

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 21st September, 1978

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. Clive Griffiths) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

ACTS AMENDMENT (CONSTITUTION) BILL

Message: Royal Assent

Message from the Governor received and read notifying that he had reserved the Bill for the signification of Her Majesty's pleasure.

BILLS (5): ASSENT

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

1. Abattoirs Act Amendment Bill.
2. Suitors' Fund Act Amendment Bill (No. 2).
3. Death Duty Assessment Act Amendment Bill.
4. Death Duty Act Amendment Bill.
5. University of Western Australia Act Amendment Bill.

QUESTIONS

Questions were taken at this stage.

LAW REFORM COMMISSION

Annual Report: Ministerial Statement

THE HON. I. G. MEDCALF (Metropolitan—Attorney General) [2.44 p.m.]: Mr President, I seek leave of the House to make a ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF: I have today tabled the annual report of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia for the year ended the 30th June, 1978. The report reflects the Government's desire to make the maximum effective use of the commission in the legislative process.

The report shows that of the 17 investigations by the commission and its predecessor, the Law Reform Committee, which have resulted in legislation, nine have been acted upon by the Court Government since it came to office in 1974.

Legislation we have introduced on the basis of Law Reform Commission reports covers such matters as criminal injuries compensation, medical and technical evidence in court proceedings, the control of mortgage brokers, land sales, the administration of estates, the legal representation of children and defamation.

In the year under review the commission published six working papers for public comment, two of which were on matters to which I had asked the commission to give high priority; namely, bail procedures and appeals under the Justices Act.

The annual report notes that I referred one new project to the commission during the year under review and extended the terms of reference in two other matters already before the commission. These references related to the retention and destruction of records of Courts of Petty Sessions and Local Courts, the status and rights of illegitimate children, and the matter of how a person's criminal record should be treated with regard to the right to privacy.

I have also since the 30th June widened the terms of reference in three other matters before the commission relating to appeals from administrative decisions, criminal process and persons suffering from mental disorders, and the Trustees Act of 1962.

I asked the commission to give particular attention to the Supreme Court's supervisory jurisdiction over administrative decisions. This is in addition to the work it has already done in considering the possible need for a special tribunal to hear appeals against decisions by various Government and statutory authorities.

The commission is about to release a working paper on the original reference, including a survey of existing avenues of appeal. It will now release a separate working paper later on the role of the Supreme Court. The court can, by means of what are called "prerogative" writs quash some, but not all, administrative decisions. It can also prohibit a body from acting without lawful authority.

My reason for extending the scope of the commission's review now is to see whether or not the Supreme Court's power in this area of the law needs to be extended.

I also expect the commission to comment on the existing procedures for asking the Supreme Court to intervene. It is possible that the procedures could be simplified or improved in some other way.

In its annual report the commission welcomes the Government's decision announced in May to legislate for the appointment of two full-time commissioners, in addition to the present three part-time commissioners. As I said then, the Government believes the commission is performing a most valuable service to the State and we are anxious to give it every assistance and facility.

The commission currently has before it references on a number of matters which the Government regards as very important, and which will almost certainly require legislative action when the commission's reports are completed. Those references deal with some matters of increasing interest to the community.

In addition to the subjects I have already mentioned, such as bail, there are projects on the use of computer records in evidence, privacy, jury service, and strata titles.

The Government is determined to make the best possible use of the commission, not as a substitute for ministerial and parliamentary action, but as an important aid to the legislative processes in Western Australia.

In tabling the commission's report for 1977-1978, I wish to express the Government's appreciation of the work of the three commissioners—Mr Crago, Mr Malcolm and Mr Freeman—the commission's Executive Officer, Mr Ogilvie, and his staff of four lawyer-research officers and three clerical officers.

SALARIES AND ALLOWANCES TRIBUNAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House), read a first time.

Second Reading

THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West—Leader of the House) [2.50 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Salaries and Allowances Tribunal Act currently requires a member of the tribunal to vacate office on attaining the age of 70 years, even though the term of appointment has not expired.

This Bill seeks to raise the statutory retiring age of a member to 72 years.

Members will appreciate that having regard for the status of the tribunal and the nature of its responsibilities, it is necessary for appointees to be senior and respected members of the community and to be well versed in government activities.

Accordingly, there is a limited field from which appointments can be made and this limitation is exacerbated by the requirement that members of the tribunal must retire on attaining the age of 70 years.

The position would be improved if members could serve on the tribunal for a longer period if required, hence the proposed amendment

which is comparable with the provisions of the Companies Act whereby a public company director can serve until the age of 72 years without having to come up for re-election each year.

This proposed amendment will not prevent the retirement of a member on the expiration of his term of appointment prior to attaining the age of 72 years, but it will allow the retention of a member's service up to that age where the person concerned is able and willing to continue in office and where it is considered that his knowledge and experience would be of advantage to the tribunal.

I commend the Bill to the House.

THE HON D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) [2.51 p.m.]: This amending Bill has the support of the Opposition. However, I would like to say a few words on the Bill. The members of the Opposition are quite happy with the person to whom this Bill has reference; I have no doubt about his competence and fairness in carrying out his job.

I am not a great supporter of arbitrary retiring ages, but it has been suggested to me when we were discussing this matter in other areas that it is very difficult to select a person for appointment to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal who would be acceptable to the judges in this State; this tribunal also fixes the salaries of judges.

Be that as it may, perhaps on some future occasion when we are appointing members to tribunals we should get up in this Chamber and say a few words about the appointment of a person who would be acceptable to members of Parliament! I have no doubt that would be a requirement in appointing members to the Salaries and Allowances Tribunal.

Perhaps in appointing members to the State Industrial Commission we could take into account the unions and the employers, and say that the members appointed to that commission should be acceptable to all parties concerned. I am aware that, in regard to that commission, the people who are appointed are representative of the unions and industry.

The point I am making is that we should not be carried away in the making of these appointments. On this occasion the person concerned is Mr Phil Adams who is well known to most of us and who has my greatest respect.

With those few words I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Third Reading

Bill read a third time, on motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House), and passed.

BILLS (3) THIRD READING

1. Youth, Sport and Recreation Bill.
2. Acts Amendment (Qualifying Ages Alteration) Bill.
3. Small Claims Tribunals Act Amendment Bill (No. 2).

Bills read a third time, on motions by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House), and passed.

HONEY POOL BILL*Second Reading*

Debate resumed from the 20th September.

THE HON. R. H. C. STUBBS (South-East) [2.58 p.m.]: This is a Bill for an Act to establish the Honey Pool of Western Australia to provide for the marketing of honey and for related purposes.

To outline the history of this industry, the Honey Pool goes back very many years and had its origin in May, 1926, as the result of meetings of beekeepers who were dissatisfied with the marketing arrangements for honey at that time.

My research shows that a meeting of the people, who were interested in the marketing of honey, was held in 1924. In 1925 they started to market their own honey, but unfortunately their trading was not a success. In 1926 Westralian Farmers Co-operative Ltd. took over and assisted with the marketing of honey, and with the provision of premises.

I remember the occasion in 1931 in Hannan Street, Kalgoorlie—this was in the depression years—when the people concerned with the marketing of honey, though experiencing difficulty in marketing it, undertook a big promotion drive. I recall seeing a grocery shop in Hannan Street with a full window display of honey in various containers, and also of various portions of beehives, and that sort of thing. That created great interest in Kalgoorlie in promoting the sale of honey.

At the time the goldfields was full of people, and people went there from all over Australia and Western Australia because of the depression

and there was no work to be found anywhere, but jobs were available on the goldfields because of the increased price of gold.

It is interesting to note that 80 per cent of the honey locally produced was exported. I understand Japan is a buyer of a lot of our low-grade honey.

An interesting part of this Bill is that it still retains the original concept of being a voluntary pool; it is not under the management of the Government.

The Opposition supports the measure.

THE HON. G. W. BERRY (Lower North) [3.01 p.m.]: I rise to support the Bill and to seek certain information. In his second reading speech the Minister said the Honey Pool went back very many years and had its origin in May, 1926, as the result of meetings of beekeepers who were dissatisfied with the marketing arrangements for honey at that time. It has continued on a voluntary basis.

The Minister mentioned there were 127 members of the pool and he indicated this is a substantial proportion of all the State's producers. I wonder what percentage of producers that figure would be. I would also like to know what sort of return the Honey Pool gives to its members, compared with the returns of those operating outside the Honey Pool. No doubt those connected with the Honey Pool believe it is a good marketing arrangement and I wonder why all honey producers are not members of it.

THE HON. H. W. GAYFER (Central) [3.02 p.m.]: I am particularly interested in this Bill, because I am a firm believer in pool arrangements. As for the previous speaker, if he does not believe that people are better off in pool systems when they are part of a primary industry, and are so helped in the marketing and disposal of their produce, I suggest we have wasted a good many of our more productive and more financial years by being members of grain, wheat and similar pools.

I believe the Honey Pool now will have every reason to be just as good and just as favourable in years to come as any of the other pools in existence. Like the Hon. Claude Stubbs I have risen to pay a degree of tribute to Westralian Farmers Co-operative Ltd.

Wesfarmers is responsible for getting many institutions in this country off the ground which it later handed over to growers. Indeed, the Honey Pool is one of those enterprises. We can look further back to the establishment of the Wheat Pool in the 1920s which was set up by Wesfarmers

and finally handed over to the growers. There was complete grower representation and a complete reorganisation a couple of years ago with the setting up of the Grain Pool. The Grain Pool has a good standing in the marketplaces of the world. Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. is another instrumentality set up by Wesfarmers which was finally handed over to the growers in the early 1940s.

The Hon. R. H. C. Stubbs: Can you remember the broadcasting of those days?

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: The broadcasting of news to country dwellers was a first by radio station 6WF. If one wanted to associate names with that era one would mention the Batyphone radio which we had to kick in the ribs to make it work.

Associated with this sort of development by Wesfarmers is the Wesfarmers' transport division of the London shipping office, which was brought into being for the benefit of farmers in Western Australia and is in the process of being handed over. It will be run along similar lines to other companies which have been handed over by Wesfarmers once they were on their feet.

Another company was Out Turns Ltd., a company based in England, which negotiates and watches out for the interests of all exporters in Western Australia; not only those in the grain trade but also those interested in any other bulk commodity that goes overseas. The company's main purpose was to arbitrate between the receiver and despatcher of goods when there was disagreement on the weight involved. Prior to the setting up of this company there were many arguments on whether or not the goods did, in fact, leave Western Australian shores and arrive at their destination.

So the Honey Pool is another of these types of ventures which have been set up by Wesfarmers in the first place to benefit the majority of growers. A while ago my Opposition friends accused the company of socialistic practices.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I did not.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: No, but it was mentioned by Mr Cooley. The person I always hear is Mr Cooley.

The Hon. D. W. Cooley: I only whispered it.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: Mr Cooley did only whisper the remark and he said it in a friendly fashion, but if being a member of a co-operative and a believer in co-operative principles marks a man as a socialist, then I am a socialist. I am

also a great believer in free enterprise and I believe co-operatives have an important part to play in the free enterprise system of our democratic form of government.

I know my next point touches on a tender subject, but recently I noted that Wesfarmers was contemplating entering the superphosphate business. I do not know whether or not in years to come this project will follow the lines of the various pools such as the Honey Pool and Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask honourable members again to refrain from this audible conversation while a member is endeavouring to address the House.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: I know there is a lot of conjecture on this point by the Farmers' Union, of which I am a member. There are two sides to every problem and I am not sure that Wesfarmers is not trying to do the proper thing by the farmers of Western Australia.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Does phosphate increase the flow of honey? What does it have to do with honey?

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: Without superphosphate on the ground we cannot grow dandelions, and if we cannot grow dandelions we cannot produce honey. It is all part of the system.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: You had better get some dandelions going, because we are importing honey from South Australia.

The Hon. H. W. GAYFER: I will leave Mr Dans to make his own observations. At the moment he is interfering with my line of speech.

Whilst there is some conjecture over the particular problem under discussion I cannot say I support Wesfarmers when it adopts the attitude it has in regard to wheat farmers and the IAC submissions.

I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

THE HON. W. R. WITHERS (North) [3.11 p.m.]: I am not going to speak against the Bill, but I would like to place on record the fact that I believe the legislation is good. However, there is one thing which is beginning to disturb me about pools in Western Australia; that is, they are based within the south-west corner of the State. By that I do not mean the south-west region, but the area north of Perth, around Perth, and south of Perth. This fact is disturbing to me, because potential industries in the north could be disadvantaged by bureaucratic decisions or advice to a Minister based purely on southern thinking.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: Did you say "sudden" thinking?

THE HON. W. R. WITHERS: No, I was talking about southern thinking. I am not really departing from the subject matter of the Bill, but would like to give an example of what I am talking about. If we consider the fishing industry we find that the regulations are designed mainly for fishermen who service a large number of people. I come from a small town—Kununurra—in the East Kimberley which has no fresh fish market available at the moment. We want fresh fish. We have plenty around us, but to meet the requirements under the normal fishing licence a fisherman would have to have a boat which would require a coxswain's licence, so in order to pay for his boat he would have to catch more fish than is required in the town.

The Hon. H. W. Gayfer: I am glad you raised the question of fishermen's co-operatives. I forgot about the subject.

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS: I am now trying to sort this problem out with the Minister so that in Kununurra we can have a fisherman with an estuarine and river licence. The department will have to change its thinking about southern requirements and give the town of Kununurra the opportunity to have fresh fish.

I use this as an example because in any pool situation all the directors of the pool come from the area adjacent to the metropolitan region. When someone establishes an industry in the far north, such as in the Kimberley or the Pilbara, he would have very little say in the decisions of the pool. In fact, in the early days of an apiary business in the East Kimberley, those involved up there would have very little say in the marketing of the honey. They would have great difficulties in marketing the product because it would be economically impossible to establish a pool up there, although I do realise that under the legislation it is possible for more than one pool to be established.

Of course, with regard to the situation in the north, it could be that the directors of the Honey Pool could establish a pool in one small town in the Kimberley and allow it to market the product from that point; but I very much doubt whether this would occur. It is this type of situation which disturbs me.

I have no objection to the Bill, but if a small apiary business is commenced in the north I would like the Minister to consider what I have said today.

THE HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [3.15 p.m.]: I am wondering how fish and wheat have become involved with honey. Most of the discussion has been on fish and wheat rather than on the subject matter of the Bill.

Mr Berry said that the Honey Pool was commenced in 1926. That is correct. That was the year I joined Wesfarmers and was employed licking stamps and delivering letters. The first Secretary of the Honey Pool was a gentleman named Ron Moyle, employed by Wesfarmers, and was well known in the city at that time as he conducted an orchestra in Perth. I thought it was worth recording these facts.

I beg to disagree with Mr Gayfer who said that Wesfarmers started the first Wheat Pool. The first Wheat Pool was commenced during the First World War, in 1917 or 1918, and was a Government pool. The grain was collected in big sheds at Spencers Brook, but unfortunately the iron was not put down deeply enough in the ground to prevent mice entering the shed, and consequently there was a terrific loss as a result of mice infestation.

About 1919 or 1920 my father was the Minister for Agriculture and he recommended to the Government that the pool be handed over to Wesfarmers; and that is how Wesfarmers became involved and commenced to control the Wheat Pool. I thought I would place those matters on record.

Over the years the Honey Pool has been a great boon to the producers. I have not heard one producer criticise the pool. They have all benefited from it.

As far as the quality of honey is concerned, there are various qualities, but I am led to believe by some producers that one of the best varieties of honey is the honey produced in areas where Paterson's Curse or Salvation Jane, as it is commonly known, is found. This is a weed with a purple flower and can be found in areas like Meckering, etc. Salvation Jane is responsible for one of the best varieties of honey ever produced in Western Australia. I do not know whether Mr Gayfer's statement regarding dandelions carries any weight because I do not think bees get very much honey from dandelion cape weed.

I support the Bill.

THE HON. D. K. DANS (South Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) [3.18 p.m.]: I support the Bill. I could not permit the opportunity to pass without speaking, especially having listened to the flowery speech of Mr Gayfer. It seems

that the debate has gone from superphosphate to wheat and then somehow or other Mr Withers had fish stuck in the honey!

I think the debate has proved beyond a shadow of doubt the complexities of our Australian society when we sometimes talk about capitalism, free enterprise, and socialism.

I think it could be said that quite a number of people in this Chamber are selective socialists. Let me remind the House of the words of the great Wall Street banker and financier (Mr J. P. Morgan). He said, "We really believe in socialism but we are the real socialists, because we want to socialise everything for ourselves." I am not suggesting Mr Gayfer or the farming community wants to do that.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Did he really say that, or did you make it up?

The Hon. D. K. DAns: I do not think anyone could accuse me of making up things here, or ever prove that I have, in any case!

We honestly and sincerely support the Bill as we have supported the Honey Pool over the years. I was interested to read the speech of Mr Hoar who was the Minister for Agriculture in 1955 when the legislation was updated.

One of the tragedies at present—and I want to make this clear to the House—is that honey producers are having a tough time as a result of cyclone "Alby".

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Before that too, because of the drought—very tough indeed.

The Hon. D. K. DAns: I was going to refer to that. We are now actually importing honey from South Australia and Victoria. I am not a honey eater—nor for that matter am I a lotus eater—but my family is in the habit of buying a particular type of honey at the Fremantle markets. This is a high quality naturally creamed honey, and the supplier of it told me that he could not meet the demand because of the drought and cyclone "Alby".

While I commend this Bill to the House, perhaps some further action could be taken in the future—although I do not know what—to secure a more permanent place in the agriculture primary producer sector of the State for the honey producers. I am not sufficiently informed to know whether beekeepers engage in the production of honey only, or whether they engage in other activities.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: There are a number of full-time beekeepers.

The Hon. D. K. DAns: I would agree with Mr Gayfer when he said that the various pools and boards have served Western Australia well. I do not know whether they have all been economically good, but I am not one of those people who think that they must have an economic situation in terms of an individual, but rather I believe we should have a good economic operation in terms of the whole industry and the people generally.

I heard recently that it is becoming difficult to encourage people to grow potatoes. I do not know whether that comment is true, but having become an expert on potatoes very early in my career in Parliament I have a great interest in them. Mr Deputy President, you will remember that during the inquiry into the potato industry we learnt about the production and the marketing of this produce. I admit that before then I did not even know that there were different varieties of potatoes—they were just potatoes to me.

We support a very large community through the board system in Western Australia. I realise that probably a few growers could produce all the potatoes we need in Western Australia, and perhaps do so at a better price than we pay at the moment.

The Hon. D. J. Wordsworth: Not very good socialism!

The Hon. D. K. DAns: No, it is not, but I am coming to that. At the moment I am speaking in support of the Honey Pool, not the superphosphate pool, the Barley Pool, the fish pool, or even the fish pond for that matter. I am making the point that in supporting the Bill at least we are consistent and cannot be accused of being selective socialists.

THE HON. D. J. WORDSWORTH (South—Minister for Lands) [3.23 p.m.]: I thank members for their support of this Bill. If I may say so, the debates in this House are full of surprises. I thought it was the Dog Act that created an interest in the Chamber, but it looks as though the subject of the Honey Pool can be just as interesting.

The Hon. D. K. DAns: And the fish pool!

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: This is rather worrying in one way, because we recently discussed legislation in regard to the abattoirs industry, which I believe is the most important rural legislation introduced in this Chamber for many years, particularly in view of the referendum that had been conducted into meat marketing, and yet not one speaker—

The Hon. D. K. DAns: I simply had no stomach for that Bill.

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: It is good to see that our members rise to the occasion when it comes to honey, and some worth-while suggestions have been put forward.

The Hon. Claude Stubbs commenced the enthusiasm on this subject when he said we should be promoting the product, and he referred to what had happened in Kalgoorlie. Just recently I attended the smallest country show in Western Australia, and out of an overall budget of some \$9 000 for the show, \$1 000 was spent on pork. Of course, this was the Tambellup show, and during the proceedings pieces of pork were passed around. This was a fine promotion idea, and we could do the same thing with honey.

I do wonder about this title of "Honey Pool". It rather sounds as though all the varieties of honey were mixed in together.

The Hon. D. K. Duns: You must make sure you add the word "pool" at the end; otherwise you may be in trouble in this Chamber.

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH: Our State is very well known for the quality and variety of its honey. An American gentleman who visited our State recently chose to take back to America some of our honey. He found nothing else of very great interest here to take home, but our honey fascinated him.

Bees are not indigenous to Western Australia, and it is rather remarkable that they were able to adapt to what must be rather hostile vegetation which had propagated without pollination by bees.

Mr Berry asked one or two questions, but I am afraid I cannot give him the information he sought. The Minister for Agriculture was unable to tell me how many beekeepers actually used the Honey Pool to sell their produce. I gather that some beekeepers use it for any of their produce they cannot sell themselves. Others endeavour to sell their produce under their own individual brands.

Mr Gayfer, having spoken in this debate, could not reply to Mr Withers who mentioned the lack of co-operatives in the north-west. I can only refer to the fact that Co-operative Bulk Handling own five small grain silos at Wyndham and sent a number of officers to the north to help with the sorghum crop, and they did a fine job. I wonder who picked up the tab for this work. I am sure the cost incurred was not reflected in the price the local growers received for their produce.

I thank members for their support, and I hope the Honey Pool will stick!

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

VALUATION OF LAND BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 20th September.

THE HON. GRACE VAUGHAN (South-East Metropolitan) [3.32 p.m.]: The Opposition has no objection to this Bill; it appears to be a rational way of valuing land. However, there are a few points we would like to clear up during the Committee stage.

This legislation certainly seems to be an attempt to ensure that justice not only be done but also appear to be done. It is hardly right that in some instances the taxing authority has the valuer of land sitting in his office. I understand no physical separation from the State Taxation Department will take place when the valuer general's office is established.

Let us hope there is not too much undue influence exerted on the public servant by his former position. This is something which is highlighted by the Public Service Bill which we will discuss later; namely, the importance of the public servant to be able to separate himself from his own bias in order to carry out the work for the State. We will have the happy position of the office of valuer general being separated from the office of the Commissioner of State Taxation.

This will also apply in respect of the valuing of land on behalf of local government authorities. The ratepayers certainly will feel they are getting a better go than if the valuation is carried out by the same authority. However, I understand the City of Perth will be able to carry out its own valuations from time to time.

I have a couple of questions I wish to ask during the Committee stage. One relates to just how often the valuer general will be making valuations.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It is hoped to be done on a three-yearly basis.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: I do not think that is stipulated in the Bill.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It is hoped to be every third year.

The Hon. GRACE VAUGHAN: Yes, it is "hoped". It also is hoped that the City of Perth which, apparently, is the only local government authority which carries out its own valuations each year will bring its valuations into line with the valuations struck by the valuer general. I hope that is the intent of the Bill.

The legislation appears to give the valuer general a great deal of authority. For instance, he will be able to inspect other departments' documents if necessary.

It also is satisfying to note the appeals provisions which have been inserted into the legislation. This is a most reasonable approach. As far as I can see, the appeal procedures will be of an informal type, so that there are no court proceedings to worry about—unless, of course, the person appealing and the valuer general cannot agree, which will require the matter to go before the tribunal.

The Opposition is happy to support this Bill. It conforms with our ideas of what is a fair go for the ratepayer. We are glad to see the office of valuer general is to be established in this State.

THE HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [3.36 p.m.]: As the Minister explained in his second reading speech, this legislation provides for the establishment of one organisation to carry out valuations for all purposes in Western Australia. I understand the legislation will come into operation on the 1st July, 1979. Prior to that date, a great deal of preparatory work will be done by the valuer general in arranging office accommodation and staff.

I agree with what the Hon. Grace Vaughan had to say in respect of the office of valuer general not being part and parcel of the State Taxation Department but also not being completely separate from it. The two departments will work together on a joint basis.

The Treasurer, in introducing the Bill in another place, made the following statement—

It has been suggested that we should go further and physically separate the Valuation Division from the State Taxation Department and create a separate department of the valuer general and his officers.

This was considered and the conclusion reached was that while there were no advantages in doing this, there were substantial disadvantages to ratepayers and taxpayers.

I cannot see where substantial disadvantages would be created. Of course, there may be some difficulty, particularly in the initial stages, of the valuer general arriving at a valuation without

having on hand all the information available from the State Taxation Department and the other offices in the State where valuations are carried out.

However, we must remember that the local government authorities have no connection with the State Taxation Department, and they will also be separate from the valuer general's department when this legislation comes into effect.

This Bill was introduced to give effect to the recommendations of the committee of inquiry report of 1975, the report of which was made public early this year. I do not think the legislation has followed all the recommendations of that committee, but I do not intend to go into that aspect.

Under this legislation, the valuer general will have entire control over all valuations; really, he will be a dictator in regard to valuations, and I wonder whether this is a good thing. I suppose it does not really alter the situation where under the present system the Commissioner of State Taxation and the Metropolitan Water Board virtually are dictators in regard to valuations.

The Hon. J. C. Tozer: We will have only one now, instead of two or three.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Yes.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Do you think "dictator" is quite the right word?

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It is very close to the right word when one considers the provisions contained in the legislation. The valuer general is to be given very wide powers indeed; he is not to be answerable to anybody as far as valuations go; he is to be a power unto himself.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Surely he is subject to enough constraint now!

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The Bill at page 9 states—

The Valuer-General shall, in valuing any land under this Act, exercise an independent judgment and not be subject to direction from any person.

For all practical purposes he is virtually a dictator; I do not say there is anything wrong in that.

The Hon. G. E. Masters: An appeal mechanism is provided.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I am not talking about that.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I do not think you have made the happiest choice of words.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The valuer general will be entirely in charge of land valuations in Western Australia. Perhaps we can say that the Commissioner of Taxation also has similar power.

On the bases that have been used in the past, as compared with the bases contained in the Bill, there is very little difference.

Firstly, provision is made for site valuation. Although this method appears to be a new one, it is not really a method which has not been used before. It has been used particularly in the city area and some other areas; the method has not always been confined to the annual value in respect of valuations of industrial establishments, service stations, commercial buildings, etc. These types of properties have not really been based on the annual value system. The basis was to use the annual value system in conjunction with the site valuation system.

The proposal relating to gross rental value is, in fact, similar to the old annual value method, increased by 66½ per cent. I say that, because the annual value was the gross rental value, less 40 per cent for rates and outgoings; and that reduced the valuation to the annual value basis.

With the use of the gross annual value basis, the job would be made much easier for the valuers, and they will not have to take into consideration the rates on the property or outgoings, such as the cost of repairs and renewals, irrespective of whether the owner be residing on the premises or leasing them. This will make it easier for the valuer general to arrive at the gross annual value, without being put to the trouble of ascertaining the rates, the cost of repairs and renewals, and other expenses involved.

I now turn to the provision relating to unimproved capital value, which is the same as the basis that has pertained for many years. It has been used for valuations on a spot check basis. Some people have told me that there was no case of spot checks; and valuers went on to properties. I guarantee that no member in this Chamber or in the other Chamber has seen a valuer on his property when the valuation on the property is being carried out. It seems that the only time one sees the valuer is when one lodges an appeal.

I have been farming on and off since 1931, and I have not seen a valuer on either of my properties. I am sure that neither Mr Gayfer nor Mrs Piesse has seen one on their properties.

To claim this is not a spot check valuation basis is to be entirely wrong. This is the basis used when a valuer goes to one district to assess the properties, and then goes back to his office and carries out the valuations. That is spot check valuation. That is the reason we experience so many problems and are subjected to so many inequalities in the country. From the charts which I have before me, I can show how unfair these inequalities are.

There are instances of adjoining farms divided by the boundary of two shires, the valuations of which vary a great deal. Such variations affect the amount that is paid in rates, etc.

Some people may claim this is not a cause for concern, but it is a worry to the person who is paying the rates, especially when he finds such a great variation in the valuations. It is time we got down to a system under which, right across the State, valuations take place over a period of 12 months, and following that every three years. If it is necessary, a percentage increase could be applied to the valuations.

With the ceiling being taken off the fixing of rates, particularly local authority rates, it appears that if the valuations are kept up to date there would be no reason to bother about revaluations. This Bill does provide for revaluations, and local authorities will have to accept the valuation of the valuer general from time to time.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.07 p.m.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Prior to the afternoon tea suspension I was referring to the fact that under this Bill local authorities would have to accept valuations arrived at by the valuer general. This has been the situation in the past when the Taxation Department has carried out a valuation followed by a revaluation at a later date. The local authority, of course, had to pay the Taxation Department for that revaluation. The local authorities use the values set by the Taxation Department to arrive at their rates and to draw up their budgets.

I referred also to the inequalities which occur between the various values arrived at for different properties. I was referring particularly to the unimproved values. I have never seen a valuer on my property and I do not know anyone who has seen one. The only way to arrive at a correct valuation is for a valuer to view each individual property. A valuer cannot arrive at an unimproved value unless he is able to visit the property, assess the bona fide sale value of the property, see the improvements, and look at it very closely. He can obtain the information from the farmer as to the value of the improvements. However, even then he should carry out an exercise to see what type of house is situated on the property, what type of sheds are there, what type of fencing has been placed around it—the distance of the fences, and so on—the wells and bores which have been drilled, and all these sorts of improvements. That is the only manner in which he can arrive at the unimproved value of the property.

A valuer cannot do this by making a spot check on one property in an area, then going back to his office and arriving at the value for all the other properties in the same district. This is the reason so many inequalities have occurred. It has been hopeless to arrive at proper valuations. In some cases properties have been over-valued. I know farmers who have tried to obtain an equitable value, but in very few cases do they succeed. In the past they have been fobbed off with excuses. This is not a good system.

I should like to refer to valuations of properties which are divided by shire boundaries to indicate how inequitable some of these valuations are. The property of one gentleman is divided by the Cunderdin and Quairading Shires. He has 2 337 acres in the Cunderdin Shire, the unimproved capital value of which was £3 11s. 3d.—that would be approximately \$7.15—per acre. The total unimproved capital value was £8 016. The section of property which came under the Quairading Shire comprised 760 acres, the unimproved capital value of which was £1 8s. 2d. per acre. Another property in a similar area divided by the Cunderdin and Tammin Shires comprised 2 167 acres, the unimproved value of which was £3 2s. per acre for the portion which was covered by the Cunderdin Shire. The section of 832 acres which came under the Tammin Shire was valued at £1 11s. 4d. per acre. In actual fact it is not possible that there could be such a big difference in values between the properties. They are situated on similar land. The fences on the properties are similar, as are the other improvements. The valuations are arrived at by a valuer sitting in his office. That is how the discrepancies arise.

I shall give a few more examples of the situation. In the Cunderdin and Dowerin Shires the unimproved capital value of the portion of the property in the former shire was £3 5s. 8d. over a total area of 954 acres and in the latter shire the unimproved capital value was £1 per acre for an area of 887 acres. In another case a portion of a property comprising 598 acres in the Cunderdin Shire was valued at £3 1s. per acre and the balance of the property in the Northam Shire comprising 318 acres was valued at £1 8s. 2d. per acre. The final example is of a property, a portion of which came under the Cunderdin Shire and was valued at £3 17s. 6d. per acre for 5 308 acres, and the remaining part of which came under the York Shire and comprised 1 081 acres was valued at £2 1s. per acre.

There are insufficient valuers available to carry out an accurate valuation of a large area of the State at one time. The properties are valued from time to time and frequently a number of years have elapsed before a revaluation is made in a particular shire. For example, in the Beverley Shire a valuation occurred in 1950. The next date of revaluation was 1966. There was a period of 16 years between valuations. The same situation occurred in the Brookton Shire.

The Hon. J. C. Tozer: They offended against the Act.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No; they have not offended against the Act, because as far as I am aware a revaluation takes place only at the request of the shire. The Local Government Act does not contain a provision that shires must apply for a revaluation at a particular time. I am speaking for my area, of course. The situation may be different in the electorate represented by Mr Tozer.

When there is such a long period of time between valuations, there is not only a large increase in the values but also variations occur. In the Beverley Shire there was a total increase of 350 per cent or 21.875 per cent per annum over the 16-year period. In the Brookton Shire, which is the adjoining shire, the increase over the 16-year period was 173 per cent or approximately 10.87 per cent per annum. It can be seen there is a big variation between the shires.

No-one could tell me that the land in Brookton Shire and Beverley Shire is of such a different character that there should be such a large variation in the increases in valuations. This is the pattern throughout the whole system of valuations. Over similar periods the increases have been as low as 4 per cent per annum. For example, in the Esperance Shire a valuation was conducted in 1974 followed by a revaluation in 1977. The total increase in values was 12 per cent, or 4 per cent per annum. The same situation applies in respect of the increases in values in Katanning. A period of 11 years elapsed between valuations. The previous revaluation was carried out in 1965 and the revaluation was conducted in 1976. Over that period there was a total increase of 50 per cent or 4.54 per cent per annum. The same pattern is shown throughout this chart.

Members may like to have a look at the chart because it is quite illuminating. It sets out the variations in time between valuations and the percentage differences over the particular period. The matter which stands out particularly is the huge differences in percentage increases in value.

The chart shows that our revaluing system in the past has been on a hit-and-miss policy, and on a spot check basis.

The Hon. J. C. Tozes: Who prepared the chart?

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It came from the State Taxation Department as a result of a question I asked on the 20th September, 1977, when I asked the Minister the year in which each shire in the South-West Land Division was revalued for rating purposes, and what was the percentage increase on the previous revaluation.

The chart is a very interesting document to study. Members who are prepared to study the chart will see exactly what is happening in regard to revaluations. It is no wonder people are dissatisfied. The situation is that people have become disgruntled because they cannot see any change in the future unless some other technique for revaluation is used.

During 1966-67 I was the chairman of a joint party committee set up to investigate revaluations. Mr Gayfer was also a member, as was the late Jack Heitman, Mr Ivan Manning, and the Hon. Cyril Rushton. There were some other members but I cannot recall their names at the moment. We spent a great deal of time going into the matter and we carried out considerable work. We were responsible for drawing up a plan which was presented to the then Premier, the Hon. David Brand. The plan was to change the vermin and noxious weeds charges which were on valuation and replace with charges based on an acreage basis. The plan was so well set out and documented that the Treasury officer, Mr Hewitt—who later became Chairman of the Metropolitan Water Board—could not find fault with it.

The Hon. David Brand was so impressed with the report—although his Treasury officers were opposed to the plan—that he abolished vermin and noxious weeds charges altogether. He repealed the legislation. Of course, now there are no charges for vermin and noxious weed control.

Unfortunately, the plan which we drew up for a new revaluation system was almost completed when the Brand Government went out of office. A period of three years intervened, after which I became a Minister and that was the end of any further consideration of our plan for revaluation. That is the reason for my concern when the report of the committee came to light. I have wondered why the Government has not introduced an amendment to the Act to deal with the revaluation of land.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: The report was published in 1975.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That is so, but the contents of this Bill follow, to some degree, that report. That deals with unimproved values.

When one comes to the annual value basis and looks at the gross rental value, one can again see anomalies in the system. I put it simply that there could be the example of two married couples living side by side in a street. One man could have a wife and one child, and the other man could have a wife and three children. Each could own a two-bedroomed house. However, the man with three children could have one girl and two boys, and as the girl grows older it would become necessary for him to build another bedroom onto his house. That man could be on the same wage as the man next door with only one child. The houses could be almost identical, as is often seen in the metropolitan or city area. However, as soon as the man with three children constructs another bedroom—and he probably has to pay a high interest rate on a loan in order to carry out the extension—he is penalised as a result of having three children. I do not believe that is a fair system for our ratepayers. That man receives no services additional to those received by the man next door.

The example I have quoted applies right throughout the system. A person who improves his property is penalised under the present system and will be under the gross rental value system. I believe it is time the powers that be looked into the problem and came up with a system which would be much fairer to the ratepayers.

During the time of the committee to which I have referred, we devised a scheme whereby the owner of a property completed a form showing the details required, and then submitted that form to his local authority for checking. The form set out a series of provisions to arrive at the unimproved capital value, among other things. As chairman of the committee, I was instructed to go ahead and draft a form.

We used two shires as examples, the Boddington Shire and the Tammin Shire. We selected small shires for the exercise so that a large number of people were not involved. The form requested details regarding the land value, as at 1966, and referred to rural land. It requested the name and address of the owner, a description of the property, the land district, the shire district, the location numbers, the area in acres, and the owner's sale value. There was a reference on

the form to "see the back hereof". That note referred to advice on arriving at a value and set out that it should be the reasonable sale value the owner estimated he could obtain for his property if he was desirous of selling. That could be assessed from property sales in the area.

The next item on the form, after arriving at a bona fide sale value—under the same system used by valuers—refers to fencing at so much per mile, rabbit-proof fencing, sheep-proof fencing, and dog-proof fencing. Then there is reference to deducting the value of fencing partly owned by adjoining owners, giving a net total of the value of fencing.

Then there is a reference to buildings and whether they are constructed of brick, stone, timber, etc. There is a list of house 1, house 2, and house 3; shed 1, shed 2, and shed 3. There is space for size of rooms in the houses, and the size of the sheds.

The next section on the form covers water supply—dams, wells, or bores—windmills, tanks, troughing, Government water supply, orchards, drainage, irrigation, etc. and other improvements. There is then provision for the total value of improvements which are deducted from the bona fide sale value, giving a net value of the property. That is the unimproved capital value.

The form then provides for remarks regarding the class of land and any special features. That refers to whether the land was cleared, etc. Then there is space for the signature of the person concerned, and the date of the filling in of the form.

The form, as I have said, requests the person to state whether his building is of brick, stone, or timber, and how many living rooms it contains. Of course, all those values would now have to be altered because the forms which were returned to us relate back to 1967.

The Hon. O. N. B. Oliver: It sounds almost like an invasion of privacy.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It was not an invasion of privacy, because the person responsible for filling in the form was the farmer himself. I have with me the forms returned by a group of farmers—ratepayers—in the Boddington area. I have another group of forms which were returned from ratepayers in Tammin.

It is surprising to note, when one goes through the forms, how spot on were most of the farmers in drawing up the unimproved capital value of their properties. The questionnaire was not mandatory; it was filled in on a voluntary basis.

The Hon. O. N. B. Oliver: I am sorry; I misunderstood you.

The Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The forms were filled in through the goodwill of the farmers concerned. The Boddington local authority, particularly, was very co-operative. I have a circular dated the 8th August, 1967, which was sent out by the Boddington Shire Council. It reads—

Valuation Experiment

Dear Sir/Madam,

Some two months ago you received a letter and a form from this Council regarding the above and you were requested to complete and return the form to this office.

Apparently many people experienced difficulty in completing the form. The Chairman of the Valuation Committee came to Boddington last Wednesday to clarify the position.

The main problem appeared to be (a) Arriving at a sale price and (b) Arriving at the values for some of the improvements.

(a) *Sale Price*—This figure should be arrived at by comparing your property with any recent sales you know of. All improvements—including clearing, pasture, fallow etc.—should be taken into account.

The estimated sale price which could be received if sold on terms should *not* be used, rather the *cash* sale figure as estimated by you.

(b) *Improvement Values*—Mr Baxter on his recent visit indicated that these are merely estimates and need not be positively correct. When taking the overall average of farm values in any particular zone, slight variations in improvement values will have a negligible effect.

General—I am enclosing 2 forms—complete one and return to this office as soon as possible. Keep the other form for future reference.

It is imperative that we get 100% return in order to show the true district or zone values. If Council can prepare a good case for submission to the Minister we may be able to obtain approval to alter our system of values which will rid us of the many and serious anomalies existing at the present time.

That was the situation in Boddington. The serious anomalies which existed there were such that the shire was particularly concerned, and it is still concerned about valuations. The shire went to considerable trouble to assist the committee.

Some people have said that farmers are not able to fill in this type of form, but the results have proved that farmers are able to do this type of exercise successfully. If some assistance was provided by valuers within a district it could be a very successful system, and much more successful than is the case when valuers go to different farms to make assessments. If the valuer had any doubt he would simply go to the shire.

This system could be used successfully throughout the State right across the board for the purpose of revaluation. There would not need to be annual revaluations. I believe that if my proposed system was adopted the forms would go first to the local authority to be considered by a committee. That committee would know, practically to the dollar, the value of the farms in its area. I have had it said to me that the members of such a committee would not know the values of properties, but I warn members not to worry about that. Members of local authorities have a very good idea of the value of properties within their area.

They are not fools; they are not the "Daves" of the old day. The farmer today is an educated businessman, and has to fill in a considerable number of statistical returns. The form which I propose is fairly simple when compared with some of those forms. I believe the system I proposed would improve the situation, and would eventuate in equitable valuations right throughout the State within a very short period.

The valuation could be followed up every three years by an increase right across the board on a State-wide basis. There is very little difference from area to area and the percentage increase would not be different. It could be that small areas within a shire could vary in their percentage increase.

The Bill provides that the valuer general, as soon as practicable after the coming into operation of the Act, shall make or cause to be made a general valuation of rateable land within each valuation district. The system I propose would ensure he could carry out the provisions of the Act.

It would be impossible if the valuer general had to wait for values, and travel from one end of the State to the other to bring values up to date within a 12-month period. The chart from which I quoted was given in answer to my question on the 30th September, and illustrates clearly that it will be impossible for valuers to visit every property. There is no way that a valuer could carry out the provisions of this legislation.

Valuation rolls are referred to frequently in this legislation, and I refer particularly to clause 26 (1) which reads as follows—

The Valuer-General shall, as soon as practicable after the coming into operation of this Act, complete and maintain valuation rolls of rateable land.

That is the situation the valuer general is faced with. Then paragraph (b) of subclause (4) reads as follows—

the gross rental value and the unimproved value of the land, so far as those values have been determined by the Valuer-General;

I take it that the gross rental value and the unimproved value of the land are taken separately. I believe this paragraph is rather badly worded; it could have been worded to make it quite clear that these are two separate valuations. Subclause (4) commences as follows—

The valuation rolls shall be in such form as the Valuer-General determines and shall contain the following particulars in respect of rateable land—

So the one valuation roll would not need to include the gross rental value and the unimproved value of the land. I believe the wording could be improved.

In spite of what we have been told—and although one must first object to the valuer general if one is not satisfied that a valuation is correct—the Bill does not provide for a direct appeal to the land valuation tribunal. This seems at variance with one of the provisions in the Land Valuation Tribunals Bill. The only occasion that a person can appeal direct to the tribunal is in regard to a matter of general interest. Clause 36 (1) of the Bill reads as follows—

Where there is a question of general interest as to whether proper principles have or have not been applied in the valuation under this Act of the whole or a definable part of the land in a valuation district, a rating or taxing authority having an interest in the valuation or any person liable to pay any rate or tax on the basis of the valuation of any part of the land may appeal to a Land Valuation Tribunal to have the question resolved.

That is the only occasion where a person can appeal directly to the land valuation tribunal. In other cases one must first lodge an objection with the valuer general, and if the valuer general then turns down the objection one must write a further letter, including all the details, to the valuer general. The valuer general shall then

promptly refer such notice of objection to a land valuation tribunal, and it shall be treated as an appeal. This seems a rather roundabout way to do things, and also it becomes a matter of appealing from Caesar to Caesar, because the valuer general, with his officers, would be responsible for arriving at the valuation in the first place. This is a little like some other regulations in operation in Western Australia. Slowly the Government is moving towards a system of introducing independent appeal tribunals, and this is certainly a good thing when we are dealing with such things as rates, taxes, and people's livelihood. It is high time that we considered a system of independent appeals tribunals.

I have mentioned before that each taxing authority will be charged a fee for the valuation roll, and the fee will be set by the valuer general. Again it seems to me that this gives the valuer general dictatorial powers, particularly as there is no appeal against the fee. I expect that the valuer general will be reasonable in setting these fees, and they will be comparable to the fees for revaluations carried out by taxation officers at present.

I have been invited to submit a proposition to the powers that be on the method of carrying out valuations on unimproved properties. I intend also to make submissions in regard to gross rental values and also site values. In my opinion this legislation does not go far enough in the use of the term "site values", and indeed it does not go far enough in regard to site values themselves.

If applied the right way, the use of site values has a lot to recommend it, but the legislation does not set out what a true site value would be. The only definition I see in the legislation is that it sets out the difference between site values and unimproved land values. No consideration is given to such matters as clearing the land, the removal of rock, and even perhaps the fact that particular areas on a property are salt affected.

In my opinion, there is only one way to use site values, and that is by taking into account zonings laid down by the Department of Town Planning. An average rate can then be struck throughout a particular zone, and people in that zone will pay for the services they receive on the same basis. Although a land tax is a straight-out tax in the case of water supply rates and local authority rates, every property holder receives the same services regardless of the value of his property. Perhaps one person may economise and build up his property while his neighbour spends all his money at the racetrack or on

holidays. It is inequitable that the first man should have to pay higher local rates because of his prudence.

I support this measure, although I believe a great deal more must be done to put our rating system on an equitable basis.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. J. C. Tozer.

BETTING CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon (Leader of the House), read a first time.

Second Reading

THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West—Leader of the House) [4.40 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time. It has been a well-established and well-known practice for registered bookmakers to utilise the facilities at Tattersalls Club, Perth, for the purpose not only of settling bets but also "calling the card" in respect of race meetings, in addition to making bets in relation to those meetings.

Strictly speaking, the provisions of the Betting Control Act do not permit of such a practice. Section 5 of the Act indicates that wagering or gaming on races should take place on a race course during the holding of a race meeting, or at or in registered premises.

This Bill proposes to regularise the procedures which have been currently accepted.

The proposal has the support of both the Betting Control Board and the Commissioner of Police.

The Bill provides specifically that the premises known as Tattersalls Club in Perth will be a place where bets under the Betting Control Act may be settled and that "calling of the card" and making bets shall be lawful.

In addition it provides that such activities may be lawful in other places as prescribed subject to the Betting Control Board, after consultation with the Commissioner of State Taxation, being satisfied that adequate provision is made concerning supervision and the correct accounting of all bets that are made.

The opportunity is taken in this small Bill to make some minor corrective amendments to the parent Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by the Hon. D. K. Dans (Leader of the Opposition).

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON (South-West—Leader of the House) [4.41 p.m.]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, the 3rd October.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.42 p.m.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HOUSING: RENTAL

Increases: Pensioners

320. **The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE**, to the Attorney General, representing the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Has the State Housing Commission recently increased rents payable by tenants who are pensioners?
- (2) From what date did the increases take effect?
- (3) In the case of a person in receipt of the full pension (i.e. married \$42.90 each per week plus rent allowance \$2.50 each per week, single \$51.45 per week plus rent allowance \$5.00 per week), has the increase been—married 26.6% and single 31.6%?
- (4) In view of the savage increase to which pensioners and others on low incomes have been subjected, will the Minister have the rental rebate allowance scheme reviewed to provide a more equitable rent increase situation?
- (5) When pension rates are increased on the 9th November, 1978, as announced in the Federal Budget, will these pensioners have their rents further increased?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

- (1) No, but an increase as announced will be effective from the 2nd October, 1978.
- (2) Answered by (1).
- (3) Yes.
- (4) The rebate allowance scheme has been reviewed and will be applicable from the 2nd October, 1978. Rebate results in married couple paying 16.7 per cent and single person 17.7 per cent of gross income, including supplementary assistance.
- (5) Pensioners will not have rents increased on the 9th November, 1978, but all rents are to be reviewed annually.

RAILWAYS

Corrigin Shed

321. **The Hon. H. W. GAYFER**, to the Minister for Lands, representing the Minister for Transport:

With reference to the railway shed being constructed at Corrigin—

- (a) what is its purpose;
- (b) what will it contain;
- (c) what will be the completed cost;
- (d) with regard to (a), was there a previous building in use?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

- (a) Accommodation for the track maintenance gang;
- (b) four units—office for trackmaster, tool and equipment shed, staff facilities and trolley shed;
- (c) \$7 050;
- (d) yes, but it was too small and in poor condition.

ROAD

Canning Highway

322. **The Hon. D. K. DANS**, to the Minister for Lands, representing the Minister for Transport:

Further to my questions Nos. 253 on the 6th September, 1978, and 295 on the 13th September, 1978, can the Minister advise—

- (1) The cost of the contract for re-surfacing Canning Highway between Riseley Street and Stock Road?
- (2) When the contractors will repair this section of Canning Highway?
- (3) Why there was a lack of compaction and low bitumen content in the hot-mix surface used by the contractors?
- (4) What steps does the Government intend to take to ensure that inferior re-surfacing work does not occur in future contracts?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

- (1) \$132 460.
- (2) An early start on the removal of faulty material is being negotiated with the contractor.

- (3) and (4) Detailed investigation by both the Main Roads Department and the contractor is still in progress to be sure of all of the reasons for failure, the most appropriate action to be taken to correct the failures, and the steps which are necessary to ensure that there will be no recurrence in future works.

Fortunately, very little trouble of this nature has occurred which is partly due to close supervision of both the specifications for the bituminous concrete and the laying of the material on the road. This close supervision will continue.

ROADS

"One-way Pair" System

323. The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE, to the Minister for Lands, representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) When was the decision made to utilise Belgravia Street and Hardey Road, Belmont, as the link roads for the "one-way pair" system, to join up with the dual bridge at Garratt Road?
- (2) Which authorities were responsible for the decision?
- (3) Was it known at the time the decision was made that Belgravia Street would not provide a direct access between Great Eastern Highway and Leach Highway, whereas Abernethy Road would?
- (4) What consideration was given to the safety and noise hazards that children attending the Belmont primary school will now face as a result of the decision?
- (5) As no such problems exist at the Abernethy Road-Great Eastern Highway intersection, will the Minister explain why Abernethy Road was not developed as the link road, because, apart from the problems associated with the school, it is a direct access linking the two major highways mentioned and most of the traffic utilising Belgravia Street, will also use Abernethy Road?
- (6) If community groups or residents wish to seek a deferral of current plans for the purpose of consideration of the Abernethy Road alternative, which authorities are to be approached?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

- (1) As decisions on this matter would have been taken by the Belmont Shire Council, the honourable member is referred to that authority for fuller information. However, the Minister understands the decision was taken in 1970.
- (2) Belmont Shire Council.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) The Minister understands that in developing Town Planning Scheme No. 6 the council had extensive discussions with the Education Department on the question of rationalisation of school sites in the area.
- (5) The council town planning scheme proposals emphasised the Belgravia Street link.
- (6) The Minister suggests the Belmont Shire Council.

TRAFFIC

RTA: Patrolmen

324. The Hon. D. K. DANS, to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Police and Traffic:

- (1) Will the extra 13 patrolmen for the RTA be in addition to replacements for RTA officers who resign during the financial year?
- (2) What was the cost of providing the extra 13 patrolmen?
- (3) Did the Minister receive a submission from—
 - (a) the RTA;
 - (b) the Police Union; and
 - (c) the Commissioner of Police; seeking extra patrolmen for the RTA and/or the Police Force?
- (4) If so, how many RTA and/or Police Force officers were requested by the above bodies?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

I preface the answer by saying that it is given on the basis that the men will be employed as time goes on during the year.

- (1) Yes.
- (2) \$71 000.
- (3) Both the Road Traffic Authority and the Commissioner of Police submitted proposals seeking extra officers in line with normal pre-Budget procedure.
- (4) R.T.A. patrolmen 50, general police 232.

RAILWAYS

Rolling Stock

325. The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE, to the Minister for Lands, representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Following the cessation of suburban rail passenger services by the Australian National Railways in Tasmania, has the Government given any consideration to purchasing the surplus rolling stock which is suitable for use in Western Australia?
- (2) If so, how much of it is being sought?
- (3) If the purchase is effected, from what source are the funds to be provided?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

- (1) Yes. Westrail officers recently inspected all of the passenger cars to determine their suitability for use in Western Australia. They are currently preparing their report.
- (2) Until the report has been considered, the number, if any, is not known.
- (3) To be determined.

RAILWAYS

Capel and Picton Junction Staff

326. The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE, to the Minister for Lands, representing the Minister for Transport:

- (1) Does Westrail intend to withdraw its staff from—
 - (a) Capel; and
 - (b) Picton Junction?
- (2) If so, what alternative arrangements have been made to provide an adequate and convenient service for the public?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

- (1) (a) It is planned to withdraw the staff at Capel but a final decision has not been made pending receipt of responses from interested parties.
- (b) This is under consideration but no decision has yet been made.
- (2) (a) Westrail is able to provide door to door motor truck services to meet the needs of local clients at Capel. Wagon load business relates principally to the mineral sands industry and does not require the attendance of station staff. Clients will still be able to consign goods to Capel under unattended siding conditions.
- (b) Under consideration.

TRANSPORT

Public: Submission to Federal Government

327. The Hon. F. E. McKENZIE, to the Minister for Lands, representing the Minister for Transport:

Referring to question No. 318 on the 20th September, 1978, will the Minister give the reason why he will not table the submission document presented by the State Government to the Australian Government in its effort to obtain the 1978-1979 grant for urban public transport improvement?

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH replied:

Because it is not the practice to table internal Government to Government submissions.

FLOUR MILLERS' DISPUTE

Trucks

328. The Hon. D. W. COOLEY, to the Leader of the House representing the Premier:

- (1) How many trucks were hired by the Government to shift flour under union ban during the flour strike?
- (2) From whom were the trucks hired?
- (3) For how many hours were the trucks used by the Government?
- (4) Was a quote given for the hire of the trucks?
- (5) (a) If the answer to (4) is "Yes" were any other firms or organisations asked to quote, and if so—
- (b) what were the prices quoted?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

- (1) Five.
- (2) An undertaking was given at the time that this information would not be divulged.
The Government is not prepared to break this undertaking.
- (3) Each truck was in use for approximately six hours, but it should be pointed out that the arrangement made was that they would be available until a total of 300 tonnes of flour was moved.
They were on a standby basis for a much longer period which makes the hours of actual operation rather irrelevant.
- (4) No.
- (5) Not applicable.