prepared to admit it, but it is the policy of the party which he supports to socialise this particular business. Therefore, those of us who hold opposite views must strongly oppose measures such as this one.

Hon. E. M. Davies: I thought you were going to support the Bill.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: No. I could not support the Bill, for the reasons I have advanced. What would be the position if we ultimately had only one insurance company?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: What do you mean by "ultimately?"

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: It could happen. As I have said, the present Government will not always be in office, and there may be a Government which would have a different outlook from the present one, and would bring about such a state of affairs. That is the reason we have to be very careful not to take this initial step. We must accept the responsibility for such repercussions as may occur following any move we make in this matter. If what I have suggested were to occur—and there is nothing to stop it—

The Chief Secretary: Only Parliament!

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: Yes; that is so. If, however, the same thing occurs here as occurred in Queensland, and the Legislative Council is abolished, it will be a simple matter for a Labour Government to implement the policy of nationalisation.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: It would not abolish the Council.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: No, probably not. Under the present system, whereby insurance is spread amongst all the companies, the position is adequately met; and should a catastrophe befall the State, involving us in a liability of millions of pounds, the companies would be able to meet that liability. If, on the other hand, there were only one company operating—namely, the State office—and if it were called upon to meet such a liability, the taxpayers would have to bear the loss, because it would be met out of consolidated revenue. As I have pointed out, under present conditions such loss would be borne by the multiplicity of shareholders in the private companies. All these are things that might not happen; but the possibility exists, and because of that possibility—

The Chief Secretary: You are living 100 years before your time.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I do not think I am. It was not a case of 100 years elsewhere. What happened took place in the space of 30 years. Because this measure could cut across the freedom of the individual to insure with whom he likes and to do what he likes; and for the other reasons I have already enumerated, I propose to vote against the Bill.

HON. C. W. D. BARKER (North) [5.22]: I listened with considerable interest to the speeches made on this measure, and I cannot understand why there is so much opposition to it. Several

reasons that have been given I can understand perfectly. First of all, it is said that the Bill provides for socialisation or nationalisation—

Hon. H. Hearn: And confiscation.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER:—and that the public are adequately catered for by the existing insurance companies. I believe that some members said that eventually the Bill would lead to a monopoly. We are all aware, I think, that the State Insurance Office came into being because of the need to insure mine workers.

Hon. H. Hearn: It went on for a long time without any authority.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: It was created to insure miners whose work was hazardous. Other companies were not willing to undertake that insurance. As Mr. Hearn has said, there was much opposition to its establishment, and it came into being without an Act of Parliament.

Hon. G. Bennetts: The other companies would not undertake the insurance.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Eventually an Act of Parliament was passed, and the activities of the office were sanctioned.

Hon. E. M. Davies: You mean legalised.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Yes; that is correct. It has been said that if this Bill is allowed to go through, it will create a monopoly. I would remind members that an amendment was made to the Workers' Compensation Act in 1948 which provided that—

On and after the coming into operation of the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Act, 1948, the State Government Insurance Office shall be the only insurer authorised to insure any employer for the liability of the employer to pay compensation under this Act to all workers employed by him in any mining operation carried on in any defined portion of the State.

I think that in 1948 the Opposition parties were in power.

Hon. E. M. Davies: It was not socialism then!

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: That amendment gave the State Insurance Office virtually a monopoly of all workers' compensation.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is not true.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I have been told on good authority—

Hon. H. Hearn: You have been told wrong.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: The insurance companies were told that if they cared to undertake this insurance they could have the monopoly, but it was undertaken by the State. I do not think we should hear any more about monopolies. What are members afraid of? If this Bill became law, people would still be able to insure

anywhere they chose. There is no compulsion in this measure. What do members fear? Are they afraid the State office will be able to offer insurers a better deal, and that people will therefore do business with it? If that is the case, there should be only the State office in existence.

I believe there are 50 or 60 insurance companies operating in Western Australia. I have not observed any of them suffering any poverty. On the contrary, I have seen huge blocks of buildings being erected by them, and high dividends being paid, and enormous staffs being employed. That may or may not be right. It may be all right for them to erect big buildings—

Hon. H. Hearn: The State Insurance Office is going to erect one.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: It is time it did so, and secured some of the huge profits out of this business for the people of Western Australia, instead of leaving the companies to reap all the benefit. Is it not only right that the State should have a share?

Somebody said that this would lead to socialisation. My answer is: So what? Have there not been several instances in which industries have been nationalised in Western Australia, and in which that nationalisation was warranted? If the Minister for Railways threatened tomorrow to put skids under the railways or to do away with State shipping, there would be loud cries from the Opposition. There are occasions when it is necessary to nationalise industry, particularly in a young country like this. I make no bones about it. I say: If this is socialism—So what?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You like it. It is strangulation.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: So what! There is nothing in the Bill which insists that everyone must insure with the State office. People can insure wherever they like. Members opposite are afraid that the Government has done so well in the past, that it will continue to do good business in other directions if it is given the opportunity. That members of the Country Party should oppose the Bill is beyond my comprehension. One section of people that the State Labour Government is out to help is the primary producers. If they can obtain better and cheaper insurance, they will be able to produce goods more cheaply and market them more easily. I cannot see why they have anything to complain about.

As far as Queensland is concerned, what happened there need not happen here. If we went deeply into the Queensland figures we might find that they tallied up, and that ends were made to meet. It might be found that if a little more was charged at one end, a little less was charged at the other. The only thing the Government wants to do is to branch out

in this business; and instead of taking the unprofitable insurance only, to enter into competition with other companies and get some of the more lucrative business. And, believe me, insurance is a good business! Outwardly, anyway, that is how it looks to me. I have not any figures to back up my statement—

Hon. H. Hearn: We know that!

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: —but I have a copy of dividends that have been paid by insurance companies, and they were 12 point something, 24 point something, 17 point something—

Hon. E. M. Davies: Are you reading a compass?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Huge dividends are paid by these companies and they can afford luxurious blocks of offices. Why should not some of these profits go to the people of Western Australia? If the State Insurance Office is given the opportunity to branch out into other forms of business, it will mean more benefits to the people, just as at present those who have children attending school can take out an insurance policy at the rate of 3s. 6d. per child or 10s. per family. In this machine age, and as we advance, many similar forms of insurance will be necessary; and if the State office can provide them better than a private company, why not let the State office do it?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is it not doing so?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: To an extent, yes.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What are you growling about?

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Let us go further in our competition with the private companies. What is there to be afraid of? This is not to be the one and only company; all that the Government is seeking is permission for the State office to enter into competition with the private companies and get some of the profitable business, instead of being tied down to the unprofitable business. What is wrong with that? If the State office can offer cheaper insurance to industry, then industry will benefit; and most premiums offered by the State office are below those of private companies.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It must be getting all the business.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: When I had a car, before I became a lowly member of Parliament, I used to insure it with the State Insurance Office, and I got a better deal from that office than from any private company. The Country Party members should foster the Bill, because I am sure it will give them a better deal than they are receiving now, and will allow them to produce their products much cheaper.

I cannot see why there should be opposition to the Bill. The bogey of socialism is as dead as the dodo. Members admitted a few days ago that there were certain industries that it was necessary to nationalise. If the skids were put under the railways or the State Shipping Service, there would be a mighty cry. As long as it suits the Opposition, it is not socialism.

When the 1948 amendment was made to this Act, it did not constitute a monopoly, because the Opposition was then in power. But immediately a Labour Government takes office and tries to do something for the good of the State, it is either socialism or a monopoly. If it is socialism, well, so what? It is a policy of the Labour Party to nationalise industry, but only where people are being exploited.

In the Labour Party platform—members can get it and read it, and no one will stop them—the plank dealing with the nationalisation of industry is to the effect that industry is to be nationalised only where the people are being exploited. Nationalisation is only a bogey drawn across the trail to protect the big companies that are making the huge profits.

There is nothing to be frightened of in the Bill. It simply seeks permission for the State Government to enter into competition with the private companies to get some of the business that pays better profits than the business it is allowed to handle at present. Why should it be tied down to the business that other people will not have, and nothing else? For this reason I support the Bill. I hope that other members will, too, particularly the Country Party members, because, if the Bill is passed, I believe they will receive many benefits from it.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [5.35]: It was amazing to hear Mr. Barker rave about the huge profits made by the insurance companies. I am afraid he is horribly mixed up between assurance and insurance companies. The assurance companies are the life companies, and I admit that they show huge profits; but the insurance companies do not. The following figures are contained in the Pocket Year Book. The total amount received from premiums during the period the 30th June, 1952, to the 30th June, 1953, was £4,494,000, against which claims amounting to £2,785,000 were paid. The contribution to the fire brigade was £102,000, and commission and agents' charges amounted to £456,000.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: What dividend did they pay?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: This money goes into the country. Wages and overheads amounted to £200,000. That also stays in the country, as does taxation to the Commonwealth, amounting to £204,000, and making a total of £3,762,000, which leaves a balance of £638,000 to be split amongst about 100 insurance companies, as there

are 87 tariff and 13 non-tariff companies operating in the State. I cannot ascertain what the actual capital is that is invested in this State, as the capital allocated to Western Australia by overseas companies would be difficult to determine.

If members divide the approximate surplus of £638,000 amongst the 100 companies and compare it with the capital involved, they will find that the dividend is very low. I know for a fact that a large number of insurance companies in this State are not paying a dividend, and have not done so for years. That bowls out the argument put forward by Mr. Barker with reference to the huge profits made by the insurance companies.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: What company are you talking about?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I am talking about all the companies operating in Western Australia. I advise the hon. member to have a look at the Pocket Year Book.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: The Bankers and Traders Insurance Co. paid a dividend at the rate of 12.5 per cent. this year.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: These dividends are not derived from Western Australia entirely.

Hon. H. Hearn: There is nothing said about the funds employed, either.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No. If the hon. member were to obtain some information, he would find that many of the companies have not paid a dividend in Western Australia; nor would their trading in this State return a reasonable dividend on the capital involved.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Why are they trading here?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: With a view to building up their business as the State develops, in the same way as they have done in other parts of Australia and the world. In this business it is a matter of building up goodwill over a number of years. Let us look at some of the State Insurance Office figures to see what has put it on its feet. It has been trading in motor-vehicle, general accident, and third-party insurance, workers' compensation, and silicosis insurance, and the local authorities pools Nos. 1 and 2.

From workers' compensation and general accident it had a surplus for the year ended the 30th June, 1953, of £580. From motor-vehicle general accident insurance, it had a surplus of £11,490. From the third-party insurance, there was a deficit of £75. The local authorities pools showed a surplus of £4,462. The silicosis fund—this is the big point—produced a surplus of £159,000. Apart from the silicosis fund, the surplus amounted to £16,633. The balance sheet and the Auditor General's report show that the reserve accumulated from the silicosis fund is almost half the capital of the State Insurance Office.

Hon. H. Hearn: It has since considerably reduced the premiums.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: From the 1st January of this year, the Premium Rates Committee reduced the premiums from 60s. to 30s. per cent. That is the rake-off the State Insurance Office has been getting from the silicosis fund. My point is this: When the State Insurance Office was established, the Government guaranteed the funds necessary for it to operate.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Because it was not known what liability the office would be carrying.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That is so. The Government of this State is responsible for any liabilities that are incurred by the State Insurance Office; but under the present operations of the office, because of the silicosis fund, which is in its hands alone, it shows a particularly good profit. The private insurance companies are not handling the silicosis fund.

Hon. E. M. Davies: They would not touch it.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It is purely the prerogative of the State office. I will admit that some years ago the private companies made a mistake in this matter. At that time they were not sure what their commitments would be, so they would not touch the silicosis fund.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There was not a big enough profit in it.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I have just pointed out the huge profit that the State Insurance Office has made out of it. The State office can now operate on the basis of half the premiums that have been payable for silicosis insurance and still make a handsome profit. But it wishes to launch out into other fields. If it does that, it will find that there is not so much money to be made because, in the event of a major disaster, its liabilities might run into £3,000,000 or £4,000,000, and it has a capital of only £2,000,000.

Who then would pay the piper? It would be the public. The whole of the silicosis fund would go, and the State would have to stand behind the office. I think that for the State Insurance Office to launch out into other avenues of insurance is purely a gamble at this stage. It is not right or fair for us to gamble public money on insurance when the State office today has a business that is showing, on account of the silicosis fund, a more profitable return than those of the private companies that operate here.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is called the miner's phthisis fund.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It is referred to as the silicosis fund in the Auditor General's report. For the reason I have given, the House would be foolish to consent to increase the scope of the State Insurance Office. The wider its business gets, the

higher its office expenses will be. The administration expenses of the State office today are around the £60,000 mark, annually; and if it branches out into other insurance business, it will have to appoint agents and representatives throughout the State; and that is pretty costly.

That is when the huge profits referred to by Mr. Barker start to disappear. As I mentioned before, the companies in Western Australia paid out, in agents' commission alone, a sum of £456,000; and, in addition, they have other overheads in the handling of ordinary insurance business. It is not as easy as it looks. The business now conducted by the State Insurance Office is on a more or less restricted basis, and could be classed as compulsory insurance. The motor-vehicle and general accident business is almost compulsory. Then there is the third party, silicosis, workers' compensation, and local authorities pool business, which could also be classed as compulsory, because it is connected with workers' compensation. That business comes in almost automatically and is not costly to obtain.

But if the State office launches out into ordinary insurance, it will be a different proposition altogether. In order to secure business, it will be necessary for agents to travel from one end of the State to the other, and those agents will not be prepared to accept the little bit of commission that they obtain in one district. Representatives will have to be sent throughout the State, and that is when the profits of the State Insurance Office—derived from the present sources—will start to disappear.

As I said before, if there is a major disaster and the State Insurance Office is involved in heavy claims, the public will have to foot the bill. In the 1951-52 season, private insurance companies were involved in heavy losses because of hail. I have not the figures with me, but it was an absolute disaster, and those companies lost a terrific sum of money in that year on that class of business. Let us take the position with wool. In that regard, about £20,000,000 is involved in this State alone; and if a big fire broke out in the wool store, and the State Insurance Office was involved, what would happen?

The Minister for the North-West: Is it not usual to spread the risk?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It may be; but even if the risk were spread, the State Insurance Office, in such an instance, would have to accept more than it could stand, and Parliament would have to agree to meet the deficit.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Why? Do other insurance companies take more than they can stand?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The State Insurance Office is working on a limited capital of £2,000,000 odd, approximately £1,000,000 of which had been accumulated

from the silicosis fund; and in that direction the office will have to meet future liabilities. Those liabilities will not be heavy; but the fund will not increase in the future at the same rate as it has in the past, and by the acceptance of ordinary insurance business, the State office will be gambling with public money.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Could not the office spread its risks, like other insurance offices?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That is done all over the world. But I would like to point out to the hon. member that a few years ago there was an earthquake in San Francisco—

The PRESIDENT: I would like the hon. member to address his remarks to the Chair.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I was pointing out that a few years ago there was an earthquake in San Francisco, and the insurance companies were involved in losses amounting to many millions of pounds. Fortunately, the companies had overseas cover; but if such a disaster occurred in Western Australia, the State office would not be able to spread all of its risks, and would find itself involved in heavy losses. There are many responsibilities associated with ordinary insurance business, and the figures I have quoted prove what a small margin there is in that class of insurance: It is certainly too small to cover a major disaster. If such a thing happened in Western Australia, the insurance companies in this State would have to borrow money from abroad or ask their principal companies to cover their commitments.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Where would the Western Australian insurance company get it?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It would have to mortgage its assets.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Do companies insure against an act of God?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If the hon. member is alluding to the earthquake, my answer is yes. Insurance companies cover buildings against such disasters.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: If an earthquake is all that we have to be afraid of, let us agree to the Bill.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: What the hon. member cannot understand is that the margin on ordinary insurance business is so small that it is not worth the State Insurance Office taking the risk. That is the point I am trying to make. It is actually a gamble with State money. If we agree to this Bill, the State office will not be gambling with money of shareholders—people who are prepared to take a risk—but with money which belongs to the public of Western Australia. Our job

is to guard that money and not allow a State trading concern to launch out in a gamble of this character.

We have seen many examples in the past where State trading concerns have lost money. We have the example of Wundowie—in fact, one State enterprise after another—which has lost thousands of pounds. If this House supports a Bill to increase the trading scope of the State Insurance Office, and a disaster occurs, the members who voted for the measure will be responsible for the money that is expended from the public purse. For the reasons I have stated, I hope that members will not agree to the Bill, and I intend to vote against the second reading.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [5.52]: I wish to say at the outset that, generally speaking, I am opposed to State trading concerns; and only when I believe that private enterprise cannot cater for the public of Western Australia will I support the establishment of such concerns. In the past, we had the experience of the Government entering the sawmilling industry, and also the brick trade. The establishment of the State Saw Mills was undertaken because it was found that insufficient timber was available for our building needs, and the same thing happened when the State Brick Works were established. I gave my sanction to one concern; namely, the brick kilns at Armadale. But once the position for which these concerns are established has been relieved, I believe the State should hand over the field to private enterprise, because we have had ample proof of the way in which State concerns lose large sums of money.

As Mr. Baxter pointed out, we are dealing with public money in this instance; and if we agreed to this Bill, we could involve the public in the loss of many thousands or millions of pounds. For those reasons, I oppose the State's entering the field of insurance business, because it is adequately catered for. Already we have a hundred companies in keen competition with one another for the insurance business offering in this State. As the Chief Secretary pointed out, if this measure is passed, the State office will also enter into this competitive field for the business offering. But he did not tell us, when he introduced the Bill, how the State office intended to go about obtaining the extra business. He did not state whether it would set up offices throughout the State or appoint its own agents, or whether it would send salesmen throughout the country districts to obtain this other business.

The Chief Secretary: It will not need to do that.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The Minister did not tell us whether clerks of the court in the various towns, or police officers, or other Government servants scattered throughout the State, would be appointed

to act as agents. Nothing has been said of the way in which the State office intends to entice business. I feel it is up to the Minister to give us some explanation, so that we shall have a better idea of how the State Insurance Office intends to give the personal service which I deem so necessary in insurance business. I believe that personal service is worth more than a few pence or a few shillings difference that one might have to pay in 12 months for cover for fire, hail, theft, or any other form of insurance.

To illustrate my point, I would say that the State Insurance Office would be a cold Government concern, as are all other Government departments. There is no elasticity in their administration. Even if a person had insured with the State office for five or ten years and, for some unknown reason, forgot to renew his policy, and something happened, it would be too bad, because the State office would turn up a musty old file and say, "I am sorry, old chap; you are not insured."

Hon. G. Bennetts: It would do the same as the other insurance companies.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is not so, because I have had experience of such an incident, and I know of other people who have had dealings with other insurance companies and have built up a certain goodwill over a number of years. If they make a slip, such as I mentioned, the insurance company concerned—it is not a cold institution—will weigh the personal factor, treat the insured person with every consideration, and pay his claim.

Hon. E. M. Davies: In that case, your experience is different from mine.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Years ago, when I was farming, it was my practice to insure with one company, and I built up a certain amount of goodwill. I have insured with this one office for 15 years; and, through a misunderstanding with the local agent—it was really a verbal arrangement at the time—my policy was not renewed. I suffered a loss, and, although the agent had been sacked in the meantime, the company paid my claim for £900 for loss by hail. I venture to say that no State Government concern would do that.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They would hide behind the Auditor General.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is the personal service to which I referred, and it is the result of the friendly relations that have existed over a number of years between the client and the business house concerned. I would not care if the State Insurance Office offered to take my business at a rate which was several pounds cheaper than the commercial house with which I insure. I would take the commercial house every time, for the reasons I have given. If the State Insurance

Office does not appoint agents or travellers to sell its insurance throughout the country districts, what service will it give to the public? All the public will do is to go to the counter and ask for a cover for this or that. No service whatever will be given.

The Minister for the North-West: What service is there in salesmanship?

Hon. A. R. JONES: Private companies send men around the country districts.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Who pays for that? The policy-holders.

Hon. A. R. JONES: They interview people and acquaint them with improvements that occur from time to time in different policies. A neighbour of mine had a visit from one of these agents, and was informed by the agent that the company had a new type of policy which, in the event of the death of the insured person, would save his beneficiaries from paying out a lump sum in probate. It was a life policy, and this friend of mine decided to take one out. He was medically examined and found to conform to the standards required by the company. As a result, his application for a policy was accepted. There was an accident within four months, and his wife collected £4,000. If the State Insurance Office had been concerned in that case he would have heard nothing about it. That is what the private companies do, but the same cannot be said for the State Insurance Office.

The Chief Secretary: I have been insured for 30 years, and all I have had to do is to pay bills.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The Chief Secretary is very lucky if he has not had to collect on insurance. None of us want to do so; because, no matter what the claim may be, the one collecting is always the loser.

The Chief Secretary: You are talking about service.

Hon. A. R. JONES: For the reasons I have outlined, I feel sure that we would not get the same service from the State Government Insurance Office as we do from the private companies at the present time.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You do not know whether you would get it or not.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The Auditor General would not permit any elasticity in relation to State trading concerns. He would allow a loss, and that seems to be what happens to every concern which the State touches. At the present time the State Brick Works may be making a profit, but when the pressure is applied and there is greater competition in three or four years' time, I have no doubt at all that it will prove to be a losing concern, and the public will have to put the money in. I will not subscribe to anything unwarranted which will mean that the public will have to pay at some future date to keep an organisation going.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [6.1]: I want to inform the House that I propose to vote against the Bill. I did so on the last occasion, and I propose to do so again.

The Chief Secretary: That is consistency!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I only want to let members know where I stand. I do not propose to have much to say; but I must point out that the function of a Government is to govern the people, and not to enter into business. That is a very good axiom, and a sound one. For that reason I think the Government should leave business alone. I do not know where Mr. Barker obtained his facts from.

Hon. H. Hearn: He does not know either.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: He did emphasise that they were facts. He made reference to insurance legislation in 1948; but no amendments were made.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: In workers' compensation.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: If the hon. member had read that carefully, he would have seen that it did not bear out the statement he made to the House.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: It is exactly as it was read.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes; when I read it, I find it certainly was. In that case, of course, we gave the Government power to purchase property. Up till that time, it did not have such power. We also gave it power to invest its money in other directions. The Government had lent moneys, and had done so illegally, and the Auditor General had drawn attention to the matter. The practice had to be legalised.

Members generally, and Mr. Barker in particular, stressed the fact that the insurance companies are making huge money from their premiums. It is not the premiums that give them the huge returns, but the buildings from which they derive their large income. The State Insurance Office knows that; and for that reason it wants to put up a big building. I have no objection to that. It might be necessary for me to look back to my more youthful days, but I do know how the State Insurance Office came into existence.

After many years of mining, we felt that the people of Western Australia should be responsible for at least some of the compensation payable to those who fell by the wayside while mining for gold and other metals. That was in the early nineteen-twenties. We set out to do something about it. The late Hon. James Cornell was sent to South Africa to find out what they did for their miners, and he came back with a story; and it was on his account of the position that it was

decided that something should be done here. At that time the matter referred more to the companies than to the Government. The companies said, "You tell us what our liabilities are to be; and if they are more or less controlled, we will probably be able to quote you a price."

Nobody could say what miner's phthisis, tuberculosis, or pneumoconiosis would cost, and for that reason the Government started a scheme of its own to which the owners made considerable contributions. After a while that scheme was extended; I think that was done in about 1926 or 1927. The Bill was introduced by a Labour Government; and it was not opposed, because of the limitations in it. There are more able speakers in this House than I, and some members may know more than I do about what actually took place in those early days.

There are sufficient insurance companies here at the present time, and they have treated the public extremely well. I have never heard of a case of a man having to apply to the court for a fair payment for damage done. I think there is only one Western Australian company; there is only one I know of. Of course, we all know the companies do not carry the risk themselves; it is spread and taken by others.

If the State office enters into other business, it also will have to spread its risk. Even though there may not be a claim for years, we find that each year the State office imposes a small increase in the cost because of the carelessness of the people on the road. The State is not spreading its risk, but is making the people who have the cars carry it.

I will not support this legislation. I will not support any socialistic legislation. I have been in this House and in another place for a long time, and I was sent here to ensure that the people would be governed in the way it was intended they should.

The Chief Secretary: You are riding the old hobby-horse.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It is a sound old hobby-horse, and so long as I ride it I will not be thrown off; but the moment we embark on these socialistic ventures we will find ourselves thrown at the first hurdle. I would warn members against increasing socialistic ideas. Let us permit the business people to run their businesses; if we went on with our legislating we would get on much better.

HON. J. D. TEAHAN (North-East) [6.10]: I rise to support the Bill and to comment on the remarks made by Sir Charles Latham. He says that the private insurance companies do not make their profits from premiums. There is no doubt that they do make profits; and from whatever source they make them, I consider

the Government could do the same. If these profits are made from investments, they must have had to take the initial step; and the State Insurance Office could do likewise. The Bill must have some merit, because not only has it the full support of the Labour Government, but a similar measure also had the support of non-Labour members in this Chamber; otherwise State insurance would not have been established originally. Last night I was surprised and favourably impressed to hear a non-Labour member say that as late as last year—only a matter of months ago—a measure dealing with State insurance was supported. If it was a good measure then, why should members change their minds in such a short time?

Hon. E. M. Davies: Have a look at "Hansard", and you will get your answer.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: It has also been said that there is already sufficient competition in the insurance field, and that no more is desirable. How real is that competition? It is certainly not as keen as we are led to believe. Let us consider the insurance pools in which the local governing bodies have interested themselves. The local authorities cannot be said to be composed of Labour members; the majority of their members are generally non-Labour.

After examining these insurance pools, which are an offshoot of State insurance, and after comparing the rates, they decided to patronise the pools. They were very happy, after the first, second, and third years, to continue with these pools, because the rates compared favourably with those of other companies, and they got satisfactory rebates. Accordingly, if these pools, which are an offshoot of State insurance, can be worked satisfactorily, so I submit can State insurance—which is the parent body—do an equally good job.

Having allowed the State Insurance office to proceed as far as it has, why should we limit the amount of business it can conduct? We have established a State office, and we should make it more sound than it is. When looking after these Government instrumentalities we want them to be as strong as possible; we do not want them to be weak. It has been said that if we permit the State office to extend its activities it will create a stranglehold on other companies. The same was said about State shipping and Commonwealth shipping, and yet we find that other shipping is still on the coast and still going strong.

An argument advanced by one speaker who opposed the Bill was that these companies play an important part because they invest in Government security loans, and in other Government instrumentalities. I maintain that that is the very reason why State insurance should be established. If these companies are

able to invest their money, they must have a considerable amount of it, and we want to ensure that the State can do the same. The companies must get the money from somewhere, and the business must be lucrative.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It is the people's money.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: With those few remarks, I support the Bill.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [7.30]: I rise to support the Bill. I am rather surprised at the trend which the debate has taken, having in mind the fact that the State Insurance Office has been part and parcel of the community life of this State for quite a number of years. As has already been explained in this House, its birth was due to the necessity to provide insurance cover for workers in a very important industry in Western Australia. Unfortunately, private insurance companies, on being approached to take this insurance, said they were unable to do so. As a consequence, workers in this important industry would have been deprived of insurance cover, had not the Government decided to establish a State insurance office.

Although it carried on illegally for a long period, and it was not until some years afterwards that Parliament legalised it, we did not hear any mention in those days about socialism or nationalisation of insurance. It seems rather remarkable to me that when a Labour Government introduces legislation to benefit the people, we find the representatives of the Opposition in this House chiding the Government and calling the proposed legislation socialistic.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: In those days the Labour Party was not pushing ahead the socialistic policy.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: The point is that the State Government Insurance Office has been in existence for a number of years. If it is such a socialistic undertaking, as we have been led to believe by some of the speeches made this afternoon, it is rather remarkable that the McLarty-Watts Government, which was in power for six years, retained it. What is more, in 1948 that Government amended the Act to provide for the State Insurance Office to utilise its funds—to invest them, and also to use them for building purposes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: That was a business proposition.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: It is not a different proposition. I do not object to any member of this House expressing his views on the merits of the question before us. What I object to is that some members were prepared to vote for similar legislation when their parties were in office, and to say it was for the benefit of the people; but when a Labour Government brings down such legislation, it is chided for being socialistic.

or trying to nationalise industry. It is more remarkable that—only recently I had reason to draw the attention of the House to it—some Liberal Party members in this House, in the course of the Address-in-reply debate during the last session, suggested that the Labour Government in office should take over the Midland Railway Co. The reason given was that freights and other things were so tied up with the Government railways.

It appears to me that the Midland Railway Co. was all right as a private undertaking when it had thousands of acres of land as a grant for having constructed the line and was able to sell that land; but now—when, like all other railway transport services, it is feeling the pinch—some Liberal members in this House suggest that the Government should take it over, or—in other words—socialise it. I would suggest that members be more genuine in their remarks.

As far as the State Insurance Office is concerned, it has become part and parcel of the community life of this State. It has provided insurance for people whom the private insurance companies would not cover. It did not matter a damn to them whether the people could be insured or not.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: The private companies only refused the silicosis cover.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I am rather surprised to hear that remark. Silicosis is one of the scourges in the mining industry. Unfortunately, there are thousands of men who worked in that industry and who are suffering from the disease. The Government which established the insurance office to cover them did a very humane act.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It covered compensation afterwards as well.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: The insurance covered lots of things afterwards. During the six years of the McLarty-Watts Government there was a majority in this House and in another place, but that Government was prepared to retain the Government State Insurance Office. Yet immediately a Labour Government brings down a Bill to extend the insurance business—which has been done several times in past years—members in this House object, because they say it is a socialistic move.

Hon. H. L. Roche: The McLarty-Watts Government was always assured of eight votes in this House.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: It was the same during the discussion of the rents and tenancies legislation. However, the position is not quite the same this year as regards State insurance. All we are asking this House to do is to enable the State office to extend its business to cover everything except life assurance. I cannot understand the objection that has been

raised. Throughout the years we have been told that competition benefits the people generally; but now we are told there is a certain number of companies operating in this State, and there is no necessity to have another.

I venture to say that if we had the State office working in competition with the other insurance companies, the advantage would fall on those who desired to take out insurance policies. I am surprised at the objection raised by some members. What is more, there has been such a change of opinion since the last session. Some members of the Opposition supported the Bill then; but today we find quite a change in their opinions, and the reason given is that this is a socialistic undertaking.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Which members have changed their opinion?

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: One does not know whether people are speaking genuinely or not. I am rather surprised at some of the statements made by some members.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Have I declared myself yet?

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I do not know; I have not mentioned the hon. member by name.

Hon. L. C. Diver: That is quite obvious.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: If the hon. member takes umbrage at what I have said—and what I said, I meant—and if he feels it applies to him, that is not my fault.

Hon. L. C. Diver: You are accusing members of changing their opinions.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I did not mention any member by name.

Hon. L. A. Logan: You made an incorrect statement when you said that members changed their attitude because they called the legislation socialistic.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Mr. Jones stated this evening that if the State Insurance Office extended its business to other lines of insurance, it would be a cold institution for people to enter. If anyone can tell me of places colder than some private insurance companies, then I shall have a long way to walk. I have a personal feeling in that regard because I lost a son in World War II. He was insured, and he also had an accident policy. When the executors applied for probate, they were told that my son did not lose his life by accident. If there is anything colder than that, then I am prepared to walk a great distance.

I believe that the State office should have the opportunity of conducting other lines of insurance business. For people to say that it is a socialistic undertaking after all this time, leaves me cold. It is proposed that the conduct of the business shall be on

lines similar to those of private insurance companies. In Clause 11 of the Bill it is provided that—

The office shall from time to time pay to the Treasurer such sums as the Commissioner of Taxation deems to be equivalent of the amounts which would be payable by the office by way of income tax, payroll tax, social services contributions, and other taxes.

The following paragraph reads—

The office shall be liable for and shall pay to any local government or other authority all such rates, taxes and other outgoings which would be by law charged to or be payable by an insurance company carrying on similar business to that carried on by the office.

Further on, it is provided that the office shall also pay the fire brigade rates to the local authorities, and also to the Fire Brigades Board, the same as is done by insurance companies. We find the basis of the conduct of the State Insurance Office, if this Bill is passed, will be on similar lines to those of private insurance companies.

Like other members, I am at a loss to understand what people are frightened about. We are told of various things that would happen. Good gracious! The people have elected members to the Parliament of this State so that they can hear and express their views in the legislative halls. It is for the people to decide on their representatives; and if those representatives desire that a State Government Insurance Office should be in existence in Western Australia, I fail to see any reason why an objection should be raised in this House.

This is not a Bill, as was said this afternoon, to achieve socialisation and nationalisation. This Bill has nothing to do with that at all. It merely makes provision for the extension of insurance cover by the State Insurance Office, and places it on the same basis as private insurance companies. So I am unable to understand the sudden objection that has been raised to the measure by some members of this House.

A little while ago, we were given reasons why members should not vote for the Bill. I have no objection to that. If representatives of the people in this House have an opinion to express, I am prepared to listen to it; and we have heard some good debating tonight. Although I may disagree with the views expressed, I give those members credit for dealing with the measure as they think fit. As to the attitude of those members who oppose the measure on the ground that it is a form of socialisation, that leaves me cold. What harm could the office do if these powers were conceded?

Hon. G. Bennetts: Let us give it a trial.

HON. E. M. DAVIES: If the State office is conducted on the basis adopted by private companies, and provides benefits, and

makes provision for workers' compensation that the companies will not undertake, then this measure authorising it is an essential piece of legislation. Only recently we were informed that a certain company was prepared to provide insurance cover for wood-carters, but not for wood-cutters; and the result was that the State office was compelled, for humanitarian reasons, to undertake the risk that the companies would not take.

I feel sure that it is the desire of a large number of people that the State Insurance Office should be granted these powers. It is remarkable that, when the State office has proved its ability to deal with the business, and has made a profit and set aside sufficient reserves to cover risks as they become due, members should argue that some catastrophe might happen whereby the office might not be able to provide the requisite funds and would have to call upon the Treasury for assistance. To my mind, that is an occurrence not at all likely to happen.

Insurance companies are versed in sound business principles, and do not run risks of that sort. Large amounts of insurance money have to be paid out in various parts of the world, but one company does not carry the whole risk; it is spread over quite a number of companies operating throughout the world. We are told that the State office works in collaboration with the private companies through the Premium Rates Committee; and this being so, I feel sure that arrangements would be made to spread heavy insurance risks with various companies.

In conclusion, I should like to say that I always listen closely to the debates in this House when a measure is being discussed on its merits, but I do not like to hear members accusing the Government of entering into socialistic undertakings when a measure of this sort is proposed. If the State Insurance Office is to be regarded as a socialistic scheme, there are many other undertakings in this State that should be regarded similarly. These I enumerated during the Address-in-reply debate, and many of the measures authorising them were placed on the statute book by other than Labour Governments.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—JURY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East)
[7.50]: This Bill proposes to amend the Jury Act by making provision to enable

women to sit on juries. Such a provision would break new ground in Western Australia; but the principle already operates in the States of New South Wales and Queensland, and has operated for some years in England and New Zealand and, of course, in America.

The proposal has been received with approval by women's organisations, which naturally regard it as a further step towards equality, or what is often referred to as the emancipation of women. Whether the effectiveness of the jury as an instrument for ascertaining the truth will be affected one way or the other is doubtful. Whatever may be the difference of temperament or experience, there is no reason to suppose that women who serve on juries will be more lacking in sincerity, concentration, or a sense of responsibility than are men.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Why not have them on all juries?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: We may come to that later. When a woman is entitled to vote, to be elected to Parliament, and to enter the professions, and is generally entitled and subject to the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship, she should take such part as the ordinary citizen is called upon to take in the actual administration of justice. It is my opinion, therefore, that the jury system will not suffer by the inclusion of women, and possibly it may be improved.

The system of trial by jury has its weaknesses, but it is worth recalling that, in practically every English speaking country and in most other democratic countries, trial by jury does in fact exist. The importance of this is that it indicates that most people throughout the civilised world regard the jury system with satisfaction and consider that on the whole it makes for just results. This is a matter of fundamental importance. The really vital thing is to have a tribunal which satisfies the public desire.

The jury system, therefore, is an institution which the people in the freedom-loving countries have confidence in and desire to retain. This does not imply, of course, that it is perfect by any means, and that it should not be reviewed from time to time. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the trend to include women on juries will have a beneficial effect and further improve an institution which is one of the prized possessions of democratic countries.

The Act provides that every man between the ages of 21 and 60 who has real estate of the value of £50 or personal estate of the value of £150 shall be qualified and liable to serve. The Bill before us proposes that the same age limit shall apply to women. Any woman between the ages of 21 and 60 who is of good fame

and character, and who is enrolled as an elector for the Legislative Assembly, shall be qualified and liable to serve as a juror in all civil and criminal proceedings.

If men between the ages of 21 and 60 are qualified and liable to serve, I do not think it can be logically argued that any difference in the age range should be prescribed for women. No one would argue that a woman of 21 was mentally inferior to a young man of that age.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is not the only qualification, is it?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: For men there is a modest property qualification.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Somewhat similar to what obtains for this House.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Not many men would be unable to comply with the property qualification. Whether that qualification should be applied to women is not, to my way of thinking, of great consequence.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It would have no bearing on the qualification of the individual himself whether he had £50 or other property. It would not make him any more intelligent.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: No. I was pointing out the qualifications prescribed for men. My argument is that, if we are going to have women on juries, the same age limit should apply, which is what this Bill provides. The whole merit of the jury system is that we get a cross-section of the community—a cross-section of trades, callings and occupations, people of varying ages and grades of society and intelligence. In spite of the criticism that has been levelled against the jury system many eminent jurists, and others who should be competent to know, have faith in it.

So I agree with the proposal in the Bill that the age range for women shall be 21 to 60 years. If we are going to have women on juries, we cannot reasonably say that, on the one hand, men between the ages of 21 and 60 are liable to serve; and, on the other hand, that a different age shall be prescribed for women.

I desire to point out that men have no choice about serving on juries, but would add that not many men in the community are called upon for jury service during the course of their lives. Most of them, however, are liable to serve; and, once they receive a summons to serve, they have no choice, but must attend the court, with the exception that if they are sick or have some other sufficient reason they can, of course, be excused.

The Bill proposes to apply that liability to all the eligible women in the community; but it provides some concession to them by stating that, if a woman desires not to remain on the jury list, she may write to

the sheriff, telling him she does not wish to serve, and have her name taken off that list. There are a great number of women between the ages of 21 and 60 years in Western Australia, and I believe that the great majority of them will have no desire at all to serve on juries.

Hon. H. Hearn: Then why compel them to do so?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: If we are going to have them serve on juries, I think we should apply the law with equal force to both men and women. Does not the hon. member think so?

Hon. H. Hearn: No. I think the responsibility should be on a woman only if she desires to serve.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: They cannot have it both ways. If we are going to place women on juries, I think we should provide that they must serve, if they are liable and have not taken steps to remove their names from the jury list. If that is not provided for, a situation will arise where we will have a certain type of woman who will become a professional juror, as it were, and will look forward to serving on juries and do all she can to find a place there. I do not think that is the type of woman we want for jury service.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Do you not think counsel would eliminate that type by challenge?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I cannot answer that.

Hon. H. Hearn: What would you do?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: There would be a lot of considerations to be weighed. The Bill also provides that the court shall excuse from attendance as a juror at a criminal trial any woman who applies to be exempted because of the nature of the evidence to be heard; or because, for medical reasons, she is unfit to serve. That is a most reasonable provision.

I reiterate that, to make this measure workable, we have the choice of making it compulsory for women to be on the jury list, unless they have their names removed from it; or of opening the jury list only to those women who write in and apply to have their names placed on it. Whether, if we take the latter course, we will get the right type of women, is open to question. This is a measure which seeks to take a most interesting step; and, in my opinion, there is no logical argument that can be advanced against women sitting on juries.

They have the same responsibilities as men before the law, and they are at least equal in intelligence and realise their responsibility to the community quite as fully as men do. Their wisdom and capacity, I am convinced, would be beneficial to the jury system; but, of course, there are some difficulties involved in this

question. The housewife, the mother of young children, and women who have other responsibilities would be precluded from sitting in a court all day, and women in that category would comprise the majority of those who would make the best jurors.

I am afraid that we might get what might be termed a list of professional jurors, and we do not want on juries the type of woman who will glory in the fact that she sits on juries. Jury service is a responsibility that the men in the community must meet, and one that I am sure women could stand up to.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Have you known—in your legal experience—of many young men of 21 or 22 years of age being called for jury service?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Yes.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do you think it would be good to have young women of that age called for service also?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Why not? The law allows them to vote. Every young woman or young man at 21 years of age has the right to vote, and can be elected to Parliament—though not, of course, to this august Chamber. They have to be far more mature than that before coming here.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Do you remember when you had to wait a little while?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I wish only that it were not so long ago.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I cannot help wondering why you voted against the jury Bill last year.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Of course, the Government changed.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: In answer to the hon. member, I would point out that when I spoke on a somewhat similar measure last year I did not oppose the principle of women sitting on juries, but did oppose certain of the provisions of that measure which I thought were unworkable. I believe that anyone who reads the remarks I made on that occasion will admit readily that I conceded the principle that women should have the right to sit on juries, and I have always held that view. There are difficulties that will be met in the implementation of a measure such as this, but the place of women in our society has altered greatly in recent years. They have become emancipated.

Hon. H. Hearn: They were emancipated many years ago.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: They now take a far more active interest in our society than they did years ago, and I do not think any

of us could justly claim that the influence they have brought to bear is other than advantageous in many ways.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Do you know how many women have served on juries in Queensland and New South Wales?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I understand that in Queensland, New South Wales, and New Zealand not many women have served on juries.

Hon. L. A. Logan: I believe there has been only one in Queensland and one in New South Wales.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Jury service is a serious responsibility, and often a great inconvenience. Sitting on a jury may involve one in financial loss. I have never met a man who sought to serve on a jury, but I know that the average male will accept that responsibility when called upon to do so.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: In many cases they shirk it if they can.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Many men prefer not to sit in judgment on their fellow-creatures; but in my experience the average man will stand up to his responsibility, and I think that would apply to practically every class of woman also. I support the measure.

HON. J. J. GARRIGAN (South-East) [8.12]: I rise to support the Bill. Mr. Heenan has given a very good resume of the measure, and I desire only to add that I have served on many juries in my time and they have held no terrors for me; nor do I think they would hold any terrors for women. I therefore see no reason why women should not serve on juries. They served in our forces during the war and did a wonderful job. In both peace and war they serve in our hospitals as nurses, orderlies, and so on; and in the course of their work, they hear and see some torrid things, but do not shirk their duty. I repeat that I see no reason at all why women should not serve on juries, provided they are over the age of 25 years, and that it is made optional whether they serve or not.

On motion by the Minister for the North-West, debate adjourned.

BILL—STATE HOUSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [8.14]: I desire to compliment the Government on having brought down this Bill, as I believe it will be the means of assisting a large number of citizens of this State who are now finding it difficult to obtain homes of their own. We know that there is at present provision for the ex-serviceman to obtain a house under the

war service homes scheme. If they are fortunate enough, there are others who, when the homes are available, will be able to take advantage of that scheme also. However, on account of the number of applicants still waiting for houses that are to be built under the workers' homes scheme, it is necessary for some other arrangements to be made. So we can compliment the Government upon introducing this measure.

It is something that we can regard as being humanitarian, because many people today are suffering as a result of the housing shortage. As home life is the very basis of a nation—in fact, it is the foundation stone of the British Commonwealth of which we are proud to be members—the Government, in bringing down this measure, has done something that will meet with the approval of all members of this Parliament.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I think you are on a winner there.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I believe I am. I have a win sometimes. The fact is that, under present arrangements, it is necessary for those people who are applying for financial assistance to provide a certain amount themselves. Because of the large increase in housing costs, in some instances it is necessary for such applicants to obtain sufficient money from banks or other financial institutions so that they may construct homes. At present, the Commonwealth Bank is prepared to advance up to £1,350 on a timber-framed house, and up to £1,750 on a brick house. However, due to the high cost of building, that still leaves a large amount to be found by the prospective purchaser.

By this Bill it is proposed to make it possible for additional money to be provided to a would-be home purchaser. I am sure there are many people who are living in tenements today, with the threat of eviction over their heads, that would be prepared to take advantage of the scheme outlined in the Bill. Therefore, I have great pleasure indeed in making a small contribution to the debate on this measure. The speeches already made by some members in this House have left no doubt in the minds of all of us that this proposed legislation will be popular with everyone concerned.

On motion by the Minister for the North-West, debate adjourned.

RESOLUTION—NORTH-WEST.

As to Commonwealth Financial Assistance.

Message from the Assembly received and read requesting concurrence in the following resolution:—

That this House expresses its opinion that that portion of the State which lies north of the 26th parallel

of latitude is incapable of being fully developed if wholly dependent upon such finance as is only obtainable from State resources.

It therefore requests—

(a) That the Government present a programme for the development of that portion of the State to a committee consisting of the Premier (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, M.L.A.), the Minister for the North-West (Hon. H. C. Strickland, M.L.C.), the Leader of the Opposition (Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, K.B.E., M.L.A.), the Leader of the Country Party (Hon. A. F. Watts, C.M.G., M.L.A.) and the Speaker and Member for Pilbara (Hon. A. J. Rodoreda, M.L.A.).

(b) That this Committee consider the programme as presented to it by the Government and, if thought necessary, amend the programme.

(c) That the Committee submit such programme personally at Canberra to the Prime Minister and the Federal Treasurer.

(d) That a special annual grant of an amount considered necessary for such developmental work be requested for a period of 10 years in order to carry out the programme.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 24th August.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.20 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 18th August, 1954.

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

MOTION—URGENCY.

As to Removal of Electric Cables from Streets.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the member for Claremont—

I wish to move the adjournment of the House this afternoon to discuss a question of urgent public importance, namely, the destruction by fire of valuable refrigerators, radiograms and other property in various houses in Leederville recently, due to a surge of excess current in the electric mains. Yours truly, Charles F. J. North.

I have agreed to allow the hon. member to move his motion if the necessary seven members rise in their places to support the proposal.

Seven members having risen in their places,