

railways today at a loss. Here is a commodity that can be carried at a profit; one of the most profitable that the railways can transport.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Which are the ones they carry at a loss?

Hon. G. FRASER: There are certain times of the year, when concessions are granted, when several commodities are carried at a loss.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Name some.

Hon. G. FRASER: Super is one.

The Minister for Transport: There is loss on the carriage of all produce, wheat and all grains.

Hon. G. FRASER: There are quite a number of them. One cannot accept concessions on some commodities and then, when the railways are making a profit on others, ask for further concessions on those also and thus deprive the railways of any opportunity of running at a profit. It has to be one thing or the other. If we are going to allow the carriage of some commodities by road then the railways must be put on a profitable basis and farmers made to pay full freight charges with no concessions whatsoever.

This Bill puts only one aspect. I suppose next session another country member will put forward another aspect and so we will find that the railways will be left with the carriage of goods on which no profit is made at all. So, instead of the hon. member's enthusiasm tending to assist his farming friends it will probably impose a hardship. Also, whilst he may be successful in getting the Bill through this Chamber, it will receive scant attention in another place.

Hon. A. L. Loton: It will not be the first one.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not think he will achieve anything by getting it through this House. The hon. member has ventilated his grievance and members generally have suggested that we should alter the State Transport Co-ordination Act, so I think he would be well advised to withdraw his Bill. If he perseveres and gets away with it, I think he will find that instead of being of benefit it will be a detriment.

On motion by the Honorary Minister for Agriculture, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.12 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 17th October, 1950.

### CONTENTS.

	Page
Questions : Education, (a) as to teachers in remote localities	1236
(b) as to handcraft allowances	1237
Tuberculosis, as to incidence amongst migrants	1237
Housing, (a) as to tenders for prefabricated homes	1237
(b) as to War Services Homes Act	1237
North-West, as to tabling Development Committee's minutes	1238
Rent increases, as to applications to Fremantle Court	1238
Hospitals, as to nurses' quarters at K.E.M.H.	1238
Railways, as to departmental report	1238
Bills : Stamp Act Amendment, 1r.	1238
Electoral Act Amendment, 3r.	1238
Health Act Amendment, 3r.	1238
Prices Control Act Amendment (Continuance), 3r.	1238
Roads Agreements Between the State Housing Commission and Local Authorities, Com.	1238
The Fremantle Gas and Coke Company's Act Amendment, 2r.	1236
Bush Fires Act Amendment, 2r., Com.	1241
Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment, returned	1241
Supply (No. 2), £7,000,000, returned	1255
Acts Amendment (Allowances and Salaries Adjustment), 2r.	1255
Railways Classification Board Act Amendment, 2r., Com., report	1262
Fruit Tree Standards, Message 2r.	1262
Plant Diseases Act Amendment, 2r., Com., report	1264
Bulk Handling Act Amendment, 2r.	1264
Superannuation, Sick, Death, Insurance, Guarantee and Endowment (Local Governing Bodies' Employees) Funds Act Amendment, 2r.	1264
Annual Estimates, Com. of Supply, general debate	1257

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### EDUCATION.

(a) As to Teachers in Remote Localities.

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

In view of the fact that many teachers in lonely, distant country centres suffer considerably because of the complete lack of amenities in such places, will he give consideration to the granting of what might be termed "remote allowances" to the teachers concerned?

The MINISTER replied:

The matter of granting "remote" allowances to teachers appointed to distant country centres is receiving consideration. Though at the present time teachers

stationed in the northern parts of the State and in the Murchison and Eastern Goldfield are in receipt of district allowances, it is felt that others living in isolated areas are deserving of some recompense in recognition of such isolation.

The question is being carefully examined at the present time. Certain proposals are already under examination.

*(b) As to Handicraft Allowances.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Does he consider that an improvement or an alteration in the conduct of handicrafts for boys in primary schools should be effected, and if so, will any steps be taken in that direction?

(2) Will he give consideration to the granting, on a per capita basis, of an allowance for handicraft materials and tools of trade for primary school boys, as is done for girls in the case of sewing?

(3) Will he also consider increasing the ninepenny per capita allowance for girls in sewing classes?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. Departmental officers have, in recent months, prepared a scheme for the improvement of the teaching of handicrafts for boys in the primary schools. The scheme provides for the issue of requisite tools and materials and the preparation of courses on a more thorough basis than at present.

(2) The financial side of the scheme has been reckoned on a per capita basis, and the issue to the schools of tools, equipment and material will be proportionate to the enrolment and the type of craft activity undertaken.

(3) The department has long since considered the allowance of 9d. per girl inadequate. This was the pre-war allowance. As the cost of materials rose during the war, the prices of materials were pegged at pre-war prices so that the rise in prices did not affect the quantity of material issued. The per capita cost of the sewing material issue on present-day prices is now 3s. 6d.

**TUBERCULOSIS.**

*As to Incidence Amongst Migrants.*

Mr. HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Is it a fact that approximately 30 new Australians are being treated for T.B. at Wooroloo Sanatorium?

(2) If so, does she agree that action should be taken in the appropriate quarters to prevent the influx of T.B. migrants into this country, as it appears that the screening of prospective immigrants is not effectively or efficiently carried out?

(3) Will she make representations to the appropriate Commonwealth authorities to ensure that the screening of migrants is so conducted that it is impossible for any T.B. migrant to enter this State?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) and (3) New Australians are x-rayed at centres in Europe prior to embarkation for Australia and this is the responsibility of the Commonwealth.

On arrival a further x-ray check is made by the State Tuberculosis Control Branch, resulting in cases being discovered.

The matter has already been taken up with the Commonwealth Government.

**HOUSING.**

*(a) As to Tenders for Pre-fabricated Homes.*

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Honorary Minister for Housing:

(1) Have any tenders yet been accepted for imported pre-fabricated houses?

(2) If so, for how many?

(3) What is the cost per house?

(4) What is the size in—

(a) squares;

(b) rooms?

(5) Of what materials will the houses be constructed?

(6) When will full details be made available?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, subject to completion and execution of the contract agreement and settlement of specifications.

(2) The contract is for 900 houses subject to specified conditions.

(3) The contract price cannot be disclosed until the contract agreement and specifications have been completed and signed.

(4) (a) Eight hundred and thirty-five square feet.

(b) Four rooms and conveniences.

(5) Timber frame, tile roof.

(6) When contract documents and specifications are completed.

*(b) As to War Service Homes Act.*

Mr. GRIFFITH asked the Premier:

With reference to a question, without notice, asked by me on the 13th September—

(1) Has the Government received any information from the Commonwealth Government on the matter of obtaining a more equitable increase in the maximum amount now permitted, namely £2,000, to be granted on first mortgage under the War Service Homes Act?

(2) If so, what is the Commonwealth Government's intentions?

(3) If no advice has been received, will the Government undertake to pursue this matter without further delay?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) The Director of War Service Homes advised the Housing Commission it was not intended at present to increase the maximum amount of advances under the War Service Homes Act.

(2) Mr. Casey, the Minister for Housing, stated last week that the Government was unlikely to increase the maximum amount made available for War Service Homes. He could not hold out any hope for an upward revision of the figure soon because of the general budgetary circumstances.

(3) In view of the recent increase in the basic wage, the matter will again be taken up with the Commonwealth authorities.

#### NORTH-WEST.

*As to Tabling Development Committee's Minutes.*

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (without notice) asked the Premier:

Will he make available and lay on the Table minutes of all meetings of the North-West and Kimberley Development Committees for the past three years?

The PREMIER replied:

I do not know that I can give this undertaking, because I am not sure that minutes of all these meetings have been kept.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: If they have been kept will you make them available?

The PREMIER: If they have been kept, I do not see that there would be any objection to tabling them. But I cannot give any undertaking that minutes have been kept of all meetings.

#### RENT INCREASES.

*As to Applications to Fremantle Court.*

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

It is freely stated in Fremantle that practically every application for an increase in rent which has been made to the local court during the last three months has been granted, and in some cases the increases have been 100 per cent. Will the Minister have a return prepared and tabled showing particulars of all applications for an increase in rent which has been made to the Fremantle court during the last three months and the decisions made in each case?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

If the information is available in the form required by the hon. member, I will have a return prepared and tabled.

#### HOSPITALS.

*As to Nurses' Quarters at K.E.M.H.*

Hon. A. H. PANTON (without notice) asked the Minister for Health:

Can she give any indication when the nurses' quarters at King Edward Memorial Hospital will be completed, thus making more room for patients?

The MINISTER replied:

I will endeavour to obtain the information required by the hon. member and will supply it to him as soon as it is available. We are at present endeavouring to get accommodation for the nurses in order that the wards may be occupied by maternity cases.

#### RAILWAYS.

*As to Departmental Report.*

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Last week the member for Kalgoorlie asked me, "When will the Railway Commissioners' annual report for 1949-50 be ready for Tabling?" I have made some inquiries in the matter and can now inform the hon. member that the Commissioner for Railways assures me that the report is expected to be available before the end of the current session of Parliament.

#### BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

#### BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1. Electoral Act Amendment.
2. Health Act Amendment.
3. Prices Control Act Amendment (Continuance).

Transmitted to the Council.

#### BILL—ROADS AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE STATE HOUSING COMMISSION AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

*In Committee.*

Resumed from the 12th October. Mr. Perkins in the Chair the Honorary Minister for Housing in charge of the Bill.

Clause 6—Power to enter into agreements and supplementary agreements (partly considered):

Mr. STYANTS: When progress was reported the Committee was discussing Clause 6 and I had voiced my objection to the fact that the Bill contains no provision as to what form the agreements shall take. The Minister stated that it has been found in practice that the agreements are too rigid and I agree that some elasticity may be desirable. The Minister said that all that is required is something less than is provided in the present legislation, which states that the whole of the general rate of the area concerned shall be refunded annually to the State Housing Commission in repayment of a loan made to the local authority, but the Bill does not provide that that shall be the nature of the agreement.

There are three statutes concerned under this Bill: the State Housing Act, the Municipal Corporations Act and the Road Districts Act. I do not object to the State Housing Commission and local authorities

being able to formulate suitable agreements, but members should be informed as to what provision is to be made in that regard. I move an amendment—

That a new subclause be added as follows:—

(4) All agreements or supplementary agreements entered into under the provisions of this section shall be made an annual report and laid upon the Table of the House.

Whilst it is a weakness for the nature of the agreement not be contained in the Act as it is at present, it will at least enable members to keep in touch with the type of agreements and the conditions contained therein which are entered into from time to time between the State Housing Commission and local governing bodies.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. member wish to insert these words as a new clause or as an addition to the existing subclause?

Mr. STYANTS: It will be new subclause (4).

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This amendment is quite fair and I have no intention of opposing it.

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

Clause 7, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

#### **BILL—THE FREMANTLE GAS AND COKE COMPANY'S ACT AMENDMENT**

##### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. D. Brand—Greenough) [4.55] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has come to this House from another place and is similar to that introduced in 1947. On making a study of the debate on the Bill of that year I find that it certainly caused much discussion which proved very helpful because following Bills have brought about great improvements in the supply, quality and pressure of the gas supplied, particularly by the Fremantle Gas & Coke Company. In that year Parliament agreed to a Bill authorising the company to increase its capital of £120,000 in £1 shares to £250,000 in £1 shares and its borrowing capacity from £60,000 to £125,000. On that occasion we were told that it was the intention of the company to erect its works on a site of some 47 acres which it had obtained at Spearwood and that it further intended to proceed with the erection of the works as speedily as possible.

As all of us are doubtless aware, it is difficult to obtain the necessary steel and requisite materials for such structures, especially those erected for the generating of gas. Also, in the meantime, costs have risen considerably. I am told that the

company intended not only to erect part of its works at Spearwood but also to shift the whole of its interests ultimately from Cantonment-street, Fremantle, which site it has occupied since 1886, and which, of course, is now much too small for its proposed development. The measure now before the House aims at further increasing the authorised capital of the company from £250,000 to £750,000 and its borrowing capacity from £125,000 to £375,000. This would appear to be a substantial increase and, in fact, is such and I have endeavoured, in the meantime, to obtain from the company a few points which I could place before the House in order that the Bill might be passed, and thus approval granted for the increase in its authorised capital and borrowing power.

Mr. Marshall: Do you not think that this measure should be introduced as a private Bill?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It was not introduced as such last time, although there is no reason why it should not have been introduced by a private member. In placing its request before the Premier and myself, the company hoped that, with the support of the Government, this Bill would successfully pass through the House. As members probably know, the area of this company's works is an extremely wide one and covers districts where the State Housing Commission has been most active, and therefore there is an ever-increasing demand not only for extensions but also, in consequence, for enlargement of its existing mains. The State Housing Commission has been pressing the company to take some action in that regard in order that gas might be laid on when its houses are completed.

The company is seeking to increase its capital in order that it might proceed with its works at Spearwood, but unfortunately, and as I have already said, owing to the lack of skilled labour and of material, and the inability of contractors to obtain the necessary steel, it is doubtful whether any part of the works will be completed within the next 12 or 18 months. The material which has been ordered from local sources and from the Broken Hill Pty. Ltd. has not been forthcoming. It seems almost unnecessary to tell the House that great demands have been made on steel supplies, whether of local origin or from overseas.

The member for Guildford-Midland asked me in a question, without notice, why the Fremantle Gas & Coke Company could carry out certain extensions when the Gas & Electricity Department could not lay mains to Mjdland and Bassendean because of a shortage of steel. I would point out that only a limited supply of steel is available and the Government has been responsible for assisting the Fremantle Gas and Coke Co. to obtain the steel it has been able to secure. In any event, I should say that these works must.

be dealt with in order of priority, and the need for increased and better services at Fremantle, the necessity for which is obvious.

Mr. May: Has the company already started building operations?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I understand it has. There is necessity for the company to undertake a very heavy programme of relaying mains and, in the process, to enlarge them. The cost of that work is estimated to involve the expenditure of something like £50,000. Steel is necessary for the manufacture of the pipes and, from the information I have been able to gather, the contractors, Hume Steel Ltd., will not be able to complete their contract until at least 1954. In the meantime, it is reasonable to assume that there will be almost immediately a substantial increase in the cost of the production of steel, whether here or overseas.

I understand that the company does not propose to issue a quantity of new shares at once, but is holding 70,000 unallotted shares which will be offered to shareholders, employees and the public during the present half-year. This will assist largely in reducing the present bank overdraft of £100,000. I understand that the intention of the company is to avail itself of the additional capitalisation of £750,000 and the substantial increase in its borrowing capacity over a period of 10 years or more. That, of course, envisages a long-range programme, and it is very necessary in times such as these that there shall be some such authorisation of finance in order to permit the company to plan on a long-term basis. It may be interesting to members to know some of the costs that the company has to face. The present commitments include the following:—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Woodall Duckham Ltd., new works, Spearwood	105,660	0	0			
Less expenditure to date . . . . .	21,242	0	0			
Hume Steel Ltd., piping Less expenditure to date . . . . .	35,200	0	0	84,418	0	0
	9,382	16	6			
Buildings at Spearwood for governor and meter house . . . .				12,000	0	0
Hume Steel Ltd., 50,000- gallon tank . . . .				4,074	0	0
Stewart & Lloyds Ltd., piping . . . . .				1,860	0	0
Monteath Bros., piping .				2,272	0	0
Repairs, two retorts . .				2,500	0	0
Boiler mountings, gov- ernors, lavatory block, motors, valves, road- way new works, fire bricks . . . . .				1,931	0	0
Total . . . . .	£134,872	2	6			

These figures are, of course, subject to the rise and fall clauses in the several contracts, and to date I understand that the increase involved in that respect is between £30,000 and £40,000. In the past, there has been, I believe, some justifiable criticism of the quality of the gas produced

by the company but, since the debate that took place in this House, a very substantial effort has been made by the concern to improve the standard.

Mr. May: The company is using Collie coal now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is so, and we are happy to know that it can do so. I point out, too, that the Government is using three times as much Collie coal as formerly in the generation of gas. Upon inquiry of the local governing authorities in the areas concerned, I find that they are more or less satisfied with the efforts of the company to improve the standard of the gas supply. I have letters from each of the local authorities concerned dealing with that phase, but I do not think it necessary for me to read them to the House. It is sufficient to say that there is a definite indication in each and every one of them that the people concerned are satisfied that improvements have been made in the gas supply. In fact, some say they are completely satisfied with the service rendered by the company.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Have you a letter from the Melville Road Board?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What does the board say?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The letter from the Melville Road Board is as follows:—

Further to my telephonic conversation with your chairman, I desire to confirm my advice to the effect that the gas supplied by your company for householders in this district, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is very satisfactory. At all events, I can assure you that I have received no complaints.

It is the desire, however, of most people resident in this area that the gas mains be extended right throughout the Melville district, and it is hoped that this will be effected at the earliest possible date.

Mr. May: How far do the operations of the company extend towards Perth?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think they extend for a distance of five miles from the Town Hall and out towards Bicton.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Up to Swanbourne.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, I think so.

Mr. May: Why did the company by-pass Melville?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I must ask for notice of that question, because I cannot answer it.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: The company did not by-pass the area, because Melville is on the perimeter of its circle, but the company extended its operations to Cottesloe and Peppermint Grove, and excluded Bicton, which is in portion of the Melville area.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Possibly some domestic difficulties were involved. Sufficient pressure may have been brought to bear to secure certain priorities.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is not the answer.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** If the hon. member knows the answer, he can tell the House.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Yours is only a guess.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** At any rate, it is a matter for the residents of Fremantle, Melville and the other districts concerned to deal with. As indicated in the letters to which I have referred, there has been a general improvement in the situation, and satisfaction is expressed that the company has been producing a reasonable standard of gas.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Do you know why it has not declared the basic price?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** No. The chairman of the State Electricity Commission, Mr. Dumas, has examined the proposals of the company, and agrees that a very substantial increase of capital is required to enable the contemplated works to be carried out. In the circumstances, I feel sure that the House will accept the Bill and authorise the increased capitalisation and borrowing powers of the company. It should not be necessary for me to point out that the Government is not involved in any way financially. The company is to raise the money itself with the object of rendering better service to its clients. Obviously, it would not do that merely for charity but, from observations, I can say that at present the company is doing a good job and carrying out essential work. I trust the Bill will not have the very rough passage similar legislation experienced in the past simply because of anomalies that existed, seeing that those difficulties have, to a degree, been ironed out. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. B. Sleeman, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 19th September.

**MR. HOAR (Warren) [5.11]:** The Government desires to amend the parent Act in several directions. Legislation along these lines has been urged by representatives of many road districts, mainly as a result of their experiences during the disastrous bushfires of last March, when many hundred thousand acres were burnt out and the timber on a vast area of first-class forest country was either destroyed or severely injured. As a result, during recent months meetings have been held by road boards, farmers' unions,

fire brigades and other bodies, all of whom have offered to the Government, through the proper channels, some contribution towards the desired objective. They have pointed out what, in their opinion, ought to be done to improve the situation. I assume that the Government has given due consideration to the recommendations received, and the Bill has emerged as a result.

First of all, the Bill seeks to provide additional road board representation on the advisory committee. Secondly, it aims at striking out the restrictive date of the 15th January for burning off on railway property and forest land, leaving the extended period entirely at the discretion of the Minister. Thirdly, the Bill provides for the tightening up of the conditions dealing with clover burning, and fourthly, it seeks to provide local authorities with more extensive powers than they now possess to order fire breaks to be cleared or the removal of anything considered conducive to an outbreak or extension of a bushfire. Fifthly, it seeks to provide greater power for bushfire control officers, and a considerable degree of local autonomy. Sixthly, it aims at a most important provision, which is that it shall not be a defence to a claim for damage, loss or injury in respect of doing anything at all, that it was done by or pursuant to the authority of the Act.

That summarises the provisions the Minister has in mind to tighten up the law and permit of better methods for the prevention of fires and their control. Taking the Bill as a whole, I have no objection to it whatever, but in my opinion it goes only halfway. A portion of the Bill seeks to amend the Act by tightening up some of the existing provisions and other portions in relaxing them, with which I agree, but casting the whole of the responsibility and expense of the extra work of the investigation on the road boards.

Nobody could offer any serious objection to the first three or four of the proposed amendments. Members appreciate that, in such a large State, the position of high summer or fire hazard differs in various zones, and that it would be improper and unfair not to have adequate road board representation from all those areas. The Minister's proposal in regard to clover burning is a very good one and, if properly carried out, should go a long way towards preventing fires from getting away from those farmers who find it necessary for their livelihood to do a special kind of burning in respect to clover.

The greater powers to be given to local authorities to order the clearing of effective firebreaks will represent a great improvement on the existing Act. The Minister is seeking power to supersede the date of the 15th January laid down in the Act for the restriction of burning on

railway reserves and forest lands, and I am heartily in accord with it. The very fact that the Government has at last broken away from setting a particular date suggests that it would be a good idea to carry the principle still further and do away with all the restrictive dates relating to the protective burning period as well as the opening of the burning season.

In the past too much emphasis has been placed upon the Act or its regulations laying down specific dates from which farmers, the Railway Department or Forests Department may burn, whereas the whole weakness of existing legislation insofar as damage done by fires is concerned can be attributed to the fact that the dates have been prescribed in such a manner as to permit of no discretion to circumvent them or allow of fires being lit outside the prescribed period. There is no flexibility in such legislation. A great deal of damage done in the past has been due to the attempts to police the Act under a system of remote control by people lacking local knowledge of conditions, which can change from day to day, and, as a result, we have had experience of farmers, for instance, while acting quite within their legal rights, setting fires going at times when the danger was probably greater than it would have been at any other part of the year.

Bushfires are no respecters of persons or of Acts of Parliament, and no man can set a date on a fire hazard. Because of this, I am pleased to find provision in the Bill to make a complete change. The Bill provides for the responsibility to rest upon the rightful shoulders where fires are deliberately lit either in or out of the burning season. I am not certain how it applies in the wheatbelt but in the heavy timber areas of the South-West, damage has been caused through fires being lighted at the opening part of the season and then getting away. The regulations have stipulated a certain date upon which it was lawful to commence burning and farmers have acted within their legal rights in starting operations, regardless of the fact that the conditions have often been such as to make it a positive danger to light fires at that time.

Where a claim is lodged for damage, loss or injury caused by a fire, a farmer will no longer be able to base his defence on the fact that he was acting within the authority of the Act. At first glance, this may appear to be a very harsh provision to include in the law, because it would be hardly fair to stipulate a certain period when burning might take place and then prosecute a man for any damage resulting during that period. However, a further scrutiny of the Bill discloses that a completely new authority is to be set up—one that will supersede the Act in the matter of authority for the lighting of fires. In this second reading debate, that is the portion of the Bill in which

I am most interested. It will give to bush fire control officers the power to prohibit or postpone the lighting of fires which, in their opinion, might become a source of danger through escaping control.

During the bush fires that occurred in March last, there were repeated hostile comments about the Act, which enabled farmers to burn, regardless of the change of weather that could occur overnight, and I have always contended when speaking on this subject that it is the competent man on the spot, the man with training and experience, who alone should have authority to determine whether a fire should be lighted or not. This provision is the real core of the Bill but, as I have stated, it goes only halfway.

The Bill seeks to set up certain conditions under which road board authorities and local bushfire brigades can operate, and then the Government wipes its hands completely of the extra cost that will be involved. This legislation is going to impose a tremendous responsibility, and the Government is now seeking to transfer it to the shoulders of the local bushfire authorities. It will be compulsory for them to set up a chain of bushfire brigades who, during the course of the coming summer, will be expected to make the most exhaustive investigations through the whole of their areas before they dare give permission to a farmer to light a fire. That is what the Bill really means.

Take a farmer who, under the Act, is entitled to light a fire in the proper season, provided he has given two days' notice to the owner or occupier of the adjoining lands, to the bushfire control officer and to the forest officer where the land is situated within two miles of a State forest. When he has done this and made adequate provision in the way of firebreaks and arranged for three men to be in constant attendance, when he has done all the things the Act prescribes, the farmer will be expected under this measure to await the determination of the local bushfire control authority before he dares to light a fire. Otherwise, he will become liable for any damage or injury that may be done.

In this respect I hope the Minister will agree to one of the words in the Bill being altered. Provision is made in the Bill that a bush fire control officer, after having satisfied himself that the lighting of a fire could possibly result in its getting away and doing untold damage, may prohibit the lighting of such a fire. I contend that it should be mandatory for the fire control officer to prohibit the lighting of such a fire if satisfied that it might do harm. Therefore I hope the Minister will agree to strike out the word "may" and insert the word "shall" in its stead.

If the Bill be passed in its present form, though I hope the Government will agree to some amendments, the new provisions

will entail a great deal of prior inspection by bushfire control officers or other appointed officers. In the past the date has been fixed, and we have trusted to luck as to whether a fire lighted at that time would become dangerous or not. Under this measure, however, the local bushfire authorities will be required to have an exact knowledge, so far as one can obtain it, before granting permission to light fires. To do this, provided the inspection work is done as it should be, additional cost will be imposed on local authorities which, in turn, means that extra rates must be imposed on the ratepayers.

This is where the Government should step in and do something. There should be some form of State aid, and I am suggesting by an amendment on the notice paper that it should be on a pound-for-pound basis with local authorities in order that a network of fire brigades may be established, that a proper system of inspection may be instituted, and that inspections may be made at the proper time in order that the best results may be obtained.

The Premier: How much would that cost the Treasury?

Mr. HOAR: I have not worked it out. I will leave that to the Premier.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Then it will never be worked out.

Mr. HOAR: I am indeed surprised at the Premier's trying to put a price on a bushfire.

The Premier: I am not trying to put a price on a bushfire.

Mr. HOAR: Had the local authorities in past years been afforded some assistance and encouragement to form bushfire brigades and build up standard equipment, many of the fires in the Nornalup-Denmark area would not have occurred or, had they broken out, they would not have extended as they did. Under the Act, the whole of the responsibility of assisting local bushfire brigades rests on the local authority concerned, the State Government doing nothing at all. The Commonwealth Government does give some assistance, and if it is proper for the Commonwealth to give assistance, it is only right that the State should bear its share.

The Commonwealth does not make a direct grant of money to bushfire brigades, but it assists them by way of sales tax exemption and remission of import duties on fire fighting equipment and a 75 per cent. rebate on telephone services. That, I imagine, is a very useful form of assistance, but the cost of this important work is borne entirely by the ratepayers of the districts concerned. Where there is a rich road board, it can engage adequately in this work by encouraging its fire brigade and providing suitable equipment, but in

the poorer areas we find no such equipment. Mr. Miles, a forests officer, said that the worst of the fires last March occurred in the Nornalup-Denmark area where there was only one fire control officer for every 10,000 acres. I was helping in that district for three days and, instead of people putting out fires, they were lighting them to save their own homes. They did that because there was no organisation.

If we are going to thrust responsibility on the shoulders of local authorities, we must put them in a position to do the work at the proper time. Unless the Government is prepared to give some such assistance the Bill will be largely ineffective. It will be all right so far as road board representation on the advisory committee is concerned, and so far as it deals with control of clover burning and other matters of that description, but the core of the measure is this: Who is to control and authorise the lighting of fires? Whoever has that control has a tremendous responsibility. It will not be any good, if we have another disaster such as we had earlier this year, for the Minister to point to this amendment and say, "We did our best." Unless the Government is prepared to provide some assistance to the road boards, then it cannot very well blame them for bushfires that get away.

The secret is to have a network of fire brigades adequate equipped, and, furthermore some attempt ought to be made to standardise equipment. At present, three different types of hydrants are used throughout the Commonwealth, and the hose connections and joints are of different sizes and shapes. We should insist on standardisation. That should be done, not only from the point of view of fires as we know them, but also in the event of this country being embroiled in a war, because we know what could happen to our wheat lands and forest areas if they were subjected to some of the devices for starting fires that were tried out during the last war, when certain flakes of inflammable material were dropped overnight, from aircraft, and ignited on the following day by the action of the sun.

Unless the State seriously attempts to provide assistance, other than what is included in the Bill, then undoubtedly a situation will develop such as we saw last March, if not worse. To attempt, under the clause relating to punishable offences, to stop a man from lighting firebreaks, or burning back as we know it, when a fire is already under way, would be a tragedy if we had not provided assistance and equipment to the local authority concerned. I could not imagine any farmer in the Nornalup-Denmark area last March waiting until he got authority from a bushfire control officer before he burnt back from his house, for, as Mr. Miles said, in that area there is only one fire control officer for every 10,000 acres. Whilst I think the

Bill is attempting to do a certain amount of good in regard to the prevention and the extinguishing of fires, unless it is followed up by a positive form of assistance to the road boards for the establishment of fire brigades with suitable equipment, I think its real purpose will be defeated. Nevertheless, I support the second reading.

**MR. HEARMAN** (Blackwood) [5.35]: The Bill will increase the powers of local authorities, and, particularly bushfire control officers, and I think that is necessary. I do not share all the views of the member for Warren. Because I have had considerable experience as a bushfire control officer, I know some of the practical difficulties that confront us. Personally I welcome the increased responsibilities and powers that will be granted. One of my principal grievances has always been that a bushfire control officer could do very little until a fire had actually broken out. He could then order people to burn, and do all sorts of things. I think the authority to order the postponing of a burn is essential. I do not quite agree with the interpretation of that portion of the Bill put forward by the member for Warren. My conception of it is this: As a bushfire control officer I am willing to let people burn whenever possible.

I believe, within limitations, that the more we burn, the less fires we have, and to prohibit burning on occasions is simply to bottle up trouble. For that reason I would have no desire to prevent a man from burning if he wanted to burn. Under the Bill, if a man wants to burn he will have to give four days' notice to the local authority and the bushfire control officer. I do not think any reasonable bushfire control officer would object to a man's burning. The only thing is that in the four days other fires might start. On the day a man intended to burn, there might be so many fires that the control officer would want him to hold off for a while. That is the intention of that provision in the Bill.

I welcome the measure because under the Act if a man gave notice and otherwise complied with the Act, the control officer could not stop him from burning. I have myself been placed in the position of having a neighbour on one side complying with all the requirements and wanting to burn on the Monday, and the neighbour on the other side wishing to do exactly the same thing. I was in the position of having fires on both sides of me, and being powerless to prevent either of them.

**Mr. Hoar:** What would you do in areas where there were no bushfire brigades?

**Mr. HEARMAN:** It would make no difference. I would still say that one fire at a time was enough, and I would stop one or the other according to which way the wind was blowing. The question of bushfire brigades rests with the local

authority. If it wishes to have one, it forms one, and if not it does nothing. My principal quarrel with local authorities—and I have an amendment on the notice paper dealing with this point, and it may be subject to criticism—is not that they are doing too much, but that they do not exercise half the powers under the Act to which they are entitled. If they had exercised all their powers, I consider we would have not have had half the fires that we have had in the past; and I also think that we would have had more prosecutions of people for improperly lighting fires than we have had. A local authority is entitled to prosecute, and any individual can instigate proceedings against a man who breaches the Act. But in point of fact, in only very few cases are proceedings taken. I can understand the reluctance of a man to prosecute his next door neighbour, but there is no excuse for a local authority's failing to live up to its responsibilities.

I know, in my own district, of several blatant breaches of the Act that occurred this year, but in not one case was action taken. We could not persuade the neighbours to take action, and the local authority would not. Consequently the Act has been held in contempt by some people. That is bad. My amendment is brought forward in an endeavour to give the Minister some power to cope with the situation which could arise if there were a bad fire hazard in a dry year and the local authority would do nothing. As a result of the local authority's inactivity, the Act becomes inoperative, and I think the Minister should then be in a position to step in and appoint someone to do the job; and that is the intention of my amendment. I realise that it might be contentious, and I would, therefore, like members to give some thought to this aspect. If they care to introduce other amendments I would like to see them.

We must do something about the local authority which does not measure up to its responsibilities. One of the difficulties, as the member for Warren has pointed out, is that the Act is administered by local authorities, fire control officers and bushfire brigade officers. Practically all of them act in a voluntary capacity, and unless they administer the statute in their own districts, it, in effect, becomes inoperative. In my electorate this year we had, in one road board area, a bushfire control officer and a member of the road board prosecuted for breaches of the Bush Fires Act. In another instance, the chairman of a road board was prosecuted. In these circumstances I feel that the Act is not being properly administered by the local authorities, and I want the Minister to be able to take action to make them accept their responsibilities.

**Mr. Hoar:** They want encouragement.

Mr. HEARMAN: I think a good whipping does not hurt a lazy horse sometimes although, on other occasions, it might be all right to encourage him. Those local authorities that have not appointed sufficient control officers, and have not formed an adequate number of bushfire brigades, are falling down on the job. The local authorities are not put to the terrific cost that people might at first imagine. In any case it is the responsibility of the local authorities. I would far rather—and so would everyone else with whom I have discussed this matter—put in a week's work preventing bushfires than put in the same time flogging them out, and then trying to make good the damage. I think prevention is far better than cure, and the preventive clauses are the ones that are so necessary. For the past three years I have endeavoured to persuade my own local authority to have some breaks made along a certain section of the Preston line.

Last year we had some bad fires, and there were no breaks. Those fires burnt portion of my property. This year I was able to influence the board—it was the third year I had tried—to have the breaks made. Farmers made the breaks and despite the fact that this year the fire hazard was very much greater than it had been for many years, we did not have a single fire get away from that railway line in the 24 miles. That proves that if a local authority can be made to do the job it can go a tremendous way towards saving some of these fires. We all know that the railways have a problem and that everybody blames the railways for lighting all these fires. But, nobody ever seems to blame the local authorities for not insisting that adequate breaks are made in dangerous spots.

In that connection I would like a statement from the Minister, when he closes the debate, as to how he defines, "land used for railway purposes." In many cases the railways burn on their own land along the railway line, but often the sparks drop some two, three or four chains inside private property and start fires there. In my own area, this year, we burnt up to four chains inside private property and that was most effective. I think the fact is well covered by the Act, but I would like the assurance of the Minister on that point.

In conclusion I would like to stress the importance of passing this measure. Local authorities know, and know very well, that this Bill is before the House. A number of them are perhaps rather more fire conscious than they have been in years past, and they are very anxious to know what is in the Bill and what their additional obligations will be. I think it is necessary that there should be no undue—shall we say—waste of time in the passage of this legislation because the fire season is fast approaching. If we do not get this legislation through with reasonable expedition, I feel that it may be too late to be fully effective

for the next bushfire season and we may not receive the advantages that will, in my opinion, be derived from the Bill.

The legislation is good and sound, and all it requires now is adequate implementation by the local authorities and the bushfire control officers and full acceptance of responsibility on the part of those people. I know that one amendment on the Notice Paper provides for a certain amount of payment for any costs involved to local authorities, but I think they should set to work and accept their responsibilities. If they do that then I for one will support any move they may make to the Minister for assistance. Unless they are prepared to earn their money as it were—and in a great many instances they do not—then they cannot expect assistance. One instance where this happened was the case quoted by the member for Warren where there was one fire control officer to 10,000 acres. The local authority there could have done better and had more fire breaks.

The question of equipment also comes into it. I know that our own bushfire brigades are equipped but farmers need knapsack sprays which, in many instances, they have in their own interests. That is a very commendable spirit, but I feel that people who are willing to accept responsibility should be dealt with sympathetically by the Minister in any approach they make. However, I am sure the Minister will deal with such people in that manner. Again I want to urge the necessity for expedition in the passage of this legislation and I support the Bill.

MR. HILL (Albany) [5.50]: I support the Bill and the remarks of the two previous speakers. I have had all the experience of bushfires I ever want to have, particularly this year. Our main aim should be to prevent fires and in our heavily timbered country, if we do not have controlled fires, we will have uncontrolled fires. Last year was a very bad one for fires and many which broke out were due to the Act which fixes the closing of the burning off season and the opening of the season. Last spring was very wet and the result was that the open season closed too early. We had a long, dry summer and the burning off season opened too soon. The closing and opening of seasons must be fixed by men on the spot who have a knowledge of local conditions and the special conditions which are prevailing in that particular year.

It is no use thinking about breaks in our heavily timbered country. My property is on the Kalgan River which is up to 100 yards wide in places. Even though the river is that wide it is not sufficient break for fires. I have seen fires jump from one side of the river to the other. One day a fire was on one side and jumped across and the next day, when the wind changed, it jumped back to the other side. At Denmark this year a hay

shed caught fire even though the main fire was about a mile away. It is absolutely essential, in our country, that we have controlled fires and the worst offender in my electorate is the Government itself.

The two previous speakers mentioned the Denmark area, where they have one bushfire control officer to every 10,000 acres. That is because the bulk of the country in the Denmark area is Government land and a proper controlled burning is not carried out. One of the districts that suffered badly last year was the Lindesay district. The fire that did that damage was wilfully lit near the Hay River, about 10 miles away. The country had never been burnt under control and when the conditions became favourable it was just hell let loose in the district.

Mr. Rodoreda: What do you mean by "lit wilfully"?

Mr. HILL: It was wilfully lit by picnickers or people who were there for the day. A friend of mine saw tracks but he was never able to get sufficient information to prosecute the people. The police should have the power to accept the responsibility, when such a fire is lit, to find out who committed such an act. A fire control officer should have very wide powers, and no fire should be lit unless he gives the authority to do so. The fire control authority should have sufficient power to say, "You shall not light a fire this morning." It is no use having to give two or three days' notice.

I will give members an instance of what occurred on my own property. A man had a lot of bulldozing done about 1½ miles away from my house. He gave me notice on Monday night that he intended to burn but told me that he would have a big gang of men looking after it. The intention was to light the fire next morning. There was a north-west wind blowing which was very suitable for me and it was a roaring fire. I was on the look-out for it, but I had to laugh when I saw one of the men doing his job in a motor launch. He was one of a certain gang which was dealing with a certain section of the fire. One of the men was only just saved in time because when the other men found him he was unconscious and the fire a few yards away. The next day a change in the wind was forecast and I can assure members I was very worried about it.

I rang up the secretary of the road board and said, "We are in for a bad time and you had better look out." It was simply wonderful to see the way volunteers came out to help us. The Salvation Army set to work cutting sandwiches and ministers were out there helping to fight the fire.

The Minister for Lands: I am glad the ministers were helping.

Mr. HILL: I meant ministers of religion. Some of the people who volunteered had to fight fires on their way out and that leads me to another important question. It should be the responsibility of the Government automatically to insure everyone who is fighting bushfires. It is no use saying that we have bushfire control officers to do the work, because other people help. One of these fires was 23 miles from Denmark and there was no bushfire control officer anywhere near. I stood up with two other men, who were on their way through, to fight the fire if necessary. Under the suggested amendment, they would not be insured. It is the responsibility of the Government to stand behind the financing of local governing bodies and to assist them by Acts of Parliament, but leave the control to the men who have the local knowledge and are on the spot.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [5.55]: I want to commend this Bill to the House for its favourable consideration and I believe that local governing authorities should be vested with further powers. Every effort should be made to assist local authorities to see that bushfires are prevented because the fires of last March caused havoc to both primary producers and the wealth of our forests. A certain amount of credit should be given to the Forests Department and its officers in the country for the work they did in assisting to put out the bushfires during that very bad period.

I am sure the Conservator of Forests is fully conscious of the need for fire protection and his officers in the country are trained and have given valuable assistance in the checking of fires. The main thing is that prevention is better than cure and I hope that the Forests Department, while it is doing very good work in this direction, will see that if possible a greater number of officers is available in the areas where there are huge tracts of forest country. In the electorate which I have the honour to represent, agricultural settlements are separated by long tracts of forest country and in many cases this makes them isolated. The local authority, while playing a prominent part in the eradication of bushfires, should have the full co-operation of the Forests Department's officers in the districts concerned and I know that that co-operation is forthcoming.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Government for doing what it did for the sufferers of bushfires in March of this year. In the Boyanup-Elgin district practically all the fences were razed to the ground, but the Government and the Conservator of Forests set aside certain areas of forestry land for the use of settlers to provide them with fence posts so that they could re-erect their fences. Difficulty has been experienced in obtaining fencing wire, but I believe the Government has endeavoured to do its best to see that the

settlers are not unduly handicapped. The Government has also assisted in the re-erection of culverts and bridges where they have been burnt out. Again, the Elgin bridge, linking up the Elgin siding with a great number of settlers were completely burnt out. The Government took immediate action and a new bridge is almost completed. On behalf of the residents of that district I express appreciation to the Government for the action it has taken in the matter. I support the Bill.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay—in reply) [5.59]: I wish to thank members who have contributed to the debate on this Bill. I also realise that members who have not spoken accept their responsibility regarding bush-fire control and I will receive their support. Great interest has been taken in bushfire control owing to the disastrous fires of this year. Those fires played havoc, but they have livened up interest in the control of fires. The bushfire committee has been working continuously in an endeavour to improve the Act. This amending Bill is in fact the result of its work and, as I have already stated, the local governing authorities have full representation on it. The member for Warren made a number of helpful suggestions. He said the Bill only went half way. In dealing with the hazards of bushfires and their control we have to give the matter very serious consideration, and I feel that for the time being this Bill is fulfilling the requirements. There is, however, nothing to stop members in any session of Parliament from bringing forward any helpful suggestions which they may have to offer as a result of their experience during the past year.

It was also mentioned that the Commonwealth Government rendered assistance to local governing authorities. The Commonwealth Government does not render any assistance to local authorities. What the Commonwealth Government did, as it has done in other States, was to assist those that have been caused distress through fire damage. That is the part played by the Commonwealth Government. I am not in favour of paying local authorities on a pound for pound basis. I feel that if the committee makes a recommendation so far as assistance to local authorities is concerned, we could well consider it. I would like to make this point.

The men we have today who are experienced in bushfire fighting and control are those who volunteer to do that work. They are keenly interested in it, and give their services willingly. Most of them are producers in the district, they have their incomes, and they are working in the interests and protection of those incomes. I do not think local governing authorities are put to any great expense regarding bushfires control because it is mostly a voluntary service. That voluntary service should be encouraged, and I hope the hon.

member will not press his amendment in that regard. Another amendment he intends to move—and I know I should wait until we are in Committee before dealing with it—is the altering of the word “may” to “shall.” This is one of the occasions when we must leave it to the discretion of the bushfire control officers. We should not make it mandatory. All sorts of things happen in a bushfire and different kinds of action is necessary.

Mr. Marshall: What about a slow fire?

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** There are slow fires and quick ones, as was discovered last season. It all depends upon the fires and the wind. I know that members who have spoken all come from fire hazard districts and they have a full appreciation of how quickly these fires travel. The member for Blackwood asked me to give some clarification of the clause dealing with railway lands. The railways have two responsibilities. First of all there is the protective burning along the railway lines. Their responsibility is up to the boundary fence and it is the settlers' responsibility to continue the break after that. The railways do have control of a lot of other land—such as lands reserved to them as water catchment areas. In some instances they have a dam in these water catchment areas, and others they are holding in reserve.

Mr. Hearman: My object is to provide security for private land and the Act only makes provision for burning on Government land.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** I understand the point. In introducing this Bill I explained that along the railway line there are a lot of damp and swampy areas which may not be burned on the dates fixed. I agree with the member for Warren when he said that it was of great importance that we should depart from restrictive dates and leave it to the good sense of the control officers through the Minister as to the burning of these areas. As the season progresses those areas produce a great crop of herbage, grass, etc., that cannot be burnt at the time but which must be burnt, in the interests of safety, at a later date. I do not need to say more. I know every member in this Chamber accepts his responsibility and is only too willing to assist in making this measure effective.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Section 11 amended.

Mr. HEARMAN: I move an amendment—

That a new paragraph be inserted as follows:—

- (d) adding after the word "situated" in line six of subparagraph (ii) of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) the words "and has obtained the approval in writing of the bushfire control officer, or if no bushfire control officer has been appointed, the approval in writing of the secretary, to his burning such bush."

The object of this amendment is to endeavour to protect both the fire control officer and the person who wishes to do some burning from any misunderstanding which might arise between them. It is necessary for the man, who intends to burn, to notify in writing the bushfire control officer and the secretary of the local authority. I should like to see the bushfire control officer acknowledge that notification in writing, because the position could arise where the bushfire control officer may want to add some qualification. The Bill does give him an opportunity to do that. It is possible that in any subsequent dispute or litigation an unscrupulous bushfire control officer might deny having given a man authority or of having placed some stipulation in a verbal agreement. If he put it in writing this would be avoided, and it might protect the man from victimisation. Both the bushfire control officer and the person applying for permission to burn should have it stated quite clearly where they stand.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I can accept this amendment because it protects the person who has been given permission to burn.

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

Clause 8—Section 12 (a) amended.

Mr. HEARMAN: I move an amendment—

That at the end of proposed new Subsection (b) (2) the following words be added "nor to any tractor while being used in an orchard."

The object of this amendment is to cover the case of tractors working only in orchards. In my electorate there are quite a number of such machines, which have their exhausts down-swept and do not therefore comply with the requirements of this Act. In the case of orchards, there is no fear of fire hazard. Vertical exhausts and any projection sticking upwards are inconvenient to the operator who has to work close to his trees. I cannot see any danger in the use of tractors in orchards.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I agree with the member for Blackwood that fire hazards are very meagre in an orchard. After all, we have headlands in orchards—they may be heavily grassed—and I think that that should be taken into consideration. I am, however, inclined to accept

the amendment. I do not suppose the hon. member could give an undertaking that the headlands would be ploughed in.

Mr. HEARMAN: My experience is that they always are.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then I accept the amendment.

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

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Clauses 9 to 12—agreed to.

Clause 13—Sections 31A. and 31B. added:

Mr. HEARMAN: I wish to move an amendment that after the word "officer" in line 2 of Subsection (1) of proposed new Section 31A., the words "or where no bushfire control officer has been appointed, the local authority" be inserted. This is to cover what I think is a drafting omission. It may happen that no bushfire control officer has been appointed, and it seems that in such a case the responsibility should be given to the local authority.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have an amendment before that one.

The CHAIRMAN: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I wish to move that in line 1 of Subsection (1) of proposed new Section 31A. the letter "(a)" be inserted before the word "Notwithstanding". That is to provide for a subsequent new subsection.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the Minister had better allow that amendment to be made consequentially. If this were agreed to and the Minister did not succeed with his subsequent amendment, we would have something in the Bill that was not required. If he succeeds with his further amendment, the Clerks will insert the letter "(a)" consequentially.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very well! Like the member for Blackwood, I have an amendment in line 4.

The CHAIRMAN: That is so. I think the Minister had better move his amendment first and, if the member for Blackwood desires to do so, he can move his subsequently.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subsection (1) of proposed new Section 31A. after the word "officer" the words "or in the circumstances mentioned in the next succeeding paragraph, a forest officer appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Forests Act, 1918-1931" be inserted.

The idea of this and the following amendment is to make provision for a forestry officer to have the same authority as a bushfire control officer when a fire comes within two miles of a forest boundary.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. HEARMAN: I wish now to move the amendment to which I previously referred—

That in line 2 of Subsection (1) of proposed new Section 31A. after the word "officer" the words "or where no bushfire control officer has been appointed, the local authority" be inserted.

The CHAIRMAN: That amendment will follow the one made by the Minister.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not think it conflicts with the Minister's amendment and it will tighten up the Act.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. HOAR: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subsection (1) of proposed new Section 31A. the word "may" be struck out and the word "shall" inserted in lieu.

In the course of the Minister's reply to the debate on the second reading, he raised some objection to this proposal. It is mainly on account of the Minister's reply that I insist on this amendment being put to the test. The Minister said that discretionary power should be left to the control officer. Surely the Minister can see that all the discretionary power necessary is contained in the clause itself and, if that power can be interpreted in the way I interpret it, then it becomes essential to change the word "may" to "shall". If the clause were worded differently, something along the lines that if an inspection has been made, the bushfire control officer may prohibit the lighting of a fire, I would agree. But there are certain specific instructions in this clause. It provides that a bushfire control officer may prohibit or from time to time postpone the proposed lighting of a fire where, in his opinion, the fire, if lit, would be or become a source of danger by escaping from the land on which it is proposed to be lit.

That is an entirely different set-up. The clause simply lays down something that this officer must do as a duty. He must inspect, and, having inspected and come to the conclusion that a fire about to be lit might extend and do a great deal of harm then, according to the Minister, he may or may not prohibit the lighting of that fire. Surely the Minister will agree that this Bill seeks to prevent fires, and not to put them out after they have been lit. There is in the Act itself a section which will give the Minister a lead in this direction where, in matters so important as this, previous Governments have inserted the word "shall". I refer to Part III., Section 25 of the Act. If this Bill is going to be of any value, we should make every effort to see that bushfires do not start. What chance have we if we allow, in a clause like this, discretionary power

after a man has first inspected an area and come to the conclusion that a fire, if lit, could escape and do irreparable harm?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In the very section the hon. member has quoted, the word "may" is used. This deals only with informing the brigades of an outbreak. I submit that we should be prepared to leave it to the discretion of the fire control officer to do whatever he thinks desirable. The hon. member suggested that a bushfire control officer may see a fire burning, and unless we say he "shall" do certain things, he will not do them. Would anyone believe that?

Hon. A. H. Panton: The fire has not started yet.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so, but can we imagine an officer not doing all things essential to prevent a fire? The opinion of the Crown Law Department and the committee is that this discretionary power should be given to bushfire control officers. If the hon. member wishes to test the matter and the Committee decides that the word should be "shall," it must be inserted, but I think we should give the bushfire officer discretionary power in this regard.

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not think the amendment means anything at all as the whole substance of this provision is contained in the words "in the opinion of the bushfire officer."

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

Ayes	23
Noes	19
Majority for	4

Ayes.	
Mr. Brady	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Oliver
Mr. Fox	Mr. Panton
Mr. Graham	Mr. Read
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Styants
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. May	Mr. Wise
Mr. McCulloch	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Needham	

(Teller.)

Noes.	
Mr. Abbott	Mr. Manning
Mr. Brand	Mr. McLarty
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Owen
Mr. Doney	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Tottardell
Mr. Griffith	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hill	Mr. Wild
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Bovell
Mr. Mann	

(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move an amendment—

That at the end of proposed new Subsection (1) the following words be added:

- (b) Where it is proposed to light a fire within two miles of the boundary of a State forest within the meaning of the Forests Act, 1918-1931, and there is a forests officer so appointed present, he may exercise the powers conferred by the last paragraph to the exclusion of the exercise of those powers by a bushfire control officer, but if a forests officer is not present the bushfire control officer may exercise those powers.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move an amendment—

That in line two of proposed new Subsection (2) after the word "officer" the words "or a forest officer so appointed as the case may be" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed.

[*Mr. Hill took the Chair.*]

Mr. HOAR: I move an amendment—

That a new section be inserted as follows:—

31C. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this or any other Act, the Minister shall for the better enabling of prevention and control of bushfires by local authorities reimburse local authorities with one moiety of the monies from time to time expended by such local authorities on inspections made by bushfire control officers and in purchasing fire-fighting equipment for bushfire brigades.

During the second reading debate I gave my reasons for this amendment. The Minister does not think local authorities spend very much in this way, as most of those concerned serve in a voluntary capacity. I do not suggest that the rank and file of bushfire brigades should receive payment for the work they do, but unless some provision such as I have suggested is included we will have a recurrence of what happened last March in the south-west portion of this State. There is no compulsion in the Act to force local authorities to provide a fund for establishing and equipping bushfire brigades. No amount of propaganda can take the place of some definite organisation in this regard. In spite of what the Minister has said, with regard to the contributions made by the Commonwealth—

The Premier: What contribution does the Commonwealth make?

Mr. HOAR: It assists by means of sales tax exemptions and the remission of import duties on firefighting equipment, and also a 75 per cent. rebate on telephone services. All that is very useful, but the State Government does nothing.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, we do.

Mr. HOAR: It has done nothing so far. A fire broke out about 7 p.m. near Nannup, in the early part of this year and the forests officer got together a gang of about 24 volunteers, who worked all night at 4s. 9d. per hour. That sort of thing is costly—

The Premier: Your amendment might be costly, also.

Mr. HOAR: Not according to the Minister, who says that the local authorities do not spend very much in this regard.

The Premier: What about what it costs the Forests Department?

Mr. HOAR: That is after the fires have occurred.

The Premier: I am speaking of equipment for fire prevention.

Mr. HOAR: I agree with that, but it costs infinitely more after a fire has got going. This small fire at Nannup cost £300 in one night, and yet the State Government, by granting assistance to road boards in areas that cannot be rated heavily, could do a great deal to prevent fires. We should take heed of what occurred earlier this year in the South-West. If we do as I suggest we will allow the bushfire brigades to become properly equipped and take their rightful place alongside the wonderful team that already exists in the Forests Department. I am sure this amendment is a step in the right direction.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the Committee will not commit the Treasury, with the passing of this amendment, to greater expenditure because the State Government has assisted local authorities wherever possible.

Mr. Hoar: In what way?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: By making available to them our civil servants, our forestry officers and others. We have always followed the policy of making fire equipment available to local authorities.

Mr. Hoar: What assistance did you give to the Denmark area last March?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I was not there, but the State Government assists wherever possible.

Mr. Hoar: Anyway, the fire happened.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the Government had had equipment and manpower available, they would have been supplied to fight the fire in that area. The hon. member mentioned the assistance rendered to bushfire brigades by the Commonwealth Government. As to sales tax and reduced telephone calls, etc., has not the Commonwealth Government its telephone lines running through those areas which the State Government and its officers are protecting? Any equipment

which the Commonwealth Government may have in those areas is thus protected by the State.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The State Government has a lot of assets also in those areas.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not denying that.

Mr. Hoar: You would not think so after what happened last March.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: As the State protects Commonwealth property in such a manner, the little the Commonwealth Government does to assist bushfire brigades is well warranted. The voluntary system has worked quite well and the bushfire brigades committee has considered this question of finance over and over again. I would point out that on that committee are four members representing local governing authorities in the four zones into which the State is split. Those men have not recommended that the Government render them financial assistance. I hope the hon. member will not persist with his amendment. I will refer his suggestion back to the committee, but I do not think this Committee should commit the Treasury to any further expenditure. After all said and done, the trend today is to get on to the back of the Government too much and it is up to the local authorities to do a little for themselves.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There is nothing original in that.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, the producers today are enjoying prosperous times. I suggest to the Committee that if local authorities are short of money for firefighting equipment, then let them obtain a little more from those residing in their districts because the whole system has been built up to protect the assets of such people. Why should the Treasurer be asked to find pound for pound put up by the local authorities?

THE PREMIER: I am concerned with this amendment because it could easily involve the Treasury in considerable expenditure. When the hon. gentleman was speaking on the second reading—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How can you accept the amendment if it does that?

THE PREMIER: The amendment may be out of order; I do not know. As to the merits of the case, I have some knowledge as to what it costs the Forestry Department for firefighting equipment. It may cost £1,200 for a firefighting truck with the necessary equipment and other additional appliances. I do not know how many local authorities would be concerned but there are a little over 100 of them in this State, so I suppose it would be safe to say that 80 would make claims on the Government for assistance to purchase firefighting equipment.

What say would the Minister have as to equipment purchased by a local authority? It may be that one of them would say, "We must have a truck for firefighting equipment" and that could easily cost £1,200. It would purchase the truck and then the Treasury would be expected to make good the payments on it. I do not know whether I am in order, but I think the Minister was correct when he said that the farming community should take greater precautions for the prevention of fires. When they have haystacks, sheds and other buildings on their property, then insurance on such structures is something they could quite well afford, and it is not for them to expect the taxpayer generally to foot the bill for all losses incurred.

Mr. Fox: They have been spoon-fed too long.

THE PREMIER: I did not say that. I am becoming alarmed because of the continuous calls which are being made on the Treasury, particularly at this time. No one knows better than the Leader of the Opposition what these calls on the Treasury mean when we take into consideration these inflationary costs. Also, there are other proposals which will deprive the Treasury of money, but which I hope will not be agreed to. Therefore, as to this proposal, I do not think members fully realise what its passing will mean to the taxpayers.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What are you really going to do with all the money you have?

THE PREMIER: The hon. member knows all about the deficit which we forecast and the difficulties which will arise as a result of the latest events. I join with the Minister in his hope that the Committee will not pass the amendment.

Mr. HEARMAN: I oppose the amendment because, as a fire control officer for several years, I have spent quite a deal of money of my own on several occasions. I do not know of any local authority which has offered to pay anybody anything. If local authorities were endeavouring to meet their obligations on financial commitments in this respect, then I would be more kindly disposed towards them. At present, however, they do not pay for the services voluntarily rendered. I have put in weeks and weeks of work and have never been offered a thing. On one occasion I did get 10 gallons of petrol, but that was an accident. If the local authorities were more liberal then I should consider this amendment in a different light.

Mr. BOVELL: The danger in this amendment is that it will commit the Treasury to the payment of an unknown sum, especially in view of the argument put forward by the Leader of the Opposition that we must ensure that public funds are properly administered. Unless

I could be given an estimate of the amount which would be necessary to cover this item, I could not support the amendment.

Mr. OWEN: I cannot support this amendment wholeheartedly because, as the member for Vasse has said, it gives a more or less open cheque to people to claim money on many points. Perhaps consideration could be given to part of it, in that money could be made available for approved fire fighting equipment. For instance, in my own area our board has spent a great deal of money on equipment but as it is in the forest areas and because, as the member for Warren has said, of the money the Forestry Department spends for conscripting workers by paying them 4s. 9d. an hour, it might be good policy on the part of that department to subsidise those local authorities in forest areas so that they might be of greater assistance to the Forestry Department in controlling fires.

Mr. HOAR: Perhaps I should feel ashamed at standing up again after hearing so much opposition to this amendment. I could well understand the Premier paying out more money than he is obliged to if it be agreed to. We have found him pretty tight so far as our salaries are concerned. Nevertheless, I think his chief grievance was, apart from the money aspect, that he was doubtful whether there would be any Government control over the purchase of equipment by local authorities because some of them might make too much of a welter of it and the last speaker supported him in this contention. We already have a section of this Bush Fires Act which provides for a reduction in insurance premiums in approved areas. In such areas bushfire control officers must make a thorough inspection. That would be a sensible thing in regard to this suggestion of mine.

If a bushfire control authority desired to purchase some equipment it would require to submit its application to the Government, and it would only be natural for the Government to have some say as to the purchase. What the Premier and other members have missed in their arguments is that they have been speaking to this proposed amendment on the basis of the existing Act. But when this Bill becomes law it alters the whole conception of bushfire prevention. Instead of putting the authority in the hands of an advisory committee, as under the Act, it puts it into the hands of local people who must, of necessity, completely cease their farming activities in order to make a personal inspection of their own areas. That would mean complete loss of production and money on their part. That is the sort of payment I am concerned about; not the payment for services rendered in fighting a fire, but the extra work that would be thrown on to local people if this Bill were passed.

The Premier: Thrust on them for their own protection.

Mr. HOAR: It is all for their own protection now in many respects, but the Government is placing greater responsibilities on their shoulders and doing nothing about it by way of recompense. Under what I propose a road board will be able to get up-to-date equipment, but the Bill provides for certain inspections to be carried out by men who will have to stop their own work for a week or more to carry out their duties under the Act and will receive no compensation in the respect. These men will have to carry out the necessary inspections before people will be allowed to light fires. That will be their responsibility, not that of someone in Perth. Those are the people who should be recompensed. With regard to the Government having the right to some say respecting the purchase of equipment, in my opinion such equipment should be standardised.

The Premier: But it does not say that. What is proposed is an open cheque. If a board says it cost £1,200, the Government will have to pay.

Mr. HOAR: With the permission of the Chairman, I shall allay the Premier's fears by moving to amend the amendment by inserting the word "approved" before the reference to firefighting equipment. I admit that was an omission on my part.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member cannot move to amend his own amendment. It will be in order for another member to move an amendment on the amendment to achieve what he has in view.

Mr. PERKINS: The amendment does not give effect completely to the member for Warren's views, in consequence of the interpretation that can be placed upon it. He has concentrated particularly on the expenditure involved in local inspection but obviously a far greater amount of money will be involved in subsidising the purchase of firefighting equipment. The portion of the amendment referring to this phase should not be agreed to by the Committee. It would lead to anomalies as between local governing authorities that would bring down avalanches on our shoulders. There are about 35 local governing authorities that have applied for registration and perhaps the Minister can say how many have been approved.

The Minister for Lands: From memoranda 26 or 27 have been approved.

Mr. PERKINS: Those that have been approved have spent anything up to £1,000 on the purchase of firefighting equipment—which means presumably that those bodies now have satisfactory systems of bushfire protection—and they will derive no benefit from the amendment. On the other hand, local authorities

ties that have not been so progressive and have taken their responsibilities regarding the provision of firefighting equipment somewhat lightly, will have their equipment partly paid for by the Government. That would create a serious anomaly and is not in accordance with the objective sought by the member for Warren. The Bush Fires Act already contains provision enabling the Government to meet part of the cost or even the whole of it. With regard to compensation for inspections made, to which reference was made by the member for Warren, has not the Government been meeting the cost of inspections carried out by forestry officers or other persons?

The Minister for Lands: Those people are doing the work in the ordinary course of their duties. The Government allows them to do so.

Mr. PERKINS: Therefore, the Government is already meeting the cost of inspections, and local governing authorities are not incurring expenditure in that direction. Any additional expenditure involved would be rather limited and could easily be met out of the funds of the local authorities concerned. In my opinion there must be a certain amount of local initiative and display of the spirit of self-help. I cannot agree to the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I would like to point out that—

Hon. A. H. Panton: Stone-walling your own Bill!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As mentioned by the member for Roe, the Government is playing its part by allowing forestry officers to carry out the work of inspection. The member for Warren suggested we were placing further work on the shoulders of the bushfire control officers. All the Government is doing is to give the officers more power, in accordance with their own request. They are willing to do the work and have done so in the past, but they feel the lack of authority. The object is to give them the extra authority they seek.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Clause 14—Section 35D amended:

Mr. PERKINS: The clause deals with a provision placed in the amending legislation which I introduced three years ago. It was not included in the Bill when it left this Chamber, but in another place it was considered that as it was experimental legislation a time limit should be fixed so that, if necessary, Parliament could reconsider the position. The clause provides for the extension of the period from 1950 to 1952. I cannot imagine that this part of the Act is likely to be deleted in future, and any such proposal would be met with very strong opposition from areas that have experienced the

benefits of the legislation. The time is ripe for the removal of Section 35D altogether. My objective when I introduced the legislation was not so much to secure a rebate for people in areas where they were progressive enough to spend their own money on the establishment of bushfire brigades, but rather to provide some incentive that would induce other areas to follow suit by installing fire control equipment. The remarks of the Minister indicate that the legislation has proved effective. I hope that as time goes on we shall have these brigades established throughout all the rural areas of the State. I hope the Minister will agree that it is no longer necessary to retain the restricted date in the Act, and I move an amendment—

That all the words after the word "is" in line 1 be struck out and the word "deleted" inserted in lieu.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope the member for Roe will not press the amendment. From the standpoint of the formation of bushfire brigades, he has been successful in attaining his objective. Already 35 local authorities have applied for registration and about 27 have been registered. Our idea is to enforce a standard of efficiency before registration is granted. Several applications for registration have been refused and some of the local authorities concerned have since standard of efficiency and have been brought their brigades up to the required granted registration. The proposal in the clause represents a recommendation from the bushfire prevention committee and we should accept its recommendation. After two years the committee will make its recommendations.

Mr. PERKINS: I am not impressed with the Minister's arguments, which seemed to show a lack of any real objection to the excision from the Act of Section 35D. This provides that where approved bushfire brigades are set up, insurance companies must allow a rebate of 25 per cent. on insurance premiums. Experience has shown that the lessening of the risk has represented much more than 25 per cent. Had the rebate asked been 75 per cent., it would have been close to the mark, and I consider the insurance companies have been getting an excellent rake-off because the bushfire brigades protect the properties insured by the companies and they make no contribution whatever to the brigades.

Before this provision came into operation, some of the companies were asked to make a contribution, but they refused. When I introduced this amendment to the Act, a joint Select Committee was appointed and, after an inspection of some of the efficient bushfire brigades, former opponents expressed the opinion that the insurance companies were escaping very lightly by giving a rebate of only 25 per cent.

Mr. Marshall: Is that a fixed rebate?

Mr. PERKINS: Yes. The Act provides that it shall be an offence if a company charges more than 75 per cent. of the normal premium on a property in an area having an approved bushfire brigade. The Legislative Council introduced an amendment limiting the effect of this provision until the present year, and the Bill proposes to extend the operation for two years. I want the legislation to be made permanent, whereas the Minister is suggesting that the provision should be reviewed again in 1952.

The Minister for Lands: I am trying to help you with the Legislative Council.

Mr. PERKINS: If the Council insists upon re-inserting the limitation, that is another matter.

Mr. Hoar: Do not you think the insurance companies put up that proposal for a limitation?

Mr. PERKINS: I do not know. The provision has proved effective and the bushfire brigades have reduced losses and, seeing that the provision has operated successfully, the limitation should not be continued.

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

Clauses 15 to 17—agreed to.

*[Mr. Perkins resumed the Chair.]*

New clause:

Mr. HEARMAN: I move—

That a new clause be inserted as follows:—

13. The principal Act is amended by inserting after section twenty-two the following section:—

22A. A local authority which is maintaining a bushfire brigade as part of its organisation for the prevention, control and extinguishment of bushfires shall effect a policy or policies of insurance—

- (a) insuring bushfire control officers, members of the bushfire brigade, and other persons voluntarily assisting any of them, against personal injury sustained while engaged in controlling and extinguishing bushfires under the direction of a bushfire control officer or an officer of a bushfire brigade; and
- (b) insuring against loss or damage all appliances, equipment and apparatus of the bushfire brigade or any privately-owned equipment working under the direction of a bushfire control officer or a bushfire control captain.

Everyone working under the direction of a fire control officer should be covered by insurance. The idea of requiring compulsory

insurance is not new. Every road board in my area has taken out policies to cover the requirements of the proposed new clause. The premiums range from £3 to £5. It is only fair and reasonable to ask local authorities to provide this cover for people who are working voluntarily and sometimes have to undertake dangerous tasks. A fire control officer directing operations might be reluctant to tell a man to take a truck or tractor into a certain position, realising that there was a considerable element of risk involved, if he did not know that the vehicle was insured.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have no objection to the proposed new clause since the hon. member has added to it words to the effect that the appliance used must be authorised by a bushfire control officer.

Mr. HILL: The proposed new clause does not go far enough. When our fire started on the Kalgan, I was called upon to assist on a neighbour's property, and I went there without the direction of a fire control officer. It was impossible for the men who went out firefighting at that time to be under the direction of a bushfire control officer or the captain of a bush fire brigade. Parties who set out to assist in fighting the fires on the Kalgan did not reach there because they were required to fight fires on the way. At Denmark the same thing occurred. A party of lads from the Denmark School of Agriculture did wonderful work on that occasion, but they could not be insured because they were under age. One man whose shed was on fire collapsed in the shed, and the boys saved his life. Can we not get some amendment to provide for everyone who goes firefighting to be covered? The question of insurance also concerns the Albany Municipality. The Town Clerk said to his employees, "You fellows get out," and they went and fought fires in the council's time and their own. The question of the insurance of those men has caused the council great concern. Can we not include some provision in the measure so that everyone who goes firefighting is automatically insured?

New clause put and passed.

New Clause:

Mr. HEARMAN: I move—

That a new clause be inserted as follows:—

14. The principal Act is amended by inserting after section thirty-four the following section:—

34A. If, in the opinion of the Minister, a local authority has at any time neglected or failed to exercise any power or perform any duty which under this Act it is liable to exercise or perform, the Minister, without any notice to the local authority, may by his servants or agents exercise such power or perform such duty, and may

recover any costs and expenses incurred by him in connection therewith in any court of competent jurisdiction as a debt due from the local authority, and a certificate signed by the Minister shall be conclusive evidence of the amount of such costs and expenses.

According to the Minister, this proposed clause is somewhat contentious. I have mentioned that it contains certain elements that I do not like myself, but I want to see the matter ventilated here. I hope there is a discussion and that something better will be evolved. If local authorities do not do their job, the Act becomes completely ineffective. We have had instances of one local authority doing an excellent job, and its good work being offset because a neighbouring local authority did not play the game. In such a case, I want the Minister to have some authority to take prompt action to improve the position, if not completely rectify it. A board that does not do its job should be penalised in some degree. If a Minister were of the opinion that a local authority was not doing its job, he would say to it, "If you do not improve, I shall have to take some action, and you will probably pay for it." In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, that would be sufficient; and in the odd one, where it was not, the Minister would be justified in taking such action as he thought fit.

It might be argued that the Minister already has power to order certain work to be done, and that is true. If the Minister is notified that a road board will not do anything about a dangerous railway, or something like that, he can order it to do certain things, but not take a general interest in its responsibilities. The amendment would enable him to authorise a forestry officer to go into a road board area to see what was required, and then to take any steps that were necessary, and the road board would have to pay whatever costs were involved. As long as the amendment is fully discussed and the Committee becomes aware of the position, I shall be satisfied.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** I hope the hon. member will not press this proposed new clause. To ask the Minister at this stage to do the work of the local authorities is a little premature. If time proves that local authorities are not doing their job, we shall bring forward a suitable amendment. In the meantime, I am quite prepared to submit this proposed clause to the bush fires prevention committee, for its examination.

New clause put and negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

## **BILLS (2)—RETURNED.**

- 1, Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment.
- 2, Supply (No. 2), £7,000,000.  
Without amendment.

## **BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (ALLOWANCES AND SALARIES ADJUSTMENT).**

### *Second Reading.*

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray) [8.54] in moving the second reading said: The intention of the Bill is to give effect to the recommendations made by Sir Ross McDonald and the Public Service Commissioner who were requested by Cabinet to review salaries and allowances fixed by statute. They were also requested to review other salaries which are subject to fixation by the Governor or Ministerial authority with the object of co-ordinating all such salaries and removing existing anomalies. The salaries and allowances which require revision by amendments to statutes and which are dealt with in this Bill are those of the Auditor General, the Public Service Commissioner, stipendiary magistrates, and parliamentary salaries and allowances. Judges' salaries were also reviewed, but it was considered that the adjustments proposed should be covered by a separate Bill, which should also include amendments to the legislation relating to judges' pensions. That Bill will be presented shortly for the consideration of members. There are therefore, two measures for which parliamentary approval is required in order that the proposed adjustments of salaries and allowances recommended may be made.

Concurrently with the passing of these two measures, it is intended to give effect to the recommendations relating to the salaries of officers which are determinable by the Governor or a Minister, by obtaining Executive Council authority for the adjustment so concerned. All salaries and allowances concerned will thus be adjusted at a common date. It is proposed that this shall be the 1st September, 1950, which practically coincides with the date of the report. This follows the principle adopted for the adjustment of fixed salaries and allowances in 1947. The Bill now before the House is a composite measure providing for the amendment of four separate Acts, as was the case with a somewhat similar Bill in 1947.

Dealing first with fixed salaries of Government officers, I point out that the adjustments which were approved in 1947 were, in general, effected by a flat rate increase of 10 per cent., plus £100. No provision was made for variations in the cost of living or the decreasing purchasing power of the pound.

Hon. E. Nulsen: There is no provision in the Act for stipendiary magistrates.

The PREMIER: There is in this measure. As 20 years had passed since a review had been made, and associated salaries had been fairly substantially increased in the meantime, the increases then approved to these salaries were by no means generous and were considerably less proportionately than the increases given to members of Parliament at the same time. No attempt has been made in the proposals which are now submitted to restore what has been lost over the years, or to relate the present purchasing power of the salaries of the officers concerned with the value of their salaries at any time in the past. Due consideration, however, has been given to the salary rates of comparable positions in other States, and a measure of protection is contemplated in the provisions of the Bill against the adverse effect of cost of living increases in the future. With the passing of the Bill, the salaries of the Auditor General and Public Service Commissioner will still be below the average for Australian States, but will be reasonably consistent with the salaries of their confreres in South Australia and Tasmania.

The salaries of stipendiary magistrates will also be brought into line with comparable salary rates elsewhere. In recognition of the current practice in a majority of the other States—Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania—which has for its purpose the protection of margins against the encroachment of salary rates variable with the cost of living, provision is made to enable the Governor in Executive Council to determine the actual salary rates to be paid from time to time within the limits set out in the Bill for each of the officers concerned. The salary limits within which adjustments may be made will, therefore, remain with Parliament. In order, however, that the proper relationship may be preserved between the remuneration of such officers and the remuneration of senior officers who hold their appointments under the Public Service Act, it is proposed that the Governor in Executive Council shall have the power to adjust salaries, when necessary, in accordance with the rise and fall of the basic wage, and any other variations—other than an increase under a reclassification or normal salary increment—which affect the salary rates of senior officers in the Public Service.

It is intended that the authority of the Governor will not be invoked except to effect variations when they accumulate to the amount of £50 per annum. For the information of members it is proposed, immediately after the passing of this Bill, to recommend for the approval of the Governor in Council that the annual salary rate of each of the officers concerned, within the limits set out in the Bill, shall be—

	Salary.	Limits of Adjustment
Auditor General	£1,700	£1,550-£2,000
Public Service Commissioner	£1,850	£1,550-£2,050

Mr. Graham: He is doing all right for himself.

The PREMIER: As I said to the hon member, it is comparable to salaries in some of the other States but it is still below the average of the Australian States.

Mr. Graham: He has still put a good value on himself.

Mr. Styants: He was one of the committee, was he not?

The PREMIER: I hardly think the hon member is fair there. Those salaries are comparable with those in other States and an adjustment has not been made for this particular officer for many years.

Mr. Graham: I will tell you more about him later on.

The PREMIER: The scale continues—  
Stipendiary Magistrates—

Senior—two positions Com--of

Senior—

Two positions £1,400 £1,250-£1,550

Junior—

Two positions £1,325 £1,250-£1,550

Junior—

One position £1,250 £1,250-£1,550

The salary rates I have mentioned will remain fixed until such time as any variations such as basic wage adjustments and marginal adjustments, but not classification adjustments, affecting the salary rates of senior officers in the Public Service aggregate £50 per annum, when the approval of the Governor in Council will be sought to increase or decrease the then existing rates, as the case may require.

Whilst it may have been possible to introduce in this legislation some formula for the initial fixation and subsequent movement of salaries within the prescribed limits, it is thought that it would be more convenient, and not diminish Parliamentary control in any great degree, to allow the Governor in Council to determine the rate to be paid. Under this method there is more elasticity to enable the Governor in respect of any particular office to make any adjustment in salary that might be required through the occurrence of an anomaly or special circumstances, which under a formula, however carefully prepared, could not be met except by parliamentary action. This method will conform with procedure to be adopted in respect of other salary rates determinable by the Governor or a Minister.

Under the existing law as amended in 1947, members—with the exception of the President, the Speaker and the Chairman of Committees of the two Houses—receive an allowance of £960 a year plus an additional £50 to members who represent

a constituency any part of the boundaries of which is more than 50 miles from Parliament House. The Bill proposes that the allowance of a member shall be £1,000 in lieu of £960, and that the allowance of £1,000 shall be increased according to the variations in the basic wage, in multiples of £25 per annum. On this basis the immediate increase will be £40 in allowance plus £75 basic wage rises since the 15th October, 1947. A further increase of £25 will be payable if the basic wage rises to £7 7s. 7d. I might mention that the present basic wage is £7 3s. 6d.

Mr. W. Hegney: It will be £8 3s. 6d. next month.

The PREMIER: Basic wage decreases are also provided for but so that the allowance will not fall below the base of £1,000. The salaries of the President, Speaker and Chairman of Committees of both Houses will be similarly increased by £40, plus £75 basic wage increase since October, 1947, and their salaries will be similarly varied in the future as applies to members.

A suggestion has been made that the salaries and allowances affected by this Bill should be related to the purchasing power of money and they should be restored somewhere near to equality with their real value in earlier years. Acceptance of this suggestion would mean that instead of basic wage adjustments, salaries above the basic wage would, under the present inflationary trends, be very considerably enlarged from time to time until the price level becomes stable.

Mr. Graham: You admit that our standard is falling under the arrangement contained in the Bill?

The PREMIER: No, I do not admit anything of the sort.

Mr. Graham: That is what you are saying, in different language.

The PREMIER: The hon. member has had the basic wage increases since 1947 and provision is made for further increases should the basic wage go higher. It is considered that the principle of relating the whole of the salary to the purchasing power of the money could not be applied to salaries under the Bill without claims being made to apply the same principle generally. This would involve very large and unpredictable increases in the salary and wages bill of the State, and would have an inflationary tendency of a very grave nature. I feel sure that the holders of the higher paid offices fully appreciate that they have a responsibility in these times to absorb, within reason, some of the falling values of money as an example to the rest of the community.

Mr. Graham: That is easy when you have another income apart from your parliamentary allowance.

The PREMIER: Let us be honest about it. In saying this I think that members of Parliament should help by setting an example and, as we know, there are many people in Western Australia who would be very glad to have the opportunity to come into Parliament under the conditions which this Bill lays down.

Mr. Graham: Because they do not know the obligations involved.

The PREMIER: I think they do.

Mr. Graham: They have no idea and I do not think the Premier has any idea either.

The PREMIER: I consider that this Bill is treating members of Parliament justly and is giving them a fair thing and I hope they will be satisfied with it.

Mr. Oliver: You are looking pretty grim.

The PREMIER: At the same time, such officers must be allowed the necessary margins over the remuneration of officers working under them and the proposals in this Bill, which I commend for members' approval, have been designed to afford reasonable protection in this respect. The Government sought advice as to what should be paid to parliamentarians. All factors were taken into consideration and the Government has decided to accept the advice that has been given to it. I do not see that we would be justified in departing from that advice. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1950-51.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the 10th October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. Perkins in the Chair.

*Vote—Legislative Council, £3,966.*

MR. NEEDHAM (North Perth) [9.12]: We have before us the Budget for the financial year 1950-51 and the fourth Budget Speech presented by the present Premier. I could not help but be struck by the marked difference between the Treasurer of today and the private member, leader of the Liberal Party, a few years ago. One was self-assured and confident when he announced his policy speech on the hustings in 1947; but we have a different man in the Treasurer of today. If one listened to his speech one could not help but feel that instead of being confident and self-assured he was plaintive and suppliant, despite the fact that as Treasurer of this State he will receive a higher allowance from the Grants Commission than did any of his predecessors. I understand that the allowance for this financial year will be something like £5,000,000.

Throughout his speech the Premier told us of the difficulties the Government is experiencing in doing certain things which it confidently promised a few years ago. He said that he was experiencing difficulty because of the shortage of labour and materials but he overlooked that fact when on the hustings in 1947. He had no regard at all for the Government of that day and the shortage of labour and materials that existed then.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He was perfectly brutal in his criticism.

Mr. NEEDHAM: That plea was put up by the members of the Government. The Premier and his co-leader contended that nothing was done in that year. They were forgetful again of the fact that the Wise Government did not have the number of men and amount of labour at its disposal that this Government has had ever since it has been in office. The Premier was quite glib during the 1947 elections about the fact that Labour had been in office for 14 years. He pointed out what he considered to be the shortcomings of that Government during that period. He again ignored the fact that six out of the 14 years were years of depression, and that six of them were years of war, and that of the men who went to the battle-fields of World War II from Australia, very few had returned at the time of the election of 1947.

Hostilities ceased in 1945, and it was well on in 1946 before many of the men who were spared from the horrors of war had returned to their homes and taken up their civil occupations. Since its accession to office, this Government has had the advantage not only of all our men being back in civil occupations, but it has also had the advantage of the extra labour provided by the Commonwealth immigration scheme. To illustrate the advantage to the Government from a labour point of view, I quote a reply recently received from the Under Secretary of the Lands and Immigration Department to my query as to the number of people who had arrived in Australia under the Commonwealth migration scheme. The Under Secretary very courteously replied as follows:—

Dear Sir,

With reference to your telephonic request for information regarding the migrants who have arrived in Western Australia since the introduction of the new scheme, I am enclosing a statement showing the number of arrivals up to 30th June last. Since that date a further 526 migrants have arrived. The schedule also shows the number who have returned to England each year. This department does not have any control in regard to European migrants but I am informed that there are approximately 15,400 new Australians in Western Australia at the present time.

The schedule supplied to me by the Under Secretary for Lands gives the arrivals of migrants from the U.K. These are as follows:—

	Year ended 30/6/47.	Year ended 30/6/48.	Year ended 30/6/49.	Year ended 30/6/50.
Nominated—				
Adults . . . .	50	1,258	1,679	1,664
Children . . . .	24	629	725	85
Groups—				
Adults . . . .	—	48	343	1,690
Children . . . .	—	—	—	218
Child migrants .	—	361	39	122
Totals—				
Adults . . . .	50	1,306	2,022	3,354
Children . . . .	24	990	764	1,196

Grand Total—9,706.

Those who returned to the United Kingdom in the three years 1948 to 1950 totalled 456, and the total number of new Australians in Western Australia is approximately 15,403. If we analyse these figures and take the total of 9,706 and deduct 2,974 children, it leaves 6,732 adults. If we take half of the 15,400 as males and the rest as females we get 7,700 and if we add 6,732 we get 14,432. These figures are in addition to our men and compare more than favourably with the labour forces available to the Wise Government in 1945-47. In these circumstances, the tenor of the Treasurer's speech should have been brighter than it was.

The golden jubilee of the Commonwealth is approaching. Fifty years will have elapsed since the inauguration of federation, and we are going to celebrate the great event in a fitting manner. When we do celebrate the golden jubilee of the Commonwealth, it will be an important epoch in the history of this young nation. The Australian nation, considering its youth, has what might be termed a unique history. While still in its swaddling clothes, practically speaking, it astounded the world by the valour of its troops when they received their baptism of blood on the shell-swept crests of Gallipoli during World War I, 1914-18—valour, endurance and initiative that were repeated in World War II.

The reputation of this young and virile nation, however, does not rest entirely on its military fame or the valour of its sons in the face of overwhelming odds on many a well-fought field. There is another feature of which we can be proud and that is as a pioneer in social reform, beginning with maternity allowances and invalid and old-age pensions, until today we have a social service that is rendering assistance to our people from the cradle to the grave, and is the envy of other countries.

During the 49 years that have passed since the people adopted the Commonwealth Constitution, there has been a certain amount of friction in the Federal machinery and that friction still exists. The relations between the Commonwealth and the States have sometimes been, if not of a hostile nature, at least somewhat

strained. This was only to be expected. We could not hope that this new machinery would run smoothly from the start. It was inevitable that friction would develop and that the machine would at times get out of order. Even now, when we are approaching the end of 50 years of Federation, there is ample evidence of discontent existing amongst the States in their dealings with the Commonwealth.

This discontent was very pronounced at the recent conference of Premiers held in Canberra, and was most marked in regard to the financial relationships between the Commonwealth and the States. I admit that there is ample reason for the existence of strained relations between the Commonwealth and the States, particularly at the last Premiers' Conference, at which the State Premiers were treated somewhat discourteously, to say the least. We must realise that, in respect of the financial relationships between the Commonwealth and the States, the Commonwealth is the supreme authority. The Governments of the States claim to have sovereignty within their respective jurisdictions. That may be so in theory, but it does not work out in practice.

The sovereign rights of the States were first attacked by the enactment of the Financial Agreement; the next assault was the legislation bringing into existence the Grants Commission, and they received their death blow by the adoption of uniform taxation. When I say that, it is not to be concluded that I am an opponent of uniform taxation. Quite the contrary! I believe in it; and I venture to say that those who have given it any thought must realise that the people of this country have had a better deal from uniform taxation than they received when there was separate taxation for the States and the Commonwealth. I have no complaint to make about uniform taxation.

But returning to the question of sovereignty, it is idle to tell me that any Government whose Treasurer has to go, cap in hand, to the Commonwealth Treasurer to get the financial wherewithal to carry on the public service for the development of the State is in possession of sovereign rights. It is absurd even to think that. The Treasurers of the States are nothing more than political Lazaruses, waiting hopelessly for crumbs to fall from the rich and well-laden table of Dives, in the person of the Commonwealth Treasurer. While that state of affairs lasts, there will be constant friction and the machinery of the Commonwealth and the States will not work smoothly.

In his policy speech in 1947, the Premier stressed that, if returned to office he would restore the State's taxing authority. But, if he has been correctly reported in the Press in connection with the last Premiers' Conference, he had no sympathy with the suggestion made by the

Premier of New South Wales that the States should regain their taxing authority. So the Treasurer of the day, at that conference, if he was reported correctly, exhibited a different attitude altogether from that which he displayed as the Leader of the Liberal Party when making his policy speech in 1947. The hon. gentleman is reported as having suggested to the Premiers that a convention be held representative of the States and the Commonwealth to discuss this very vexed question of Commonwealth-State financial relationships.

That was not the first time the suggestion had been made. The hon. gentleman, shortly after he became Premier of this State, on my suggestion brought that matter forward at the 1947 Premiers' Conference. Before that, Hon. F. J. S. Wise made a similar proposal when he was Premier. But, no matter who made the suggestion, I would be very glad to see such a convention held. The way would be paved for a better understanding between the States and the Commonwealth so far as their financial relationship is concerned. Even if the convention is held, however, I do not think we will attain that state of affairs that we would like to see, namely, the smooth running of the Federal machinery.

There are other matters affecting the Constitution that should be inquired into. It is quite evident that, after 50 years, many weaknesses have been found in its structure. I have always thought a convention should be held on similar lines to that which took place when the original Constitution Bill was being drafted. A convention of leading citizens prepared a Bill which became what is today the Commonwealth Constitution. The members of that convention were elected by the people and chosen because of their legal, constitutional, financial and commercial knowledge. It would be well if a similar convention could be convened now to review the whole of the Constitution in all its bearings and workings so that we shall know exactly where we are. Whether that convention should be elective or nominative is a matter for argument; but I think a convention should be held representative of the various States, and the men meeting together should be eminently fitted to review the Constitution in all its aspects. If that were done, I feel sure they would bring forward suggestions which, if incorporated in the Constitution, would lead to its better and smoother working.

It is said, "Why not have certain amendments drafted and submitted to the people right away?" Our experience of referendums for the alteration of the Constitution proves that there has never been an important amendment carried in that way. Why? Because the leading parties were not in agreement! The only amendments of the Constitution that have taken place in 50 years have been of a minor character,

and ones on which all parties were agreed. If the leading parties have not been in agreement, the amendments have not been carried. If we had a convention to mark the golden jubilee, whether that convention were elected by the people, or nominated by the Parliaments, I venture to say we might get a series of amendments to submit to the people, on which all parties were agreed and which would be accepted by the people and made part and parcel of the Constitution.

The Labour Party has been blamed for having unification as part of its platform. Well, there is unification now. The Commonwealth Treasurer has the power of the purse, and that being so he has the power of government. I have always been in favour of unification, but not such as we have with regard to finance. Even those who oppose unification must admit that from a financial standpoint we are unified. So much for the Constitution of the Commonwealth and the position that will continue until the Constitution is reviewed in extenso!

I come to the question of transport, an all-important one in this State, and one that is becoming increasingly so. Our public utilities have considerably deteriorated since the advent of the present Government, particularly the tramway transport. Our tramway system is worse than that in any other capital city in Australia. Since the Liberal-Country Party Government has been in power, the position has gone from bad to worse. It appears to me that the Transport Board revels in boosting privately-owned transport at the expense of public transport. I think the management of our tramway system is actively engaged in that regard and I lay most of the blame at its door.

Mr. J. Hegney: I think your deduction is pretty right. That is my experience.

Mr. NEEDHAM: The tramway system instead of being a public asset is running on the poor-paying routes while the privately-owned buses take the plums. It is strange that whilst there is evidence that the management of the tramway system is favouring private enterprise at the cost of publicly-owned transport, there is a different statement altogether in the report of the Government Tramways for the year ended the 30th June, 1949. I shall read to the Committee a couple of paragraphs of that report that are appropriate to the remarks I have made and, in fact, endorse them. The section entitled "Financial Survey" is as follows:—

Although the earnings for 1948-49 were increased by £80,485, this amount was mainly due to increased fares which were brought into operation from 1st August, 1948. Increases from this source fell short of the estimate by £36,849. This regression is accounted for by the several stoppages and restricted services caused by power

failures, coal strikes and a stop-work meeting by the members of the wages union.

The revenue loss from these interferences in the provision of normal services approximated £25,000. Another factor in the loss of revenue has been the lifting of the restrictions prohibiting private buses from lifting passengers from or close to this department's services. The sharing of traffic over these routes, especially in off-peak periods has caused, and will continue to cause, marked deterioration in the finances of the department. On all routes, adequate services are provided in off-peak periods and the sharing of the limited passenger traffic offering with private buses running through the department's areas from outside districts is uneconomic and all in favour of the private services, who are thus enabled to augment their revenue with short distance travellers on vehicles provided for long distance travellers paying fares approved to cover such long distance travel. During peak periods, no great loss is sustained through this cause excepting where certain private operators have undertaken to run buses for the purpose of "pirating" regular tramway patrons. Whilst the present conditions continue, the department will have no option but to continue to withdraw vehicles from districts where the loss of traffic, through reasons as shown above, make the present timetable uneconomic.

That is proof of my contention, and that report is signed by the manager of the department. We can see that there is something radically wrong when private companies are allowed to pirate traffic which rightly belongs to a publicly-owned transport system, and to the people of this country who have to foot the bill for interest and all other charges. It is high time the Government realised that fact and did something about it. The tramway transport system serving North Perth is antique. In the off-peak periods on the routes served by the Nos. 19, 20, 21 and 22 trams the service is at 14-minute intervals during one part of the day and 21-minute intervals during another portion of the day.

Shortly after the present Minister for Railways took office I interviewed him and pointed out the injustice and inconvenience of this system to the people of the areas concerned. The Minister was accompanied by the manager of the Tramways. He wrote to me pointing out that if we had a better service it would not pay. I have read to the Committee the reasons why the system is not paying, namely, owing to unfair competition by private companies. The Minister wrote me a letter explaining the position, but what

he said does not coincide with what I have read out from the report. The time has come when we should have proper co-ordination of our transport system. The State Executive of the Australian Labour Party has made suggestions for the improvement of road transport in Perth and its suburbs, and given many examples of the condition of transport here compared with that in the Eastern States. I will quote now from "The Worker" of the 1st October, 1950, where the following appeared:—

Eastern States' example. Melbourne and Adelaide particularly can point with considerable pride to the standard of service made available to the public as a result of Government ownership and administration through a board of experts. The existence in Perth of a number of companies, all carrying considerable overhead as individual organisations, must lead to heavy charges to the public if they are to remain in business, obtaining what they feel to be a reasonable profit on capital investment. We believe that the Government possesses, in its own system, a sound basis for the complete control of all transport in the metropolitan area. We believe that the time must come when worsening conditions will force this action upon the Government, and respectfully suggest that the time is now.

The time is more than ripe for an overhaul of our transport system and the setting up of a competent board to handle transport in and around the metropolitan area. The sooner that is done the better it will be for the people and the finances of the State. On the 31st August last I asked the Premier some questions with reference to the National Savings campaign. My questions were as follows:—

(1) Is he aware that the Commonwealth Treasurer has made several appeals to Australian employers to co-operate with their employees in forming National Savings Groups in their respective establishments in support of the Commonwealth Government's efforts to increase national saving?

(2) Is he aware that as a result of these appeals up to date 8,000 National Savings Groups are in operation in industrial establishments throughout Australia?

(3) Is it a fact that the Government Railways and other Government Departments have refused to co-operate with their employees in the formation of National Savings Groups, denying thousands of Government employees the opportunity of taking part in the scheme?

(4) If that is so, and in view of the importance of the National Savings Scheme to the Australian economy, will he issue instructions to the heads

of all Government Departments to afford every opportunity to their employees to form National Savings Groups and thus set an example to all private employers?

To those questions the Minister for Education, on behalf of the Premier, replied—

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes. The Railways Commission considered that it would not be practicable to arrange National Savings deductions through the pay sheets, owing to the shortage of staff and the fact that deductions on account of superannuation, endowment, taxation, etc., had reached saturation point. In one or two other departments the same position existed.

(4) Following representations from the Prime Minister, a circular was sent by the Premier to all departments on the 2nd February, 1949, advising them that the State Government had agreed to support the campaign launched by the Commonwealth Government in conjunction with all the savings banks of Australia for an intensified drive for National Savings and asking them to arrange to do everything necessary to assist the campaign. The Treasury Department agreed to make arrangements to facilitate carrying out the scheme by deductions from salaries and wages through the pay sheets. The present position will be re-examined with a view to obtaining increased support in those departments where National Savings groups are already operating and establishing groups in other departments where groups have not been established if it is now found practicable to do so.

Shortage of staff is no reason why the savings scheme should not have been encouraged. The same position in that regard applies in the Eastern States, where Governments have done a splendid job in assisting the National Savings Scheme. While I commend the Commonwealth Government for what it has done in this direction, it has done and is doing many other things that in no way help to check the inflationary spiral. That Government repealed or disallowed the regulations concerning capital issues, even though it was an effective brake on inflation. Those regulations were framed by the Curtin Government at the outbreak of the war and they continued until the Menzies Government took office. The practice of allowing capital issues for all kinds of goods—mostly for luxuries—has certainly not stopped the inflationary spiral; on the contrary it has added to it. If the Commonwealth Government of today would reintroduce the control of capital issues it would go a long way towards helping to check this inflationary spiral.

The Premier: It is going to do something about it.

Mr. NEEDHAM: When Mr. Menzies was on the hustings, towards the end of last year, he made all sorts of promises about checking inflation and—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: As did all the State Liberal Premiers.

Mr. NEEDHAM: —putting value back into the pound; but, he is a long time doing it. He will be forced to do something shortly or it will be the rock on which the present Commonwealth Government will perish—by that I mean revaluation. I believe that history will repeat itself so far as the composite Government in the federal arena is concerned. In 1941 Australia was in dire peril and the same two leaders of a composite Government—Mr. Menzies and Mr. Fadden—had a row over financial policies. As a result of that argument, the Government of that day abdicated while the enemy was almost at our gates.

They could not agree then and they are not agreeing now. I believe that Mr. Menzies will have a hard struggle to get his revaluation of the pound through Cabinet, because the Country Party section is too strong. If he is to put the value back into the pound, that is one of the things he will have to do before very long. There are other matters which were discussed in the Premier's Budget speech but I will defer discussion on them until I speak on the various departmental Estimates.

Progress reported.

#### **BILL—RAILWAYS CLASSIFICATION BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.**

##### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 12th October.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [10.41: This Bill is one to permit of an arrangement between the Railways Commission and the officers affected—who are not very many in number—and it is more or less a matter of a mutual agreement between the officers concerned and the Government, through the Railways Commission. I know that both parties are anxious that this Bill should be passed so that the officers may receive their acknowledged dues and so that the harmonious relationships between such officers, who are subject to the Promotions Appeal Board Act, and the Government can be continued.

I know that the member for Kalgoorlie has given consideration to this Bill. He has had it examined both from the point of view of the department and the officers affected. Since it does not interfere in any way with promotional rights or reclassification—except in ways in which the whole subject has been approved between the parties—I have no objection to the Bill, and I know that would be the attitude of the member for Kalgoorlie.

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—FRUIT TREE STANDARDS**

##### *Message.*

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

##### *Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [10.8] in moving the second reading said: The short title of this Bill is "Fruit Tree Standards" but in the Bill itself there is reference to the registration of nurseries. It is the same Bill. Members will be interested to know the circumstances which have led up to the introduction of this measure. Western Australia was the first State to suggest legislation of this kind and had the matter discussed by the Australian Agricultural Council in 1945. For the purpose of discussion, draft legislation was provided by Victoria. As a result of the action taken by Western Australia, the principles of the legislation were adopted by the Australian Agricultural Council. However, strong opposition came from nurserymen in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales when they learnt that restrictive legislation was pending.

In 1946, Queensland passed an Act similar to the Bill we are now considering. The Queensland legislation was based on the draft Bill drawn up by Victoria for discussion by the Australian Agricultural Council. Queensland did not proclaim its Act as it preferred to wait until the other States took similar action. The position at the present time is that Queensland is the only State to pass legislation for the registration of nurseries and the sale of fruit trees, but it has not been proclaimed. The Government is of the opinion that if we also pass similar legislation, the remaining States may find it easier to follow suit. The Western Australian Fruit Growers' Association has supported a move of this kind since 1946, and the Australian Dried Fruits Association since 1945. With the end of the war, it was necessary for large plantings to take place and, as this State at that time propagated very few fruit trees, most of the stock had to be obtained from New South Wales and Victoria.

We all must agree that it is in the best interests to ensure that only trees of a sound type are planted, and the best way to achieve this would be to have a uniform standard throughout Australia. Some little time back fruitgrowers in this State were hit very badly with a disease known as

apple scab. Owing to Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution and its provision for free trade between the States, it is not possible for us to control by legislation the quality of imported stocks from Victoria and New South Wales if sold direct to a grower. Importations sold direct to a grower could only be controlled if the State of origin had similar legislation in operation. If the provisions of this Bill eventually operate all nurserymen will have to register, and those registered will be the only people who can grow fruit trees or plants for sale in this State.

Registered nurserymen will have to keep records of trees being grown, the names of varieties and sources from which rootstocks were obtained, as well as the names of purchasers. Inspectors will be appointed and given power to enter the premises of nurserymen in order to inspect the records which are required to be kept. Since this State is not yet self-supporting in fruit trees and plants, it will not be possible to proclaim this legislation until such time as we are, or until the States from which we import have similar legislation in operation. This is because the Bill makes provision to restrict the sale of fruit trees or plants unless they are sold by a nurseryman in Western Australia who is registered under this Bill, or a nurseryman in another State who is registered under an Act which is the equivalent of this one. It can be seen, therefore, that no action can be taken at this stage towards proclamation.

New South Wales and Victoria must first come into line and by passing the Bill here perhaps consideration may be given to similar legislation in those States. The growers are particularly anxious to have the benefit of legislation which will ensure that the fruit trees they buy will be up to standard. In order to help them towards achieving their objective, the Government would like to follow the lead set by Queensland. By so doing, encouragement will be given to interested organisations in New South Wales and Victoria to press for similar legislation.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Have you had any assurances from those States that they will pass it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, we have not. Of course, like the Leader of the Opposition, a great deal of my life has been spent in the fruitgrowing industry. I have been actively engaged in raising stock, budding, etc. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, Victoria and New South Wales, being the greatest propagators of stock of fruit trees, etc., do not appreciate legislation of this description because they have been the suppliers to our markets. I am not aware of the position in Queensland, but I think records will indicate clearly to us that both Victoria and New South Wales were the two

States mainly engaged in propagating fruit trees and supplying the other States with them.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What I am concerned about is how you would get on if they did not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think we will get very far because of our own regulations that are policed by the Department of Agriculture and the experience of our fruitgrowers in receiving, in the past, diseased stocks of trees affected by apple scab and other diseases. Because of that, there is more encouragement in this State now for our nurserymen to increase their business and to raise their own stock. There is an indication already that that has taken place. The principal reason for asking the House to pass this legislation is that it may have the result of encouraging the other States to pass similar legislation so that they may fall into line. In any event, the fruitgrowers' association and those interested in fruitgrowing in this State are hoping that that will be the result. When that does happen and those States take legislative action, we will be well on the way towards implementing the resolution of the Australian Agricultural Council for a uniform standard of fruit trees and plants throughout Australia.

Tasmania is quite prepared to follow the action of the other States and South Australia must also conform if New South Wales and Victoria eventually decide that a uniform standard is desirable. The Government is anxious to meet the wishes of the growers, and this can only be done in the first instance by passing this legislation. I can commend this Bill to the House for the very reason that it may encourage the other States to fall into line. We shall then have some control over the fruit trees which at the moment are required to be imported into the State, and further, this will go a long way towards ensuring that we get healthy stock and will not import diseases such as apple scab.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: How rigidly do you implement the Plant Diseases Act now, in regard to quarantine restrictions?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: All stock that comes into the State is under quarantine and is inspected at the port by our expert agricultural officers. If they discover any disease on the spot, I believe they have full power to condemn the stock concerned.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The stock is all fumigated by such officers, anyhow.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, that is so. For instance, I know that if I desired to set up a nursery and vineyard, as I have done in the past, before I could sell any of that stock, I would have to notify the Department of Agriculture of my in-

tention to sell it. It then sends its officers to my premises and they make me dip that stock into a solution of sulphate of copper which acts as a cleansing measure. So our Department of Agriculture has certain powers, but the whole idea behind this measure is to endeavour to get all the States to fall into line and with the one purpose in view, namely, to ensure that all nurserymen supply stock free of disease.

On motion by Mr. Owen, debate adjourned.

### **BILL—PLANT DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [10.20] in moving the second reading said: This Bill was introduced in another place. When we amended the Plant Diseases Act last session, we provided for compulsory spraying in certain districts after a poll was taken and the growers agreed to come under the compulsory scheme. We inserted in that Bill amending the Act a certain charge for each spraying. Those sprayings have been carried out and the growers have paid the fee chargeable for each spraying. But the Crown Law officers have advised the department that full provision has not been made in the amendment for collecting the charge on each spraying. As the amendment was worded, the Crown Law Department is of the opinion that it only provided for the payment of 6s.—that is the fee per acre—for the first spraying. In order to clarify that clause, the Crown Law Department has now made provision, and has made the position very clear in this small amending Bill, for a charge of 6s. for each spraying. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. F. J. S. WISE** (Gascoyne) [10.22]: I am quite prepared that this Bill should go through. Originally, the object was that an acreage fee should be charged and collected.

The Minister for Lands: We decided on 6s. per 100 plants.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Subsequent events showed that although the department had authority to spray and although the fee had been paid, there would probably be one or two people who would find it difficult, or make it difficult, for such collection to be made. I think the Crown should have authority so to collect, in the event of its being challenged.

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—BULK HANDLING ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [10.26] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has been dealt with in another place. I notice from a certain document that there was no opposition, and the introductory speech was particularly short. The parent Act provides for a toll to be collected by Bulk Handling Ltd. from farmers, which is done at present by the company raising a debit direct to growers. This amending Bill simply changes the method by which this toll is paid, and has been requested by Bulk Handling Ltd. It proposes that the small amount involved will be deducted from the farmers' proceeds before they are paid into the farmers' bank accounts. A number of proceeds were paid to the farmer and collected from the farmer afterwards, and it meant writing out a lot of small cheques to meet this obligation. The method was quite cumbersome as it was done by cheques, stamps and postal notes. All that this small amendment is doing is to alter the principle of collecting the toll, which will now be deducted from the proceeds before they are paid to the grower. It is a much simpler method of collecting the toll, and that is the reason for the Bill.

Mr. May: Taxation at the source!

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** It is collecting toll due from the source, instead of a cumbersome system of collecting it after the proceeds had been paid by the farmer.

Mr. May: Have not some of them been paying up?

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** We know there are difficulties in that regard. Some people do not like parting with what they think they should not. This is a far simpler method of collecting these dues. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

### **BILL—SUPERANNUATION, SICK, DEATH, INSURANCE, GUARANTEE AND ENDOWMENT (LOCAL GOV- ERNING BODIES' EMPLOYEES) FUNDS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT** (Hon. V. Doney—Narrogin) [10.30] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is a very small one, but proposes a useful piece of legislation. Its purpose is to authorise local governing bodies to establish and maintain superannuation and other funds for employees of those bodies, that is to say, municipalities, road boards and such other bodies as may from

time to time apply for and be accepted for the scheme. The Act was amended last year when employees of the Parks and Reserves Board were brought under its provisions. To do this a special Bill had to be introduced and now, knocking at the door and asking to come under the provisions of the Act, are employees of water boards.

There is not a great number of these boards left, most of them having been taken over by the Government. However, there are half-a-dozen such boards still controlled by local authorities, and Bunbury is a case in point. It happens to be the Bunbury Board that is now submitting an application for acceptance for these benefits and, at the same time, to assume the responsibility attached to membership of the fund. Already quite a number of vermin boards come under the Act, that is, where the employees of the board come immediately under the control of the local authority. Others likely to apply are cemetery boards, but of these there would not be many.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That would be the dead end.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I suppose it would, and if the hon. member can think of another joke along those lines, probably members will laugh at that, too. There are cemetery boards likely to come under the provisions of these funds, and I have no doubt that as time passes there will be others, though at the moment I cannot think of any other than the Stirling District Drainage Board.

The framing and submission of Bills involves the expenditure of time and money, and that is the reason why the Government brings down only such Bills as are absolutely essential. If we continue to introduce a separate Bill when each application for membership is received, probably one a year will be needed during the next five or six years. Each application made by a would-be member body will necessitate a fresh Bill. The object of this measure is to avoid the need for introducing all those small Bills and to bring applicant bodies into the scheme by proclamation. That is the one purpose of the measure and I hope it will appeal to members because it will be the means of saving a good deal of time in future. The Bill is deserving of ready support and I feel sure will receive it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.35 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 18th October, 1950.

### CONTENTS.

	Page
Motion : Mining, as to Government advance to prospectors .....	1265
Bills : Railways Classification Board Act Amendment, returned .....	1270
Plant Diseases Act Amendment, returned .....	1270
Acts Amendment (Increase in Number of Ministers of the Crown), Sr., passed .....	1271
Fauna Protection, 2r. ....	1271
State Transport Co-ordination Act Amendment, (No. 1.) 2r., defeated .....	1275

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

### MOTION—MINING.

*As to Government Advance to Prospectors.*

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [4.37]: I move—

That this House is of the opinion—

(a) that the weekly amount of 30s. per week advanced to prospectors under the Government prospecting scheme is quite inadequate for present-day requirements; and

(b) that with a view to assisting bona fide prospectors and reviving interest in prospecting, the scheme generally should be revised and in particular the weekly advance of 30s. should be substantially increased.

In the first place, I want to assure members that I bring forward this motion—which I am confident will receive the wholehearted support of my colleagues from the Goldfields—not only at the instance of a large number of prospectors, supported by their official body, the Amalgamated Prospectors' Association of Western Australia, but also on behalf of the people on the Goldfields who are directly dependent on the great goldmining industry which has done so much for the State in the past and which holds out prospects of achieving further triumphs in the years that lie ahead.

At present the industry is passing through a most difficult period. Fortunately, a year or so ago, by more or less fortuitous circumstances, the price of gold was substantially increased, and that gave the industry a much-needed fillip. But rising costs of materials and commodities have almost caught up with that increase. Although conditions on the Goldfields can be regarded as being reasonable, there is not that air of prosperity or that optimistic outlook which is almost an essential aspect of life in a goldmining com-