

forestation pool, and I hope we shall not have to employ borrowed money for reforestation purposes. Then there is a sum of £800,000 provided for the Perth Public Hospital and other hospital buildings. I am not objecting to that expenditure, but I do want the Treasurer to appreciate that interest and sinking fund are being met out of payments made by the Lotteries Commission.

The Premier: So far!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: When that sinking fund is paid, the amount should go into a trust account, and not into Revenue, so that the loans with which the sinking fund is associated will be redeemed when they fall due. I do not know what the periods of those loans will be. As the Premier has pointed out, the period may be five years or it may be 15 years, but under the conditions I have mentioned the money would be available whatever the period. I do not know the rate of sinking fund paid by the Lotteries Commission—whether it is 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. In any case, the amount must be fairly substantial. We want to make sure that the sinking fund is not paid into revenue. I repeat, it should be paid into a trust account, so that we shall be able to meet those loan commitments. I am not worried, in this matter, about the Treasurer. It is the officials about whom I am worried, and in this respect I know what takes place. We purchase things from loan funds, and when they are sold the proceeds are brought into revenue.

The Premier: That is one thing that has been stopped for the last eight years.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I know it was the practice. I have had nothing to do with the Treasury for eight years. In prosperous times that sort of thing could be done, but not at other times.

The Premier: Last year we put in an extra £30,000.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I think money was also taken from another source. A considerable amount of revenue was lying idle. The Treasury seems always to be able to find these handy little amounts, especially towards the end of the financial year. We ought to balance our budget this year.

The Premier: I hope we will.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We are committing the State, by these Estimates, to a deficit; but the present position indicates that we should be able to make ends meet. I

have no objection to the passing of the Bill; but if other members on this side feel that they should discuss the measure, I shall have no objection to assisting them in that respect.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

House adjourned at 12.10 a.m. (Friday).

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 9th December, 1941.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

- 1, Money Lenders Act Amendment.
- 2, Financial Emergency Act Amendment.
- 3, Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Continuance.
- 4, Public Trustee.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS.

As to Traffic Improvements.

Hon. W. J. MANN asked the Chief Secretary: In view of the considerably increased patronage now being accorded State

Railway services, will the Government urge the Commissioner of Railways to make special efforts to—1, Ensure that all country trains are run to schedule time during the forthcoming holiday season; 2, provide adequate accommodation in order to prevent overcrowding of passengers, particularly those compelled to travel long distances; 3, accelerate services by providing non-stop trains over as much as possible of journeys between the metropolis and distant holiday and seaside resorts?

The CHIEF SECRETARY, replied: 1, Yes. 2, Accommodation to maximum of our rolling stock will be made available. Every coach will be in service. 3, This has been arranged as in previous holiday periods.

MOTION—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT.

To Disallow Regulation.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East)
[4.36]: I move—

That Regulation 8 made under the Industries Assistance Act, 1915-1940, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 21st November, 1941, and laid on the Table of the House on the 25th November, 1941, be and is hereby disallowed.

This regulation was made in pursuance of the Industries Assistance Act Amendment Act, 1940, which was passed on the 4th December, 1940. It has taken until the 25th November, 1941, to lay the regulation upon the Table so that members of this House might have an opportunity to peruse and discuss it. Ever since the Industries Assistance Act Amendment Act, 1940, was passed, members of the party to which I have the honour to belong have been urging that the regulation be tabled. To me, there appears to be no excuse for the Government in withholding it so long, and then laying it on the Table practically in the closing hours of the session. The regulation deals with the administration of the sum of £570,000, being the amount which was advanced by the Commonwealth Government and made available to drought-stricken farmers, who were required to sign an acknowledgment and contract on Form C issued by the Industries Assistance Board. We have been informed by the Minister for Lands that this particular form was used because thousands had already been printed and

their use would save an expense of approximately £300. The forms were sent out to the farmers who were desirous of obtaining drought relief and they had to sign them.

But on the head of that form a small slip of printed paper was attached stating that all concessions in connection with interest rates and terms of repayment will be granted on this application when the Commonwealth conditions are known. The position is that many farmers find themselves under the control of the Industries Assistance Board and not, as they had hoped, of simply being in the position of having taken advantage of the concessional rates of interest granted by the Federal Government. If members will cast their memories back to the time when the amendment of the Industries Assistance Act was before the House last year, they will recall that we strongly objected to drought relief being brought under or administered by the Industries Assistance Board, or the Agricultural Bank. We contended that a small measure of rural relief would have granted assistance to all irrespective of whether they were clients of the Agricultural Bank or of financial institutions. The point was made that in fact we were pledging the drought-stricken farmers, subject to the regulations of which we then had no knowledge. We were accused at the time of not trusting the Government. We are often told that we must trust the Government. We were told that it would not bring the farmers under the Industries Assistance Board.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: When were we told that they would not be brought under the board?

Hon. A. THOMSON: They are under the board now. I will prove that this regulation has placed those farmers entirely under the control of the Industries Assistance Board. When the Premier introduced this measure in 1940 he said—

If we passed fresh legislation containing some of the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act they might appear to be very harsh. As I said, those interested know how the Industries Assistance Act has been administered; they know its effect and the way the bank has stood aside and allowed merchants the right to take liens for superphosphate, etc. Therefore, we decided that, if we made these drought relief advances in accordance with the practice well known and well understood, there would be no ambiguity about the procedure and people would know exactly where they stood.

We proposed to insert a short amendment to Section 14 of the Industries Assistance Act in the following terms:—

Provided that any further advances made under this Act shall be subject to such terms and conditions as to rates of interest, repayment of principal and other matters as may be prescribed regulation.

Regulations would then be passed providing that, in connection with the amount of £570,000 to be issued this year as drought relief, no interest would be charged to the farmers for the first year, and only half interest to be charged for the next six years. Appropriate regulations would also be made concerning the repayment of advances.

It has taken 11 months to have this regulation published in the "Government Gazette" to enable farmers to know exactly their position. I will later read two letters which will show that it is only from actual practice, as far as the farmers are concerned, that they discovered how they stood. Mr. Anthony, the Assistant-Minister in the House of Representatives, when he introduced this Bill on the 10th December of last year said this—

Members will see outlined in the Bill an arrangement by which the Commonwealth will meet a portion of the interest which would normally be due by the States on the principal of the moneys loaned to them. This interest contribution, the administrative costs of raising the Commonwealth loan, and a straight-out grant to drought-affected wheatgrowers, which is the subject of a further Bill, may be regarded as the Commonwealth Government's contribution to drought relief in Australia. Hon. members will note that the States are being allowed a period of four years in which to make their first repayments of principal. In fairness to the States, they must be given an opportunity to recover some of the moneys which they, in turn, will lend to the drought-stricken farmers. It will be appreciated by hon. members that when a farmer has suffered a year of severe drought, at least three or four years must elapse—

I want to emphasise this point—

—before he will be in the position to repay money advanced to him during or following the drought to enable him to carry on.

It was the intention of the Federal Government, and I think it was also the intention of the State Government, to advance money on that basis. I will quote the regulation later to show that a totally different interpretation could be placed on it. It may not be the intention of the

Agricultural Bank to do so, but certainly those who have studied the measure cannot but help arriving at the conclusion that the regulation, as tabled, certainly can be interpreted to mean that the whole of the repayment may be insisted upon in the first year. The Loan Act, No. 71 of 1940, states, in Section 4, Subsection 1—

The principal of moneys loaned to any State in accordance with this Act shall be repaid by that State to the Commonwealth by four equal annual payments, the first to be made not later than four years after the making of the loan and the last to be made not later than seven years after the making of the loan.

Section 5 reads—

(1) During the first year after the making to any State of a loan in accordance with this Act, the Treasurer may pay to that State a sum not exceeding the interest on the loan payable by that State to the Commonwealth in respect of that year, and during each of the next following six years the Treasurer may pay to that State a sum not exceeding one-half of the interest on the loan payable by that State to the Commonwealth in respect of that year.

The reply, on behalf of the Minister, would be that the Government must have power to do certain things. Under our standing orders we cannot amend the whole of the regulation. Clauses 2 and 3 of the amended regulation, contained in the "Government Gazette" of the 21st November last, state—

(2) The said advances shall be made or other said commodities shall be supplied under the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act, 1915-1940, by the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank of Western Australia for the purpose of drought relief out of the moneys loaned to the State by the Commonwealth as aforesaid and made available to the said Commissioners by the Government of the State.

(3) The advances made or the moneys owing for the commodities supplied shall be repayable to the said Commissioners in the following manner:—

(a) Where the commissioners are of the opinion that the proceeds derived by the borrower from the sale of his crops or wool or other sources of income arising out of the agricultural farming, grazing, or other operations carried on by him during the 1941-42 season on any land, his estate and interest wherein is, by virtue of Section 15 of the Act, charged with the repayment of the said advances or moneys aforesaid, are sufficient to repay in full the advances or moneys aforesaid and still leave a balance sufficient to enable the borrower to carry on all or any of the said operations during the 1942-43

season, the commissioners may require the borrower to repay to the commissioners in full the advances or moneys aforesaid out of the said proceeds, and the borrower shall be liable to make such repayment forthwith upon the commissioners making a demand for the same.

If a farmer is fortunate enough to have a good return in the first year, the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank can demand full payment of the advances made out of this cheap money.

Hon. L. Craig: There is not much wrong with that.

Hon. A. THOMSON: But I have already quoted the statement of the Federal Minister, when introducing the measure, that it would probably take the average drought-stricken farmer more than one year to recover from the effects of the drought. The position is that the I.A.B. can insist upon a farmer repaying the money in the first year instead of being permitted to take advantage of the cheap money for the period of seven years, to which he is entitled.

Hon. L. Craig: It was granted on account of the drought.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, and it is repayable over a period of seven years. Therefore it should not be made mandatory that the repayments be made in the first year.

Hon. H. V. Piesse: The farmer has other obligations to meet.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I will deal with that point later. This money is advanced free of interest for the first year, and the average cost will not be much more than 2½ per cent. for the succeeding six years. Therefore, why not let the farmer have the benefit of it, provided the total amount is eventually repaid? It is not mandatory that the money should be repaid in the first year, but doubtless the I.A.B. will say that it wants the money.

Hon. V. Hamersley: And will use it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The farmer is entitled to have the use of the money, seeing that he is the one who is suffering from drought.

Hon. L. Craig: And other creditors will want control.

Hon. A. THOMSON: When I read paragraph 4, Mr. Craig will probably be more sympathetic in his interjections than he is at present. I think the farmers are justified in asking for the benefit of this cheap money. In order to anticipate interjections

that might otherwise be made, I propose to read letters I have received. They show that the farmers vitally interested view the matter from a totally different angle from that indicated by Mr. Craig.

Hon. L. Craig: You do not know how I view it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: So far as one may judge from the hon. member's interjections, he is supporting the regulation.

Hon. L. Craig: Not at all.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I remind the hon. member that he will have an opportunity to address the Council later on.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If the hon. member is not supporting the regulation, it would be quite unnecessary for him to make such interjections. I have a letter dated the 11th November, 1941. This letter appeared in the public Press and each member of the Country Party received a copy of the resolution. It reads—

At a public meeting held in the Memorial Hall, Pingrup, on Sunday afternoon, the 9th November, great concern was exhibited by all present at the proposed action of the Government in insisting that, where a farmer has received drought relief advances, all proceeds have to be paid into the Agricultural Bank each year until the amount so advanced has been recouped, as it was felt that a farmer's freedom was thereby impaired and that his initiative would suffer, which would not be beneficial to the farming community.

It was also felt that, by such action, the main purpose which decided the Commonwealth Government to make such advances would not be realised. The following motion was carried unanimously:—

That this meeting of Pingrup farmers strongly protests against the proposed action of the Government in insisting that all proceeds have to be paid into the Agricultural Bank by farmers who have received drought relief; and this meeting insists that drought relief farmers should receive these moneys on exactly the same terms and conditions on which they were made available by the Commonwealth Government—

I will not omit the concluding portion of the motion.

and if our Country Party members cannot obtain such redress on the lines indicated, then we call upon them to resign their seats on this issue and seek re-election.

Hon. G. B. Wood: It is a pity you read that.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, but it shows the strong feeling that exists.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The boss talking.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It is not a matter of the boss talking, but shows the strong feeling of resentment amongst the farmers at the manner in which this drought relief is being administered. As regards that request, I did not approve of it, but those present at the meeting felt the position was so desperate that they were justified in asking their representatives in Parliament to use all means in their power to secure a remedy. The letter continues—

I would also state that since the inception of drought relief the settlers of this district have felt very strongly upon this matter and insisted as far back as February that the terms and conditions of such loans should have been made known to farmers before they committed themselves to anything of this nature.

They had to commit themselves to the regulations, and it was only on the 25th of last month that they were in a position to know definitely what was proposed, except that they were aware that the Agricultural Bank was insisting upon all proceeds being handled by the I.A.B.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Did not you say that the farmers signed a form containing the conditions?

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, the form bears the conditions in accordance with the acknowledgement, contract and application contained in the First and Second Schedules to the Act. The farmers were told that all concessions in the matter of interest rates and the terms of repayment would be granted on this application when the Commonwealth conditions became known. I have outlined the terms and conditions which were laid down by the Commonwealth Minister in introducing the measure in the Federal House, and the farmers are complaining that they are not getting the benefit of those terms and conditions. I have a letter from the Kent Road Board reading—

Re drought relief advances, in connection with such advances made to farmers out of the above funds, advice has been received that as these funds have been advanced under the I.A.B. they are to be counted as State loans and all farm proceeds are to go into the Bank each year until the loans are covered.

This board feels that this procedure is against the spirit of the conditions as laid down by the Commonwealth Government, as we are led to believe that the money advanced by the Commonwealth Government was to be repaid by seven equal annual instalments plus the interest rate as laid down by the Commonwealth.

We consider that the drought-stricken farmers are entitled to the conditions laid down by the Commonwealth Government. That is all we are asking. The letter proceeds—

Regarding security for the above advances, we are of the opinion that the farmer should only be committed to the amount of annual repayments plus interest each year, and that annual returns above that amount be free to the farmer.

The general effect of the proposal of the Agricultural Bank is that a farmer becomes the servant of the Bank, and his property and assets are controlled by the district officers.

Doubtless you are aware of the position, but I desire to bring the matter before your notice, and as time is getting short, sincerely trust that you will do your best to look into the matter, which is one of vital importance to a great number of our settlers.

There is the position. Had the Government promulgated the regulation, I do not think any member of Parliament would have objected to the I.A.B. declaring that they would take one-seventh next year and so forth, and place the money in a trust fund and, if the farmer did require the money, advance it to him under the I.A.B. conditions. Unfortunately the Government has made a drag-net arrangement. Today there are scores of farmers who unwittingly find themselves again in the hands of the Agricultural Bank. Members know that the property of every such farmer is under lien to the Industries Assistance Board, with everything upon the property except the wife and children. To continue reading paragraph (3) of the regulation—

(b) Where the Commissioners are of the opinion that the proceeds referred to in subparagraph (a) hereof are not sufficient to repay in full the advances or moneys aforesaid and still leave a balance sufficient to enable the borrower to carry on his said operations during the 1942-43 season, the Commissioners may, if they think fit—(i) allow the repayment of the advances or moneys aforesaid to be deferred wholly or in part until the proceeds derived by the borrower from his said operations in the subsequent year or years are sufficient to repay the deferred advances or moneys aforesaid and leave a balance to enable the borrower to carry on his said operations during the season next following that in which the repayment in full of the advances or moneys aforesaid is made in full; or (ii) fund the advances or moneys aforesaid wholly or in part and allow the borrower to repay the funded advances or moneys aforesaid by annual instalments spread over a period to be fixed by the Commissioners but not exceeding seven years. Provided that—(a) in cases where the advances or moneys aforesaid are funded as aforesaid and become repayable by annual instalments over a period

of years as hereinbefore provided for, the Commissioners may require the borrower to execute in their favour a mortgage of his lands and a bill of sale over his stock and plant to secure the repayment of the advances or moneys aforesaid by the said instalments; and (b) in cases where the Commissioners merely allow the repayment of the advances or moneys aforesaid to be deferred and do not fund the same, Section 15 of the Act shall continue to apply and have effect to secure the repayment in full of the advances or moneys aforesaid.

It might be well to refresh the Chief Secretary's memory concerning Section 15, which reads—

(1) Notwithstanding any provisions of the Land Act, 1898, the Transfer of Land Act, 1893 or any Act or law to the contrary, the principal and interest of all advances made, or deemed to have been made, under this part of this Act shall be, and until fully paid shall remain, a first charge in favour of the board in priority to all other encumbrances—(a) upon the estate or interest of the applicant in all lands held or occupied by him for agricultural, farming, or grazing purposes, including all such lands held by him under lease or contract for the purchase thereof, or as a homestead farm, or otherwise; and (b) upon all crops to be sown in or grown upon such lands and the produce thereof, and the share or interest of the applicant in any other crops wheresoever grown; and (c) upon all implements, livestock, and the progeny thereof, and other chattels supplied to the applicant under this Act; and (d) subject to prior encumbrances, shall be, and, until fully paid shall continue, a charge on all other livestock, implements, machinery, plant, and movable structures of the applicant; but any proceeds of the charge created by this paragraph shall, if such chattels are realised by the board, be distributed *pari passu* between the board and the other creditors of the applicant: Provided that the board in its discretion may allow the whole or any portion of the proceeds of the sale of dairy produce, pigs, and poultry, to be retained by the settler.

Hon. J. Cornell: That has nothing to do with this regulation.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It has indeed. If subparagraph (b) of paragraph (3) of Regulation 8 does not bring the farmer under the control of the I.A.B., I do not know what would do so. Paragraph 4 of Regulation 8 provides—

When for the purposes of paragraph (3) of this regulation the Commissioners are considering whether or not, after repayment in full of the advances or moneys owing by the borrower, the balance of the proceeds derived by the borrower from his operation aforesaid are sufficient to enable him to carry on his said operations during the next ensuing season, interest owing to creditors of the borrower other than the Commissioners, and payments in respect of

machinery or plant owing by the borrower to persons other than the Commissioners, shall not be taken into account as being expenses incidental to the carrying on of the said operations by the borrower.

This just bears out the statement made by members of this party when combating the Bill last year. We pointed out that it would bring every borrower taking advantage of drought relief under the I.A.B. I wish to be fair, and therefore admit that the Government is charging only the interest which it is being charged itself. Under the Industries Assistance Act there is nothing on a debtor's farm over which the Government has not control.

Hon. J. Cornell: If Section 15 has the same application as in the 1940 Act, there was no need to embody it in the regulation.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If that is so, why have the Commissioners or the Government seen fit to provide that Section 15 shall apply?

Hon. J. Cornell: Probably it was discovered that Section 15 did not apply.

Hon. A. THOMSON: And so there was a desire to introduce it here! As pointed out in the letters I have quoted, people affected have been asking for the gazetting of this regulation. If the regulation had been promulgated at the beginning, many farmers would not have been so foolish as to take advantage of the drought relief money, for they did not want to come under the I.A.B. again. From the two letters I have quoted it will be apparent that this is not a party matter or a case of an individual member seeking to secure some kudos, but an endeavour to obtain justice for numerous farmers who have been, in plain language, taken in.

Now we are in the closing hours of the session; probably we shall finish this week. It is rather a pity that the Government did not publish this regulation, which has been asked for during the last seven or eight months, at an earlier period, so that there might have been an opportunity to deal with it. I ask the House to vote for a disallowance of the regulation. I am aware that the Government will have power to reinstate it until the meeting of the next Parliament, but the motion, in my opinion, should be carried as a direction from the farmers who are suffering from the drought and have taken advantage of the Federal money. The carrying of the motion would be an indication that it is the wish of the

House that the farmers shall receive this money on exactly the same terms and conditions as outlined by the Federal Minister.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILL—LICENSING (PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATE).

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.17] in moving the second reading said: This is a small Bill, designed to deal with a problem which has arisen in the administration of the Licensing Act on account of war conditions and the passing of the National Security (Building Control) Regulations. Under Section 61 of the Licensing Act a person who wishes to obtain a publican's general license for premises proposed to be erected must make application to the Licensing Court for a provisional certificate. The court hears the application and if the certificate is granted it may be subject to conditions imposed by the court.

The provisional certificate certifies that the specified premises erected, or to be erected, in accordance with the plans and specifications approved by the court, will be a fit and proper place for business to be carried on under a publican's general license. If application is made by a fit and proper person for the issue of a license within 12 months from the date of the provisional certificate, the application will be granted on proof that the house and premises have been erected in accordance with the approved plans and specifications, and that any other conditions laid down by the court have been complied with. It will be noted that the Act fixes the period of the provisional certificate at 12 months.

A certificate was granted in connection with the building of an hotel on a block of land bounded by Blake, Knutsford and Little Walcott streets, North Perth, on the 28th April, 1941. This expires within 12 months from that date. The National Security regulations have restricted the erection of any buildings the value of which exceeds £5,000. Representations by those

concerned in the certificate have been made to the Federal Treasurer for his consent for a building permit, but this has been refused. The matter has been taken up by the Licensing Court which, after dealing with the position, recommends that an extension of time should be granted for the erection of the building. Such an extension requires Parliamentary approval, and that is the purpose of the Bill, which will operate during the war and for a period of 12 months thereafter and no longer.

Hon. J. Cornell: Was not a provisional certificate granted to the Rottneest Board of Control?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I believe it was.

Hon. J. Cornell: Is it not excluded?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It may be.

Hon. J. Cornell: It should be included.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know whether it should or should not be; that is another matter altogether. The people concerned in this matter have already expended an amount of approximately £2,500 and, unless the Bill is passed, that money will have been completely thrown away. Legislation of this type is not unusual. A similar Bill was introduced in 1931, and also in 1935. In fairness to the people concerned, it is necessary that this measure should be agreed to. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.21]: I do not oppose the Bill, but some elucidation is required on a point that is exercising the minds of a certain influential section of the community which is not opposed to the measure. I refer to the position of the provisional license granted to the Rottneest Board of Control. Are we to understand that this measure will not apply to that board? Is not the board bound by the Licensing Act? If it is not, why the necessity for the board's applying for a provisional license? That is a point that requires to be cleared up. We are aware that Rottneest is—and is likely to be for a long time after the cessation of hostilities—under military control, so that the erection of a hotel is problematical. However, I make this inquiry on behalf of a section of the community that opposed the granting of a provisional license to the board, but the members of which have taken the broad view that, if this Bill does apply to the provisional license

granted to the Rottneest Board of Control, they have no objection to the measure, which is only fair and reasonable. I hope the Minister will let us know the position in regard to that provisional license.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.25] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual continuance Bill and in view of the previous discussion we have had this afternoon, it seems appropriate that the measure should be introduced at this stage. Members are aware that the Act was passed in 1914, at a time when Western Australia was experiencing what was then the worst drought in the history of the State. The measure has been re-enacted from time to time to enable relief to be granted to farmers suffering from drought and other disabilities. The re-enactment of the Act is necessary to continue the authority required for the protection of advances previously made under the Act, and to continue the charge against farm proceeds which are necessary for the recovery of advances made. Most members, I believe, are also aware that the operations under the Act had almost ceased in 1934, but the droughts of 1935, 1936 and subsequent years caused the opening of fresh accounts under this Act. I propose to inform the House of the amount of money involved in the advances made since 1935-36. The figures are as follows:—

Year.	No. of Settlers.	Amount Advanced.			Amount Repaid.		
		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1935-36	1,200 (app.)	57,407	0	0	3,723	14	11
1936-37	1,408	157,014	6	6	24,314	10	7
1937-38	1,025	134,853	8	5	89,404	17	2
1938-39	968	113,141	11	4	21,093	18	8
1939-40	919	112,016	13	5	148,973	6	5
1940-41	2,157	385,964	0	0	110,869	0	0

As the result of excessive droughts, and the shrinkage of credit for the season 1939-40, very heavy advances were necessitated, but the prospects for the present season will, I feel sure, materially assist farmers. It is of interest to note that superphosphate, which

is very important to the farming community, was supplied to clients under this Act to the following extent:—

						Tons.
1936-37	..	..	..	..	..	2,320
1937-38	..	..	..	..	..	3,170
1938-39	..	..	..	..	..	3,864
1939-40	..	..	..	..	..	6,413
1940-41	..	..	..	..	..	5,554
1941-42	..	..	..	..	..	*15,181

* Estimate.

These details show, I think, that there is every necessity for the continuance of this Act. Notwithstanding the criticism that may have been levelled against the administration of the measure from time to time it must be admitted, even by those who have been most severe in their adverse comments, that had it not been for the legislation many farmers on their holding today would have found it impossible to carry on. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.32]: This is the Bill in connection with which Mr. Thomson indulges in his annual straining. I suggest to him that his motion to disallow a regulation made under the Act will be quite futile if the Act itself be continued. If he desires to hamstring the Industries Assistance Board he can do so by not continuing the operations of the Act. That is the only way by which he can get over his difficulty.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: As Chairman of Committees you have told us that we cannot amend a continuance Bill!

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes, but members can vote out such a Bill.

Hon. G. W. Miles: We suggested that 10 or 12 years ago.

Hon. J. CORNELL: If the Country Party members wish to save their scalps, I proffer my suggestion as the easy way of accomplishing their end. If the Act remains as it is, any drought relief will be given under the old Act or the amended Act. This, therefore, is their opportunity to defeat the Bill.

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

BILL—LOAN, £916,000.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.34] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual Bill introduced each year to provide authority for the raising of funds necessary to carry out the programme of works detailed in the Loan Estimates and to authorise further advances to the Revenue Fund. As is customary I shall supply particulars of the various works under the Loan Estimates during the course of my remarks.

The total authority sought is for £916,000 of which £896,000 is for works and £20,000 for advances to revenue. Since the Financial Agreement, the Commonwealth and State Governments have considered the size of loan programmes in the light of the probable funds available, and arranged their programmes accordingly. It is recognised that a restriction in all States' loan expenditure is necessary because of the need to conserve our financial resources for the successful prosecution of the war.

In framing this year's Loan Estimates, the Government has given every consideration to the necessity of equipping various undertakings for defence work. At Midland Junction it is proposed to spend fairly large sums on the workshops and also on the purchase of machinery. The intention is also to make available funds for the rehabilitation of the State Engineering Works, where a considerable quantity of defence work is already being carried out, and for which more defence orders can be obtained when certain facilities are available. Money is being set aside for the extension of electricity supplies which will provide more power for private enterprise which is being more and more utilised for defence purposes.

The curtailment of spending other than for war purposes is reflected in the smaller amount asked for in the Loan Bill this year. Compared with the Loan Bills of recent years, the total of this measure is actually the smallest since the year 1919. That, I feel sure, will meet with the approval of some members who have been critical of loan authorisations in past years.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It is about time there was a decrease.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The amounts set out in the Bill for the various items do not necessarily coincide with those set

against the corresponding items in the Loan Estimates, but with the unexpended balances of previous authorisations, the Bill will provide for the completion of our programme for the year ending the 30th June next and, in addition, will enable any necessary works to be carried on for a further six months, by which time, in accordance with the usual procedure, another Loan Bill will no doubt have been introduced.

Provision is again made in the Bill for further advances to the Revenue Fund. The amount provided, namely, £20,000, will be sufficient with the amounts authorised by previous Loan Acts to cover the accumulated deficit which at the 30th June last amounted to £5,966,200, plus the estimated deficit for the current year of £198,297. During the year 1940-41, the Public Debt was increased by £1,561,325 and stood at £97,791,724 as at the 30th June last. New loans amounted to £1,497,750, and in addition £500,000 worth of Treasury bills, which had been temporarily redeemed from the proceeds of previous loans, were re-issued. Redemptions from the sinking fund, effected during the year, amounted to £436,425.

There were two flotations by the Commonwealth during the year, the first being in November, 1940, subscribers having the choice of two rates of interest, namely, 2¾ per cent. for four years, or 3¼ per cent. for 16 years, with the option of redemption by the Government after 10 years. Our share of the loan was £780,000, and we were allotted £210,000 at the lower rate and £570,000 at the higher, these amounts being in proportion to the total subscriptions at the respective rates.

The second flotation was in April this year, and on this occasion the terms offered were 2½ per cent. for five years or 3¼ per cent. for from nine to fifteen years. We participated in the proceeds to the extent of £700,000, of which £266,000 was at 2½ per cent. and £434,000 at 3¼ per cent. Both these flotations were at par and were not underwritten. As they also included large sums for war purposes, the flotation expenses were very light, averaging only in the vicinity of 5s. per cent. against approximately 15s. per cent. for most loans in recent years. Local raisings during the year amounted to £17,750, mostly representing the investment of trust funds under Treasury control.

Turning now to the Loan Estimates, the estimated loan expenditure this year, as compared with the actual expenditure in 1940-41, is as follows:—

	Actual, 1940-41. £	Estimated, 1941-42. £
Departmental	91,920	83,000
Railways and Tramways	123,979	360,000
Harbours and Rivers	69,357	130,500
Water Supply and Sewerage	805,701	599,000
Development of Goldfields and Mineral Resources	43,006	37,000
Development of Agriculture	173,364	149,000
Roads and Bridges, Public Buildings, etc.	390,016	132,701
Sundries	62,033	69,637
Total	1,760,366	1,560,928

The estimate is, therefore, £199,438 below last year's expenditure. The figures quoted include loan suspense expenditure incurred in the previous year for which there was no loan authority. On adjustment of the loan suspense expenditure a proper comparison is available. This shows the expenditure for 1940-41 at £1,536,340 and the estimated expenditure for this year at £1,482,000.

The railway and tramway expenditure last year amounted to £123,979, and the estimate for this year is £360,000, representing an increase of £236,021. Of last year's expenditure £91,032 was involved in works mainly consisting of re-ballasting, deviations, duplications, water supplies, strengthening bridges and provision for coaling plants at various places. In addition, workshop extensions at Midland Junction cost £19,000 and machinery £16,500. Another item of note under railway expenditure is that involving alterations to the Brunswick station yard. This cost £16,500.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Was there no re-grading last year?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Very little. Similar works are provided for in the Estimates. Plant and equipment for Midland Junction Workshops and for extensions thereto, which will include an annexe and tool room, are amongst the works provided for. Provision has been made for new barracks at Northam. In all, the estimated expenditure is £74,000.

Members are aware that a substantial addition has been made to the Midland Junction Workshops. Portion of this addition is set aside as an annexe to provide housing for machines, etc., for the manufacture of shells. The cost was £50,000, of which £15,000 was found by the Commonwealth. This addition to the workshops has been completed and the annexe will be in operation shortly.

It has been found necessary to enlarge the annexe compared with the original calculation, thus necessitating the duplication of machines already installed. The manufacture of these machines is well in hand and the majority will be built locally.

Hon. W. J. Mann: For how long has that been under construction?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Approximately 12 months.

Hon. W. J. Mann: It is taking a long time to build.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The first part is not yet in production.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It has been in production for a long time. I do not want to say too much about what the production is, but would like members to know that everything possible has been done to expedite the work.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: I do not question that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The sum of £7,000 is being expended on a tool room for the manufacture of tools and gauges to meet the needs of the munition factory. Machinery to the value of £4,000 will be provided by the State. An amount of £30,000 free of cost to the State is being advanced by the Commonwealth for tool room equipment and the room will be utilised almost exclusively on work for the small-arms factory.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Government work to the value of £1,056,000 has been undertaken by the State for the manufacture of munitions, etc. Contracts already completed involve an expenditure of £66,000, contracts on hand £646,000, contracts received recently £344,000 or a total in all of £1,056,000. Last year the expenditure on railway rolling stock was £9,190. This year the estimated expenditure is £35,000, the principal items involved being construction of S class locomotives, also construction of Z brake vans and Vb covered vans, the latter being used for perishable goods.

Last year the tramway expenditure was £8,939, mainly on account of six petrol buses to augment existing services. The estimate for this year is £105,000, the main items being the provision of six Reo buses in lieu of trolley buses ordered the previous year, and the purchase of 18 trolley buses which had been previously sold to the Canton Municipal Council. Extensions at Maylands and Inglewood and the completion of the

feeder cable to that suburb are also provided for in the estimate. The expenditure on electricity last year was £14,818; the estimate this year is £146,000. Last year's expenditure was mainly on extension of mains. Similar work will be continued this year, in addition to which the estimates have also provided for ring main feeder cables, the conversion of the Cottesloe transmission, and additional high tension switch-gear.

Harbours and rivers expenditure last year was £69,357, this amount being laid out on additions and improvements to North-West jetties, construction of new slipway at Fremantle, North Quay reconstruction and continuation of bellmouth dredging, Swan River reclamation at South Perth, and improvements to harbours and rivers generally. The estimate for this year is £130,500, an increase of £61,143. This provides for additions and improvements in the North-West (Wyndham jetty dredging, Carnarvon jetty improvements and improvements to rolling stock), minor works at Bunbury harbour, continuation of construction of new slipway at Fremantle, North Quay reconstruction and other minor works.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Has any dredging been done at Carnarvon?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Not that I know of. The provision of water supplies, sewerage, irrigation and drainage works throughout the State involved an expenditure of £805,791 during the year 1940-41. The allocation for this year is £599,000, of which £19,000 is to be spent on the completion of certain works of last year and also on improvements to town water supplies generally.

The sum of £101,748 was expended on metropolitan sewerage and drainage last year, when work was continued on Bassendean, Bayswater and Guildford sewerage and reticulation. Sewerage works were commenced at Floreat Park and North Fremantle; and other works included the provision of a ventilation stack at Lincoln street, sewerage house connections and an extension to Smith's Lake drainage scheme. This year's estimate of £98,000 makes provision for continuation of sewerage reticulation works at Floreat Park and Welshpool, and new sewerage reticulations at Maylands. House connections, a ventilation stack and minor drainage and sewerage works will account for the balance.

On metropolitan water supply an amount of £126,481 was expended last year, mainly on the completion of the Canning Dam, the continuation of North Beach and Floreat Park water supplies, the linking up of Canning and Mundaring reservoirs, the extension of a 30in. main from Victoria Park and Belmont, and improvements to reticulation in various parts of the metropolitan area. The estimate of £64,000 for this year is for further reticulation improvements, a 12in. main extension at Dalkeith and South Perth, and the usual annual expenditure on services and meters.

Turning now to goldfields water supply, I find that last year's expenditure was £202,642; while the estimate for this year is £113,000. Works carried out last year included the completion of the relaying of a 30in. main through Northam, enlargement of Cunderdin reservoir, fabrication and cement lining of pipes, erection of summit tank at Kellerberrin, linking up of Mundaring reservoir with Canning Dam and reticulation extensions and improvements generally. This year it is proposed to continue the programme of fabricating of pipes and renovations to the main conduit. Total-dam water supply improvements, improvements to branch mains and the usual annual expenditure on services and meters are works for which the estimates have also made provision.

During last year water supplies in agricultural areas, including drainage and irrigation, involved an expenditure of £341,896, mainly on the completion of Samson Brook reservoir, the continuation of work at Stirling Reservoir, irrigation channel lining and other improvements to irrigation in the South-West, No. 3 district irrigation works, No. 1 district water supply extensions and lining existing mains, and provision of tanks in agricultural areas including roofing and equipment of wells. The Waroona irrigation office was completed and the erection of the Harvey office commenced.

Hon. L. Craig: A very nice job has been done there, too.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am glad we can please some people.

Hon. G. W. Miles: They do very well in that corner.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The 1941-42 estimate is for £300,000, a decrease of £41,896. The estimate provides for the continuation of work on the Stirling Reservoir

and the No. 3 district irrigation works, channel lining at Collie, Harvey and Waroona, the completion of Harvey office, relining of Herdsman Lake tunnel and provision of tanks, wells, etc., in agricultural areas.

The Eastern and Murchison Goldfields water supplies accounted for an expenditure of £1,446 during last year. The sum of £4,000 is this year's estimate for the purpose of effecting improvements to existing water supplies and providing water supplies at new finds. For the development of goldfields and mineral resources we are setting aside an amount of £37,000, or £6,006 less than the amount expended last year. Included in this expenditure was the main item of £21,806, which was granted by way of assistance to prospectors. This brings the total assistance since the inception of the scheme to £190,023.

Hon. G. W. Miles: There have been some repayments?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, the sum of £36,390 has been repaid. For the current year provision has been made for £22,000 assistance to prospectors, £13,000 loans and £2,000 expenditure on batteries. Decreased expenditure is estimated on the development of agriculture, forestry, etc. An amount of £173,364 was expended last year; and this year's estimate is for £24,364 less.

Included in the undertakings of last year were additions to pig pens at Midland Junction and the erection of saleyards at Robb's Jetty involving an expenditure of £3,362, erection of cottages for instructors at the College of Agriculture, £1,116, while reconditioning of abandoned Agricultural Bank holdings, clearing at Wooroloo and Wokalup accounted for £102,923. This year provision has been made for improvements to the Midland Junction Abattoirs, completion of manager's cottage at the College of Agriculture, and sundry small works at that college, while £38,000 has been set aside for reconditioning Agricultural Bank holdings and for clearing operations at Wokalup and Wooroloo.

An item of interest on the Estimates for this year is an amount of £3,000 for experimental work in connection with the proposed Ord River irrigation scheme. That is an experiment for which I am sure every member will wish the best of success. Nobody can say just what the outcome will be, but, from the information we have re-

ceived, we are hopeful that this expenditure—while purely experimental and involving further expenditure later—will prove there is a large area of land in that part of the State which can be utilised to better advantage than it is being utilised at present.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It is a step in the right direction.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Last year £12,695 was advanced to banana growers, pearlers and the Albany Freezing Works. Assistance was also granted to two firms in order to help secondary industries. An amount of £50,000 has been placed on the Estimates for the current year for similar assistance, most of which, however, is intended for extension of secondary industries.

The sum of £51,952 was expended for the purpose of reforestation of karri, jarrah and mallet, afforestation and forest regeneration. Similar work on this year's Estimates is expected to involve an expenditure of £50,000. A decrease of £257,225 is estimated on roads and bridges and public buildings. Last year the expenditure was £390,016; this year, £132,791. Last year's expenditure included £262,954 recouped to Loan Suspense, the amount having been expended during the previous year without sufficient authorisation. The actual cash expenditure was therefore £127,062, plus £59,291 carried forward to this year's Loan Suspense, or a total of £186,353. This year's proposal is for a recoup to Loan Suspense of £59,291, plus £73,500 of cash expenditure provided for public buildings. No provision has been made in the Loan Estimates for roads and bridges for the current year. Last year £41,733 was expended in this connection. Dealing with public buildings, on which £48,283 was spent in 1940-41, it is pointed out that £73,500 is contemplated as expenditure this year.

The main undertakings last year were the Perth Technical College additions, Claremont and Point Heathcote Mental Hospitals new treatment blocks, additions to Northam, Bunbury and Eastern Goldfields High Schools, Inglewood police station, Public Works Department new workshops and erection and additions to schools and public buildings generally. The estimate for the current year's programme covers in the main the completion of

works commenced during last year, notably the Fremantle Technical High School, the Government Chemical Laboratory, and a number of school buildings, including the addition to Kent-street Central School. Money spent on hospital buildings, equipment, etc., represents expenditure on the new Perth Hospital, the interest and sinking fund of which is found by the Lotteries Commission. The amount advanced last year was £100,000. The difference between this sum and the expenditure of £300,000 represents the authority for the amount expended in 1939-40.

I now come to the last of the items enumerated in the table mentioned at the inception of my remarks, namely "Sundries." Under this heading the total expenditure last year was £62,933; the estimate contemplates an increase for the current year's programme of £69,636. Pardelup Prison Farm will account for £1,000 of this amount for the purpose of erecting huts, while some small undertakings are included. Last year the expenditure was nil. State Ferries have been provided for to the extent of £4,000 for the completion of a new boat. Last year's expenditure in this connection was £1,630. Included in the item "Sundries" is the State Implement Works, on which £20,000 was expended last year to recondition the works, principally the moulding shop, to enable defence contracts to be carried out. Of this amount £12,429 was carried forward to Loan Suspense to be recouped out of this year's provision. This year's estimate of £30,000 over and above the recoup to Loan Suspense is for the continuance of the work mentioned.

State hotels and tourist resorts expenditure last year of £20,702 was nearly all for a recoup to Loan Suspense of the previous year's expenditure. The sum of £1,000 has been allocated in this year's estimate for the completion of a few small works. I have, I think, given members the information usually looked for and I have also dealt rather extensively with the more important items. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [6.7]: I propose to deal with only one item, in which I am interested. I refer to Item 17, Agricultural Implement Works. This House would be well advised to look fully into this item. Money is being found and ex-

pended on these works, which are quite obsolete and have been so for years. Some time ago, all work for outside people at those works was supposed to have ceased, one of the main reasons being that a tremendous loss was being made on every piece of work sent out. But over and above that, the fact is that 70 per cent. of the machines are obsolete.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Ninety per cent.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I know that 70 per cent. are. The machines were bought from a broken-down concern in South Australia.

Hon. J. Cornell: Why not scrap them and buy new ones?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: That would be better.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Would it not be better for the hon. member to deal with an item such as that in Committee?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I want to explain the matter to members.

The PRESIDENT: An incidental remark would do no harm; but an item such as that should be dealt with in Committee.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I shall mention one important point. Parliament, in its wisdom, passed an Act in 1932 removing the State Implement Works from the State Trading Concerns Act. That was nine years ago. I was leading up to that point, which I consider well worth discussing on the second reading. The Act to which I refer was assented to on the 7th November, 1932; nevertheless it contained a section which left it open to any Government not to respect the decision of Parliament. I refer to Section 2, which reads—

This Act shall come into operation on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

Members are aware that on two occasions I asked questions in this House as to when the Act would be proclaimed. On the second occasion I was told that it was against the policy of the Government. It is time that Parliament took a stand against this ignoring of a decision of Parliament. I take it that Parliament, once having arrived at a decision and embodied it in an Act, no matter what Government is in power or what its policy may be, there is only one decent thing to do, and that is to proclaim the Act. That has not been done, although the Act was assented to by the representative of the King. The only remedy in the hands of

members of this House is to force the position when we reach Item 17 in the Committee stage.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

BILL—CHILD WELFARE ACT AMENDMENT.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [6.13] in moving the second reading said: This Bill contains amendments of a machinery nature designed to improve the administration of the Child Welfare Act. Whilst there is nothing of great importance in the amendments, they will assist the department in its administration of the Act.

Hon. H. Tuckey: The Bill is going a long way to extend the Act to adults.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I can vouch for the necessity for every amendment. The proposals in the Bill to amend the Act are deemed advisable for its improved administration, as well as for the welfare of those who come under it. The first main proposal deals with the granting of power to the Children's Court to commit a child, and at the same time recommend that such child be released whilst of good behaviour. Not every case which comes before a children's court can be properly dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

It frequently happens that a court wishes to commit a child in order to ensure departmental supervision, but at the same time does not want to send the child to an institution, much preferring that the child be restored to the care of its parents, provided there is some power of supervision over it. Because power to commit, but at the same time to recommend release whilst of good behaviour, is not provided in the Act, the child concerned has had to be committed to an institution or no order whatever has been made. It is, therefore, considered most desirable that the court should be empowered to commit a child and recommend that he or she be released whilst of good behaviour. This amendment is designed to give greater

discretionary powers to a court when dealing with those children who must, in some cases of necessity, come before it.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Another proposal seeks to amend Section 26 of the Act, which section enables the court to dismiss a complaint against a child even though that child is guilty of an offence. It may be the child's first offence, and the court by dismissing the charge leaves the delinquent's name unblemished. It is considered advisable, however, as a preventive measure to have the department's probation officer keep an eye on the child.

The amendment proposed by this Bill will enable this to be done without recording a conviction. The court may order the child concerned to be subject to the supervision of the department until such child attains the age of 18 years, or during such shorter period as the court may think sufficient. No blemish would be recorded against its name in the court, but action could be taken to place such a child under supervision, so that it may be assisted in avoiding a repetition of the offence which had led to its appearance before a magistrate. The proposal will enable discretionary powers to be exercised by the magistrate, which is considered most desirable when all the circumstances have been taken into consideration.

Another proposal in the Bill is that which is dealt with by Clause 5. That clause proposes to amend Section 29 of the Act to provide for the arrest of uncontrollable and incorrigible children. At present only neglected or destitute children can be so dealt with. In practice, however, it has been found that it is usually the uncontrollable or incorrigible child who requires such action to be taken against him, rather than one who is deemed to be neglected or destitute. This amendment is obviously most desirable. The Bill also provides that the court may commit an incorrigible or uncontrollable child even if no near relative is able to provide any security for the child's future maintenance.

As the Act stands at present, the court may not commit any such child unless adequate arrangements are made by the near relative for the child's maintenance. These arrangements are a condition precedent to committal, and an order cannot be made, no

matter how bad the case may be, if the parents cannot pay maintenance. There are many cases in which these children are brought before the court where none of the near relatives is able to provide any security for future maintenance because of the lack of income, or because of the small income which he is receiving. The proposal in the Bill will give the court the liberty to commit the child on the merits of the case, the court having the power to make an order for the child's support if the near relatives are in a position to contribute.

There is another proposal in the Bill which seeks to amend that section of the Act which gives the department power to arrest a child who does not comply with the terms of his probation. It is pointed out that in many cases, although a child is placed on probation, actually it is the parent or parents who are on probation. As an instance: A child is charged with being neglected while being under the guardianship of a person whom the court considers to be unfit. The child lives with its mother, who is living in adultery and is continually changing her place of residence to avoid paying rent, etc.

The court finds the charge proved, and in order to give the mother another chance to live decently and so be able to care for the child properly places the child under departmental supervision on probation for a period of two years. The department's inspectors visit the mother at regular intervals and ascertain that she has not mended her ways and things are the same as before the court case. It is obviously impossible to charge the child with failing to comply with the terms of its probation, and so a fresh charge of being a neglected child under the same definition must be laid. The proposed new section will overcome the departmental difficulty in the matter and will allow action to be taken where the responsible person or persons are at fault and not the child. This is a very necessary provision as there are many cases of such a nature brought before the court.

Under the Act power is given to order the father of an illegitimate child to pay confinement expenses. It is desired to make similar provision for confinement expenses for the mother of a legitimate child. Occasions have arisen where husbands have deserted their wives, and subsequently children have been born, legitimately, to

them. Husbands have refused to pay maintenance in this connection, and under the Act the court has no power to make an order for the payment of the confinement expenses of the mother. The Bill seeks to rectify what is obviously an anomaly.

There is another clause dealing with the penalty against those who fail to pay to the department money attached in favour of the department as the result of a court order. At present no default is provided, so that if the person who is holding the money ignores the court's order, no action can be taken to enforce the decision. A further proposal seeks to make it possible for a court of petty sessions to deal with maintenance orders if there is no Children's Court available within reasonable distance of the centre where the action is to be taken.

The relevant clause in this connection amends Section 79 for the purpose of giving parties concerned in maintenance orders access to the court in order to have them reviewed. It further provides for the transfer of maintenance orders from court to court. Sometimes it happens that an order is made in the Perth court and that, later, the parties transfer to some country district. As the Act stands, any action for a variation of the maintenance order, or for its annulment must be taken in the Perth court where the original order was made. The Bill sets out that any subsequent action may be taken in the court nearest to the near relatives, provided that the court concerned considers that any action it may take would be fair and reasonable to the parties.

A provision in the Bill deals with bonds given to the court. There are several references in the Act giving the court power to order persons to enter into recognisances, but there is no means whereby they may be estreated if the terms are not carried out. The measure seeks to give the court the required power to estreat where desired. Another clause is considered to be most desirable and necessary. A man deserts his children and makes no provision for their maintenance. He is liable to arrest under Section 129 of the Act, and when he is arrested and brought before the court, all the court can do is either to imprison him or place him under a bond that he will not repeat the offence. It is obvious that the court should have the power to

make a maintenance order against him to ensure that he will provide for his family's needs.

If a man is placed under a bond by the court and does not live up to it, the position is not improved to any degree at all. That does not help his wife or children in their needs. The existing state of affairs is, therefore, most unsatisfactory. It is considered that an order is the best and surest provision for maintenance because, if a man does not make his payments in accordance with the order, warrants can be issued to compel his compliance, or, alternatively, to punish him by imprisonment. The provision in the Bill aims to improve the existing state of affairs by leaving with the court the powers it already has, and adding additional power to make a maintenance order against the father.

There is a proposal in the Bill dealing with the employment of a child under the age of 14 years. Section 137 of the Act prevents any child under that age from being employed in any circus or the like. It is desired to add "travelling show" to the definitions in order to have close supervision in such cases, and to be able to take action if it appears necessary for the welfare of any such child. Another proposal in the Bill aims to give power to bring defaulters in connection with maintenance orders before the nearest court of petty sessions where no members of the nearest children's court are available, or in any area where no children's court has been established.

It has happened in the past that a man has been arrested for failing to comply with his maintenance order and that the arrest has occurred in a place where no children's court has been established. This has entailed huge expenditure in costs in bringing the defaulter before the nearest children's court. The Bill aims to overcome the difficulty in this connection in a practical and most convenient way, and would be instrumental in keeping costs down to a minimum and ensuring that the defaulter is given a speedy trial. These may be considered the main proposals in the Bill. There are others which may be dealt with in Committee if necessary. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 20:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Paragraph (d) of Subclause (ii) gives tremendous powers to the magistrate. Magistrates should be trained men, but the special magistrate is untrained. I urge the Committee to assist me to delete paragraph (d).

Hon. L. Craig: What would you put in its place?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I would put nothing in its place. Such cases should go before a magistrate and not an untrained special magistrate.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Would it not have to go before two or three magistrates?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No, before one, who would be a professional man.

Hon. L. Craig: Do you suggest that such a case should not go before Mr. Schroeder?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It should not go before a special magistrate. This power should not be given him. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (d) be struck out.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Experience has shown that Mr. Schroeder, although not a legally-trained man, has been an outstanding success, more so perhaps than any previous occupant of the position.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: But he has no legal qualifications.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is desirable that we should confer this additional power.

Hon. A. Thomson: Can you give us the reason why?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Because the cases affect children, and the special magistrate has been very successful in his work. The best-trained man, lacking Mr. Schroeder's special qualifications, might be a failure in the position.

Hon. L. CRAIG: What does Mr. Baxter mean when he says that Mr. Schroeder is not a trained man?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: He lacks legal qualifications.

Hon. L. CRAIG: But he has special knowledge for dealing with cases covered by the measure. He probably has more knowledge of the kind required than has

anyone else, and it is desirable to give him the extended powers to deal with cases of the class that come before him. The welfare work of the court is extending, and in future magistrates will need to have special as well as legal qualifications. To delete the paragraph would be wrong.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I agree with the Honorary Minister. Mr. Schroeder has done excellent work, and I doubt whether a legally-trained man could have done better. Is it proposed to give the additional power to Mr. Schroeder only? To prescribe "a special magistrate sitting alone" might be conferring too much power.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The provision affected by the paragraph is Section 8 of the Guardianship of Infants Act and, if the Minister quoted that, it would be helpful.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Section 8 extends powers to courts of summary jurisdiction, but provides that such courts shall not be competent to entertain an application relating to an infant who has attained the age of 16 years, or one involving the administration of any property belonging to an infant, or award the payment of sums towards the maintenance of an infant exceeding 20s. a week. The paragraph will give authority to exercise such powers.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: A layman should not be appointed a special magistrate to deal with cases involving the custody and maintenance of children. These are matters for a legally-trained man. The magistrate has dealt with some cases and it was discovered on appeal that he had been acting illegally.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: The paragraph proposes to extend the jurisdiction of the magistrate of the Children's Court in a very desirable way. There are qualifications, apart from legal training, requisite for this work, and Mr. Schroeder has shown that he possesses them. The jurisdiction exercised by Mr. Schroeder in Perth is exercised by the magistrates at Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Bunbury.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Will they be special magistrates under this measure?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I cannot see that those magistrates are more highly qualified for this sphere than is Mr. Schroeder. If the special magistrates shall have these powers, I cannot imagine many people who would be more competent to exercise them.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The amendment was made at the request of another place, and it applies only to Mr. Schroeder, whom the Government regards as better qualified to exercise this power than other magistrates would be.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I understand that no man can be appointed a magistrate unless he has passed a certain examination.

The CHAIRMAN: He can be appointed an acting magistrate without having passed the examination.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes. We have not had an opportunity to study this measure. Progress might be reported. The Bill should state specifically that this particular provision applies to Mr. Schroeder only.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: I support the clause as it stands. If any magistrate or acting magistrate is to have this power, Mr. Schroeder should have it.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4, 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Amendment of Section 32:

Hon. H. SEDDON: This clause cancels the power of a magistrate to order a boy a whipping.

The Honorary Minister: It is now agreed by practically all authorities that the young should not be whipped.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I have heard of a magistrate ordering a boy's father to administer a thrashing.

Clause put and division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	..	..	14
Majority against					3

AYES

Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. E. M. Heenan	(Teller.)

NOES

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. E. H. Hall	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. V. Homersley	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. G. W. Miles	Hon. J. J. Holmes
	(Teller.)

Clause thus negatived.

Clauses 7 to 18—agreed to.

Clause 19—Amendment of Section 146:

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not wish this clause to be retained in the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Then the Honorary Minister will vote against the clause.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The clause should refer to Section 124, which provides penalties for the malicious disclosure of the conviction of a child.

Hon. H. SEDDON: This is an instance of where galloping through a Bill leads us. We have left in the Act provision for ordering a whipping and now have taken out of the Act the provision which limits the number of strokes that may be given. If we had had an opportunity to follow the Bill sufficiently to see what the amendment meant, we would have refrained from eliminating Section 142 as has been done by Clause 18.

The Honorary Minister: We can recommend the measure.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am pointing out the absurdity of trying to amend an Act without members being given a chance to read it.

Hon. A. Thomson: We have only ourselves to blame.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have no wish to rush this measure and am prepared to report progress.

Progress reported.

BILL—RESERVES (No. 2).

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Perth Lot 018:

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: This Bill covers a number of reserves and I would like the Honorary Minister's assurance that the various local authorities have been consulted.

The Honorary Minister: I gave that assurance.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I can support the Honorary Minister's statement so far as the Metropolitan-Suburban Province is concerned. I have been in touch with each of the local authorities interested and have been assured that they were consulted.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 to 8, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—ROAD CLOSURE.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Closure of Hume-street and certain streets and rights-of-way in Albany.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have had no information from Albany and I wonder whether the Minister can tell me whether this road closure is being done at the request of the municipal council or the Albany Road Board? What is the position?

The HONORARY MINISTER: It has been done with the consent of both authorities.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 8, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [8.27] in moving the second reading said: This Bill to amend the Workers' Homes Act, proposes—

(a) To amend the definition of "worker" so that advances for building purposes may be made to an applicant who has a family and whose remuneration exceeds £400 per annum.

(b) To provide that the maximum advance for building purposes shall be increased from £800 to £900.

(c) To vary the rate of interest charged as ground rent on leasehold land.

(d) To make provision for a sinking fund to the mutual advantage of the board and the client.

The Act defines a "worker" as one whose remuneration does not exceed £400 per annum. Any person in receipt of more than that amount is unable to obtain an advance

for building purposes. In practice the terms of the definition have reacted unfairly to the married man with a family. At present an applicant with a family whose income is over £400 per annum is ineligible for an advance, whereas an applicant without any family whose income is just below that figure is eligible. It is proposed to widen the definition to permit of an addition to the limit of £400, of £25 for each child under the age of 16 years. Under this proposal an applicant with four children and with a remuneration of £500 would be eligible for assistance.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: That is a fair thing.

Hon. H. Tuckey: It brings the amount to £500.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It would increase the amount by £25 for each child the applicant might have. If the applicant had two children under 16 years of age then the limit of his salary would be £450; if he had three children, the limit would be £475; if he had four children, the limit would be £500.

Hon. J. Cornell: He would not be likely to have a salary beyond £500 if he had five children.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is felt that the people with families merit this consideration and assistance to own their own homes. A proposal of a similar nature is embodied in the Act governing the operations of the State Advances Corporation in Queensland. The provision to increase the maximum advance under the Act from £800 to £900 has been deemed necessary owing to the increase in the cost of building. It is impossible to provide a five-roomed brick house with reasonable accommodation for an advance of £800 unless the applicant himself is able to find a substantial deposit. There are not many applicants for workers' homes who would be in a position to provide a substantial deposit, and the Act was introduced originally with the object of rendering assistance to those not in a position to pay a considerable sum of money for the erection of homes.

To give an indication of the increased cost of building, I have obtained from the Workers' Homes Board particulars of two types of dwellings—one a five-roomed brick house, and the other a four-roomed wooden house. Tenders were called for these two types in August, 1939, and again in August, 1941, for the wooden house, and in September,

1941, for the brick house. In August, 1939, the tender for the brick house was £775 15s., and on this price it is quite possible to accept a deposit of £5 from an applicant. The tender submitted in September, 1941, on plans for the same dwelling was £892. To this price have to be added fees and other expenses to be borne by the applicant, which are added to the capital cost. The total capital cost would probably be now in the vicinity of £920. Before an applicant could have secured this house he would have had to find a deposit of about £120.

Regarding the wooden house, the pre-war contract price was £459 and the tender price on the 14th August, 1941, was £586. Since that date other tenders which have been submitted on similar plans have been over £600.

Hon. A. Thomson: For a start, there is a 15 per cent. sales tax on all materials.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, a number of factors influences the increase in the costs to the Workers' Homes Board. In view of the present position, the board—and the Government is in agreement with the contention—holds that it is necessary to amend the Act along the lines suggested in the Bill. Unless the amendment is passed the board will have to confine its attentions almost solely to wooden houses. It may, of course, provide for those applicants who are able to find deposits of about £100 to £150. There are, however, very few applicants who are able to put down such an amount. The board is not satisfied that the increased cost of wooden houses is reflected in the value of the home, and is fearful that after the war it may find itself left with a number of wooden houses, the liability on which will be in excess of the value at that time.

It is necessary, therefore, for the board to exercise every care in dealing with applications for the erection of wooden houses on the basis of the higher values. Quite a number of cheap houses have been erected during the last year or two and they represent very desirable residences, the cost of which has run up to about £400. That cost has been materially increased since then and the board feels that, unless great care is exercised, the danger will arise of the inflated costs—if I may use that term—resulting in the equity not being maintained when the war ceases.

Hon. A. Thomson: That applies to brick buildings as well.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, to a limited extent. While there has been a considerable increase in the cost of brick houses, the decline in value at any given time would not be as great regarding them as it would be respecting wooden houses of the type we have been discussing.

The next proposal in the Bill seeks to vary the rate of interest charged as ground rent on leasehold land. The Act provides that ground rent shall be based upon an interest rate of three per cent. on the appraised value of the land. As interest rates vary from time to time the fixing of the rate is deemed to be an unwise provision.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Can the board afford to provide money at three per cent.?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Under the Act the board can charge three per cent. only on the face value of the land.

Hon. A. Thomson: That was all right when the Government owned the land.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, and when money was procurable at cheaper rates. When the board purchases land out of funds borrowed at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. it obviously cannot allow its client to lease this land at a ground rental based on 3 per cent. of the purchase price.

Hon. J. Cornell: Is it intended to make that provision retrospective?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. The board therefore has to increase the value of the land to such a figure that at an interest rate of 3 per cent. it will return to the board $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the purchase price. That is the method that has been adopted for years past. It has had the effect of inflating the value of land and that has been detrimental to the client concerned.

Hon. H. Seddon: Look what you will lose in land tax.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Government is prepared to lose that proportion of the land tax. It is considered that a better arrangement will be for the rate of interest to be as prescribed by the Treasurer and fixed by regulation. The Bill contains the necessary amendment for this to be done.

Hon. J. Cornell: Is it proposed to alter the period for the reappraisement?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. There is no intention to make a sudden increase in the ground rental charge to the board's clients from 3 per cent. to $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. No variation will be made until the next ap-

praisement, when the value of the land will be adjusted to conform to the new rate of interest.

The next and final proposal provides for the establishment of a sinking fund. I commend that proposal to the House; it could well have been in existence years ago. Had some such provision been included in the original Act, it would have proved beneficial to the clients of the board. The Act provides that any purchaser of a home may make additional repayments of £10 or any multiple of £10, upon payment of which his capital debt is adjusted.

Hon. J. Cornell: And his interest is reduced accordingly.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. The War Service Homes Act, which is administered by the Workers' Homes Board, gives permission to a purchaser to pay any amount in excess of his required contributions, and the excess is placed to his credit in a sinking fund. The purchaser is allowed the same rate of interest on the sinking fund as he is charged on his liability for the purchase of the home, so that in effect the sinking fund is applied towards the reduction of his debt.

Under the Act the sinking fund can be used by the purchaser to meet contributions in times of distress or to meet the cost of additions or renovations to the home. The fund is very largely availed of and is found to be of considerable benefit to purchasers. The proposal in this Bill seeks to grant to clients of the Workers' Homes Board the same privileges as are now enjoyed by those under the War Service Homes Act. There is a proviso that if a purchaser's payments to the sinking fund reach the balance owing on the home his debt shall be discharged. This is necessary to avoid purchasers using the sinking fund as a medium for saving. Obviously, if a purchaser could continue with his ordinary repayments and at the same time build up a sinking fund, he would be able to earn on his sinking fund contribution a much higher rate of interest than he could possibly earn by some other form of investment. The idea is that the sinking fund can be applied only to the liquidation of his debt or for additions or improvements to the home.

It is felt that the proposals contained in this Bill will improve the Workers' Homes Act and enable the board to render an even better service to the community. I might also mention, as no doubt members are

aware, that in many of our suburban areas it is not possible for persons to erect wooden homes, those areas having been declared brick areas. That, too, is having an effect upon the board. There are many districts where clients desire to erect homes; they possibly might be able to finance a wooden home, but are not allowed to build one. Under the amendment it will be possible for such workers now to make successful application to the board for assistance to erect a brick home. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [8.48]: The evolution of the Workers' Homes Board reads like a romance. The scheme began in 1911, when £300 per annum was the maximum figure which entitled anyone to come under the Act. Subsequently that amount was increased to £400. Now it is proposed further to increase the maximum in proportion to the number of children of an applicant. The maximum loan then available again increased to £550. That was to be spent either upon erecting a home on the leasehold principle or on the freehold principle. The amount was then increased to £900.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: But £900 now will not do as much as £500 did in 1911.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The difference is not so much in the value of money. The first workers' homes were erected on the leasehold principle and there was but one object in view, namely, to put as much money as possible into the dwelling. The size of the rooms and the height of the walls of those buildings stand to the credit of the board of that day.

The Chief Secretary: Times have changed and ideas have altered.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. I had one of the first workers' homes at Subiaco. Mr. Panton had one erected at Leederville and owns it today. Mr. Foley, at one time member for Leonora, also had a worker's home. The only clearing done on the blocks of land was of an area sufficient to erect the building and necessary outhouses. No provision was made for paths or for sewerage. The tenant was supposed to clear the block and make a garden. He was also required to make his own footpaths. Subsequently he had to find the money with which to pay for sewerage connections. If he were in impecunious circumstances, the money was lent to him

for a period of six years at a rate of 6 per cent. As the Minister has said, the whole position is now altered. Today there must be a ready-made house, with footpaths, garage and all conveniences.

Hon. G. W. Miles: A garage must be provided?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes.

The Chief Secretary: Not for £900.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is the difference between early-day applicants for homes and present-day applicants. There is this to be said for the early applicants, that more help was given to the legitimate lower-paid worker than has ever been given since.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You were one of the earlier applicants?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. I know of men who, while only in receipt of 8s. per day, got a worker's home valued at £500, and they have met all obligations. As I said, the applicant in those days was expected to do as much as possible to help himself. Slowly but surely, the original idea was departed from. It drifted in a direction towards which it was never intended to drift. Consideration was given to the higher-paid worker, because he was considered to be a better client, as he was in a better position to meet his obligations. That is what happened. Today a man on the basic wage has very little chance of meeting the obligations that would be involved in the purchase of a £900 home, unless the period for repayment was fixed at 36 years instead of 30 years. At one time it was 30 years; now it is 36.

There is a departure in the Bill which I do not favour. The Act, as it stands, provides for two methods of erecting workers' homes. One method is that the home may be acquired on the leasehold system, whereby a man pays 3 per cent. per £100 for the home in perpetuity; but the interest is to be re-appraised at stated periods. It is not proposed to alter that system and I have no objection to it. The other is the freehold system, whereby a man who owns a block of land may have a new home erected upon it. It is now proposed to do what was done under the War Service Homes Act, the operation of which has long been discontinued. That Act provided that all war service homes had to be built upon freehold land.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Was it freehold under the War Service Homes Act?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. Later, it was provided that a soldier could buy a house that had already been built. The Act also provided that if he had acquired a home, either prior or subsequent to enlistment, he could obtain an advance from the War Service Homes Board to add to or improve his dwelling. That system has been discontinued for a long time, and it is now proposed to adopt it in our Act, which has been in existence for 30 years. The object of the Act should be to provide for the erection of more homes, and the money should be used for that purpose. Never before in my recollection have houses of five rooms or less been so hard to obtain in the metropolitan area. The shortage can only be met by building more houses; but the proposal in the Bill is to allow workers to buy houses already erected. I would have no objection to that if they were properly built new houses, but I have a decided objection to the purchase of old houses.

Hon. H. Tuckey: They might be wooden ones.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is the departure in this Bill. The sinking fund provision is a good one. The Workers' Homes Board, which is composed of honorary members, has always helped its clients. Those in straitened circumstances, who have been unable to paint and renovate their homes and to meet their commitments, have had the amount added to their debt, to be paid at the end of the period. So far as my recollection goes no worker has been wrongfully ejected. I think I can say the same of the Agricultural Bank. The board is most considerate and efficient. I support the second reading.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [8.58]: If I understood Mr. Cornell aright, he said there was a shortage of houses in the metropolitan area and I have no reason to doubt his statement. I urge the board and the Government, however, to pay attention not only to the shortage which Mr. Cornell says exists in the metropolitan area, but to consider more and more the needs of country districts. I refer not only to agricultural districts, but also to other districts outside the charmed circle of the metropolitan area. Mr. Cornell said that the members of the Workers' Homes Board acted in an honorary capacity. When dealing with the Lotteries Commission recently, I

said that that board was a paid board, but that I thought it would do its work just as well if the members acted in an honorary capacity. The Lotteries Commission has a paid secretary, and so has the Workers' Homes Board. But these two utilities—if I may so describe them—cannot be compared.

We have the Auditor General's report which states that the total profit earned by the board from its inception amounted to £126,328 17s. 8d., of which £120,910 4s. 5d. had been paid into Consolidated Revenue Fund to the 30th June, 1941. That is a remarkable achievement. Every attempt should be made to improve upon it, especially when we know such a shortage exists in housing accommodation. This work should be taken from the honorary board. I do not say that I have any fault to find with the gentlemen who comprise that board. In case members have not seen the only copy of the report of the activities of this board presented to the Chamber, I will read it to them. Possibly it was on the grounds of economy that only one copy was presented. I could point out many ways in which economy could be better effected than —

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Shorter speeches of members in "Hansard" might help!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL:—supplying only one copy of such a report to this House. The Under Treasurer, who has a full-time job in that capacity, is chairman of the board, and the Principal Architect and the assistant manager of the Wyndham Meat Works are members, and of course there is a secretary. The Government should give serious attention to the fact that this very important matter is in the hands of men whose time is pretty well occupied by their ordinary duties—especially when this matter is of such moment to those people that this Act was intended to benefit. Those are the people specifically mentioned by Mr. Cornell. More attention must be given to building and providing homes for those who live outside the metropolitan area. We heard earlier in the evening about the drift of population to the city. It is not so marked in this State as in the Eastern States, where, proportionately, more money is being spent on munitions.

I have here a circular issued by the Chamber of Commerce in New South Wales, a copy of which has been received

by all Chambers of Commerce throughout Australia. I will not read all of it, but will just quote half-a-dozen examples: Forbes, pre-war population 5,000, drift 900, empty houses 70; Grenfell, pre-war population 3,000, drift 500, empty houses 40; Moree, pre-war population 5,000, drift 1,000, empty houses 60; and Wellington, pre-war population 5,000, drift 750, empty shops and houses 85. Every member of Parliament in New South Wales representing country electorates received a number of requests daily from constituents who wanted to come to Sydney or some other industrial centre to work in munitions and war factories. We have not that state of affairs here.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is an argument against this board extending its operations into country districts.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Wives of men who have enlisted are coming to the city. The city populations throughout Australia are being augmented. Mr. Miles's suggestion is a pertinent one and not an impertinent one. If this matter is allowed to go unchecked, his suggestion would have some weight, but country members have to request the Government to give some attention to this aspect in order to stop this drift; and one way in which that can be stopped is to make houses available to people at a reasonable price. Figures have been quoted about the increased cost of building, but they have been based purely on the erection of houses in the metropolitan area. Mr. Thomson knows more about building houses than I do, and he would be able to tell us about the difference in the cost of erecting houses of a similar type in the metropolitan area and at Katanning. Although we have the Midland railway competing against the Wongan Hills line in my electorate, the cost of building in Geraldton is roughly 50 per cent. more than in the metropolitan area.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Not 50 per cent., surely?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Well, call it 25 per cent. I am not sure of the figure. It is a great deal more. Members will say, "Why not? Extra freight has to be paid on the timber." When our various State enterprises were established most people were led to believe that they would have a cheapening effect. Has that laudable ambition been realised? Being a disinterested party—the Government not having started in opposi-

tion to anything I might be interested in such as a canning factory on the Abrolhos Islands—

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It owns one now, does it not?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: —I speak purely from the taxpayer's point of view and one who desires to see facilities cheapened for the benefit of that section of the community which, I take it, we are all out to assist, namely, the wage earner. Simply because people have the pluck to go out into the country and develop this great State, they have to pay extra taxation and put up with extra hardships. Some attempt should be made by the Government to put these people on a similar basis to those who live in the metropolitan area.

Hon. G. Fraser: The Workers' Homes Board builds homes in the country.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Yes, but it has not given attention to the interests of the people in the country to the extent it might have. The figures might not prove what I say. I can only speak from my knowledge of Geraldton and the Murchison goldfields. I am correct in saying this, and Mr. Seddon who can say whether I am right or wrong is here. It is only recently that the Government has had sufficient faith in the gold industry of this State to erect workers' homes on the goldfields.

Hon. H. Seddon: That is quite right.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Whilst it has encouraged people to invest capital in the goldmines it has been sadly lacking in displaying faith itself. It has steadfastly refused, for many years, to provide these people with decent housing accommodation. We do give it credit for the fact that it has at last seen the light.

Hon. G. Fraser: It is a board and not the Government.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: When will members realise that boards are created by the Government?

Hon. G. Fraser: They are not to be dictated to by the Government.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: It is only a week or two since I was criticised for being unfair in my remarks about a board created by the Government. If the people had some say in electing the members of these boards there would be some substance in that criticism, but there are two Ministers here to defend any Government-appointed board. If members of Parliament were to

be palmed off with arguments of such a flimsy nature, things would get into a pretty mess. When I criticise a board I criticise the people responsible for its birth—the Government. If the board has not seen its way clear to build houses on the goldfields the Government is to be blamed.

Hon. H. Seddon: When it did do that it was just prior to a general election.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I am willing to accept Mr. Seddon's assurance that that is a fact. The more we can escape that kind of thing in this House the better. We will leave it to another place. It is up to the Government to do something to make life more livable for people in the country districts. There is a class of man working for the Government whose housing accommodation is nothing short of a disgrace to the Government. The men to whom I refer are those responsible for the upkeep of our permanent way on the railways.

Hon. A. Thomson: It is an absolute disgrace!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: How a State-wide union, with a membership of a couple of thousand men, tamely sits down and tolerates the conditions which the present Labour Government has imposed on these people for many years is something I cannot understand.

Hon. A. Thomson: It supplies them with a few secondhand sleepers.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The unswerving loyalty of those people is shown——

The PRESIDENT: Order! I think the hon. member is wandering beyond the subject matter of the Bill.

The Chief Secretary: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: This is a Bill to provide for workers' homes, and how on earth can I be out of order when I am discussing the provision of workers' homes? Can anyone tell me that there are any better workers in this State than the men of whom I am speaking?

Hon. J. Cornell: I can tell the hon. member that a lot of the shacks the workers are living in have been built by the men themselves.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I take it that I shall be in order in proceeding.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member may make incidental reference to those matters, but his remarks should have a direct reference to the Bill.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I take it my remarks have a direct reference to the Bill. The measure should make provision for the erection of workers' homes for those men, many of whom live far from any township. We who travel on the railways see them at small sidings far removed from the amenities of life and some of them live, as Mr. Cornell remarked, in shacks built of disused sleepers. I ask the Government to give consideration to these workers, their wives and families, who, from one end of the State to the other, are to be found living under housing conditions that are a disgrace to the Government. I support the second reading.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [9.17]: In giving my support to the Bill, I may say that in view of the remarks of the preceding speaker, I shall expect him to put an amendment on the notice paper. To those who live in the country and on the goldfields, it is obvious that the best way to achieve the objective of the Workers' Homes Board would be to limit the operations of the board to the country and goldfields districts. By these means we should be able to provide homes for the workers who are really carrying the State and who are engaged in the essential industries on which the city lives. As I have previously pointed out, the difficulties under which they live are such that the least the Government can do is to ensure that the benefits of the Workers' Homes Board are made available to them in order that they may live in decent homes and under decent conditions.

The Minister drew attention to the increase in the cost of building workers' homes. This applies especially on the goldfields. I know that when the first lot of homes was built there, tenders were called and quite a number were accepted by the board, but when the work had been put in hand, it was found that the tenders were such that the contractors were unable to complete the work. More than one contractor failed, and the work had to be finished by the board calling for further tenders, with the result that the workers in that area were particularly fortunate insofar as they got homes at a cost that in many cases represented a loss to the builders. I point out to Mr. Hall that the Government took some convincing before it could be induced to build workers' homes on the goldfields, and

I am correct in saying it was only when the matter was forcefully brought home to the then Premier during a visit to the goldfields that he was induced to call upon the board to make a special report.

Hon. J. Cornell: We passed a Bill, did we not?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Yes.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is so. But that was of no use until the incident to which I refer and the board was then induced to reconsider its decision, and the sum of £10,000 was set aside with remarkable celerity for building workers' homes on the goldfields. The present policy is to devote the amount received from these homes in the course of a year to the building of additional homes.

We have got into a rather peculiar position with regard to building. Owing to legislation that has been introduced from time to time, we find that very few people are prepared to build homes for letting, and the result is that a further demand is made upon the board because workers can look only to this avenue for assistance to build homes. There is one section of the Bill which I hope the Minister will explain in his reply and that is the amendment being made to Section 24 of the Act. It appears to me that the Government is making an entirely new departure in that it proposes to erect and dispose of dwellings for workers. I understand the policy of the board is to call tenders for the erection of homes, and I did not know it was the intention of the board to enter into the building trade.

Hon. G. Fraser: It would be better if the board did.

Hon. A. Thomson: That would be following the example of New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The amendment will give the board power to do that if it so desires.

The Chief Secretary: To do what?

Hon. H. SEDDON: Erect and dispose of dwelling houses to workers. If that is the intention, the Council should be aware of it. If it is not the intention, I would like the Minister to explain the meaning of the provision when he replies to the debate, because we might find ourselves in the position of having approved of something that we have refused in the past, namely, an extension of Government activities in the direc-

tion of State trading, an avenue that the board has not to my knowledge entered in the past.

The Chief Secretary: You blame the Government for not having provided homes and now you are blaming them for trying to do so.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Provision has been made for further activities in the metropolitan area, and the only effect has been to accentuate the demand for poor houses. I hope the activities of the board will be directed to an extension of operations in the country districts rather than to the continuance of building more homes in the metropolitan area. It has to be admitted that many people, taking advantage of the fact that workers have enlisted, have come to Perth to live and are swelling the population here. However, the policy of the board should be directed towards building in the country. I hope the Minister will tell us it is not the intention of the board to engage in the field of erecting homes. I hope the Minister will deal with the points I have mentioned and clarify them.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [9.25]: I support the second reading. The figures relating to the increased cost of building given by the Chief Secretary were illuminating. As I interjected, the present cost of building has been materially increased by virtue of the sales tax imposed by the Commonwealth Government. When the concrete mixer has to pay sales tax, we have immediately an increase of 15 per cent. on approximately 60 per cent. of the value of the building. The cost of building has increased out of all reason. Mr. Cornell mentioned that when his home was erected, tradesmen were receiving 12s. per day, whereas now they are getting 25s. I regret to say that not so much work is being done for the 25s. as was done years ago for the 12s. There has been a reduction in the output and the men work shorter hours. All this adds to the cost of building a home.

I am in accord with the views expressed by Mr. Cornell regarding the needs of people when he had his home built and what people require today. Of course we are not in a position to say to a worker or anyone else that he shall not have all the modern facilities until such time as he is able to pay for them, but I am afraid that sometimes people undertake a bigger burden

than they should. The provision made for married men is a wise one. I would be prepared to fix the amount at £500, but it is wise to enable a man with a family to receive a little more consideration than is given to other applicants. I would like to provide an increase of £50 because £25 in the erection of a home does not go far. Even £100 would not pay for building a room in a brick home today.

The Chief Secretary: That provision relates to the qualification.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I overlooked that point. The provision will afford a little assistance to workers. The Government is in the position of having to purchase land in the metropolitan area on which to erect workers' homes, and I am pleased that provision is being made that when a worker has ultimately paid the value he may convert his leasehold into freehold. Mr. Seddon spoke of the provision that will empower the board to erect dwellings and dispose of them to workers.

Hon. J. Cornell: That means that the board will erect homes for applicants.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I cannot see any serious objection to that because the board will be providing the money. I presume that an applicant for a home would have the right to say whether he would have a dwelling erected for him, or whether he would purchase one in course of erection, or whether he would prefer one already built and located contiguous to his work. It is useless to say, "We have an estate nine or ten miles out," and erecting homes there if the cost of the homes is to be increased by an amount of 5s. or 10s. weekly in the form of railway or other fares for the man and his family. Something nearer to his work would suit him better. The Government is making a thoroughly reasonable proposition, however, since for some time it has refused to purchase outlying homes.

Hon. J. Cornell: It has no power to do so.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It has managed to get over the difficulty. The provision with regard to soldiers' homes exists but has not been availed of.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is practically discontinued.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I know that in the early days the provision in question enabled the soldier to secure a home very much cheaper than the cost of erecting a

home would have proved. The clause referred to would enable a worker to obtain a home which, while not as flash as some of the newly erected homes, would perhaps be more substantially built. He should not be debarred from securing such a home. Under normal conditions it should be possible to erect a home for much less than £900. At present homes are being erected under unfavourable conditions; labour is scarce, and there are shortages in many materials.

Hon. J. Cornell: Under this provision the soldier would be enabled to buy a £1,500 house if he could put up £600.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Such a deposit would afford a substantial safeguard. The Government might purchase an area of land and establish what could be termed a workers' homes area. If the Government let a contract for 20 or 30 homes to a single contractor, the cost should be considerably lessened. I support the measure as an endeavour by the Government to meet altered conditions.

As for homes erected in the country, the people of the Great Southern district have no reason for complaint as regards granting of applications. I endorse Mr. E. H. H. Hall's remarks concerning railway officials putting up with very bad conditions out back—rough and inconvenient homes. It is a matter for surprise that the Commissioner of Railways or the Government has not endeavoured to make the situation more comfortable for the railway workers. In the case of a railway employee stationed in a country town the Government might give an assurance that if he wished to acquire a worker's home he would be permitted to remain in the town for some considerable time. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [9.36]: It is my intention to support the second reading. I approve generally of most of the amendments suggested by the Bill. The increased figures asked for are fair and reasonable. Like Mr. Seddon, however, I am somewhat perturbed regarding the proposed amendment to Section 24. Paragraph (a) of the clause contains the words "erect and dispose of dwelling houses to workers." I see there the thin end of the wedge for an extension of State trading in the building industry. I am afraid that the next thing we shall have will be the Government apply-

ing for membership of the Builders' Registration Board. I definitely do not desire to see the Government registered for the purpose of entering the building industry. We know that in Government contracts the State trading concerns have preference for the supply of all materials. I am somewhat nervous that if the Government entered into competition in the building industry, there would be nothing like contract work; that all buildings would be erected by day labour and all material purchased from State trading concerns.

If after the war things went a little flat and it was impossible to keep such State trading concerns as the brickworks, saw-mills and so forth going, it would be quite within the power of the Government simply to say to applicants for homes, "The Government is prepared to erect and sell or dispose of dwelling houses, but not to make advances." If as at present the worker has the right to contract for his house, that would be quite in order; but if we give the Government this power, we shall be doing something highly dangerous. I do not suggest that the present Minister controlling workers' homes would act as suggested, but we might have another Minister or another Government. It would be within the Minister's power to refuse an advance to any worker and to force him to buy a home built by the Government. When the Bill gets into Committee I shall move for the deletion of the paragraph in question. Otherwise I am in favour of the Bill.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [9.40]: I had not intended to speak on this measure but am moved to do so by the remarks of one or two previous speakers. Mr. Bolton and Mr. Seddon have placed an interpretation on the clause which I think, unfortunately, is not correct. The Workers' Homes Board, when it has a large tract of land available like that which was handed over to it by the Perth City Council, should have the right to erect homes before applications for them come in.

HON. J. CORNELL: Allot them after they are built?

HON. G. FRASER: Yes. Mr. Bolton is afraid that the Workers' Homes Board will build homes itself, instead of letting contracts.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: He is afraid of the Government becoming a builder and contractor.

HON. G. FRASER: That is so. Mr. Bolton is afraid of that, and so is Mr. Seddon. My fear, however, is, that nothing of the kind is to be anticipated. At present the board does not build until an application has been received and has been approved. The clause proposes to empower the board to erect houses without applications and allot them to workers afterwards—the board not building the homes itself, but calling for tenders as is its practice today. If the Workers' Homes Board did do the building we might find a result similar to that obtained when the Government did its own building. In this latter instance there was a considerable saving.

HON. H. L. ROCHE: But we had an efficient Government then.

HON. G. FRASER: In New Zealand the Government does its own building and thereby effects great savings. My belief is that the same result would be produced here. Contractors tender well on the safe side, allowing for a reasonable profit as any sensible man would do.

HON. A. THOMSON: Some builders get caught.

HON. G. FRASER: I do not think many of them are caught today. The majority of the contractors tendering for workers' homes today submit tenders allowing for a reasonable profit. There is not a large number of those contractors. They have to cut their prices for the erection of workers' homes. In fact, many builders prefer to work for private persons, from whom they can obtain larger profits. In the case of numerous homes recently, when tenders have been called no tenders have been received. The building of those homes has had to be put off for three months with a view to calling for other tenders. If that state of things continues, the only remedy will be the system of which Mr. Bolton and Mr. Seddon are afraid. Great difficulty has been experienced recently in securing tenders for the building of quite a number of homes. One portion of the measure about which I am not very keen is that concerned with raising the advance to £900. I consider that a burden will be imposed on the worker in repaying such an amount.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Do you not think there should be a stipulation regarding the elimination of garages?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not think there is any need for that, because it is difficult to have a home including a garage built for £900. Garages and things of that kind are being cut out, not at the wish of the builder or of the board but with a view to keeping down costs.

Hon. A. Thomson: Garages do not cost such a large amount of money when all is said and done.

Hon. G. FRASER: That may be so, but quite a number of houses are being built without them.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: There are not many £909 homes.

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member means there are not many £900 homes being built without garages? I think he will find that it is difficult to secure a tender around the £900 mark for the erection of an ordinary home with a garage. That has been the experience. Sums of £875 and £890 are being paid for homes which 12 or 18 months ago could have been built for £800. Quite a number do not include garages and some do not even include the path to which Mr. Cornell referred. As a matter of fact, we know that what we generally call the cheaper type of home—that is a weatherboard or a weatherboard and asbestos dwelling—has increased in cost to a greater extent than has the brick house. That is one of the main reasons I propose to support the increase of the price to £900. I would much prefer to see £600 homes erected because in that way the money available could be utilised to build a much larger number of dwellings. It is the man able to afford only that amount that we should cater for rather than the person able to carry a burden of £900. However, I do not want to deny the man who can afford to make a payment the right to get a modern home. As I have said, the cost of weatherboard and weatherboard and asbestos houses has increased to a greater extent than has the cost of brick homes. Today tenders for those types of homes have reached £660 and £670 and that is for the bare house without any paths or garage or extra conveniences of that kind.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is that the result of the State Sawmills joining the timber association?

Hon. G. FRASER: No. It is the result of the unfortunate circumstances prevailing today, of the extra taxation levied by the Federal Parliament to prosecute the war.

Hon. J. Cornell: The State has done nothing in that regard.

Hon. G. FRASER: No. The unfortunate circumstances that exist are responsible. The scarcity of material has contributed to the increased cost.

Hon. A. Thomson: And the scarcity of labour.

Hon. G. FRASER: The cost of labour has not increased considerably. The cost of material has led to a raising of the price. The clause permitting a person to make a greater contribution than is desired by the board is a good one and will, I am sure, be taken advantage of by quite a number of people. I have had an extensive experience of clients of the Workers' Homes Board, and I have found that frequently they would like to pay a little more than is asked of them. It is wise that permission should be granted, because often through unemployment and sickness people find themselves unable to keep up their payments. If they were permitted to add a little more to their weekly payments during good times, a reserve would be created and their future would be safeguarded. The general idea of the Bill is commendable and I intend to support the second reading.

HON. W. J. MANN (South - West) [9.50]: I support the Bill, though I do not think there is likely to be any great activity in the building trade for a long time. I think we would be very optimistic to imagine that there was likely to be much done in the way of building homes under present conditions. At the same time, I am thoroughly in accord with the Bill and I desire to pay a tribute to the Workers' Homes Board with which I have had dealings on behalf of people whom I represent. I think the board is one of the brightest of the Government institutions. I have never yet gone to it without obtaining, if not an affirmative reply, at least a very good reason why my request could not be granted. At the time of which Mr. Cornell spoke bricks

were comparatively cheap and a man could have all the bricks laid that he desired for 30s. a thousand.

Today partly as a result of the combination of brickmakers and the State Brickworks joining with other big brickmaking concerns we find that the price of bricks has more than doubled and that when it comes to laying them, instead of 30s. a thousand having to be paid, anything up to £4 10s. is required. These costs have been increased by the higher prices of metal and fastenings and other accessories which will make the building of average workers' homes a greater problem than was the case 10 or 15 years ago. If I had any criticisms to make with regard to the workers' homes I have seen it would be that in the early stages in particular not nearly enough inspection was undertaken during the time of erection.

Hon. G. Fraser: Builders complain that there is too much inspection.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Within reason, I do not think there can be too much inspection. I recollect that during the depression the Workers' Homes Board had scores of empty houses that they would have been glad to let workers have on very reasonable terms. I saw some of those buildings and they were a disgrace. They represented jerry-building of the worst type.

The Chief Secretary: Are you referring to workers' homes or war service homes?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am referring to workers' homes. I assure the Chief Secretary that not only did I see the buildings, but I also took a builder with me to advise me on behalf of certain people and he pointed out the defects. I think that the same applies—though this does not affect the Bill or those erected by the Workers' Homes Board—to many buildings today. It appears to me that a person can go to a local governing body, deposit plans of a building, obtain a permit and that is about the last interest that the local governing body—at least this applies to some local authorities—takes in the matter, until the building is finished, when a cursory glance is given to it.

Hon. J. Cornell: Some of them do not even do that.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That will not get us anywhere in connection with the housing problem. However I do not want to pursue

that line. Mr. Fraser interjected that some builders complain that there is too much inspection.

Hon. G. Fraser: A number of men will not tender for that reason.

Hon. W. J. MANN: If Mr. Fraser would come with me I could show him one or two workers' homes of which the tiled roofs have a beautiful bend in them, quite a saucer effect! That sort of thing is not good building and should be guarded against in the future. Mention has been made of country towns. I understood that the policy of the department was that a certain number of buildings should be allotted to country districts. I have not had any complaint because I have had no application turned down. Some have been held up for a long time, but all the applicants with whom I have had anything to do have eventually secured homes.

I think it would be wise, however, if the board has not already done so, for it to widen its policy and make a greater percentage of its activities apply to country districts. There are some country towns that have in the past three or four years experienced a great advance in their population. In the South-West, places that were not much more than sidings a few years ago, are now thriving towns and have become so because there are factories and other sources of employment within their confines that make it necessary for workers to live there.

Hon. J. Cornell: The reverse is the case in the wheat belt.

The Chief Secretary: Have any applications in those places been refused?

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am not in a position to say. All the applications I have had anything to do with have been granted, but I have heard men complaining that they wish they had a home and that if only they lived in the city they could obtain a workers' home. I have endeavoured to overcome their difficulties by pointing out that if they could show a reasonable chance of conforming to the conditions laid down I thought they had a good opportunity of getting a workers' home. If it were widely known that the board was prepared favourably to consider more applications for country homes than has been the case in the past, I think people would be encouraged to stay in country districts.

I am not very favourably disposed towards the question of contract building, and do not look kindly on the idea of mass production of homes. It would be much better if the present method were followed whereby a man secures a block of land in the locality suitable to him and has some hand in the designing of his home or in selecting the design, and is able to watch the building being erected. All that gives him a closer contact with and more interest in the building, and the men who build under those conditions are likely to make better clients of the board than would the men who live in one of a number of buildings erected on a mass scale.

There are many—what shall I call them?—shiftless sort of people who would go into homes built on that principle, and have the idea that because they were Government buildings it did not matter what they did; that they could walk off and leave them at any old time. That is what has to be guarded against and I am afraid that if we went in for big schemes of that description and erected homes on the scale suggested, the objects of this legislation would be defeated. I propose to support the Bill because I can see nothing wrong with it. On the other hand, some clauses are long overdue.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [10.1]: It is not long since the Government submitted proposals to enable it to build houses for letting purposes. I think it fell to the lot of this House to refuse to pass that legislation.

Hon. G. Fraser: Had it been passed, we could have fixed up the requirements of railway workers.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: There is at present a shortage of houses for letting purposes. The Bill embodies proposals that will help to improve that position. Its introduction is long overdue, but even so, I do not think that it will enable all requirements to be met, especially those of the permanent-way men. Certainly the Government could not build houses all along the railway line, and most of the railway men make temporary arrangements where they are at work and have their permanent homes elsewhere. I agree with the proposal to increase the amount available to £900 because wherever possible people should be encouraged to build brick houses. Wooden premises are not

so satisfactory because depreciation is rather rapid and the cost of upkeep considerable.

I am not altogether in favour of the system of appraising values every 20 years; nor do I consider the basing of interest charges on the value of the land to be right. I would rather that it was governed by the rate of interest obtaining. If the value of the land were fixed at £500 or £600 according to the rate of interest, the tendency would be to create fictitious values. I would like the Chief Secretary to explain what happens during the 20-year period. If the interest rate today is 3 per cent. and the position is to be rectified after 20 years, I do not know how the interest could be arranged during the intervening period. It would be better to charge the actual cost of the money.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Minister explained that it would be on the value of the land.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: That does not seem to me to be the proper way to deal with such a matter. The Government has been moderate in the proposals embodied in the Bill, the second reading of which I shall certainly support.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [10.3]: I shall not take up much time in replying to the remarks of members, but a few statements have been made that call for some comment. First of all, I will draw attention to the constitution of the Workers' Homes Board, to which reference was made by Mr. E. H. H. Hall. Those who are acquainted with the gentlemen comprising the board will agree with me that they are not likely to make many mistakes.

Hon. W. J. Mann: It is a very good board.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Bill will provide the board with extended powers, because that body has not been able to act as it desired in several directions. As the Act stands today, the board has not been able to do what it desired. Mr. Seddon asked me to explain what paragraph (a) of Subsection 1 of proposed new Section 24 really means. It means what it says. Mr. Seddon should not require any explanation of such a paragraph, which reads—

(a) Erect and dispose of dwelling-houses to workers.

No explanation of that is necessary except to say that under the Act at present the board has no power to do what it considers eminently desirable. A larger number of applicants has been forthcoming than could be provided for, and many have not been in a position to purchase the necessary blocks on which their homes could be built. It is considered highly desirable that the board should be able to supply decent though cheap homes for workers in the districts where they are employed, such as Fremantle.

During the last twelve months, a large number of homes of weatherboard and asbestos has been erected at a cost of about £400. They are quite good dwellings that seem to be much appreciated by the workers who have secured them. It is not in every district that land is available for such purposes, and on several occasions the board has purchased areas upon which dwellings could be erected. I can see no reason why the board should not have that power. For what other purpose is the board constituted? Surely the Workers' Homes Board, after years of experience, is in a position to determine whether the proposal to erect certain types of homes in certain districts is reasonable or otherwise! The board must be able to say whether it should purchase land, erect homes on the blocks, and dispose of them. Mr. Bolton raised some objection to that suggestion. As to the inspections that take place in connection with workers' homes, I know that such inspections do take place not only while the homes are being built but after their construction, and while they are occupied by the clients of the board. I am aware that there have been some complaints about such inspections.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Some people will complain about anything.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so, and I am quite confident that the officials of the board have carried out an excellent job. Clients are expected to do a certain amount of work each year in connection with their homes. The inspections are made with a view to ascertaining if the clients have acted in accordance with their agreements. The effect has been satisfactory from the standpoint of maintaining the values of homes, particularly of those constructed of wood.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Was Mr. E. H. H. Hall's statement correct about £125,000 having been paid into Consolidated Revenue?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot say, but I am prepared to accept the hon. member's word seeing he stated that he quoted from the Auditor General's report.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: I do not think that would represent profit.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Is not the annual profit about £3,000?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so, since the inception of the Workers' Homes Board in 1911, or thereabouts. I accept the hon. member's figures as correct. I claim that the Workers' Homes Board has given satisfaction to everyone associated with its operations.

One objection raised to the Bill was that it would be possible for the board to purchase houses already erected. I am in a position to state that the board does not like that type of transaction. It is not a course that it seeks to adopt regularly, but occasions may arise when it is perhaps best to adopt the procedure. I think the matter could well be left in the hands of the board. Circumstances might arise when it would be advantageous to the board and to the client concerned if power were retained to purchase premises already erected. I appreciate the reception accorded the Bill. If it is agreed to in its present form, it will be of great advantage to a large number of people and will obviate much embarrassment that arises owing to the limitations at present inherent in the Act.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Repeal of Section 24 and new section:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (a) of Subsection 1 of proposed new Section 24 be struck out.

The amendment will serve to test the position. The paragraph deals with the power to erect and dispose of dwelling-houses to workers.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Before the Committee agrees to the amendment, Mr. Seddon should provide some further reasons for adopting that course. On previous oc-

easions he has chided the Government for not doing everything possible for the workers, particularly those on the gold-fields. There is another side to the question that Mr. Seddon very well understands. Unless the board possesses the power the hon. member seeks to delete from the Bill it is possible that workers' homes will not be erected in places that he may desire.

Hon. A. Thomson: The board might not be able to dispose of those which have already been erected and which might fall back into its hands.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That might be so. The board has been more active in country districts during the last few years than previously. I know of areas in the metropolitan district where the board could erect cheap homes, but not in sufficient numbers to meet the applications for them. During the past two years an attractive type of home has been erected in the district where I live, and I have been asked by workers when more of such houses would be available.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Are they lower-priced houses?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: What difference would that make to this clause? Application could be made for them. I have an objection to State trading.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not want to raise that issue. The board should have the right which this paragraph proposes to give it. We should not place obstacles in the way of the board doing something to encourage workers to get their own homes.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: The board has built good homes in the past and will continue to do so.

The Chief Secretary: It will.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: I support the amendment. I do not want it to be thought that I have anything but the highest admiration for the work done by the board; but this provision is only the thin end of the wedge. I do not want the Government to enter into the building trade. Some members have raised the point that sufficient contractors are not available; but in that case the State would be in no better position than would be private enterprise.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I regret I was not present during the whole of the discussion on the Bill. In my opinion it would be a mistake to agree to the amendment. The board has done an excellent job.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: We all admit that.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Members must not forget that, owing to the restrictions we have placed on private enterprise by our legislation preventing increase of rents we have made it unattractive for private enterprise to build houses of this type. The only alternative is that Government money should be used for the purpose.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: We do not mind Government money being spent if it is spent in the right way.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I once held views like Mr. Bolton's, but I have changed them. We must place some trust in the board, which is not composed of fools. By giving the board greater powers, it can buy materials cheaper and build cheaper.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You do not think that.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do. Negotiations are proceeding with an organisation with which I am concerned to open up an area of land, construct roads and erect 40 or 50 workers' homes. Contracts would be let for 12 houses at a time, and these can surely be built cheaper than could one or two houses. It would be a mistake to agree to the amendment.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Two questions arise. The first is, is it desirable that the board should erect homes, that it should become a speculative builder? I shall not express an opinion on that point. At the moment, the more important question is, how should the board erect the homes? There is a danger that, if the board takes on this work and erects homes on the departmental day labour system, the general cost of the homes will go up. Competition will keep prices down to a reasonable figure. If it is desirable to give the board power to erect dwelling houses and the Committee agrees, I shall move an addition to the clause making provision that such dwelling houses shall be built by contract after the calling of public tenders, in order that the interests of the workers generally may be protected, and so that the cost of the homes shall not become too great.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I hope the Committee will agree to the amendment. The Minister himself admitted that the board was not keen on this provision.

The Chief Secretary: No.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That was my deduction from what the Minister said. We now propose to give the board power to build and let houses while private enterprise, which manages such things better than does the Government, is not prepared to take on the business. No man of common-sense would today build a house to let.

Hon. G. Fraser: But he would for selling purposes.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: But job contractors would not build homes of the standard built by the board. Speculative builders build to sell. Landlords will not now build houses to let. The paragraph, if passed, would allow the Government to become a builder and contractor. The Government would use its own bricks, its own timber and joinery. It would secure all these materials from the State trading concerns. As far as the State Sawmills are concerned, it is on record in "Hansard" that that concern has joined the Sawmillers' Association. The State Sawmills were working 44 hours per week, while the other millers were working 48 hours per week. The representative of the State Sawmills thereupon went to the other millers and asked them to put up the price of timber, because the State mills could not compete on the 44-hour basis as against the 48-hour basis. I support the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is as well that I am in a good humour.

Hon. G. Fraser: The hon. member has not made those remarks for a long time.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He is reviving an old story, having been given the lead on this occasion by Mr. Bolton. This Bill does not in any way provide for the letting of houses.

Hon. L. Craig: That is an important point. I would not agree to the board building houses to let.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is a question of disposing of houses after they have been built. A large number of houses is not likely to be built on these conditions.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Mr. Craig said that 40 or 50 would be built. He said he was interested in a block of land on which the houses would be built.

Hon. L. Craig: I am not.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Craig is correct when he spoke of the necessity for building cheap homes for the people. Some of the biggest critics of this Bill tonight will be only too pleased at a later date to advocate the same thing. It is difficult to secure land in the metropolitan area within a reasonable distance of the city where homes of £400 or £500 in value can be erected. For that reason, it is necessary for the board to have power to purchase land of the kind mentioned by Mr. Craig, in order that the needs of the people for that class of home may be met. The number of applications before the Workers' Homes Board is, today, sufficient to keep it going for 12 months or more. I could tell the story of contractors who have, within recent weeks, refused to tender for homes.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is due to their inability to get labour.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If they tender they do so at a price £100 more than the house is worth. The Workers' Homes Board cannot be placed in the same category as a speculative builder. The board subjects its homes to periodical inspections which is why a number of contractors do not like tendering; their tenders might be accepted and they would be subject to that supervision.

Hon. A. Thomson: That does not worry any decent contractor.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The real point I wanted to make was in regard to Mr. Holmes's remarks. He seemed to think I said that the board did not like this particular clause. That is not true. What I did say was that the Workers' Homes Board does not, as a general rule, like the idea of buying houses. There are occasions, however, when it should have the power to do so.

Hon. W. J. Mann: In order to fulfil an application.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so. It did not previously have that power.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.35 p.m.