Hon. E. M. DAVIES: The hon. member used the word "bureaucratic". He could have referred to no other body than the State Electricity Commission, because that commission was empowered to deal with the regulations. Red herrings across the trail do not get members anywhere. The Bill has been introduced to protect the public. I emphasise that these appliances are being sent over to Western Australia because they cannot be disposed of in the Eastern States, and it is necessary that some regulations be introduced to control their sale. As the State Electricity Commission is the controlling body for the supply of electric current in this city, and as they are the people who know the potential danger of such appliances because they were not approved throughout the Commonwealth, then the regulations are necessary. I trust that members will look at this measure from a reasonable angle, bearing in mind that it is for the protection of the general public.

On motion by Hon. L. A. Logan, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.45 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 19th November, 1953.

CONTENTS.

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

QUESTIONS.

EDUCATION.

As to Provision of School, Innaloo.

Mr. NIMMO asked the Minister for Education:

In view of the large number of rental and war service homes being erected, or already erected, in Innaloo, can he say whether the erection of a new school is likely to be commenced on the new school site in that district?

The MINISTER replied:

It is anticipated that with the completion of the Bristol unit of two classrooms at Doubleview the accommodation needs of Doubleview and Innaloo will be satisfactory for the first few months of 1954. It is hoped to commence the erection of a new school on the new site at Innaloo during the latter half of 1954.

EMPTY CRATES.

As to Transport, Use and Value.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is it a fact that the crates in which Bristol prefabricated schools are packed are, when empty, picked up by a vehicle employed by a Government department and returned to Perth?

(2) If so, for what purpose are they used?

(3) What is the estimated second-hand value of each set, and what is the cost of transport per mile back to Perth?

(4) Would local offers for purchase of one or more of these crates be entertained, and if not, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) For framing for cupboards and other fittings; for concrete formwork and general utility purposes in connection with building construction.

(3) (a) £40.

(b) The cost of transport to Perth is practically nil, as the truck which takes the cases to the school site carries the empties to Perth on the return trip; otherwise the truck would return empty.

(4) No. Because the material is required in connection with departmental works.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

As to Long Distance Transmission from Bunbury.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH asked the Minister for Works:

(1) What is the longest distance under which electricity will be transmitted when the Bunbury station is fully linked up?

(2) What voltage will be used on the long transmissions?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) This depends on the demand.

(2) 132,000 volts.

HOUSING.

As to Loss Due to Sirex Wasp.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Have any imported houses actually been lost due to the Sirex wasp?

(2) What is the principal loss incurred because of the wasps?

(3) How is this being adjusted?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. Some minor components have been replaced.

(2) The principal expenditure incurred has been for the treatment of the timber. Notice of claim for this expenditure has been lodged with the supplying company. Until these claims are disposed of, losses, if any, cannot be determined.

(3) See answer to No. (2).

FLOURMILLING.

As to Reduction of Output and Effect.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Can he say whether flourmills in Western Australia are reducing output?

(2) Have any mills ceased producing?

(3) Are there qualified millworkers—

(a) unemployed;

(b) working less than full time?

(4) Does he know of any mills contemplating further reductions?

(5) Will a reduction in flourmilling affect industries such as stock foods, etc.?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, because of the difficulty of obtaining export flour orders.

(2) Three, and a number of others are not working full time.

(3) (a) About 40 have been put off but are now occupied in other industries.

(b) No.

(4) Yes, unless the demand for export flour improves.

(5) Yes, because a reduction in export flour will result in less bran and pollard being produced.

It is anticipated that any shortage of bran and pollard could be met by a greater usage of oats, barley and wheat.

TRANSPORT.

As to Directors of Beam Omnibus Coy. Ltd.

Mr. OWEN asked the Minister for Justice:

(1) Who are the directors of the Beam Omnibus Coy. Ltd.?

(2) What are their occupations and addresses?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) The Beam Omnibus Coy. Ltd. is not a company registered in this State.

Assuming the question relates to Beam Transport Limited, the following are the particulars:—

Brisbane, David William, McNeill-st., Peppermint Grove, company manager.

Tuckey, Roy Lancel, Mandurah, business proprietor.

Drake, Robert George, 10 Ardross Crescent, Mount Lawley, company director.

Dowson, John Seymour, 3 Bay View Terrace, Mosman Park, company manager.

McDonald, Robert Ross, Sir, 20 Mount-st., Perth, barrister.

RAILWAYS.

As to Substitute Mundaring Service and Fares.

Mr. OWEN asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is the Railway Department bus service from Midland Junction to Mundaring to be replaced when the railway ceases operations, by a bus service run by the Beam Omnibus Coy.?

(2) What alteration will, as a result, be made in the fares charged?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) This matter has not yet been determined but Beam Transport Ltd. has been asked to advise what service it could provide in the event of the existing combined rail and road bus service being withdrawn.

(2) The final submissions of Beam Transport Ltd. are still awaited.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT.

As to Tabling Papers.

Mr. NALDER (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

So that the House will know all the details with reference to the agreement between the Commonwealth and State on war service land settlement, will he lay on the Table of the House all papers dealing with the matter and the letters that passed between the Premier and the Prime Minister, the Minister in charge of war service land settlement in the Commonwealth Government and himself?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes; next Tuesday.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (RESUMPTION OF LAND) ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

As to Leave to Introduce.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke)—I move—

> That leave be given to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Industrial Development (Resumption of Land) Act, 1945.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY (Murray): When, the other day, the Premier moved that Government business should take precedence over private members' business, he said that I was hard up to find a complaint when I referred to the amount of legislation that was being introduced and the time that would be given to members for its consideration, bearing in mind the date on which the Premier said the session would close. Even allowing for a later day, I say we must have a record amount of legislation on the notice paper; and some of it is contentious and urgent.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Come back for another week.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: What I say still applies even if we should come back for another week.

Mr. J. Hegney: Why did you stonewall a Bill?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We did not. Today there are 42 different items of legislation on the notice paper, and more Bills are yet to come. I repeat, that very little consideration has yet been given to the Estimates. To date we have only had four speeches on them; and the Loan Estimates have still to be introduced. In the last session of Parliament we had complaints from the Premier, and other members of the then Opposition, about the volume of legislation that was on the notice paper at the same time of the year. The legislation on the notice paper then was 14 Bills, and, in addition, the Loan Estimates were to be introduced, but there had been considerable discussion on the Budget.

We have some idea of what the Government proposes to do from its action last night when we discussed a most important Bill. We sat until about 5 o'clock this morning. The Opposition cannot be accussed of stonewalling that measure because most of the discussion was left to the member for Mt. Lawley, and he had a right to comment on every amendment in the Bill to which he, and other members of the Opposition, took exception. In order to get the legislation through we had the most extraordinary spectacle of the Minister sitting in his seat and refusing to say one word on a number of important amendments that were moved.

The Minister for Mines: It is no new pattern. You did the same last year.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is new. I had not seen that attitude adopted previously. Ministers in the last Government did make some replies to important amendments that were moved.

The Minister for Railways: Sometimes.

Hon. D. Brand: Always.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The attitude adopted by the Minister and the Government, generally, last night was not in the interests of good legislation.

Mr. Brady: The Leader of the Opposition has a bad memory.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It appears to me that this session will end with a record rush of legislation. Some of the

Bills will go to the Legislative Council in the dying hours of the session. If the Council does not deal with them, no doubt members opposite will take the opportunity of making an attack on that Chamber. I would say that members in the Legislative Council will be fully justified in refusing to deal with the Bills if they consider they have not time to consider them as they should.

So I think the Premier should tell us at this stage how much more legislation is to be brought down, and how much time he is going to allow us to discuss it. What amount of time is he going to allow us for discussion on the Estimates and the Loan Estimates; or is he going to allow any at all? We know that on the Estimates, members take the opportunity of expressing their views and the wants of their constituencies. It is really the only chance they get to do so, yet they are to be deprived of that right. There will be hardly any discussion on the Loan Estimates. I feel I am not hard up in making this protest.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: I hope they do not put the gag on.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am fully justified in protesting, and saying that the Government will create a record rush of legislation towards the close of the session.

M. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan): I was interested to hear what the Leader of the Opposition had to say in connection with the expected rush of legislation.

The Premier: He has a very bad memory.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I have a vivid recollection of introducing last session, long before the Government of the day had suspended Standing Orders for the purpose of getting its own Bills through, a Bill dealing with the question of the dust nuisance, and the Government deliberately kept my Bill, which was of considerable importance to my electors and to others in the metropolitan area, back until it had given consideration to another measure which it introduced. On the day that the session ended, the Minister for Health simply said that she opposed the Bill, and then sat down. That was her answer to it from the health point of view. The measure then went to another place, but that Chamber dealt with the amendment to the Factories and Shops Act before dealing with my Bill. My measure was then rejected by another place on the ground that its subject matter had already been dealt with.

There was some important legislation brought down which affected my electorate, with regard to the Bassendean chord railway, some years ago, and again, in the dying hours of the session the then Premier spoke to the member for Guildford-Midland and me about the matter. At 12.30 a.m. I found out how the legislation affected the electors I represent, and I consulted the local authorities later that morning. That very afternoon the Premier insisted that the member for Guildford-Midland and I should go on with the debate, because the legislation was a matter of great urgency to the country. Three years have passed since then and nothing has been done in the matter except with respect to what are known as the Bassendean marshalling yards.

Over £3,000,000 was involved in that measure, which was pushed through this House, ill-conceived and ill-considered by this Parliament. Members were not fully conversant with the proposition put before them, or they would not have voted for it as they did. Now the Leader of the Opposition—the then Premier—rises to his feet and charges the present Premier with rushing legislation through in the dying hours of the session. Let us sit on until Christmas or later, if there is sufficient legislation to be dealt with. Let us deal with the problem on that basis.

There is plenty of time between now and next year in which to handle all the legislation that may come forward, without rushing it through. I can remember when the Estimates were dealt with and the present Leader of the Opposition forced them through on the very afternoon that we adjourned last year. Why should he now rise and pose as lilywhite and chide the present Premier? That kind of thing has gone on ever since I came into Parliament, no matter who was Premier or what party occupied the Treasury bench. I personally advocate day sittings, and I think the time has arrived when we could follow that course and deal with legislation in a proper way, instead of sitting into the early hours of the morning. The argument put forward by the Leader of the Opposition is certainly ill-founded.

Mr. BOVELL (Vasse): I was not going to speak until the member for Middle Swan said that we should be kept here until Christmas and, if necessary, return after Christmas.

Mr. J. Hegney: Certainly.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Hear, hear!

Mr. BOVELL: That is the opinion of the member for Middle Swan, and the member for Fremantle, who is loud in his "Hear, hears." I thought I saw the lips of the member for West Perth move also. Those members do not seem to realise that country members have obligations to their electors. Metropolitan members can go backwards and forwards between this House and their homes and can sleep in their own beds—if the Government allows them to do so—every night of the week, but country members cannot. I therefore ask the Premier to adhere to his original

target date of the 11th December, or thereabouts, for the completion of this parliamentary session, so that members will have opportunity of meeting their electors in a festive way at the festive season. The Premier is a reasonable man indeed.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Nonsense!

Mr. BOVELL: It seems that the Leader of the Opposition does not quite agree with my statement, but I repeat it.

The Premier: Is there anything the Government can do in your electorate?

Mr. BOVELL: I have always found the Premier reasonable, and I hope he will be reasonable on this occasion. I repeat that the Government should allow country members to be in their electorates at the festive season and should allow them some ten days before Christmas in order to meet their constituents and indulge in a certain amount of Christmas festivity with them. I would not have risen except for the comments of the members for Middle Swan and Fremantle, who have nothing to do but sit in this House, day in and day out.

Let me remind them that some members have to travel thousands of miles each year to and from their electorates. While Parliament is sitting, two days of my time each week are occupied in travelling to and from my electorate, and many other members are similarly placed. When we reach our homes, usually in the centre of our constituencies, which are often 100 or 200 miles in length, we have almost invariably to travel another 100 miles or so to attend to parliamentary business in some other part of our electorates. I again ask the Premier to adhere to his original date of the 11th December for the completion of the session.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [2.37]: I think the member for Middle Swan lost sight of the point raised by the Leader of the Opposition when he talked about our sitting until the first or second or some other week in the New Year, because the whole of the objection raised by the Leader of the Opposition was taken on the point that the Premier had indicated some time ago that he proposed to end the session some time before the middle of December—

The Premier: I did not propose anything of the kind.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: That was the point that the Leader of the Opposition took.

The Premier: I repeat that I never proposed anything of the kind.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You said the 11th December.

The Premier: I said that was the target.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: One can only reason, as I understand it, from the known to the unknown, and in all the years that I have been here, when an assertion of that kind has been made, it has usually been taken to indicate the target date.

The Premier: That is right.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: And everything possible has been done to bring about an end at or about that date. It has been generally recognised in past years, also, that there would be a distinct limit to the amount of new legislation brought down after the target date was mentioned. With all respect to the Premier—he knows I have a great deal for him—that has not been so in this case. There has, instead, been a barrage of notices of intention to move for the introduction of measures since that time, and I think it is rather unusual.

Yesterday I looked at the notice paper of the 13th November, 1952, and found there 22 Orders of the Day, whereof eight were private members' business—the business of members, if I recollect aright, who are now on the Government side of the House—and 14 were Government business. Yesterday, which was the nearest date I could get this year to coincide with the date that I mentioned of last year, there were 35 Orders of the Day on the notice paper, whereof three were private members' business, leaving 32 as Government business.

It is therefore quite obvious that, at the reasonably equivalent date this year, there were 18 more items of Government business on the notice paper than there were a year ago. With possible additions to that list, it will be extremely difficult to bring the business of the session to an end at any time before the Christmas vacation. The information that I seek has been asked for in similar circumstances by one side or the other over the last 15 or 16 years to my knowledge. I want to know from the Premier just what is the balance of the legislation that he proposes to bring down; how many Bills it includes, without naming them and whether they are continuance measures or not? We ought to be given some idea of what the Premier proposes to do so that we can reasonably co-operate with the Government in this matter.

Somebody referred to the Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment Bill which was dealt with last evening. I think my contribution to the time that was spent on that measure last night was approximately 12 words and the members who are associated with me made one, or at the most two short speeches in Committee on matters which interested them. Therefore there was no time lost here and little, if any, time spent by the other section of the Opposition benches in an endeavour unreasonably to delay the Bill. It did not take anything like as long to dispose of the measure to repeal all that was passed last year as it took to include those provisions in the principal Act. The Premier will certainly

agree with that. I am sure the Premier will tell us where he stands in the matter so that we can do our best to bring this session to an end at a reasonable time and in a reasonable manner.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT (Mt. Lawley): I rise only because there has been some comment as regards the measure for which I had a responsibility last night.

The Minister for Lands: You are wasting valuable time now. You have already wasted 20 minutes.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: No. At no time, on any amendment last evening did I exhaust my time and, as members know, there is a time limit on speeches. I can remember what happened last year and the lengthy speeches that were made; if members wished to make them, they were perfectly entitled to do so. I do not like to criticise the Premier for drawing up the list of proceedings for the day, but I would point out to him that it is rather unusual to place an important Bill on the notice paper after the Estimates, and then deal with it until five o'clock in the morning.

The Premier: The Leader of the Country Party can explain that to you. It was done at his special request.

Hon. A. F. Watts: That is quite true.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Then my complaint is unfounded. I was not aware of that, so I withdraw my remark. As a private member I am naturally disappointed that I had to commence discussing a Bill after sitting from 4.30 to some time after 10 p.m., and then having to deal with it until 5 o'clock in the morning. I think members will agree that it is a highly contentious measure.

The Premier: You do not think the Minister enjoyed it, do you?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: No, and that is why I think the Premier misunderstood this side of the House. There was apparently some thought that we were attempting to stonewall the Bill which the Government rightly considered of some importance. There was no attempt in that direction and I think the Minister pointed out that each amendment he brought forward he considered to be of major importance.

The Minister for Lands: Why are you wasting time now?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I am entitled to lodge my protest at the Premier's action because I can well remember the protests that were made last year. I am sure the Premier, after he has seen the way the average member feels about it, will not again make the little faux pas he made last night.

The Premier: What was that?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Keeping us here till 5 o'clock in the morning.

The Premier: You kept yourselves here.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: No. The Minister made no effort to explain any clause in the Bill during the Committee stage.

The Minister for Labour: I did.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mt. Lawley must give his reasons why the Bill under discussion should not be introduced.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I think I have transgressed, but the fact that I had a sleepless night made me do it. Last year I had the responsibility of seeing that Bills were introduced at a reasonable time and I made every effort to do it. However, I forgive this Government because it is most inexperienced and I am sure it will do better next year.

The Minister for Mines: Your Leader does not like that.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I cannot help what my Leader thinks about that; I think the Government is most inexperienced and it has shown its inexperience by the number of Bills it wants the House to consider. It is rushing legislation and it is not a good idea. I know that the Premier will get up and apologise and will point out that it was not intentional. I realise that, but I hope the Premier will be able to give us an intimation that there are no more Bills to be introduced, other than those that we normally expect at the end of the session, and that we shall have an opportunity of dealing with those that are already on the notice paper in a rational manner. I trust that we will not be sitting here till all hours of the morning in the future.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle): I do not think there is any need for the member for Mt. Lawley to take exception to what was said. No one took exception to the gallant fight that he put up last night when looking after the interests he represents. There was no semblance of stonewalling and the hon. member seemed to be carrying out a one-man fight; he was fighting for what he thought was right.

Mr. Heal: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I rose to answer the member for Vasse who complained about something I said. I do not know what I said other than that if we could not finish by the 11th December we would sit after Christmas if necessary. He talked a lot about being with his electors at Christmas time, but I know that on occasions I wish I could get away from some of mine.

The member for Vasse lives at Busselton and he is up here for the best part of the week; he can write a few letters to his electors and they are quite satisfied.

But there is a member sitting not far away from me who got home at 7 o'clock this morning and as soon as he arrived there a householder rang him up and complained about the colour of the water in the pipes. That could not happen to the member for Vasse, so I think he should get medical advice because he must be suffering from stomach ulcers or some such complaint.

I am quite satisfied to sit here till Easter time if necessary. We are paid to represent our electors and if it takes until Easter to consider all the legislation we have, I am quite prepared to agree to do so. I hope the member for Vasse will not keep grizzling about things like that because I can remember the time when we used to sit until Christmas Eve. In those times we had late shopping nights and our wives and families were down the street shopping while we were doing work for our electors. I trust that we will discuss every one of these measures even if it takes till Easter to do so.

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco): I want to keep some order and have a decision made whether the Bill should be read or not. We have had enough Bills introduced already. This Chamber is a badly organised place. The Premier, last night, could easily have permitted members to go home about 11 p.m. and rung the bells this morning at 8 o'clock so that members could be in their places. Instead, members indulged in a great deal of haggling and wasted much time with a lot of stupid talk. None of us has had any sleep. If we could have gone home at 11 o'clock last night and resumed at 8 o'clock this morning I would have had no objection.

Mr. McCulloch: We will do that to please you.

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: It is not merely to please me, but also other members and their wives and families. Members have returned to the Chamber this afternoon not in a fit state to discuss legislation and already we have lost about 25 minutes saying nothing.

The PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply): I am not able to decide whether the Leader of the Opposition was speaking with his tongue in his cheek or whether he has developed into a chronic grizzler. The second-mentioned possibility is perhaps more on the target.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You did a bit of grizzling yourself when you were over here.

The PREMIER: I am not complaining about that. What I said a few days ago was that the 11th December was the target date for the finish of the session. If we can finish on that date, well and good. If we cannot, we might have to finish on the 18th December and if we cannot finish then we might even have to come back here in the New Year.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Except that it was not logical to keep us here until 5 o'clock this morning.

The PREMIER: That was not the complaint made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Hutchinson: That is a different idea from that which you held last year.

The PREMIER: We are paid to be parliamentarians. If it becomes necessary to sit until the 18th December or the 23rd December or the 31st then we should sit until we finish on that date, and that is what we will do.

Mr. Bovell: You are not being very reasonable.

The PREMIER: I appreciate the angle that the member for Vasse put forward and I appreciate, too, the well-merited rebuke he levelled at his Leader. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about Bills that are being brought down late. If he will look at the programme that was made by his Government for the session of last year he will find that that was more formidable than the one now before us.

It must be remembered that a new Government takes a while to get into its stride, especially with regard to legislation. In addition to which, as Leader of the Government, I was away from Western Australia in England for three months during a vital period when the legislative programme is generally made out, and consequently, until my return, some decisions had to be delayed.

Hon. D. Brand: You had a good deputy.

The PREMIER: In the last ten days of the session last year, when the Leader of the Opposition was Premier, a long list of Bills was introduced, together with the Loan Estimates. They were not brought forward in that session until the 25th November, and the House finished on the 12th December. Certainly there was a rush. There has been a rush every session during the 20 years I have been here. If we were to fix the 31st January as the finishing date we would still have a rush, and if we fixed it on the 31st March or the 30th April and so on there would still be a rush on those dates.

There are very few additional Bills to come forward and I should think none of them will be very controversial. Some of the Bills already on the notice paper have been substantially considered by both Houses. This House has already received several messages from the Legislative Council with regard to Bills. I think those messages can be decided quickly by this House and they will be in due course. Obviously, the proper procedure to adopt is

to deal with those Bills that have not yet been to the Legislative Council in order that we may make our deliberations on them as quickly as possible and get them through to the Legislative Council in order that that House may give them reasonable consideration.

I do not want to go into that which happened during the last two or three weeks of last session in connection with the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Amendment Bill, the Bassendean chord railway line and other matters, but I should think the Leader of the Opposition, who was Premier at that time, would have remembered the rush, strain, bustle and so on that occurred. If he had done so, he would not have adopted the attitude he did this afternoon.

Personally, I am quite sure that if members are anxious to finish on the 11th December, they can conclude the business on that date. If they follow the example—a very worth-while example—which was set by the member for Mt. Lawley last night and put forward their speeches briefly, concisely and, I should add, intelligently, we could finish comfortably on the target date, the 11th December.

Question put and passed.

Bill introduced and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Closer Settlement Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

2, Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Housing.

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. L. F. Kelly—Merredin-Yilgarn) [3.0] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to amend the Inspection of Machinery Act, 1921-51, to include provision for the inspection of certain cranes driven by hand power.

At present the definition of "machinery" in Section 2 and also the Second Schedule of the Act exempt from registration and inspection all machinery driven by the means referred to in that definition. It is now proposed, however, that overhead travelling cranes and jib cranes required for the manipulation of loads exceeding one ton which are driven by hand power, shall be removed from this exemption and made subject to the Act and regulations. All cranes driven by steam or motor power, other than those exempt under Section 4, are subject to registration irrespective of the loadings, small or large, for which they are required.

Before the initial certificates are granted in respect of such machinery now covered by the Act, all details of structural and mechanical design are examined by the Inspection of Machinery Branch, and stresses calculated in order to ascertain that margins for safety are in accordance with requisite standards. Should analysis of a design disclose a weakness of some part, instructions are then issued regarding the necessary alterations.

When construction is completed a crane is submitted to tests under the supervision of an inspector and if the results are satisfactory he then issues a certificate. Each year thereafter these cranes are inspected for renewal of certificates. If it be found during an inspection that some part—and this applies also to the rope and hook—is in such a condition as to be prejudicial to safety, the owner is given instructions regarding the repairs necessary.

Hand cranes being exempt from the jurisdiction of the Act, there is no statutory obligation for designs to be submitted for approval or to have such machinery inspected by the appropriate authority. It is emphasised, however, that being driven by hand power it makes them no less a potential danger, if there be a fault in their design or construction than those which are motor-powered. Although in the former instance the speed of the mechanism may be slower during hoisting operations, this does not necessarily constitute a safeguard against failure of some mechanical component or collapse of some part of the crane structure while a load is in suspension.

A crane may be of sufficient durability to withstand overloads for some length of service when a margin of strength for safety in some part or parts is much inferior to accepted standards, but there would be the attendant risk that fatigue of some section, due to excessive stresses, would ultimately result in the collapse of the structure. It is not suggested that all necessary caution with details of design may be purposely neglected, but it is to be considered that designs are not necessarily carried out by those who are skilled in the manufacture of machinery of this nature.

There is also the question of maintenance to be kept in view. Unless strict attention be given to components of the motion gear on cranes—particularly the hoist ropes with their attachments—defects remaining overlooked or ignored could develop to a degree which would endanger persons working in the vicinity. If, however, equipment of this kind be subject to the provisions of the Act and regularly examined by an inspector, necessary repairs could be brought to notice and enforced.

Two instances of hand-powered cranes that were of unsuitable construction for the loadings required of them were brought under notice during this year. One was

a jib type for two-ton loads and the other an overhead traveller for five tons. Both were being employed for work which much exceeded their safe capacity, and strengthening of an important nature was carried out in both instances.

In the first case I mentioned—the one carrying the two-ton load—it was found to be satisfactory to handle only a half-ton load. That is a glaring instance of machinery being dangerous to people in the vicinity. In the former instance the advice of the Inspection of Machinery Department was sought on the matter, and in the latter instance the deficiencies in structural strength were discovered on conversion of the crane to motor power when, of course, it was obligatory to register the unit with the department.

Although this crane had not been altered in any way, the mere fact that a motor was added brought it under the Inspection of Machinery Act and under the jurisdiction of the inspectors; it was immediately condemned because of those faults. It is considered that hand cranes for moving loads up to one ton may remain exempt from registration under the Act. In the construction of equipment for requirements up to this capacity, the inexpert builder appears to have a natural tendency to adopt materials of adequate proportions as such materials are usually ready to hand, and he normally possesses some appreciation of rule of thumb methods which suffice for designs up to limited load requirements.

This definitely comes under the category of small Bills. It is designed purely for making safer the handling of a type of machinery which because of the position it now holds—that of being hand-powered—does not come under the jurisdiction of inspectors. I would suggest that in your electorate in the North, Mr. Speaker, you would come into contact with many types of similar machines. We have them on every wharf in the State and on many country sidings.

There are cranes with a loading capacity of five, 10 and sometimes 15 tons that are hand-operated and are yet not subject to the Inspection of Machinery Department because of that fact. It is due to a number of accidents that have occurred in recent months that I bring this measure before the House. I move—

That the Bill now be read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Wild, debate adjourned.

BILL—PRICES CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR PRICES (Hon. W. Hegney—Mt. Hawthorn) [3.10] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is of widespread interest inasmuch as price-control affects the people of Western Australia either directly or indirectly. It is known as a continuance Bill and its object is to extend the provisions of the Prices Control Act from the 1st January, 1954, to the 31st December, 1954.

The only other alteration to the existing Act is that in lieu of an advisory committee appointed by the responsible Minister, a consultative committee is provided for. Specific reference is made to the different interests which will be represented on that committee. It is set out, not in great detail, that the committee must meet at least monthly, and at such other times as the Minister may direct. To a great extent, the amendments follow the policy outlined by the Premier during the last election campaign. It will be noted that manufacturers, retail traders, primary producers and consumers are to be represented on that committee, and it has been decided that a woman shall represent the consumers.

It is necessary to pass the measure in order to continue price-control in view of the upward trend of prices, and, what is more important, the recent freezing of the basic wage. This is all the more essential now that the courts of this country have decided that the basic wage shall be pegged. The natural concomitant is that prices of essential commodities shall be regulated where it is deemed advisable. There is a distinct duty and obligation on the part of the Government to have machinery available in operation to protect the ordinary consumer from traders who seek undue profits.

I would like to make it clear that the Government does not favour controls just for the sake of control. We favour controls where the interests of the general public warrant an extension of them. Since I took over the onerous duties of Minister for Prices, a number of commodities has been decontrolled where it was found the supply was ample and where it was evident that a reasonable profit was being made. Regarding certain items that were decontrolled, the traders' associations have assured the Prices Branch that the ordinary margins would continue to prevail, but in the case of clothing, I was loath to sign an order to recontrol.

Speaking from memory, clothing was decontrolled in July, 1952. From authentic information gained from responsible officers of the Prices Branch, it was decided at the Ministers' conference in April, 1953, to recontrol the more essential types of clothing used by the average wage earner and those in the lower income group. This information by qualified investigators of the branch, clearly indicated that margins over and above what is reasonable had been charged by many traders. A constant check by the Prices Branch is kept of all

decontrolled items. The idea is to ensure that margins of profit are within reasonable bounds.

Furthermore, the traders' associations assured the public that they would not seek increased profits if prices were decontrolled. It was indicated by those associations that ordinary competition would apply if controls were removed from a number of commodities. Where there is an award or an industrial agreement, I do not believe in people cutting each other's throats. Where there is an award in existence, people should abide by it, and no man should be prepared to work for less than the award rate. But the impression gained from the Retail Traders' Association was that there would be open and free competition in that business and that prices would find an equitable level.

I have an extract from the Grocers and Storekeepers' Journal of Western Australia for March, 1952. The evils of price-control are mentioned in large letters. Among other points, the following were brought out:—

> Price-cutting is a poor means of education of the public.
>
> Once a store sets a price-cutting policy, the customers expect a continuance.
>
> Price-cutting shows disloyalty to trade associations and manufacturers who endeavour to give the retailers a worth-while margin.
>
> Price-cutting gives price authorities the impression that margins are sufficient and hinders applications by manufacturers and associations for better controlled margins for the retailer.
>
> Price-cutting is the first step to the Bankruptcy Court.

That does not indicate that there is fair competition. There is the official journal urging that there shall be no competition for the purpose of keeping margins and prices up. On page 4 appears this article in the September, 1952, issue:—

> The Council desires to draw the attention of members to a very vital subject which it feels they should consider most seriously.
>
> The subject is percentage margins.
>
> As members are aware, their association has, since 1948, been responsible for establishing the retail prices of de-controlled grocery lines. These lines today represent approximately 25 per cent. of the total monetary turnover whilst the remaining 75 per cent. of turnover is still subject to price control and the retail prices of the controlled lines are fixed by the Prices Office.
>
> It is most important that members should realise that their association has been largely responsible for the profit margins which they have been trading on.
>
> The association has fixed the margins on de-controlled goods and done all in its power to secure reasonable margins on controlled goods.
>
> Members' Responsibility.
>
> Having set for the trade what the council considers to be fair and adequate margins on which the trade can reasonably operate, the council now looks to every individual grocer for his unreserved co-operation. If the trade is to retain the margins now operating, every member must set his face against any recommended prices which come from any source but the association.
>
> Subject to the incidence of price control, it is considered that the organised retail trade has an undoubted right to fix the retail prices of decontrolled lines. Perhaps it would be better to say that nobody has the right to ask the retailer to sell goods at an inadequate margin. When the grocery trade was absolutely unorganised, certain manufacturers set prices with two ideas in mind: first, to ensure and regulate prices, and the other to make certain that their goods were sold at an attractive price.

I have read those extracts to show that, while it has been said that competition would be the means of finding the normal price level, there is evidence of a move to combine—combination instead of competition—thereby assisting to keep up the price level. We have been told that if fair competition prevailed and there was a reasonable supply of goods, people would be able to purchase them at a reasonable figure.

I wish now to refer to meat, which is a very important item in the "C" series index figures compiled by the statistician. The index figures give an indication of the changes in price levels. Most of the controlled items of groceries are dealt with on an Australia-wide basis, resulting in price movements being similar in all the States. Therefore, the greatest increase is with respect to decontrolled goods, and meat is a very important item that carries a heavy weighting in the "C" series index figures. I believe I am correct in stating that a change of 1d. per lb. in the price of beef or mutton set out in the regimen used by the statistician for the various cuts of meat means a variation of 1s. per week in the basic wage.

The Prices Commissioner and his staff have checked up, and, although the executive of the Meat and Allied Trades As-

sociation urged its members to charge only the ordinary retail margin prevailing when price control operated, the evidence shows that in quite a number of cases excessive margins have been taken, and the prices of the cuts of meat to which I have referred are 4d. to 6d. per lb. higher than they should have been. The general circumstances have been taken into account by the Prices Branch. The wholesale livestock market in the middle of October of this year was on about the same basis as that of last year, and yet the figures show definitely and conclusively that the price charged to consumers is, in many instances, much higher than it should be.

We have hesitated to recontrol meat prices because to exercise control over the prices of some articles is very difficult. When I occupied a seat on the other side of the House, I pointed out—and I have not changed my mind—that if we were going to control a commodity included in the computation of the basic wage and the statistician obtained certain figures regularly from retail traders and prices were fixed, the retail trader was strongly inclined to hand to the representative of the statistician the fixed price and make the requisite declaration accordingly. A statement made by a man highly placed in the meat trade is that practically 90 per cent. of the retailers were on the blackmarket, charging 5d. to 11d. per lb. over the fixed price.

This means that the variation in the basic wage did not accurately reflect the prices that housewives and consumers generally were being charged. That is the true position, and I invite members who are interested to investigate that aspect. The position has become serious and, if it is to become more serious, the Government will have no alternative to reconsidering the controlling of that commodity in the interests of the public. During the quarter ended September, 1953, the Federal basic wage increase for Perth was 4s. Of the 4s., a sum of 3s. 8d. represented the increase in foodstuffs, and of the 3s. 8d., no less than 3s. represented the increase in the price of meat.

Having touched on clothing and meat, I shall now refer to the attitude of the Prices Branch with respect to certain services. I had an investigation made, following a number of complaints, into hotel tariffs.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you satisfied with the way the Commissioner of Prices has carried out his duties?

The MINISTER FOR PRICES: I consider that he is a very competent officer. There is no surplus of staff. In the days of Federal control, there were about 111 employees in the branch, and the member for Mt. Lawley, shortly after taking office, had the staff reduced to about 70. I think he should have been hesitant about doing that.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I am glad you appreciate my view that the commissioner is an extremely competent civil servant.

The MINISTER FOR PRICES: He is, and those working for him are competent. One of the troubles in administering a department of this sort is to obtain competent investigators and inspectors. It is a technical job.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Very technical.

The MINISTER FOR PRICES: Certificated and cost accountants are not as easy to obtain as some people might think, because good men are already in remunerative employment and they would naturally hesitate to undertake employment, the duration of which was doubtful.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Will you agree that the staff should be highly skilled and should appreciate an investigation and be able to make it?

The MINISTER FOR PRICES: Naturally. I am glad that the hon. member has made that point; I intended to refer to it. I was saying that a number of complaints had been received about hotel tariffs. An investigation was made by the Prices Branch and, allowing a percentage on what operated during the time of price-control, and taking into account the increases in the basic wage, it was found that a number of hotelkeepers had increased their tariffs out of all proportion. I am satisfied that the executive of the U.L.V.A. tried to discipline its members who were charging extortionate prices. It was only after much consideration and deliberation that I issued the necessary order for the control of hotel tariffs.

With regard to plumbing, we received a number of complaints from people who considered they had been exploited. The Prices Branch made investigations and found that the complaints were justified. A comprehensive schedule was drawn up by the branch to determine what was a fair amount to pay for a specific job with the materials included. The Prices Branch has been responsible for receiving quite a sum of money by way of refunds for overcharges.

The same thing applies to electrical installations. The initial complaint, in this regard, came from the Premier's electorate, I think. Investigations were made not by a layman but by a qualified electrician. As a result of the investigations it was decided to recontrol electrical installation services. That has had a steadying influence on a number of the people who were exploiting the position.

Among the hotelkeepers, plumbers and electrical contractors, there are quite a few honest and decent men who have a

high standard of business morality, but members opposite, as well as those on this side of the House, know there are others who are taking advantage of present-day circumstances for the purpose of robbing the public; and I use the word "robbing" in the proper sense.

It was found that the plumbers were charging 136 per cent. over and above reasonable prices, and some electricians as much as 68 per cent. above reasonable prices. With regard to the savings aspect of price-control, the approximate cost to the State for the retention of the Prices Branch is about £54,000 or £55,000 a year which represents .41d. per week or 1s.9½d. a year.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Per week of what?

The MINISTER FOR PRICES: Per head of population. I mention this to show that the cost of price-control is not high when all the circumstances are taken into account. The other night I heard the Leader of the Opposition say among other things, he was not in favour of price-control; but I point out that he is in favour of freezing the basic wage, which is control of the price of labour power. I do not believe in general price-control continuously and permanently on unessential commodities, but I certainly believe this State would be ill-advised to throw off price-control altogether.

Let us have a look at some of the savings. I have here figures dealing with some of our most essential commodities—oil and petrol. The oil companies have at different times made overtures to the Prices Ministers for an increase in the price of petrol. During the last three months, despite a request for an increase some time ago, the Prices Ministers reduced the price of motor spirits by 2d. a gallon; lighting kerosene by 1d. a gallon; power kerosene by 1½d. a gallon; distillate by 2d. a gallon; diesel fuel by 40s. per ton; and fuel oil by 60s. per ton. It is estimated that these reductions alone represent an annual saving to the general public of Western Australia of approximately £733,000.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Have you any evidence at all that the prices would not have been reduced by the oil companies, anyway?

The MINISTER FOR PRICES: The member for Mt. Lawley will agree that if tomorrow the lid were lifted from price-control, there would be an immediate increase in the price of petrol.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I am not so sure. It is very competitive.

The MINISTER FOR PRICES: The oil companies have been asking for increases.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: When?

The MINISTER FOR PRICES: Some little time ago. I do not think the member for Mt. Lawley has any doubt about the oil companies' increasing the price of petrol.

Hon. L. Thorn: I do not think there is the slightest doubt about it. They would do it.

The MINISTER FOR PRICES: Of course they would. The question of prices in the oil industry has been the subject of constant study and investigation. It will be realised that changes in the price of petrol and the other items I have just mentioned have a direct effect on primary industries, manufacturing concerns, and the public generally.

I come now to another important matter, namely, the control of the price of hides and skins. The Commonwealth Government suggested to the Prices Ministers that price-control be lifted from hides and skins. Particular consideration was given by the Ministers to the home-consumption price, and the applications for decontrol have been continually and strenuously resisted in the knowledge that such action would result in all hides and skins in Australia being sold at world-parity prices. It is estimated that this would result in an increase of 100 per cent. in the cost of hides to tanners, and that the additional cost to the users in Australia of boots and shoes alone would amount to the substantial total of nearly £7,500,000 per annum. The average increase in the cost of footwear, generally, would be as follows:—men's 13s. a pair; women's 9s. 6d. a pair; and children's 3s. 7d. a pair.

The effect of these increases upon the budget of the average family can well be imagined. If price-control were lifted, the people of Western Australia could count forthwith on paying a substantially increased amount for their footwear. The State purchases quite a large quantity of goods and materials, including petrol and price-control on an equitable basis means a considerable saving to the people of Western Australia.

Truth is stranger than fiction! I shall give an example of what a Minister has to face up to with regard to price-control. Within the last few weeks I received a deputation from the fishermen's organisation requesting that the price of fish be decontrolled. That deputation concluded, I think, by 11 o'clock in the morning, and later on the same day the Perth and Suburban Bread Manufacturers' Association came, by way of a deputation, to me as Prices Minister and urged that the minimum price of bread should be fixed; and that in no circumstances did it want price-control lifted from bread. Those two distinct views were put before me within the space of one or two hours. I invite members to check up with the Perth and Suburban Bread Manufacturers' Association.

The Automobile Chamber of Commerce has written to me as Minister, enclosing a copy of a letter from its Federal organisation, dated the 28th of October, 1953, and reading as follows:—

> At the annual meeting of the Australian Automobile Chamber of Commerce held early this month in Melbourne, a very strong recommendation was made from the conference that each of the member associations approach their State Governments for the retention of price control on all petroleum products.
>
> This recommendation has been further discussed by the executive of this chamber, and we wholeheartedly agree with same, as any precipitious lifting of price control at the present time would undoubtedly mean an increase in price to the consumer, owing to the present state of the oil industry in their trade-war for increased gallonage which is resulting in such uneconomic practice as installation of unwarranted industrial or commercial pumps, and also an over-abundance of petrol selling points.

That is not my statement but that of the Automobile Chamber of Commerce. I checked up with the other States and found that in New South Wales and Queensland the legislation is more or less on a permanent basis, harnessed to their industrial laws. In Victoria the Bill was introduced into the Legislative Council recently and having passed that Chamber I have little doubt that it will pass the Assembly there. The Minister for Prices in Victoria is a member of the Legislative Council and that is how the Bill came to be introduced in that House first.

In South Australia the Liberal Government, under the leadership of Mr. Playford, who is also Minister for Prices, introduced a Bill which has already passed the Assembly, and the indications, on the latest report, are that there will be no difficulty in having it passed through the Legislative Council. In Tasmania, although I did not see the report—I do not think it appeared in "The West Australian" but it came over the air—I believe the Attorney General has recontrolled the price of meat on account of the action of retail traders in Launceston and Hobart in not agreeing to carry on at a fair margin.

Those, briefly, are the main reasons for the Bill. I reiterate that the Government does not favour price-control just for the sake of control but firmly and sincerely believes that if the legislation is not carried on during the next year, there will be an upsurge in price trends and that the action of the Commonwealth and State Arbitration Courts, in pegging wages, will not have the effect that those tribunals visualised their action would have. While some people will in flippant manner say, "The Prices Control Branch does nothing but increase prices," I, as Minister, say that that organisation is not there either to reduce or increase prices ad lib but only to adjust them in accordance with the circumstances after a full and complete investigation.

From my short connection with that department I am satisfied that, while every organisation has its weaknesses—in this case on account of the vast size of the State and the difficulty of the inspectors and other officers in administering the department—if there were no price-control, although the general level of prices has increased since 1948 when the then Government introduced State price-control, the percentage of the increase would have been much greater than has been the case. While price-control operates, I, as Minister, will do my best to administer the Act fairly and equitably. Where complaints are made by the public they will be investigated as soon as possible and the interests of all parties concerned will be taken into account. If it is necessary to recontrol or extend the control of any essential item, I do not think the Government will be doing its duty if it has any hesitation in taking the necessary action. I move—

> That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion of Hon. A. V. R. Abbott, debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.9 p.m.

BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES, ROYAL VISIT EXPENDITURE AUTHORISATION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. NIMMO (Wembley Beaches) [4.10]: I support this short Bill that has been introduced by the Minister for Railways. This morning I made it my business to interview Mr. Green, the Town Clerk, at the Perth City Council, and I also rang two members of road boards. The Bill will have no effect on one of those local authorities, but the other road board will have a certain amount of money to spend. These local authorities have spent some of the three per cent. allowed to them under the Act on urgent business.

On one occasion the member for West Perth tried to get something for the spastic children in West Perth. The Perth Road Board was good enough to pass £100 odd to put a ramp down at Trigg Island for the benefit of these children. I mention that fact because some people have an idea that we are giving road boards an open cheque. As a matter of

fact, I think the Minister mentioned that as well. I do not think that is so, because the men who are on road boards, etc., are put there by the people, and on the whole they do a very good job. I am sure they are not going to run wild.

During the debate I heard somebody say we should limit road boards and councils. I cannot see how we can state any figure. If we tried to state a figure, then I cannot see who could nominate the amount. Most of the country road boards whose districts the Queen will visit will very naturally want to put on a decent display. I can certainly understand the chairman and members wishing to do so, because it will be some time—or at least it will not be in our time—before we have Royalty here again.

I think it is up to all local bodies to make the best display possible for our Queen when she arrives in Western Australia. I do not desire to labour this matter; I think we will do the right thing by agreeing to this amendment to allow road boards to spend the money out of their general funds. I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—ROYAL VISIT, 1954, SPECIAL HOLIDAY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. L. THORN (Toodyay) [4.16]: This Bill provides for a special holiday in connection with the Royal visit that is to take place in 1954. It will be remembered that in 1951 I introduced a similar Bill and, after having checked the wording of the present Bill with the one I introduced, I find they are almost identical, clause for clause. Very naturally, therefore, I offer no objection whatever to the measure now before the House.

There is, however, one point I would like to raise and that is a matter concerning the nursing profession. When I occupied the office of Minister for Labour, I remember that a similar question was put to me, but I cannot recollect what I did about it. The point is that several nurses will undoubtedly have their day off on the declared holiday. I was asked what we were going to do about those nurses. I know we did agree that nurses on duty, the same as anyone else, would get an extra holiday at a later date and probably at a time to suit themselves.

But in the case of the nurse whose day off falls on the special holiday I am not sure what the position is, and I would like the Minister to let us know what he proposes to do about the matter in order to compensate these nurses for the day they would otherwise lose. I would be glad if he would inquire into this. I know the Secretary for Labour did bring it to my notice, but I am not sure whether he has brought it to the notice of the present Minister. I support the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. W. Hegney—Mt. Hawthorn—in reply) [4.19]: I thank the member for Toodyay for his kind response to the Bill. There is nothing contentious in the few clauses it contains. I would like to say a word on the matter raised by the hon. member. The object of the measure is to grant a special holiday on Monday, the 29th March, 1954; that is the day that will be proclaimed. The idea is to ensure a day's holiday without loss of pay for all workers who normally work on that day. The principle is that no person in that week shall receive less than a normal week's pay. A shift worker not working on the Monday will still receive the week's pay. Those working on that day, whether in private industry or in the Government service, will receive double time, or if the award or industrial agreement does not provide double time, at the option of the employer, a day shall be added to the annual leave.

With regard to nurses who are shift workers, this is a matter for administration rather than one for incorporation in the legislation. If we specifically provide for nurses, then we must provide for all shift workers—members of the Police Force, railway employees, and all men in private industry. Then there is the question of rostered workers. That being the case, it will be found that many people would receive the week's wages and a day in addition.

I have perused the file dealing with the 1951 holiday where certain such matters were raised. It is difficult for a Cabinet Minister to devise a series of arrangements which will mete out justice to everybody. Nurses who do not work on Monday, the 29th, will not lose any pay that week. The purpose of the Bill is to grant a holiday to commemorate the visit of Her Majesty and His Royal Highness. The Minister for Health spoke to me with regard to this matter, and the question will be put in writing and considered by Cabinet. I cannot commit the Cabinet at this stage.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES (Hon. J. T. Tonkin—Melville) [4.25] in moving the second reading said: This is a short Bill. Apart from one main provision, the rest is more or less formal. The main purpose of the amending legislation is to give authority to water boards to grant long-service leave to their employees. In recent years the granting of long-service leave, enjoyed as a right over a considerable period by public servants, gradually emerged as a reasonable privilege in some avenues of employment, provided those avenues were such that the privilege could be applied practically.

For years it has been recognised that the worker should be given an opportunity to have recuperative leave. This has been provided to schoolteachers for years. They get the usual holidays throughout the year, and at the end of a term of years they are granted, in addition, long-service leave to enable them to go on a long holiday. The idea of this recuperative leave is to permit the teachers to have a break from their arduous and exacting work so that they come back refreshed and restored, and so that they will be capable of more efficient work.

That practice has been recognised for some time as a sound one. Local authorities can grant long-service leave to their employees by the promulgation of a by-law, but there seems to be some difficulty in extending this privilege to the employees of a water board if it happened to be the local authority. This problem arose in Bunbury; I was informed that the Bunbury Municipal Council, which is the water board for the area, desired to extend long-service leave to its employees.

I was advised that this could be done by the promulgation of a by-law, but subsequently was informed that it would be of doubtful legality and that an amendment of the Act would probably be necessary in order to clarify the position. That is the main purpose of the Bill—to authorise water boards to grant long-service leave to their employees.

The other amendments proposed in the Bill are of a purely formal character but are nevertheless highly desirable from an administrative point of view. It has been the practice over the years for the department to commence a rating year at the time when a new board was formed, and the consequence is that we have the rating year commencing at varying times.

Hon. D. Brand: That is unsatisfactory

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: Yes. We propose to remedy that by empowering the Minister to fix the rating year. This will remove the present obscurity and make the Act definite as to what is meant by a rating year and when such year shall commence. Some of the provisions of the Act are no longer operative and so we propose to delete them. Those are provisions dealing with distress for arrears of rates. With the abolition of the Distress for Rent Act, those provisions are no longer operative and we desire to repeal them.

One of the sections of the Act is redundant because of a provision in the Interpretation Act covering the same matter and that section should be repealed in the interests of more accurate drafting. The repeal of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules is consequent upon the repeal of the distress for arrears of rates provision in Sections 100 and 101 and the deletion from Section 102. Apart from the provision for power to grant long-service leave to employees, the other proposals, as I have explained, are of a formal nature. I move—

> That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. D. Brand, debate adjourned.

BILL—ENTERTAINMENTS TAX ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: This Bill contains some important amendments, the most important probably being the provision for two schedules in the Act as against the present one complete schedule. The principle of having two schedules follows the Commonwealth Act, the operation of which ceased on the 30th September.

The purpose of the two schedules in the Commonwealth Act was to divide into two classes the many entertainments that are held. One class included entertainments commonly referred to as live shows, and the other class related to entertainments that generally were considered to be other than live shows. Under the Commonwealth law the schedule dealing with live shows provided a lower rate of amusement tax as compared with the rate for other shows. This was done because the Commonwealth Government and Parliament considered that live shows, particularly in these days of strong competition from the films, were deserving of some small encouragement.

We propose to introduce the same principle into our Act, but our amendment will go much further in granting relief to live shows, especially with regard to admission charges for such shows up to and including 5s. The Bill proposes to exempt

live show entertainments from the tax completely where the charge for admission does not exceed 5s.

We are proposing this because we feel that it will prove to be a substantial medium of encouragement to the smaller live shows particularly and also, in practice, be an encouragement to people in the lower-income groups to patronise such shows in increasing numbers. There should not be need to argue the point as to the much greater expense involved in the staging of live shows as compared with other shows. In this regard, I have in mind particularly the film entertainment. Members know from their own experience and observation that live shows, unless they be run on an amateur basis, cost a great deal to stage.

Mr. Nimmo: Those are tax-free.

The PREMIER: Because of the cost of staging such shows, particularly the professional ones, they are up against very fierce competition when they have to compete with the films, where the number of people to be paid in this State is very few indeed. So we feel that this method of providing encouragement for live shows is well justified in the circumstances, and that it will not only tend towards the expansion of the smaller types of live shows in this State but also encourage people on lower incomes to support the live show type of entertainment to a far greater extent than they have been prone to in the past.

I am sure members will agree that many classes of live show entertainment are highly desirable in every way, not only in the class of entertainment which they present to the public but also in relation to the development of dramatic art and so on that is provided through the staging of such shows in public.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What effect will these provisions have on your estimated income from this source?

The PREMIER: I would prefer to deal with that point after I have explained the amendments contained in the Bill, in order that the provisions of the measure and what will occur under them might be explained to members consecutively, and in order also that they might appear in "Hansard" in consecutive fashion.

If members examine the Bill, they will see the types of entertainment that are to come under what we broadly describe as the live show schedule. The list of entertainments set out there will indicate the classes of entertainment, by and large, which will be helped to some extent by this provision and to which people on lower incomes will be encouraged further to go. I am not suggesting that every member will vote unanimously for all the types of entertainment contained in the live show schedule, but I believe that, generally speaking, they are the classes of stage entertainment that deserve a reasonable measure of encouragement from Parliament at this stage.

Where the admission charge for entertainments in the live show schedule exceeds 5s. but does not exceed 5s. 6d., the rate of entertainment tax to be levied is 9d., and an increase of 1d. for every 6d. by which the charge for admission exceeds 5s. 6d. In relation to the other schedule which we propose to place in the Act and which will deal with entertainments generally regarded as being other than live shows, we are providing for a higher exemption than exists in the Act at present, and higher than the unofficial exemption that has operated since the 1st October.

The exemption at present in the State Act for this type of entertainment is below 9d. In other words, if the State Act were to be applied in its present form, only admission charges below 9d. would be entirely exempt from the tax. Unofficially, when we brought the State Act again into operation on the 1st October, we allowed an exemption of up to 1s. 6d., and in this Bill we propose to raise that unofficial exemption to 2s., which means that for film entertainments, dancing, races, trots and so on, the exemption proposed in the Bill is 2s. and entertainment tax will be imposed only where the charge for admission exceeds 2s. Where the charge exceeds 2s. but does not exceed 2s. 6d., the rate proposed in the Bill is 4d., and that is to increase by 1d. for every 6d. by which the admission charge exceeds 2s. 6d.

If members care to make a quick mental calculation, they will find that the new tax rate with respect to live shows, as set out in the schedule, will from 5s. 0½d. onwards, as compared with a similar admission charge for other classes of shows, be 1d. less in each class of admission charge than will be the new rate of tax in respect of film and similar entertainments. Here again we are providing some additional small relief for live shows and some encouragement, as compared with other classes of entertainment, for people to give reasonable patronage to the live shows.

The Leader of the Opposition, by way of interjection, asked what effect these proposals were likely to have on the total amount of entertainment tax expected to be received by the Government, as compared with what would have been received had this measure not been introduced. Bracketing this measure with the one which I shall introduce immediately after it, it is thought the State will lose from £75,000 to £76,000 per year, as a result of these two Bills if they both become law, compared with what we would have received had they not been introduced.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What was your original estimate?

The PREMIER: If I remember rightly, it was £232,000, and so the granting of the concessions contained in this Bill and in that which is to follow it, will mean that that estimate has to be reduced to about £160,000, which will be approximately the total amount received from the imposition of entertainment tax in this State on the present basis. This measure makes some valuable concessions, particularly to live show entertainments. I could compare the proposed new rates of tax with those which were operating under the Commonwealth law up to the 1st October, but members can easily make that comparison for themselves by turning to page 639 of No. 7 of "Hansard" of the current session.

If they do that, they will see the Commonwealth general rate for film and similar entertainment and the Commonwealth special rate which applied to live show entertainments, together with the existing State rates under the Act as it stands now, and they will be able to compare all those rates with the rates proposed, in this new legislation, for live shows and entertainments which do not come within that category. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

BILL—TRADE DESCRIPTIONS AND FALSE ADVERTISEMENTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Received from the Council and, on motion by Hon. C. F. J. North, read a first time.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Declarations and Attestations Act Amendment.

2, Returned Servicemen's Badges. Without amendment.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—ENTERTAINMENTS TAX ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [4.53] in moving the second reading said: The Bill proposes to amend the Entertainments Tax Assessment Act. There are some important amendments in it and a number of them seek to give fairly substantial concessions in desirable directions. Under the Act several classes of entertainment are exempt provided they are staged for deserving purposes.

For instance, if any entertainment is conducted for philanthropic, charitable or religious purposes without any charge on takings for expenses, such entertainment is exempt. If the entertainment is of a wholly educational character, that also is exempt. If the entertainment is provided for partly educational or partly scientific purposes by a society, institution or committee and is not conducted or established for profit, that entertainment is also exempt under the provisions of the Act.

The Bill intends to provide a further exemption, such proposal being set out on page 3 of the measure. That refers to any entertainment which would consist solely of a game or sport in which human beings are the sole participants. The entertainment would not include dancing or skating unless those activities were conducted on a competitive basis. Where an entertainment is held by a society, institution or committee, and is not established or carried on for profit it would be exempt, and where no person receives remuneration as a promoter organiser or participant in the entertainment, that entertainment would also be exempt.

The main purpose of that amendment is to exempt completely from the payment of entertainment tax in the future what are known as amateur sporting organisations. Some weeks ago, a deputation waited upon me which consisted of representatives for the organisations concerned, and as a result of the case they presented, which was subsequently considered by Cabinet, it was agreed that they deserved all the encouragement that could possibly be given to them, and therefore the Bill proposes to exempt completely from the tax all entertainments that they conduct.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That means that there will be no tax on cricket matches, football matches and so on.

The PREMIER: That would depend on whether the football match or cricket match, or whatever the sport happened to be, was being conducted for profit or otherwise. In effect, to put it briefly, it would depend on whether the sport was for amateur purposes and being played by amateurs or whether it was being run for commercial purposes.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: How will you class football or cricket?

The PREMIER: Cricket would be exempt; football could be. It would depend on the circumstances. If the players were being paid to play football, the matches in which they particpated would not be exempt from entertainments tax. In that regard we would have to rely on the judgment of the Commissioner of Taxation. He would require to have applications for exemptions submitted to him and would have to judge each application on its merits.

We could not give an all-embracing exemption to sporting activities otherwise immediately we would have to exempt trotting and racing and similar entertainment. That, of course, is not proposed in the Bill, nor would anyone argue that that is the sort of entertainment or sporting activity that should be excluded from its provisions. The principle in the Bill is to grant complete exemption to amateur sporting organisations. If the Bill becomes law, the Commissioner for Taxation will administer this part of the legislation on the principle of what is intended in the amendment.

Mr. Bovell: What about agricultural societies?

The PREMIER: They are exempt now. Another amendment which is related, to some extent, to the one I have just explained, has to do with Section 9. That section gives the commissioner a direction and, to some extent, a discretion with regard to the imposition or otherwise of entertainments tax. The first provision is appropriate. The method is to register the entertainment, and the proprietors submit a return to the commissioner. If the total expenses of running the entertainment do not exceed 50 per cent. of the total receipts, then no tax is collected from those running the entertainment. If the expenses do exceed 50 per cent., then entertainment tax is imposed. When it was known that Cabinet was giving consideration to making these amendments to the assessment Act by raising the expense ratio of 50 per cent., it was pointed out that it would not be easy to keep the total expenses down to 50 per cent. or below the total receipts. Instances were given where difficulties arose.

Under the Bill it is proposed to raise the exemption rate to 60 per cent. of the total receipts. This means that entertainments run for the purposes mentioned will not pay entertainment tax if the total expenses do not exceed 60 per cent. If entertainments are run for worthy purposes, then they should get the benefit of the receipts, instead of a paid organiser or some other person obtaining most of the benefit.

In other words, there will be some restriction on entertainments being run for philanthropic, religious or charitable purposes, otherwise we would find racketeers entering into this sort of thing, and the causes would get no benefit at all. We consider that restriction should be imposed to ensure that when entertainments are run for desirable purposes, a strict control over the expenses side will be kept. Where the expenses of running such an entertainment do not exceed 60 per cent., those entertainments will be completely exempt from taxation, but where the expenses exceed 60 per cent., then the proceeds will be taxable.

Mr. Bovell: Should the Commissioner of Taxation not have powers of discretion in special circumstances?

The PREMIER: He has. The Bill proposes to increase those powers. At present he has the right to take into consideration adverse climatic conditions which might develop. This Bill will give him more discretion and he has the right to take into consideration any unforeseen circumstances which may develop to cause the anticipated proceeds to fall below the estimated total. We have in mind such circumstances as transport breakdowns, and other considerations which, in the commissioner's judgment, should afford relief from taxation. He will be empowered to use his discretion without limit. If this Bill becomes law, the commissioner will be able to grant extension even though the expenses may be more than 60 per cent. of the total receipts on account of some unforeseen circumstances.

It is proposed in Clause 5 to add the word "public" to the classification of entertainments with respect to exemptions. The purpose is to enable organisations such as progress associations, parents and citizens' associations and others which sponsor the entertainments, to come under the provisions I have been explaining. At present, only entertainments run for philanthropic, religious or charitable purposes are entitled to the concessions. It is proposed to grant this concession in respect of entertainment run for a public purpose. "Public purpose" would include the raising of money for infant health centres, provision of amenities at schools and efforts in a number of similar directions. If this amendment becomes law, it will prove to be of great assistance to organisations which run entertainments of a public character to benefit the causes I have discussed.

Then again, it is proposed to tighten up the administration in certain respects. At present proprietors of entertainments who feel that way inclined, could stall on the payment of taxes due. It is not because they cannot pay, but because they possess a mercenary nature. They hang on to the money which is due in taxes until the authorities become tired of waiting and start a prosecution, then they will come along and pay up. It is proposed to give the commissioner responsible for the collecting of entertainments tax, the same power as commissioners who collect other forms of taxation; that is, a power to impose a penalty for late payment. This is to ensure prompt payment of entertainments tax. It will save a lot of administrative expense and it will put all proprietors of entertainments on the same basis—the prompt payer and the staller.

Under the provision of the Bill, the commissioner will have similar power in dealing with proprietors of entertainment who operate under a bond. Some take out a

bond whereby they guarantee to pay the tax within a certain period of the date on which the entertainments they sponsor are held. A few of these proprietors also stall in payment. They do not honour the bond; they honour it in the breach, but not in the observance. The only remedy at present is to institute proceedings. This would involve the commissioner and the proprietors in unnecessary expense. To overcome that unsatisfactory position, it is proposed to give the commissioner power to impose a penalty when proprietors do not honour their bond. There are also less important amendments, which, no doubt, will receive general support. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

BILL—VETERINARY MEDICINES.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 11th November.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [5.13]: I congratulate the Minister for introducing the Bill. It is long overdue and will fill a long-felt need. In his second reading speech the Minister said that I brought this matter before him and he took a certain amount of credit for its introduction. I did not bring the measure up as a private Bill because I thought it could be better introduced by the Government. The introduction of a measure by a private member cannot involve the Government in any expenditure, and as some expense would be incurred in the payment of officers, it must of necessity be a Government Bill.

The method of selling veterinary medicines in the State has been deteriorating for some time. Many years ago I had a discussion with Dr. Sutton, who was Director of Agriculture, on the merits of a stock lick. This was retailing at £26 a ton, but Dr. Sutton estimated that the cost of production was only £5 a ton.

Most elaborate sales talk was devised to induce purchases. There was mention of such ingredients as magnesium sulphate, ferrous oxide and copper sulphate. In reality, these are Epsom salts, common rust and bluestone respectively. It was palatable to stock and was eaten in large quantities. For that reason the suggestion was made that this lick filled a long-felt want. But that is not logical. If we were to place a bag of sugar in front of a group of children, they would eat it up; but that would not indicate that the children were deficient in glucose.

Medicines were not manufactured in Western Australia to any extent until recently, and that is why it had been felt there was no need for legislation of this nature. Many years ago, most of the veterinary medicines were imported from England, where they were made by reputable firms such as Day, Son and Hewitt, who were controlled by English legislation; and it was felt that that was adequate protection for farmers in Western Australia. Other medicines were manufactured by American firms such as Sykes. Both of the firms I have mentioned have established subsidiary branches in the Eastern States, where they are covered by legislation; and it was considered that such legislation was not required here.

However, the position has become more complicated because medicines are now being manufactured in this State, some of which are quite suitable for the general treatment of diseases that exist in the Eastern States, but which do not occur in this State, such as fluke in sheep. In some instances these medicines are described as being general tonics, whereas they were not intended originally for that purpose. It is most misleading.

What is more, a lot of them are very expensive, and farmers are being induced to part with considerable sums of money for medicines that are either of doubtful efficacy or are of no value at all; or, even worse, in one or two cases they can be dangerous. The question of the method of adminstration of certain drugs to the animal has to be taken into account. Some drugs are quite safe in the hands of competent veterinary surgeons, but not in the hands of laymen. There have been instances of losses having been sustained through the wrongful administration of drugs.

This matter was first brought to my notice last January by a gentleman who is quite well known to certain members of this Chamber, including the Minister for Justice and the Minister for Agriculture. I refer to Mr. Eric Farleigh, of Boyup Brook. He asked me to see whether I could do something in the case of a neighbour of his who thought he had been rather badly exploited. That led me to discuss the matter with the Minister for Agriculture and the Premier; and we decided that however unfortunate the case might have been, nothing could be done about it.

What happened was that a certain fairly notorious salesman of stock remedies approached this farmer, an elderly man who had suffered something of a decline, and persuaded him that his sheep had worms and that he needed considerable quantities of a certain medicine. By means of high-pressure salesmanship, this man induced the farmer to buy £36 worth. He did not examine the sheep. The man came on to the place smartly dressed in a white dustcoat, and seemed to be possessed of some veterinary qualifications. He persuaded the farmer to buy this stuff and give him a cheque. He even went as far as to write out the cheque, because

the farmer did not happen to have his glasses on. The farmer signed the cheque, and the salesman went straight to Boyup Brook and presented it. Payment was refused by the bank because of an error in the filling in of the cheque. The cheque was returned to the farmer and he was asked to send another one.

However, some days had elapsed, and the farmer's wife suggested that it would be unwise to buy the medicine and that it would be a good thing not to forward the cheque. So they wrote and said that they did not want the medicine, and if it arrived by train they would pay the return freight, and that should close the incident. Normally that would have been the case; but it was not so in this instance. The farmer received a series of letters from a solicitor demanding payment for the medicine. This worried him considerably, and he mentioned the matter to Mr. Farleigh, who discussed it with me. We decided that, in all the circumstances, it would be a good thing not to send any more money, but for the farmer to content himself with paying the return freight, and let the matter go at that. But the series of letters continued and became more threatening in tone. Finally, however, it stopped, and nothing has since happened.

That serves to show the lengths to which these people will go to try to get their money. Further checking in the district showed that the salesman had received various amounts of money—£80 in one case—for medicines for drenching sheep, which medicines were of very doubtful value, if any, in the opinion of the Chief Veterinary Officer. Such medicines are certainly not worth the money being asked for them. In a number of cases they are useful in dealing with certain types of worms, but not others. Sometimes they are efficacious in the case of worms that are not particularly harmful, whereas they have no effect on the harmful varieties.

The cleverness with which the products are sold by a misrepresentation of their value is surprising. The salesman to whom I have referred went to one farmer and asked him who lived next door. When he was told, he asked the farmer whether he was on the phone, and when the reply was in the affirmative, he asked the farmer whether he would ring his neighbour and say that an extension officer would be calling over to see him. Many people have not a clear idea of what is meant by the term "extension officer." A great many associate it with the C.S.I.R.O., or with the university, or the Department of Agriculture, because practically all extension officers are connected with those organisations.

So this farmer, in perfectly good faith, rang his neighbour and said, "There is an extension officer of the C.S.I.R.O. coming to see you." The salesman called on the neighbour who made a purchase of medicine, being under the impression that it was Government-sponsored. The salesman himself made no actual statement that he had come from the C.S.I.R.O. or from any Government - sponsored - organisation; on the other hand, he made no bones about misleading the person with whom he was discussing the matter or about allowing him to be under a misapprehension and to unwittingly misrepresent the position to his neighbour.

That is the sort of thing that is taking place. It is very cleverly done, and quite a number of very good and efficient farmers have been taken down by gentlemen of that description. The files in the office of the Farmers' Union and at the Department of Agriculture are bulging with complaints received from farmers who have purchased medicine in good faith from such people and who have found it of no use at all and, in some cases, actually harmful.

All the Bill will do will be to set up a panel to investigate the merits or demerits of any medicines offered to the farming community. It will not prevent the sale of a medicine that has any value, and will not restrict the activities of reputable firms and salesmen. It will, however, tend to make it much more difficult for the mountebank or the charlatan to obtain a dishonest penny by appealing to the gullibility of the farming community. It is a very good Bill. I hope it will receive the support of both this Chamber and another place, and I commend the Minister for introducing it.

MR. OWEN (Darling Range) [5.27]: I am very much in favour of the Bill, and I wonder that something similar was not introduced before; because, as the member for Blackwood has explained, many men on the land have been taken in by having so-called medicines presented to them by very wide-awake salesmen.

We have a counterpart of this measure in the Act dealing with the registration of fertilisers, which provides that their composition shall be made known; and also in the legislation controlling the sale of insecticides and fungicides. Those measures have been in operation for many years and do not restrict the sale of the legitimate insecticides, fungicides, and fertilisers. They do, however, enable the farmers and stock-keepers to know what they are buying, and that the medicine or mixture purchased has been approved and registered by the appropriate body.

The Bill contains 22 clauses, but many of them are concerned with definitions and penalties. The meaning of "veterinary medicine" is well defined. It is as follows:—

> "Veterinary medicine" means any material, including a mixture, or compound of one or more drugs or ingredients in any form, or any biologi-

cal product, including both living and dead organisms and sera, used or intended for administering or application to any stock by any means for the purpose of—

(i) curing, alleviating, or treating an injury to stock;

(ii) preventing, curing, alleviating, or treating a disease or ailment in stock;

(iii) destroying any parasite or pest affecting stock;

(iv) diagnosis in relation to stock; or

(v) improving the health of, or increasing the capacity of stock for work, production, reproduction of progeny or show purposes.

That definition is very comprehensive and presumably it will mean that racehorse owners and trainers will have to register their dopes if they want to sell them to some of their friends.

The Bill will not hinder the sale of those proprietary medicines which are well known, and the registration of them will cause no difficulty. I think the measure will give protection to the manufacturers of those medicines because the medicines will have the seal of approval of the committee. The panel which is to be set up to advise on this matter is well constituted because the people who are mentioned should have the requisite knowledge to approve or reject any applications made for the registration of stock medicines.

No difficulty will be experienced in registering in this State those stock medicines which are approved in other States. All in all, the measure is very desirable. It will help the primary producer considerably, and it will not be a detriment to the manufacturer of legitimate medicines. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—KWINANA ROAD DISTRICT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 10th November. Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Railways in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 3 had been agreed to.

Clauses 4 to 11—agreed to.

Clause 12—Protection of persons:

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 the word "to" be struck out.

This word is redundant.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 15, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—CREMATION ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Health in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Section 8 repealed and re-enacted:

Hon. A. F. WATTS: When speaking on the second reading, I took exception to three provisions in the measure, one of which gave opportunities to persons who, in my opinion, have no actual interest in the disposal of the body of the deceased person, to approach the medical referee to obtain permission for cremation. Another had reference to the possibility that the medical referee might have been the medical practitioner who attended the deceased person, and the other concerned another clause.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister has an amendment to strike out certain words.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I appreciate that and I can relieve your mind of the difficulty, Mr. Chairman. The Minister was good enough to discuss the matter with me, and he permitted me to have some discussion with the responsible officer of the Crown Law Department. As a consequence, the amendments I have on the notice paper I do not now propose to move, and those of the Minister, which appear below mine, are acceptable to me. After going into the matter, I am satisfied that they will have the result, which I desire to achieve, with better and simpler phraseology. Therefore, I have much pleasure in supporting them.

On motions by the Minister for Health, clause amended by deleting the words "or nearest surviving relative" in lines 3 and 4 of subparagraph (iii) of proposed new Subsection (3) (a); by adding after the word "made" in line 6 of subparagraph (iii) of proposed new Subsection (3) (a) the words "and who shows to the medical referee a satisfactory reason why the application is not made by an administrator"; and by adding after the word "where" in line 1 of proposed new Subsection (6) the words "except as provided in the last preceding subsection."

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7—Section 8A added:

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I move an amendment—

That at the end of paragraph (g) the following subparagraph be added:—

(h) The medical referee to whom the application for the permit is made.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 8—Section 8B added:

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of proposed new Section 8B (a) after the word "practitioner" the words "other than himself" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 11, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—DISEASED COCONUT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th October.

MR. HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [5.53]: At long last we are able to deal with this Bill.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Are you having a shy at the coconuts?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: Yes. When moving the second reading of the Bill, the Minister said that he doubted whether it would be a contentious measure. He said that it was a small Bill, and it is quite obvious that the Government considers it unimportant because of the delay that has occurred between the time the Minister moved the second reading, and the first resumption of the debate.

The Bill was read a first time on the 13th October, and on the same day, the Administration Act Amendment Bill (No. 1), introduced by the member for Maylands, and the Returned Servicemen's Badges Bill, introduced by the member for South Perth, were read a first time. Both those private members' Bills have been dealt with by this House, and one has been returned from another place; on present indications, the second measure will also be returned within a day or so.

So it appears that this Bill, which was born of panic, I would say, has lost a good deal of its importance, or it appears to the Government that the purpose for which it was introduced is not now so important. The measure has several qualities, one of which is innocuous and another I would consider dangerous. It is a strange document, but I suppose that that is only to be expected because, as I said, it was born of panic.

There are three provisions in the measure, and the first will prohibit the importation of contaminated coconut. The second will provide for compensation for coconut now seized where compensation is payable under the Health Act; and the third provision provides for no compensation to be payable where Papuan coconut was imported into the State after the 15th September. The implications of these three provisions seem rather strange. At first glance, they appear to be admirable and ones with which we could have little quarrel; but deeper thought leads us to imagine that there is little necessity for at least two of the provisions in the Bill. Possibly the motive behind the introduction of the measure in the first place was to safeguard public health; yet that appears to be unimportant because it has been delayed for just over six weeks.

I think we should cast our minds back and recall the reason why the measure was introduced. Just over three months ago, an epidemic of typhoid broke out in the Eastern States and the disease was traced to an imported lot of desiccated coconut which had come from Papua. Immediate action was taken to examine the coconut, and laboratory tests were conducted. These revealed that the coconut was contaminated with some sort of bowel disease germs which gave rise to a form of diarrhoea and dysentery. The coconut also contained germs which were likely to cause typhoid. No cases of typhoid were discovered in Western Australia, but, after tests were made, evidence was found of bowel disease germs in this particular lot of Papuan coconut.

Action was taken in the Eastern States after the Commonwealth Director General of Health advised that precautions should be taken. This was done, and precautions against the further importation and sale of this coconut were taken, while the freezing of stocks that were already in the country was imposed. The action taken in the Eastern States and by our own Commissioner of Public Health, together with the practical measures he adopted, were admirable. If I remember rightly, stocks of coconut were frozen, and it was ordered that they should be handed to the local governing authorities.

I did say that we could praise the practical measures adopted, but certain elements of doubt do creep into our minds as to the necessity for these really harsh provisions in the Bill. Six weeks after the introduction of the Bill it does appear that reason might prevail and it might be thought that the harsh penalty provisions are no longer necessary, and that the fear of the danger of epidemic, once thought so great, may not be quite so apparent now. I say they are harsh penalty provisions because of the wording of the clause. Clause 2(1) states—

A person shall not import or introduce into this State any desiccated coconut which is contaminated with the germs or organisms of a dangerous infectious disease or an infectious disease.

We cannot quarrel with that except where it states "any disiccated coconut." But that is a matter to which I can refer later in my speech.

The term is so wide as to bring about the possibility of there being no trade whatsoever in coconut imported from any other country. If this provision is left as it is, thus presenting a risk to the importer by its wide terms, and it is followed by the extremely harsh penalties, then I feel it would deter traders from importing coconut from Ceylon which, of course, is our principal source of supply of that commodity.

It is difficult, if not well nigh impossible, for importers to judge whether coconut imported into this State is contaminated or not, and importers would have a most difficult task to prove that the fault did not lie at their door if the coconut was contaminated after it had reached these shores. This could virtually mean a ban on imported coconut. If one looked into this matter it would be apparent that there would be a further difficutly for importers in their being unable to detect the contamination.

I would say it would be quite impossible, because it took teams of chemists and Commonwealth experts a great deal of time, comparatively speaking, to detect and trace the source of the typhoid epidemic. If it could take experts so long to discover this, how much more difficult would it be for importers to detect similar contamination? The importers possess no technical equipment to enable them to ascertain whether there is contamination or not.

The Minister for Health: Do you not think the exporters should accept some responsibility?

Mr. HUTCHINSON: Yes, I do.

The Minister for Health: Therefore the importers should see that they are indemnified.

Mr. HUTCHINSON: This commodity can be stamped or passed by the health authorities of Ceylon—I mention that country because it is from there that we import the major proportion of our coconut supplies—and yet it could be contaminated with those germs. We are not too sure in what manner the coconut from Papua was contaminated and it passed the health authorities. Why should the importer be so harshly penalised? I might say I am not against a token penalty. But I find it hard to understand why the importer should be as harshly penalised as is suggested in the Bill. These penalties plus the ridiculous freezing of all desiccated coconut is to my mind, going too far.

The provision that sets out that there shall be confiscation without compensation should be sufficient to scare merchants and prevent them from importing coconut for the life of this Bill, which is twelve months. The virtual ban on the importing of coconut will have a serious effect on the manufacturers of confectionery, cakes, biscuits and so on. I think the amendment that I have on the notice paper would protect the public as far as it is possible to protect them from the importation of any diseased food, and it will not affect the principal purpose of the Bill, which is that there shall be no importation of contaminated desiccated coconut from Papua.

There are several important points with which I would like to deal. The first one to which I will refer is the innocuous part of the measure which states that there shall be no importation of contaminated coconut into the State. Let me say that the territory of Papua forbade the export of this commodity immediately it was found to be contaminated.

The PREMIER: I move—

> That the member for Cottesloe be given leave to continue his speech at the next sitting of the House.

Motion put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.