

# Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 4th September, 1958.

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

### SUPPLY BILL (No. 1), £21,000,000.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor and Administrator received and read notifying assent to the Bill.

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

#### LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION.

##### Exhibitions.

1. Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) How many exhibitions are awarded annually at the Leaving Certificate examination?

(2) How much are these exhibitions worth, and who pays for them?

(3) What is the purpose behind the awards?

(4) When were exhibitions first awarded?

(5) What were they worth at the inception of the awards?

(6) How and when have any alterations been made to the financial benefit?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 30.

(2) (a) 20 at £40 each.  
10 at £20 each.

(b) The Government of Western Australia.

(3) Originally the purpose presumably was to provide a living allowance for the ablest students. As this is no longer necessary owing to the Commonwealth scholarship scheme the purpose of the exhibitions is as a reward to the top students and is expected to assist with incidental expenses at the University.

(4) 1914.

(5) £40.

(6) An alteration was made in the depression period when a percentage reduction was made. This was later restored. A change was made to apply from 1958 to award 30 exhibitions instead of 10, but these exhibitions would have, instead of an annual award for three years, an outright payment of one sum.

### **NARROWS BRIDGE.**

#### *Northern Approaches.*

2. Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) When is it expected that the traffic system being established at the main intersections on the Narrows bridge approaches (i.e., Milligan-st.-St. George's Terrace; Mill-st.-St. George's Terrace; Spring-st-Mounts Bay Road; William-st.-Mounts Bay Road) to handle the initial Narrows bridge traffic will become saturated?

(2) How long will the proposed western switch road take to construct once the decision to proceed is made?

(3) Has the form of this road been decided—that is, its route and main features such as bridges, tunnels, open cut, etc.

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The date at which this traffic system becomes saturated will depend on a number of factors which have not yet been evaluated, notably future re-routing of buses, the effect on traffic growth of parking charges, changes in pedestrian movement due to re-routing of buses, and suburban population growth. A study of these factors is now being actively pursued.

(2) The proposed western switch road will be developed in stages over a period of years. A programme of stages has not yet been worked out. This programme will also be affected by the major factors to which I have referred in my answer to question No. (1).

(3) No.

### **NATIVE WELFARE.**

#### *Recommendations of Special Committee.*

3. Mr. W. A. MANNING asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

Of the 63 recommendations made by the special committee on native affairs, how many and which particular ones have been implemented?

The MINISTER replied:

The recommendations of the committee were based on the provision of the necessary funds by the Commonwealth Government. The committee estimated that over three years £3,898,600 would be required. The State Government, on the present basis of providing £500,000 annually, will enable some of the recommendations to be wholly or partly implemented.

Many of the recommendations refer to practices and policy which are already established within the department.

Other recommendations are subject to current action including:

(a) A Bill is at present before the House.

(b) Plans have been prepared for a children's hostel at Hall's Creek and a mission at Roebourne, during past years, but delays have been encountered because of insufficient funds or suitability of a site.

(c) The Education Department has been pressing Pindan for a decision but no finality has been reached.

(d) The Government is at present considering the provision of a suitable institution by the transfer of Alexandra Home to the Department of Native Welfare.

### **PENSIONER FLATS.**

#### *Local Authorities' Refusal to Issue Permits.*

4. Mr. ANDREW asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) Have any local authorities refused to issue permits for the erection of cottage flats for pensioners?

(2) If so, what local authorities?

(3) What were the grounds of refusal, if any?

(4) What action is proposed to prevent a local authority denying pensioners cheap residential accommodation being made available by the State Housing Commission?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Permits have been issued in each case although some local authorities issued them under protest.

(2) Perth Road Board and Melville Road Board.

(3) On account of size of laundry/bathrooms, notwithstanding they had been approved by the Commissioner of Public Health.

(4) The local authorities are not in a position to prevent the commission erecting these cottage flats although they have indicated they would not grant permits to other parties.

### **WATER SUPPLIES.**

#### *Flat Rate Throughout the State.*

5. The Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Treasurer:

Further to my question No. (3) on the notice paper on Tuesday, the 2nd September, would he explain in what way the principle of a flat rate for water is being implemented throughout the State, and what progress has been achieved?

The TREASURER replied:

By careful consideration of all the complicated factors involved, which is being carried on as opportunity permits. It should be clear to everyone that a flat rate system would not be to the advantage of everybody in the State.

### LEIGHTON BEACH.

#### *Departmental Inspection.*

6. The Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is he aware that on the 26th September, 1957, in answer to a question, he said that the proposed inspection of the area known as Leighton beach would be made by the Under-Secretary for Lands and the Surveyor-General within one month?

(2) Has the inspection been made?

(3) If so, will he procure a copy of the report for me, for the benefit of members of the North Fremantle Council?

(4) If the inspection has not been made, when is it likely to be made?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Lands) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) An inspection was made by the Surveyor-General.

(3) Yes.

(4) Answered by question No. (2).

At the request of the Town Planning Commissioner, to whom the matter was referred, aerial photography at a comparatively low altitude was completed over the North Fremantle area on the 2nd September, 1958.

A copy of the report referred to above is attached. I move—

That a copy of these papers be laid on the Table of the House.

Question put and passed.

### WUNDOWIE CHARCOAL IRON INDUSTRY.

#### *Financial Details.*

7. The Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) What is the total capital cost of the Wundowie charcoal iron and steel industry as at the present date?

(2) What further capital expenditure has been decided upon, and what is the amount involved?

(3) What was the total capital indebtedness of the industry as at:—

The 30th June, 1952.

The 30th June, 1953.

The 30th June, 1956.

The 30th June, 1957.

The 30th June, 1958.

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £1,518,443.

(2) No capital expenditure has been planned outside the expansion proposal now nearing completion.

(3) £1,178,000.

£1,249,501.

£1,428,640.

£1,583,640.

£2,112,640.

### LEIGHTON BEACH.

#### *Future Development and Control.*

8. Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Premier:

In regard to future development of Leighton beach—

(1) Has a decision yet been reached as to whether the Fremantle Harbour Trust or the North Fremantle Council will control the area?

(2) If so, what is the decision?

(3) If not, in view of the period of time that has elapsed, and the importance of quickly reaching finality on this matter, when may a decision be reasonably expected?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) No. At present the land referred to is vested in and controlled by the Railway Department to give access to additional wheat terminals to be erected by Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd.

(2) and (3). See answer to No. (1).

### NATIVE WELFARE.

#### *Control and Management of Allawah Grove Area.*

9. Mr. W. A. MANNING asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

(1) Who is responsible for the control and management of the native area at Allawah Grove?

(2) How many residents are there and what number of these have citizenship rights?

(3) What interest have the resident natives taken in the welfare of the area?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Coolbaroo League Inc. At the outset, as an experiment the residents agreed to the Coolbaroo League controlling and managing the area as they did not wish to feel that they were on a native reserve and subject to the many restrictions and inquisitions that occur in the case of reserves.

(2) The numbers fluctuate day by day. The last census taken on the 20th February, 1958, shows a total of 220. Of this figure 32 were non-natives, including 28 citizenship-rights holders

(3) Considerable interest has been taken in the area by the natives. Some nine or 10 truck-loads of rubbish were removed from the area which they cleared when they first moved in. A basketball court is being prepared and many of the residents have established grass lawns where only sand existed before. With the help of various organisations and the sponsorship of the department, the Coolbaroo League has arranged for a library, a kindergarten, a recreation hall, sewing classes and the formation of a girl guide group. When considering Allawah Grove we must remember that nine months ago many of these people were living in abject poverty on the ground in miserable iron and bark humpies without bathing, laundry or sanitary facilities. More important than the welfare of the area is the welfare of the people. Even though they are modest, the facilities which they lacked before they now have. This is a vast improvement and their own standards and outlook are continually improving because of it.

#### *Approach to Federal Government for Finance.*

10. Mr. W. A. MANNING asked the Treasurer:

(1) Has an approach been made to the Federal Government regarding finance to cover capital expenditure as recommended by the special committee on native matters?

(2) If not, is there any reason for delay?

(3) What form of approach has been, or will be, made?

The TREASURER replied:

(1) Yes.

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

(3) A copy of the report together with a written request for a special grant has been forwarded to the Prime Minister, whose reply is now awaited.

#### *Printing of Report of Special Committee.*

11. Mr. W. A. MANNING asked the Premier:

When will the report of the special committee on native matters be printed?

The PREMIER replied:

The report is now with the Government Printer and it is expected to be printed within a month. Copies will be available to the public at approximately 10s. each.

#### **RURAL & INDUSTRIES BANK.**

##### *Use of Day Labour on New Building.*

12. The Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Can it be taken that the Government has decided to build the new Rural & Industries Bank building by day labour through the Public Works Department

instead of by contract after the calling of tenders, in view of the fact that tenders have been invited for the supply of the following items of equipment required for the new building:—

- (a) Supply and installation of compressor equipment, etc., for cool room.
- (b) Manufacture, supply and erection of curtain walling.
- (c) Installation of an inclinator.
- (d) Supply and delivery of aluminium window frames and sashes.
- (e) Installation of air conditioning and mechanical ventilation.
- (f) Installation of lifts.
- (g) Manufacture, supply and erection of precast exposed aggregate facing panels?

(2) What method is available to the Government for determining that projects carried out by day labour are more cheaply and efficiently done by this method rather than by competitive tendering?

(3) What is the estimated cost of the new building by the day labour method?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Lands) replied:

(1) No.

(2) Where it has been possible to make exact comparisons of day labour with contracts as in housing it has been found that day labour costs are comparable.

(3) Not yet available.

#### **CROSSWALKS.**

##### *Provision at George-st., Kensington.*

13. Mr. GRAYDEN asked the Minister for Transport:

Will he consider providing crosswalks across George-st., Kensington, at the junction of George-st. and Lansdowne-rd., and at the junction of George-st. and Kennard-st.?

The MINISTER replied:

I shall arrange for the Main Roads Department to carry out the usual pedestrian and traffic counts at these junctions to determine whether traffic conditions justify pedestrian crossings.

#### **XYLIDINE.**

##### *Cost to Government Chemical Laboratories.*

14. Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Mines:

What would be the cost, per lb. of the chemical solvent known as "Xylidine", if purchased by the Government Chemical Laboratories?

The MINISTER replied:

There are approximately six different chemical compounds known as "Xylidines", which are chemical intermediates in the dye industry. It is considered doubtful

if they could be regarded as solvents. The Government Chemical Laboratories have had no cause to purchase any of these compounds, so a price cannot be quoted.

### SULPHUR DIOXIDE.

*Report on Gas Tenor by Dr. F. O. Wienert.*

15. Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) Is his department in possession of a report on the gas tenor of sulphur dioxide produced from roasting Kalgoorlie gold ores, by Dr. F. O. Wienert, on the 28th February, 1951?

(2) If so, would he agree to lay this report on the table of the House for a fortnight?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

### Percentage of Gas Tenor.

16. Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Mines:

What is the gas tenor (per cent) of the sulphur dioxide gas produced from roasting Kalgoorlie gold ores?

The MINISTER replied:

The roaster gases at Kalgoorlie contain from 2% to 2.5% by volume of sulphur dioxide.

### ALBANY REGIONAL HOSPITAL.

*Iron and Steel Used in Construction.*

17. Mr. HALL asked the Minister for Works:

In view of the answers given to questions appertaining to steel and iron used, and to be used, in the construction of the Albany regional hospital, would he have further shipments of steel and iron to be used in this connection, shipped through the port of Albany?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Works) replied:

The steel and iron required for this work is of several different kinds. The round mild steel and the small angles are rolled at Kwinana. The other items would come from New South Wales. The individual parcels are not large enough to warrant direct shipment from Newcastle. Supplies will be obtained from time to time as required, by tender from Perth suppliers.

### COLLIE COAL.

*Establishment of Coking Plant, and Production of Char Briquettes.*

18. Mr. MAY asked the Premier:

(1) If the report on the coking of Collie coal, anticipated from the Lurgi Gas Co. shortly is favourable, is it the intention of the Government to establish a coking plant at Collie?

(2) In view of the satisfactory reports received on the tests made on railway locomotives, of char briquettes made from Collie coal, will it be possible to produce char briquettes from the same plant, as will be used to produce gas?

(3) Is it a fact that char briquettes, as tested by the W.A.G.R., have eliminated sparking and so render the use of Newcastle coal unnecessary?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) If the report by the Lurgi Co. indicates that the establishment of a coking plant at Collie is economically sound, the Government will assist the establishment of such a plant in every way possible.

(2) There is no intention to produce gas at Collie. Any plant established there to manufacture coke briquettes could also be used to produce processed fuel for use in locomotives.

(3) There was no significant spark emission during trials conducted by the Railway Department, using char briquettes as fuel. Such briquettes would be a satisfactory alternative to New South Wales coal, subject only to price being satisfactory.

### KOOLYANOBING IRON DEPOSITS.

*Drilling for Sulphur.*

19. Mr. EVANS asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Has a diamond drilling project been carried out at Koolyanobbing for the purpose of discovering the possibilities of iron sulphide deposits there as a source of sulphur supply?

(2) If so, were results satisfactory?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes. Geological Surveys Bulletin 111, "The Exploratory Diamond Drilling of the Koolyanobbing Iron Ore Deposit for Pyrite", is in the hands of the Government Printer, and will be available soon.

### POTATOES.

*Inspection Prior to Despatch.*

20. Mr. I. W. MANNING asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware that departmental inspectors rejected 11,000 bags of potatoes in Perth during the months of June and July of this year?

(2) Is it not considered that a lot of unnecessary transport and handling costs are involved when such a large quantity is rejected?

(3) Will he take action forthwith to implement a scheme of primary inspections prior to the despatch of the potatoes from the country?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) No. The large number of sidings at which an inspector would be required and the variability in times of loading would make the cost prohibitive. It is the responsibility of the growers to consign only potatoes which conform to grading regulations.

### MT. LAWLEY HIGH SCHOOL.

#### *Number of Students, Teachers, and Classrooms.*

21. Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Education:

(1) How many students in each year group attend Mt. Lawley High School?

(2) How many teachers are there for each year group?

(3) How many classrooms are there available for each year group?

(4) How many vacant rooms are there, if any?

(5) Are any more classrooms to be built at this school; and if so, how many?

The MINISTER replied:

I would like the hon. member to postpone this question on account of the school holidays. I am anxious to give a complete reply to the hon. member which will be forthcoming as soon as practicable. This also applies to questions Nos. 22 and 23.

Nos. 22 to 25. These questions were postponed.

### TRANSPORT ROUTES.

#### *Effect of Changes on Businesses.*

26. Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Has he received complaints about business difficulties resulting from changed traffic arrangements and re-routed bus services and changed bus terminals either in the city or suburbs?

(2) What is the Government's policy in regard to complaints where old-established businesses are seriously prejudiced?

(3) Is there any consultation with local trading and other interests before changes are made. If so, to what extent, and in what form?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes—both opposing and advocating the retention of bus stops adjacent to business premises.

(2) Public safety and convenience are always the prime consideration in locating bus routes and stopping places. Subject to that, other factors such as business interests are kept in view.

(3) Decisions are made in consultation with local governing bodies who should be aware of any local trading or other interests affecting the position. Reference is made by letter concerning bus route changes. Bus stops and stands are dealt with by a committee on which the relevant local governing body is represented.

### FLOURMILLING.

#### *Geraldton Difficulties, and Exports to South-East Asia.*

27. Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware of the financial difficulties that confront the Geraldton flour mill?

(2) Has the Government taken any action to interest itself in the matter in view of the importance of the flourmill to the district?

(3) Is there any prospect of Western Australia receiving preferred treatment as to export tonnages in view of the general significance of milling and export to this State's economy and employment?

(4) Are Western Australian millers receiving the benefit of the geographic and freight advantage they normally hold in respect of South-East Asian and Indian Ocean trade?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied:

(1) Yes. This matter has been represented to the Government by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Sewell, M.L.A.).

(2) Yes. A request for financial assistance has recently been received and is under investigation.

(3) Most unlikely. Export flour tonnages are allocated between the States by the Federal Council of the Flour Mill owners' Association of Australia on the basis of the mill output capacity of each State.

(4) No. The price of wheat for the export flour trade is now adjusted so that all flour exported from Australian ports is quoted at the same price. This arrangement was introduced by the Australian Wheat Board in agreement with the Federal Council of Flour Millowners of Australia, which includes representatives from Western Australia.

### TIMBER SUPPLIES.

#### *Effect of Increased Population.*

28. Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Forests:

What is the Government's view on the statement by the acting principal of the Australian Forestry School at Canberra (Mr. K. P. McGrath) that Australia might have to import two-thirds of the timber needs of a doubled or trebled population?

within 20 years, especially in view of current Western Australian timber merchandising difficulties?

The MINISTER replied:

The Government feels that the statement made by the acting principal of the Australian Forestry School is based on the best information available at the present time on this aspect of the timber requirements of the Commonwealth. It can therefore be accepted as authoritative.

The present regulated yield from our State Forests can be maintained for a considerable period, but our supply problem will arise with an increase of population. If this reaches 1,000,000 in the next 25 years we will need more than our present timber production from native forests for our own requirements. In an endeavour to provide for this increased consumption the department has already planted 25,000 acres of fast-growing pines and expects to maintain a planting programme of 2,000 acres per year. An extension of this annual planting rate is regarded as essential.

Furthermore, it is most important that there should be no irresponsible release of areas containing marketable timber. There is persistent pressure for the sacrifice of forest areas for land selection and all hon. members could play a useful part by having regard for the long-term timber position, rather than individual interests.

### WATER SUPPLIES.

#### *Discount on Excess Rates in Country Areas.*

29. The Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

In order to assist the Government in its policy of decentralisation, would he state whether the Government would be prepared to allow a discount on excess water used in country districts, provided the rates are paid by a certain date, taking into consideration that a discount of 3d. per 1,000 gallons of excess water is allowed to metropolitan consumers, provided the account is paid before the 30th November each year?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Water Supplies) replied:

In some country districts there is differentiation of price for excess water if water rates are paid promptly. No extension of this principle is contemplated at present.

### NATIVES.

#### *Number in Western Australia Granted Citizenship Rights.*

30. The Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

What is the total number of natives who have been granted citizenship rights in Western Australia?

The MINISTER replied:

Adults	....	....	....	1,167
Children	....	....	....	412
Total	....	....	....	1,579

### CLOSED BURNING SEASON.

#### *Changes in Zone 3.*

31. Mr. HEARMAN asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) What changes were made for the coming season with respect to the commencement of the closed burning season in Zone 3?

(2) What local authorities are involved in Zone 3?

(3) What dates were recommended for Zone 3 by the various local authorities concerned?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Lands) replied:

(1) No changes were made with respect to the commencing date for the prohibited burning times for Zone 3 as a whole. Zones are determined on concluding dates, which are uniform throughout each zone. There is some variation in commencing dates in individual road districts.

(2) Armadale-Kelmscott; Balingup; portion of Beverley; Busselton; Capel; portion of Chittering; Colliie-Coatfields; Dardanup. Darling Range; Drakesbrook (except coastal strip); portion of Greenbushes; Harvey (except coastal strip); part of Maradong; Mandurah; Mundaring; Murray; Preston; Serpentine-Jarrahdale; Swan; part of Wandering; Wanneroo; part of York.

(3) No general change in dates for Zone 3 was requested by any local authority. There were some requests for modification of boundaries of the zone in individual road districts. These were—

Chittering—inclusion of part district in Zone 3.

Drakesbrook — requested change in boundary and date of area in coastal strip excluded from Zone 3.

Harvey—requested exclusion from Zone 3 of a coastal strip.

Mandurah—requested change which would have involved exclusion from Zone 3 and inclusion in Zone 2 or a special zone.

York—include existing part of Zone 3 in Zone 2.

### BUNBURY HARBOUR.

#### *Allocations from General Loan Funds for Improvements.*

32. Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Works:

What sum has been set aside from General Loan Funds for the year ending the 30th June, 1959, for general improvements to the Bunbury harbour?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Works) replied:

An amount of £120,000.

## NEW INDUSTRIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

### *Number Established Since 1953.*

33. Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

(1) What are the names of the new industries established in this State since 1953, and what amount of capital was invested in each case?

(2) Where and when were they established?

The MINISTER replied:

The question is far too general for any specific reply, as it is not stated whether the industry is primary, secondary or tertiary. Presuming secondary industry is meant, it would take weeks of work to obtain details of all secondary industry established in the last five years.

The following information may assist the hon. member—

#### Value of Factory Fixed Assets:

	30/6/53.	30/6/57.
	£	£
Land and buildings ....	20,959,603	35,519,634
Plant and machinery	24,038,814	63,272,185
Totals ....	£44,998,417	£98,791,819

I desire to thank the hon. member for asking this question.

## RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK.

### *Soliciting Business.*

34. Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Premier:

(1) Was the method of soliciting business in Government Departments and carried out by officers of the R. & I. Bank brought about by an instruction or direction given to the R. & I. Bank by the Government?

(2) If not, how did this practice begin?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) No.

(2) When the Commonwealth Bank gave approval to the Rural & Industries Bank to commence a Savings Bank Department, the particulars of the facilities which were available were brought before all departments.

## PENSIONERS.

### *Transport Concession Cards.*

35. Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister, representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) What categories of pensioners are entitled to transport concession cards?

(2) (a) Are persons in receipt of reciprocal U.K. age pensions eligible for such concessions?

(b) If not, will he give consideration to the extension of this concession to such pensioners?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) Aged, invalid, widows, wives of invalid pensioners, service old age pensioners, service—permanently unfit for employment, and tuberculosis cases.

(2) (a) Yes, in all cases where the pensioner's total income is not more than the United Kingdom aged pension plus the allowance made by the Department of Social Services to bring the amount up to that payable under the Australian aged pensioners' schedule.

(b) Answered by (a).

## IMPORTED STUD PIGS.

### *Quarantine Regulations.*

36. Mr. NALDER asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) How many stud pigs were imported from the Eastern States?

(2) Are there any disease regulations relating to the import of pigs into this State?

(3) What are the diseases covered in these regulations?

(4) Are all pigs imported quarantined?

(5) Who issues instructions for the quarantine?

(6) What notice is given to the owner of the quarantine?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Agriculture) replied:

(1) 43—over the period the 2nd August, 1957, to the 4th September, 1958.

(2) Yes, under the Stock Diseases Act regulations.

(3) Swine fever, swine brucellosis, contagious pneumonia, swine paratyphoid, swine erysipelas.

(4) Yes.

(5) The Chief Inspector of Stock, under the regulation quoted in No. (2) above.

(6) On the receipt of advice from the agent arranging the importation, the owner is advised—usually before arrival of stock—that pigs will be entering quarantine.

## LEUKAEMIA RESEARCH.

### *Interim Report.*

37. Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Health:

Arising out of his answer to my question dealing with leukaemia and other blood diseases, will he request an interim report from the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Western Australia, on the progress so far that has been made into research on these diseases, with particular reference to the part that radiation plays?



The MINISTER replied:

Research into factors associated with leukaemia and other blood diseases is highly complex and can only be approached on a long range basis. It is premature to expect any reports at the present time.

## QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

### STATE BUDGET.

#### *Date of Introduction.*

1. The Hon. D. BRAND asked the Treasurer:

Now that the total grant available from the Commonwealth is known, when will he be introducing the State Budget?

The TREASURER replied:

The papers in connection with the State Budget are almost completed, and I hope to introduce it in not more than about two weeks from today.

### FLOURMILLING.

#### *Preferred Treatment for Western Australia.*

2. Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

In the answer to question No. 27, part (3) on the notice paper today, the Premier said "most unlikely". Has the Government made, or does it propose to make representations to see if some preferred treatment can be received for Western Australia?

The PREMIER replied:

I understand these matters are decided by the Wheat Board after consultation with the Flour Millers' Association. From memory, I understand that the two flour-millers' representatives from Western Australia at the time agreed to the methods which I gave in answer to the questions. I think at that stage there was a bit of a flare-up in Western Australia because it was considered that those representatives had, to some extent at any rate, let down the flourmilling industry in this State. On behalf of the Minister for Agriculture, I am prepared to undertake to have some further inquiries made.

### TRANSPORT ROUTES.

#### *Effect of Changes on Business.*

3. Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Transport:

Further to question No. 26 on the notice paper today, does the subject of compensation ever arise in the deliberations of the Government with respect to the effect on business when there is a re-routing of uses or a change in terminals?

The MINISTER replied:

No.

### LANDS.

#### *Agreement with Esperance Plains (Australia) Pty. Ltd.*

4. The Hon. D. BRAND asked the Premier:

(1) Does Mr. Chase get a clear title to the land he obtains at Esperance under the agreement between Esperance Plains (Australia) Pty. Ltd. and the Government?

(2) Does this enable him, notwithstanding any provision in the agreement, to sell the land, undeveloped, to anyone he chooses?

(3) If this is so, how does the Government propose to ensure that land sold in this way is developed according to the terms of the agreement?

(4) Has a title been issued by the Titles Office to the private purchasers who have bought land subject to the agreement from Mr. Chase?

(5) If not, will titles be issued to the new owners?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Upon payment of the purchase price a clear title is issued to Esperance Plains (Australia) Pty. Ltd.

(2) Legal advice is being obtained.

(3) Mr. Chase has advised verbally that transferees will be required to develop holdings in the terms of the agreement, and has promised to obtain a binding agreement from each transferee.

(4) Parcel No. 1 has been subdivided, and separate titles issued, or are about to issue, for the holdings which have been transferred.

(5) Answered by No. (4).

### IRON ORE.

#### *Agreement with B.H.P.*

The PREMIER: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to refer to some questions which were asked without notice some days ago by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. These questions had relationship to the agreement made between the State and the B.H.P. Pty. Co. in connection with iron ore at Yampi Sound. The particular question upon which the Deputy Leader required some information was as to whether any other agreement prior to the one with B.H.P. had been made in Western Australia. As a result of extensive investigation by officers of the department it was found that a previous agreement had been made; this was contained in the Iron and Steel Industry Act which was passed by Parliament in 1947.

The Act authorised the Government to contract or arrange for the development and mining of any iron ore resources of the State; to promote or assist in the promotion of any company having objects which include the establishment, maintenance, or carrying on of an iron industry,

a steel industry, or an integrated iron and steel industry; to subscribe and pay for, acquire and hold shares in any such company; and to direct or control, or assist in the direction or control of any such company, and to make certain contracts; and further to ratify an agreement made between the Government and H. A. Brassert & Co. Ltd. relating to certain iron ore deposits; and for other purposes relating to the foregoing.

As I mentioned earlier, this agreement was contained in the Iron and Steel Industry Act, which was passed by this Parliament in 1947 and repealed in 1951.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL.

Introduced by the Minister for Justice and read a first time.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. May, leave of absence for one month granted to Mr. Lawrence (South Fremantle) on the ground of ill-health.

### BROKEN HILL PROPRIETARY STEEL INDUSTRY AGREEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### NOXIOUS WEEDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd September.

**MR. NALDER** (Katanning) [2.51]: I am sorry that the Minister for Agriculture is not in his seat.

**Mr. Brady**: He is opening a show in the country today, and will be back later.

**Mr. NALDER**: If that is the case, I think this matter should have been delayed in order to enable the Minister to answer some of the queries that may be raised.

**Mr. Graham**: That is why we keep Hansard reporters; so that absent Ministers may know what is going on.

**Mr. NALDER**: That is not a very satisfactory reply.

**Mr. Hawke**: The Minister for Agriculture is opening a show at Dalwallinu at the request of one who was the local member for the district.

**Mr. NALDER**: After having had a look at the proposed amendment contained in the Bill, it would appear from the Act—although it did not appear from what the Minister said in his speech—that the purpose of the amendment is to permit local authorities to enter into an arrangement with the Agriculture Protection Board, to assist in eradicating primary noxious weeds in the areas of the boards which make application for this assistance. On looking

through the Act we find that the Agriculture Protection Board has power to go from place to place to eradicate primary noxious weeds. I understand that several methods are used. The chief method used is a machine which deposits a spray containing a chemical which has proved to be very effective in the past.

To my mind one of the worst noxious weeds that is threatening our country districts at present is the cape tulip. It is spreading with lightning rapidity throughout the country areas. One has only to travel from district to district to see just how fast is the spread of this weed. On railway reserves, on Crown land, on private properties and on roads, this pest is spreading at a great pace. It is definitely a State problem; but, if we are not careful, it will become a national problem very quickly. I admit that something is being done; but every effort should be made, not only by private landholders but also by the Government and the Department of Agriculture, to do all that is possible to check the spread of this pest.

I understand the amendment contained in the Bill is designed to assist in this direction. If local authorities wish to attend to any particular area that comes under their control they will be at liberty under this amendment, to seek the assistance of the Agriculture Protection Board. Under the present set-up, I understand, the road board is not permitted to spend on this particular work the rate money it receives from landholders. There is no reason at all why we should not pass this Bill. If it is agreed to it will mean that local authorities may use some of the money to eradicate any of the primary noxious weeds one of the worst of which as I have mentioned, is the Cape tulip.

In the South-West area blackberry is a problem. I do not know to what extent this is so; but no doubt the hon. member from that area will be able to tell us whether it is being tackled, and whether it is being checked or is extending to other parts. We cannot over-emphasise the urgency with which this problem should be tackled, and every effort ought to be made to impress this on individuals who own any land at all. I know that local government bodies are fast becoming aware of the urgency of this matter, as are the various departments.

I would like to mention here that the Railway Department is tackling this problem with quite a bit of effort and energy. Just recently I was talking to one of the men engaged on a certain length of the Great Southern line, and he told me that the work done last year in spraying the Cape tulip on the lines between the Great Southern and Collie had a marked effect that, almost without exception, the strong plants of the Cape tulip had been killed and that there were only some of the smaller plants showing any growth at all

I would say that, if they are sprayed this year, probably within two years the efforts of the Railway Department, in this particular area, will have been 100 per cent. effective.

For my part, I see no reason why the House should not pass this amending Bill, because the power it will give to local authorities will enable them to deal more efficiently with the areas that come under their control. I would like to point out that the roads in the local government areas of the State are always open to some criticism. It appears that there are miles and miles of roads that are not easily accessible. These noxious weeds seem to grow in the most obscure places, such as creeks, rocky outcrops, and so on. But the problem must be tackled; and, if power is given to the local authorities, I feel that in most cases they will make every effort to deal with the matter which is the subject of this amending Bill. I have much pleasure in supporting the measure and trust it will pass through this House.

**MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [3.0]:** In the limited time available to me since the introduction of this measure it appears to me that it will vest more powers in a local authority in relation to its efforts to eradicate primary noxious weeds. I adhere to the principle that the people on the spot and those elected to the responsibility of local government are best informed as to the difficulties that confront them in their immediate environment. I think it is a commendable move that the local authority should be given added powers in relation to the eradication of noxious weeds, and I support the measure.

There are one or two matters to which the hon. member for Katanning has referred, and I would like to discuss one of them. I refer to the eradication of noxious weeds on public roads. I do not know of any system operated by the Main Roads Department in the eradication of noxious weeds. I would say that the Commissioner of Main Roads should evolve a policy—which could possibly be dealt with in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture—for the eradication of noxious weeds on main roads.

Local authorities, of course, are responsible for the other roads in their districts; but probably, by some collective enterprise, a scheme could be formulated where noxious weeds on main and secondary roads could be dealt with.

As the hon. member for Katanning pointed out, the Railway Department does act in this regard; and as far as my experience is concerned, the gangs burn, from time to time, and do what they can in regard to eradication. I support the measure.

**MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [3.4]:** I support this Bill. I think the remarks by the previous speakers are appropriate.

However, one point has not yet been covered, and it is this: that in the event of a local authority doing this job and insisting that a landholder clear noxious weeds from his property, that local authority is not placed in the invidious position of being criticised because it has not dealt with noxious weeds through the fence of the road boundary. That has always been a sore point. In a few instances a local authority could compel a landowner to eradicate or treat noxious weeds on his own property, but it could take no action on land which adjoined a property over which it had no jurisdiction.

This amendment will mean that in the event of a Government department such as the Railway Department or the P.M.G. failing to act with sufficient expedition on the properties under their control on which a few plants might have grown, a local authority, if necessary, can do the work itself and presumably recover the cost of that work from the department concerned. In other words, it will put the local authority in a morally stronger position to deal with landholders who have the misfortune to have noxious weeds growing on their properties.

**Mr. Nalder:** Would the P.M.G. have very much land in the country?

**Mr. HEARMAN:** Not very much; but it might have a few sites. The individuals are not concerned about the presence of noxious weeds, and theoretically I do not think a local authority could spend any money on it. Under this provision I think they could expend the money without infringing their regulations in respect of expenditure, and subsequently recover the money from the offending department.

The hon. member for Katanning should be well aware of the fact that in dealing with noxious weeds it is necessary to act very promptly. It is no use allowing local authorities time in which to have an argument, as the plant will spread and be ten times more difficult to deal with than if prompt action is taken. The amendment will make it possible for a local authority to deal as promptly as possible with an outbreak of a noxious weed in its district. There is Cape tulip in my electorate, but it is by no means general in the sense that it is in many areas in the Great Southern; and, quite obviously, if any plants are discovered, it is most desirable that immediate action be taken to eradicate them. Even two or three plants must be dealt with before they seed, as the seed can be carried quite a long way in water in a short period. For that reason I think the Bill should have the support of all members of the House.

**THE HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [3.8]:** I want to associate myself with the remarks which have already been made. I feel that anything we can do to prevent the spread of noxious weeds should be done.

On Sunday last I visited some country and saw enough Cape tulip in one particular area to seed the whole of Western Australia. We know that the spread of noxious weeds occurs because of carelessness, as little notice is taken of them when they are in small quantities. But how quickly they spread!

I give the Department of Agriculture full marks for the considerable amount of work which it is doing today, particularly in supplying the hormones which, as the hon. member for Katanning has pointed out, are an effective spray. The hon. member for Katanning mentioned Cape tulip in particular. From my own experience, I know that spraying has a good effect in controlling the growth of this particular curse. Of course, we have a number of noxious weeds in Western Australia which are very hard to deal with and which are very rapid spreaders. Apart from Cape tulip, there are the doublegees, wild turnip, and so on.

Mr. Owen: What about the watsonias?

Sir ROSS McLARTY: They are thick along the rivers and water-courses; but, as the hon. member probably knows, where good cultivation has been carried out and stock have been pastured, the watsonia does not cause much trouble. I know that sheep will clean it out and that cultivation will get rid of it; but that does not apply in the case of the other weeds I have mentioned.

I wonder whether there exists at present sufficient provision, in regard to the gathering and sale of seed, to prevent the spread of noxious weeds. Many of us buy oats, clover, and other seed; and, if the seeds of noxious weeds are contained therein, that is an effective way of spreading those weeds throughout the country districts of this State. I know, from practical experience, that the seeds of noxious weeds are often mixed up with other seeds such as I have mentioned.

If one sends to market sheep affected with lice, the stock inspectors will not allow them to be sold—and that applies also to other animal pests and diseases. I would have liked the Minister, had he been here, to tell us what steps are being taken to control the distribution of noxious weeds, by means of effective control over the different classes of seed that are harvested and sold. I support the second reading, in the hope that this measure will be of some assistance to the control of noxious weeds in Western Australia.

THE HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Premier—Northam—in reply) [3.12]: As I indicated, by way of interjection, the Minister for Lands is today at Dalwallinu, in connection with the agriculture show at that centre; but he has undertaken to peruse carefully any speeches made during this debate and to consider any suggestions

that might be made in regard to the general question of controlling and, where possible, eradicating noxious weeds.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

## ARGENTINE ANT ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE) BILL.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd September.

MR. OWEN (Darling Range) [3.15]: This measure, as introduced by the Minister, might be classed as a small Bill, because in effect the two amendments contained in it merely change the figures "1959" to "1960"; but, in the words of the Minister for Health, I feel that we could say it is a very important Bill, because unless it is agreed to by this House the several years' work that has already been done, in an endeavour to eradicate the Argentine ant from Western Australia, will be lost.

The Minister explained to the House what a great deal of work had been entailed in the campaign so far; and I wish to touch on one or two matters of a similar nature. When the original legislation was introduced in 1954, a lot of work had been done, mainly by the Health Department, in an endeavour to control the Argentine ant, both in the metropolitan area and in many country centres.

Up until 1952, although a number of areas had been sprayed and some householders had spent a lot of time and money in trying to control the pest, very little effective work had actually been done; but during the year 1952-53 the Health Department, in conjunction with the entomological section of the Department of Agriculture, undertook a lot of experimental work and research, and found that, by using the latest chemicals, fairly good control could be achieved—control sufficiently good that it was hoped that eradication of the pest would be possible over a period of five years.

This matter is referred to in the report of the Commissioner of Public Health for 1952; and, in Appendix II of that report, there is a report by Mr. Cyril Flower (Deputy Chief Inspector) dealing fully with the work done in South Perth. That report will give hon. members who are interested in the matter some idea of the magnitude of the work undertaken in the eradication campaign envisaged in the Argentine Ant Act of 1954. As the Minister explained, the work progressed very well for the first two years, while the more easily accessible areas were cleaned up; but when less accessible country had to be dealt

with, the difficulties encountered increased greatly. It was then found that the five-year period, at first envisaged as necessary to eradicate the ants, would be insufficient.

Some indication of the cost can be gained by an examination of the report submitted by Mr. C. E. Flower (Deputy Chief Inspector) which appears on page 66 of Appendix XI in the 1952 Annual Report of the Public Health Laboratories. The following is an extract from his report:—

Inspections were made of all premises to be treated and where necessary orders were served to clear fence lines, remove rank vegetation and clear rubbish; for although it had been shown that chlordane could be used effectively without clearing, it was considered that, apart from ensuring more effective treatment, there would be a considerable saving in the quantity of insecticide used when clearing up was done.

This is borne out by the following figures:—

- (1) Vacant lot heavily overgrown with grass and bush required 90 gallons of spray to treat  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre.
- (2) A dwelling occupied by two old-age pensioners, backyard badly overgrown, required 50 gallons per  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre.
- (3) A suburban home with well kept but elaborate garden layout—30 gallons.
- (4) A clean suburban dwelling with well kept garden—15 gallons.

It was estimated that the spray used cost approximately 3s. per gallon. Therefore, it can be seen that, over the years, as the ant-infested area totalled 40 square miles—as the Minister told us—it was indeed a tremendous task to eradicate this pest, especially when we know that certain areas were in bad condition and were badly overgrown with weeds and vegetation.

The Minister also told us of the difficulties encountered in the northern suburbs out towards Wanneroo, which is swamp land. Mr. Flower described the work done in the old market garden allotment on the South Perth foreshore. In his report, he said—

This market garden land had been abandoned for some time, consequently it was heavily overgrown with vegetation of all kinds and parts were permanently covered with water; these latter areas supported a dense growth of bulrushes. The old irrigation ditches and the deep drains which separated the reed and paper-bark covered foreshore from the garden land made even the movement of hand trolleys difficult and sometimes impossible.

Clearing by either manual or chemical means was impracticable and uneconomic and there was little chance of successfully burning the area, although treatment was deferred until later in the summer in the hope that this could be done.

All water for the insecticide had to be carted to the spot.

Taking into account the dense vegetation plus the fact the area was very heavily infested with ants, it was decided to apply a heavy application of chlordane as a complete cover spray.

The South Perth Road Board co-operated by bulldozing a track from the Mends-st. Jetty end to the junction of Mill Point-rd. and King Edward-st. and by clearing narrow tracks from Mill Point-rd. to the foreshore in areas where the vegetation was particularly dense.

Two spray units were used; each equipped with one 100 feet and one 300 feet length of spray hose. One unit sprayed the foreshore area while the other treated the section between the deep drain and the road.

Water for the foreshore unit was pumped through 700 feet of hose by a third power spray adapted for the purpose.

The whole area was treated in strips and paper markers were used to ensure thorough coverage.

The spraying was completed in three weeks and 14,060 gallons of spray were applied at 292.9 gallons per acre.

We all know the South Perth foreshore area, and some of us know about the swamps that are in the Wanneroo area. This should give us an excellent idea of the difficulties that would be encountered in conducting this spraying campaign. So to me it is not surprising that five years, as envisaged by the Act of 1954, is not long enough completely to eradicate the pest.

Nevertheless, I feel that great progress has been made towards that end, and also it has been demonstrated what can be done by concerted and co-ordinated efforts. The Minister told us that, prior to the introduction of the Act, approximately £25,000 per year was being spent by the Government in an endeavour to control the pest; and, in addition to that, considerable sums were being spent by local authorities; and, further, comparatively large amounts—up to £5 per annum—were being spent by each householder. So I think it would be quite reasonable to assume that £60,000 a year was being spent on various methods to control the pest. Despite this, the Argentine ant continued to spread.

On the other hand, once the eradication campaign commenced, it was anticipated that £105,000 would be spent each year for five years. Now, however, that it is

proposed to extend the period of the campaign for another year, it will mean that approximately £630,000 will have been spent to eradicate the Argentine ant from all the infested parts of Western Australia. Under the old method of control, which was getting us nowhere, it is quite possible we would have found that in 10 years—if those methods had been continued—we would have spent £630,000, but would still have been no better off than when the campaign was first started. Therefore, it has been proved what can be done with a properly controlled campaign.

When a Bill similar to this was first introduced, I compared the Argentine ant pest with that of fruit-fly; and I still think that they are equal as pests, and that the Government should make some concerted effort to eliminate fruit-fly throughout the State with a campaign conducted on the same lines as that used to eradicate the Argentine ant. If that were done, we would get somewhere in our efforts to eradicate fruit-fly in this State.

In reverting to the Bill, I have no option but to support it; and I hope that other members of the House will also give their support to the measure. Before concluding, I would like to quote what I had to say during the debate on a Bill similar to this, which was held in this Chamber in 1954. The remarks that I made then could certainly be used to express my feelings now. This is what I said on the 19th October, 1954, and the remarks appear in Volume 2 of the Parliamentary Debates of that year:—

In like manner, the Bill aims at eradicating the Argentine ants. As explained by the Minister, a committee will be set up and given powers and machinery to undertake the campaign. The great difficulty is to provide the requisite finance and it is estimated that for the five years' campaign £500,000 will be sufficient. I hope it will prove to be so. If we have made considerable progress at the end of five years and the pest has not been completely eradicated, we should extend the duration of the measure until the ant is exterminated throughout the State.

Later on in my speech, I said this—

If that end can be achieved in five years and at a cost of £500,000 we will be fortunate, but should it be necessary to have a longer period and extend the legislation beyond the five years, I shall have no objection to that.

When that Bill left this Chamber there was a clause in it, I think, which would have permitted the programme to continue for another six months. However, in another place, hon. members considered that Parliament should have more control over the position, and that clause was amended to ensure that the matter would

be referred back to Parliament so that the life of the Act could be extended if it were so desired. We now have this continuance Bill before us, and I have much pleasure in supporting it to allow the campaign to eradicate the Argentine ant to continue for another year.

**MR. CROMMELIN** (Claremont) [3.29]: Like the previous speaker, I consider that we are somewhat under an obligation to agree to the continuance of this Act for another 12 months. I do not think that any of us know where these ants came from. All we know is that they descended on us somewhat suddenly. Unfortunately, over the last few years, most of us who have been in the different districts in which the destruction of these pests has been taking place have found that, to some extent, the treatment given to the Argentine ant affected other insects in some ways.

So it has been noticed, particularly in some parts of the metropolitan area over the last few years, that each year—from about September to Christmas—there was an ever-increasing number of flies. Perhaps the Minister can allay my fears in this regard and assure me that the spraying of these ants does not affect any of the other insects, and consequently the increase in household flies, which is very definite, has not been caused by the treatment meted out to the Argentine ant.

It would have been my hope that over the suggested period of years the programme adopted by the Government would be sufficient to clean up the pest; and yet at the same time I could not but agree that having contended with the easier parts of the area where this pest was found, the Government has now come up against the much greater problem of treating the ant found in swamps and similar territory where it is, of course, much more difficult to handle the heavy machinery needed to carry out the destruction of this pest.

At the same time, I just wonder if we have any definite reason for believing that the Argentine ant will be destroyed in 12 months' time. From the remarks of the Minister, I take it he felt fairly confident; but there again he could not promise that would be done. It is a fairly heavy cost both to the Government and to local authorities.

When I refer to local authorities I refer to those people who have to pay rates and taxes. Some of the figures for which I asked the other day, for the purpose of finding out what was the effect in the area in which I reside, showed that the expense in those particular districts was very much less. For instance, in four years the Nedlands Municipality has paid £2,265; but in the last two years, the amount spent in that municipality was £580 and £516. In Cottesloe the annual donation or subscription to the Argentine ant fund

is £1,214; but in the last two years the money spent in that district was £565 and £428 respectively.

Figures like these, of course, become public property. It will be appreciated that the ratepayers see them, and they begin to wonder whether they are still being charged a rate for this destruction. I do not know the exact rate in Nedlands, but in Cottesloe it is 2d. in the £., while in Claremont it is 1½d. in the £. Incidentally, in Claremont, during the year before last, out of the donation of £1,162, the amount spent was £160.

Further than that, the Minister has informed me that the department does not keep any records of the expenditure in each local authority but it makes an estimate for an area and endeavours to base its findings as to the respective expenditure in each district by that method. As I said previously, when figures such as these get out, the ratepayers in the districts concerned, who are paying a set amount, wonder whether this particular Act and this particular tax should remain in operation.

Although one must appreciate the overall problem of the Government and the overall purpose of continuing with the good work to bring about complete eradication of the pest, it is very difficult to convince some people in this respect relating to their parochial affairs. I hope that, when replying, the Minister will be fairly emphatic in his remarks that this tax on the public will not last for a greater period than a further 12 months. I would go further and hope that this programme of cleaning up the pest will eventuate. I support the second reading of the Bill.

**MR. COURT (Nedlands) [3.37]:** I just want briefly to comment on the import of this particular Bill and to further emphasise what the hon. member for Claremont mentioned just prior to resuming his seat. Hon. members will recall that when this Bill was before the House in 1954 there was a claim that the Argentine ant could be eliminated in four years.

The Minister brought down a Bill which, if I recall correctly, provided for a five-year period, with a provision for a continuance under certain circumstances. However, this Chamber objected to that continuation provision, and it is very interesting to look back on the observations of some hon. members. I think the one who described the matter in the best manner was the Leader of the Country Party when he was speaking on an amendment moved by the then member for South Perth, an amendment aimed at restricting the life of the Bill. The Leader of the Country Party said—

I think the Minister is losing sight of the real point of this objection. It is that the proper authority to decide

whether the impost shall be continued on the ratepayers or taxpayers is Parliament itself. Nobody loses sight of the fact that we might want an extension of time, in order to conduct the mopping up to which the Minister referred. If the present Minister or any other Minister, came to Parliament and said, "We have done a very good job over four years; our experts have looked into the position and we feel we cannot guarantee to complete this work in five years; we must have an extension of 12 months or two years," I feel sure that Parliament would not refuse to grant his request. I suggest the odds would be very heavily in favour, in those circumstances of all parties being prepared to grant the necessary extension.

So the debate continued along those lines, with emphasis being placed on the fact—in this regard it is interesting to note that the member for South Perth had the support of the member for Leederville—that Parliament should be the authority to say whether this rating was to be continued. The Minister has now come along and said, "I want an extension of another 12 months." The point that concerns me is this: When will we be able to call an end to this particular campaign? It is true that from time to time we will find pockets of resistance, and the authorities will say, "We need a continuation of this power to clean up these pockets of infestation". But if we are not careful we will find that this will become a hardy annual.

Parliament should make it very clear that it hopes this will be the last occasion an extension of time is sought. We cannot overlook these rates that are imposed on the people. This appears quite a small tax in its way; but the fact remains it is one of many taxes that the people are bearing with increasing severity from time to time.

One of the worst features of ratings is the change in valuations. Local authorities and central governments are always probing this question of valuation. Up go the valuations and, regardless of whether they change the rate in the £, the incidence of rating and the tax on the ratepayer go up with it.

The only observation I want to make—and I trust due emphasis will be placed on it when the Minister reads the report of the debate today—is that we hope this will be the last time he has to come to Parliament for an extension of this arrangement and to urge those in charge of the campaign to use this period as a cleaning-up period.

It may be that at the end of that time there will be small outbreaks of Argentine ants. But surely some caretaker organisation can be devised by the Government at a comparatively small cost, which will enable us to call a halt to this particular

rating. It is important for other reasons. Local authorities have a limited sphere of finance. Already we hear talk of further ratings being imposed, the latest one being the suggestion by some people for a rate to be struck to provide finance for a beach trust. We cannot keep piling on these rates, even if it is only a fraction of a penny in each case, because they all add up. I hope this will be the last time we have to face a continuance measure in respect of this problem.

**THE HON. A. R. G. HAWKE** (Premier—Northam—in reply) [3.42]: The Parliament is now master of this situation. Unless Parliament agrees to this legislation being continued for a further term, as agreed upon previously, the scheme cannot, of course, continue. The Minister is very hopeful and confident, to some considerable extent, that the extended period asked for in this Bill will be sufficient to enable the Argentine ant pest to be wiped out—or at least reduced to such a degree as not to require any special action by Parliament after the year 1960.

I think if the Minister were here, he could not say yes or no to the question asked by the member for Claremont on the point as to whether the spraying against Argentine ants has been responsible for increasing the number of house flies which he, the member for Claremont, tells us have been around for the last two years or so. That is a matter purely for speculation. My experience of house flies over, shall we say, 50 years or so, indicates that they are worse in one year than they might be in the next.

**Mr. Ross Hutchinson:** How much is the "or so"?

**Mr. HAWKE:** I think quite a deal depends on a number of circumstances, none of which would be related to the spraying against Argentine ants.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

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

## VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd September.

**THE HON. A. F. WATTS** (Stirling) [4.7]: On the face of it this Bill appears to be completely harmless, and one that could very readily be supported. Yet I have some doubts about the advisability of putting it on the statute book. The reason that the Minister gave for introducing

the Bill was that it was to cover a difficulty which had arisen at Port Hedland in regard to the Vermin Board at that centre. It was found that the Vermin Board, as is quite usual in most places, was the local road board and that all the members of the local road board, being town residents, were not suitably equipped to deal with the problems connected with vermin in the inland area; and everybody agreed that another vermin board should be appointed to cope with the problem.

He said that the Crown Law Department then raised the question as to whether the dismissal or cancellation of the existence of the vermin board for that purpose was entirely within the four corners of the law, and recommended, to remove any doubts, that this Bill be introduced. In those circumstances, or in similar circumstances, there could be no objection to this measure being placed on the statute book. But this Bill, if it is passed, would enable the Agriculture Protection Board to go a great deal further than that. In most places throughout the State the road board and the vermin board are synonymous; under the Vermin Act the road board of the district is created the vermin board for the district. It carries out the powers which are conferred on vermin boards by legislation to control vermin. As a general rule, no problem arises.

However, as this Bill is worded, if it became an Act it would be competent for the Agriculture Protection Board to dismiss or cancel the existence of any vermin board which was a road board and to appoint, for the district, some other authority to undertake the management and control of the vermin legislation in that district.

One might say that that is an unlikely contingency, but I suggest we should not put on the statute book something that would give the Agriculture Protection Board the right to do such a thing—or to give anybody the right to do such a thing—unless there be some justification for it, as unquestionably there was at Port Hedland; and, it is possible, of course, that there may be justification for it at some other place. This Bill merely states—

Where under Section forty-five of this Act a board has been appointed for a district, if it appears to the Protection Board that for the more conveniently or for the better carrying out of the purposes of this Act the board so appointed should be abolished and replaced by a board constituted pursuant to section seventeen of this Act, the Protection Board by declaration may abolish the first mentioned board without abolishing the district, and thereupon or as soon thereafter as is practicable a board shall be constituted pursuant to section seventeen of this Act for the district.



So it has only to appear to the board, without anybody having the right to question that opinion and without the board disclosing any surrounding circumstances, to decide that it is more convenient to dismiss a vermin board and appoint another. Looking at the Bill from those two aspects, I am left in somewhat of a quandary. I am sympathetic towards the Minister in regard to his desire to make perfectly clear that the appointment of a new board—such as the one appointed at Port Hedland—is quite valid.

On the other hand, I have always been opposed to granting powers to authorities, such as the Agriculture Protection Board, or any other that has been similarly constituted, to dismiss bodies which, we must remember, as in the case of local authorities, have been elected by the ratepayers of the district. Therefore, something more is necessary than merely for the Agriculture Protection Board to regard it as convenient to alter the set-up in any particular district—which is provided as the only ground—for the better carrying out of the provisions of the Act in that district.

I would hope that the Committee stage of this Bill might be postponed until the next sitting of the House when the Minister for Agriculture could, in the meantime, give consideration to the objection I have raised and possibly then be able to submit some qualification to the power that he proposes to confer on the Agriculture Protection Board in this instance so that we would know that, at any future time, that power could be exercised only when the circumstances actually warranted it because of some legal difficulty having arisen, or because of some declared inefficiency—or something of that nature—of the board which it was deemed necessary to replace.

I do not want to hold up the passage of the Bill by opposing it or by endeavouring to bring about the defeat of the second reading; but I think it would be a reasonable proposition if the Minister were to give consideration to some qualification of the power that he proposes to give to the Agriculture Protection Board under this legislation, in order that there could be no possibility of that power being wrongfully exercised at some future date simply because the board might come to the conclusion that it is more convenient to replace a board with another one. That is all I have to say on the matter.

**THE HON. A. R. G. HAWKE** (Premier—Northam—in reply) [4.16]: I am quite prepared to postpone the Committee stage of the Bill until next week.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd September.

**MR. BOVELL** (Vasse) [4.17]: At present the Land Act confers upon the Governor power to acquire land which is thought desirable for any purpose. He can acquire it by purchase or by exchange of other land up to the value of £100. However, I would emphasise that the Act provides that this cannot be done without the consent of the owner of the land first being received.

This provision was included in the Land Act in 1898; and since that time, of course, the value of money has changed considerably. The Bill proposes to increase the amount from £100 to £400. At present, if the value of the land is in excess of £100, the matter is dealt with by a board which is set up under authority by Section 8 of the Land Act. The Governor—although normally this would be a departmental procedure—can deal with the matter more expeditiously than the board, and the Minister for Agriculture did quote some examples showing that periods of up to several months had elapsed, due to the administrative machinery used, before a satisfactory conclusion was arrived at; that is, when the matter was being dealt with by the board.

In view of the fact that the land cannot be acquired without the consent of the owner, I can find no fault with the Bill's objective to increase the amount from £100 to £400, and therefore I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

### *In Committee.*

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

## RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd September.

**MR. BOVELL** (Vasse) [4.20]: It is the custom in banking circles to decide on a date on which to conclude the year's operations, and to strike an annual balance. When the Rural and Industries Bank Act was first passed, it included a provision that that institution's annual balance day would be the 30th September each year. The Associated Banks have varying dates for the striking of their annual balances. The Bank of New South Wales annual balance day is the 30th September, as is, at present, the Rural & Industries Bank's annual balance day. The other banks

have their annual balance days on the 30th June, while others have them at different times of the year. I think at one time the Union Bank had its annual balance day in August. However, this is merely to suit the convenience of the bank.

When introducing the Bill, the Minister explained that it would be preferable for the annual balance day of the Rural & Industries Bank to be the 31st March, as that would give the bank an opportunity of having accounts prepared for submission to Parliament. As it stands at present, the Act states that these accounts and reports shall be available on the 30th November each year; and, therefore, as it is usual for the session of Parliament, each year, to conclude on about that date, Parliament is denied this information until the following session when the reports are tabled.

If this measure is passed—and I raise no objection to it—the annual balance day of the Rural & Industries Bank will be the 31st March each year and the accounts and reports for submission to Parliament will be finalised by the 31st May each year. The Minister also gave as a reason the fact that primary producers usually complete their year's activities in about March of each year, and this would coincide with the end of their year's operations. He explained that although the Rural & Industries Bank's activities extended to all phases of industry, commerce and primary industries, its main function dealt with primary industries. I do hope this will be its main function as long as it exists.

It would appear that having the balance day on the 31st March would, to some extent, help the clients of the Rural & Industries Bank. It should certainly enable the annual reports to be submitted to Parliament much sooner than they are today. Accordingly I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

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

### **LAND TAX ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 2nd. September.

**THE HON. D. BRAND** (Greenough) [4.36]: After that period of very close co-operation with the Government, it would appear we have now reached a point where we will differ.

Mr. Brady: Do not spoil a good record!

Mr. Bovell: And differ very vigorously, too!

Mr. BRAND: When this measure was originally introduced into this Chamber much was said about the actual scale of the tax, and the conditions under which it was to be imposed. But it would seem to me that the question now is whether a tax should be imposed on improved agricultural land. In quite a number of measures that have been introduced in the last two years the land tax has been steeply increased. As a result of amendments, which limited the application of the tax on improved land, we now find the position where the land in the country towns and the metropolitan area is carrying a very heavy land tax; and it is intended by the Treasurer, by the Bill before us now—and that is the main purpose of the Bill—to reimpose on agricultural land a tax which it has been carrying over the last two years.

We have heard the Premier state in this House, on a number of occasions, that once a tax is imposed, no matter how good the intention might be to carry that tax on for a particular period, or for a particular purpose, it becomes the accepted thing; it becomes part of the national economy, and it is very difficult for any party to remove it. Now that the tax has ceased to apply to improved agricultural land, and seeing that Western Australia enjoyed exemption from State land tax so long, we on this side of the House feel it would be the right and proper thing to oppose its reapplication.

It can be said fairly that at this juncture any new tax to be imposed on people earning a living from agricultural production—that is, from agricultural land—would impose a hardship which would not have been as great in the past few years because of the prosperity they enjoyed. It is common knowledge that many of the primary products are not bringing the attractive prices on the world's markets that they have brought for many years past. Because of the fall in world prices for commodities like wool, dairy products, and—to some extent—cereal grains; and because at the same time the cost of production has increased gradually, farmers and people who earn their living in the country and from the soil are certainly not making the large profits which they made in the past.

As the Treasurer pointed out, the land tax will bring in some £300,000 to the Treasury—which is a large sum of money, but for all that not great in comparison with the money which passes through the Treasury by virtue of taxes these days. We must bear in mind that it is anticipated on this side of the House that in the event of this tax not being imposed, the vermin tax—which, when it was suspended, brought in something like £100,000—will again be imposed. Therefore, for the sum of £200,000 overall, I consider it would be a worth-while gesture—and it will not mean a great deal to the Treasury—to allow the

farmers and people living in the country—the primary producers—to be exempt from land tax in the future.

In putting up his arguments, the Treasurer pointed out that originally he had given an undertaking to this House that railway freights would not be increased in the event of the land tax being approved by Parliament. We know that that tax was imposed temporarily. As far as we can ascertain, there has been no increase in railway freights; but obviously the time has come when some review of freights is considered necessary by the Government, and indeed by the Minister for Railways himself.

In quite a number of country districts, particularly where wheat growing takes place, the farmers feel that as a result of the suspension of railway services and the introduction of road transport, their actual costs have increased. That is at least what they claim, and have claimed at a number of public meetings which have been held and attended by the Minister for Railways. In fact, if we were to accept what has been published in the Press, the Minister stated that the Government did not really believe it was a good step to close the railway lines which served the wheat-growing districts.

It is a fact that the farmers in the districts concerned claim that the cost of transport has increased greatly as compared with the time when they were served by the railways. We must not forget, of course, the Government's policy of decreasing annually the transport subsidy, which over a period of seven years will be completely withdrawn. I would remind the House that already two years of that period have elapsed and the subsidy has been withdrawn to the extent of two-sevenths. No doubt the farmers who live right out in the country, and who have to rely on road transport, are now facing up to increased transport costs to the extent of two-sevenths. Surely that must increase the farmer's cost of production.

The Treasurer also pointed out that water rates were being subsidised by the general ratepayers through the Treasury. I think he mentioned a sum well over £1,000,000, which represents the deficit for water supplies in this State. The time has come for an overall review of water rates. There are so many variations and alterations applying at the present time that I would think, whilst not advocating any increase, that a general review of the water rating system would be worth while and be in the interests of the overall position.

Nevertheless it has always been accepted that people who live in the country are subsidised by the Treasury in respect of water supplies. Certain political parties have advocated a flat rate for water and a number of other services. In fact that is written in their policy. The principle is, no doubt, a good one. So far, because

of the huge cost involved and the point made by the Treasurer today reminding us that a flat rate is not acceptable to all concerned and will not be advantageous, the problem has not been tackled by this Government or any of its predecessors.

We have to recognise that in Western Australia, because of the vast distances, open spaces and sparse population, a flat rate applying to water, transport and other facilities is not quite as practicable as it is in smaller States like Victoria. Because of the subsidy on road transport and the deficit shown by the railways, I do not think there is any argument in favour of applying this tax on improved agricultural lands. In principle I believe we should oppose it in order to show our interest and support of decentralisation; of encouragement to produce more; and of encouragement to people to go into the country to expand and develop the land.

I would remind the Treasurer there are many young farmers just starting out who face tremendous costs in establishing their farms. Sums of money required for equipment and initial development are so great that these farmers find it difficult to obtain them. Every section of primary production in this community is seeking financial assistance of one kind or another, and every avenue is being exploited to raise finance to help them to establish or carry on. I would remind the House that we have not yet felt the full impact of the very sharp drop in the price received for wool.

For many years we have ridden economically on the back of the sheep, if I may use that expression. We have almost become dependent on the sale of wool in regard to our national income. The price has dropped by a very large percentage, as was indicated in answers to questions asked by, I think, the hon. member for Murray. I think the figures given indicated that there was a drop from an average of 60d. per lb. to an average last year of 40d. per lb. We do not have to think very hard as to what that means to the overall economy of the State.

Therefore, it is the intention of our party to oppose this Bill as vigorously as is possible; because, whilst we recognise the Treasurer's difficulties—we recognise he has to obtain money from whatever source possible—it is up to us to see that the people of the State do not have to make the sacrifice at a time when they can ill afford it. I would point out that in spite of the fall in the prices received for our primary products, the value of land is being maintained, and the Treasurer is reaping an income as a result of this increased valuation throughout the metropolitan area and the country towns. We must take that into consideration when considering whether we should reimpose this tax on a permanent basis on all improved agricultural land.

We know that in recent years some progress has been made in obtaining a better balance between secondary industry and primary production in this State, but we still have a long way to go and there is a need to more vigorously pursue a policy of increasing primary production for many years to come. In order that an incentive may be given, I oppose the second reading of this Bill.

There are two clauses in the Bill which are no doubt desirable, but we have decided to oppose it in toto. If the Treasurer thinks fit, it is up to him to introduce another Bill containing the two provisions which, if presented, as in the present Bill, will be acceptable to this side of the House. I oppose the Bill.

**MR. BOVELL** (Vasse) [4.45]: During the last two or three sessions of Parliament I have asked a number of questions in connection with the imposition of land tax in all its phases, and each time I have noted that the Treasurer has received a greater amount. I am concerned about this Bill because last year Parliament decided to discontinue a temporary measure in relation to a tax on agricultural land. It was found in 1931 that the primary industries could not stand the imposition of a tax on improved agricultural land, and the Mitchell-Latham Government of those days abolished it. That tax was not reimposed until two years ago, when the Treasurer submitted a measure to Parliament which was passed by both Houses. At that time, the primary industries of Western Australia were in a somewhat better financial position than they are today. The wool outlook was then encouraging, the wheat industry was holding firm, and the wholemilk section of the dairying industry was relatively satisfactory.

The butterfat section of the dairying industry has never been entirely satisfactory from a financial point of view because of its limited development. The butterfat section of the dairying industry of Western Australia is at a great handicap when compared with the Eastern States, because that section was not commenced until after the end of the 1914-18 war. With the increased price of home consumption butter and the difficult position of export butter in relation to price on the world market, it looks as though the butterfat producer is going to receive a lesser amount for his produce this year than in past years.

Primary industry, especially the butterfat section of the dairying industry, is unable to absorb any further tax imposition. The valuations which are used to assess land tax are somewhat alarming. During the last session of Parliament I asked the Treasurer for information in regard to increases in valuations in various areas of this State, and the Treasurer in reply said that increases in valuations had

been greatest during the years 1955 and 1956. I will quote some of the districts concerned.

In the year 1955, the valuations in the Carnamah district, which is in the area represented by the Leader of the Opposition, were increased by 926 per cent. The increase in the Mingenew area, which is another district in the Leader of the Opposition's electorate, represented 356 per cent. In the Wungong area the increase was 1,182 per cent. In the following year—I am only quoting some of the instances—the increase in valuations for the Quindellup area, which is in my electorate, was 2,130 per cent. That increase was in an area which mainly produces butterfat or potatoes.

In the North-West—and this is rather alarming, considering the fact that we are endeavouring to assist the North-West—if the valuations are true, it would appear that this area is enjoying a period of prosperity, because valuations there are so high, indicating that land is in much demand. At Wyndham, during the year ended the 30th June, 1956, valuations were increased by 1,174 per cent.—that is in the district represented by the member for Kimberley—and in the Derby area the valuations of land were increased by 2,179 per cent.

If assessments of land are to be based on these terrifically high increased valuations, primary producers especially cannot absorb any further taxation. I believe that with the amount of £300,000 which the Treasurer has said he will receive from this tax, it would not affect the Treasury very much if this Bill were defeated. Income from tax reimbursements from the Commonwealth have been approximately £1,000,000—if I interpret information that I have at my disposal correctly—in excess of the formula prescribed. Also the Government has received an additional £1,000,000 from the Grants Commission. With these added amounts from Commonwealth resources, I feel that the Treasurer would be well advised in the interests of the economy of the State, to refrain from reimposing a tax on agricultural lands.

With regard to the receipts by the Treasury from land tax, over the past few years, I asked the Treasurer how much the Treasury received from land tax in 1956; and he replied that it was £529,412. He also stated that in 1957 the amount was increased to £1,008,173, and it was estimated that for the financial year just ended on the 30th June, 1958, the amount would be £1,330,000.

To check those figures I asked a question in the House recently; and the treasurer replied that the actual amount received from land tax in the year ended the 30th June, 1958, was £1,421,795, which is considerably in excess of the amount which he estimated. To take the figures from 1956 to 1958—three years—the land

taxation receipts by the Treasurer have increased threefold. They have increased from £500,000 to £1,500,000, and that is the period over which the imposition of land tax on improved agricultural lands has been made by the Government.

Mr. Hawke: Most of the increase came from the metropolitan area.

Mr. BOVELL: I have no doubt that the metropolitan area has contributed to this increase—

Mr. Hawke: Most of it.

Mr. BOVELL: But I have already quoted the increases in valuations in country districts from Wyndham to the South coast; and as these range in some cases, to thousands per cent., I would say that a considerable amount of this increased revenue from land tax has come from rural districts.

Mr. Hawke: Most of it by far from the metropolitan area to help finance school buses in country districts.

Mr. BOVELL: I am glad that the Treasurer is so well informed now, as I asked him a question on the 12th of last month. The question was as follows:—

What amounts have been received from land tax during the financial year ended the 30th June, 1958, from—

- (a) city and metropolitan area;
- (b) country towns;
- (c) improved agricultural land;
- (d) unimproved rural land?

The Premier replied—

In view of the sliding scale now in operation, it has been necessary to compile new statistics. These are in course of preparation and, when available, the information will be supplied.

I have not received the information, but perhaps the Treasurer is informing me in this debate. However, I would appreciate having those figures, because this question was asked with the object of having some knowledge of different sections of the community and to what extent they are contributing to this vastly increased amount which the Treasurer is receiving from land tax.

Mr. Hawke: The hon. member knows, taking the vermin tax suspension into consideration—

Mr. BOVELL: Which is approximately £100,000.

Mr. Hawke: — that only a net increase of £200,000 per year comes from improved rural land.

Mr. BOVELL: Well, that is what the Premier said in his introductory speech on this Bill; but even so, £200,000 on rural industry today, on land that is producing something, is, I contend, an imposition. While the Treasurer has said a vast majority of this increase comes from the metropolitan area, I can assure him a vast

majority of it comes from rural towns. I know that my own valuation in Busselton has been increased considerably. The land tax a few years ago was in the vicinity of £1 or over; today it is up to £23 and £24.

Mr. Hawke: The hon. member is surely foolish to claim that the majority of the increase comes from country towns.

Mr. BOVELL: I am not claiming that the majority comes from country towns.

Mr. Hawke: You did a moment ago.

Mr. BOVELL: I do not think I did. The Treasurer said the majority of it comes from the metropolitan area. I said—if I remember rightly—that the country districts were paying a considerable amount of this tax, and the imposition of it could not be absorbed by primary industry.

Mr. Hawke: The hon. member said that the vast majority came from country towns and instanced his own personal experience, as a distinguished resident of Busselton.

Mr. BOVELL: All my life! However, the Treasurer is trying to draw a red herring across the path; and I would appreciate the information which I sought so that I can be well informed on this matter. I feel that primary industry today is not in a position to absorb any further tax impositions, and I oppose this measure strongly.

On motion by the Hon. A. F. Watts, debate adjourned.

## ACTS AMENDMENT (SUPERANNUATION AND PENSIONS) BILL.

### *Second Reading.*

**THE HON. A. R. G. HAWKE** (Treasurer—Northam) [5.0] in moving the second reading said: This Bill proposes to amend the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act of 1938-1957, and the Superannuation Act of 1871-1957. These Acts of Parliament were amended by an Act which was approved by both Houses of Parliament last year. A provision was placed in the amending Act of last year which it was thought would ensure that the pensions which were being paid prior to the 31st December, 1957, would be increased in many cases, and would not be reduced in any one case.

However, it was found, when the amendment was submitted to examination by officers of the Crown Law Department, that the amendment was in fact of no legal effect at all. Its wording was faulty inasmuch as it did not relate effectively in legal form to the situation which it sought to preserve. As a result, the legislation as amended by last year's amending Act, had to be continued and put into operation in accordance with the legal interpretation of the particular part of the amending Act to which I have just referred. This Bill

aims to overcome the legal fault which was contained in that particular part of last year's amending Act.

Another amendment has been included in this Bill, as well as the one to which I have just referred. The first amendment relates to the 1938 Act and provides that where a person was contributing for less than eight units and on or before the 31st of December of last year reached the elected retiring age, but the benefits of superannuation were to become payable to him after that date, he should be entitled to the benefits which would have been payable to him prior to that date; in other words, that he should not, as a result of the passing of last year's amending Act, suffer any reduction in the pension to which he would otherwise have been entitled.

This particular amendment will cover, among others those who elected to retire before the compulsory retiring age, but who continued to work after the elected retiring age. There is a provision in the 1938 Act which allows contributors to the superannuation fund to elect to retire at an age earlier than 65, so long as the elected retiring age is 60 or somewhere between 60 and 65. Several employees of the Government who were contributors to the fund, and still are in some instances, agreed to continue in Government employment after they had reached the elected retiring age; and consequently it is desired that their pension, when they do finally retire, shall not be reduced below that pension which would have been payable to them had they retired prior to the 31st December last, or prior to the actual date on which they finished their employment.

Mr. Roberts: Will there be a retrospective payment of that anomaly of 10s. back to the 31st December?

Mr. HAWKE: If the hon. member will be patient, and wait awhile, I will deal with that point; but if he cares to read the Bill, which is fairly short, he will find the answer there. However, he would doubtless prefer that I should do the work and tell him about it; and I shall be happy to do so. The amendment to the 1871 Act will provide that where pensions have been adjusted by the formula, and where they exceed £208 per annum, but do not exceed £1,000 per annum, and the adjustments as a result of the application of the formula reduce the present pension payments to a figure less than the amount which was being paid in any particular instance prior to the 31st December, 1957, the amount to be paid shall not be less than the amount which would have been paid prior to the 31st December last.

The adjustments to be made, where reductions have already occurred since the 1st of this year, will be made on a retrospective basis which will mean, of course,

that the pensioners concerned will receive the adjusted and increased pension as from the beginning of this year until the Act comes into operation; and thereafter will receive the adjusted pension regularly. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the hon. D. Brand, debate adjourned.

## STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 28th August.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [5.8]: It is perhaps a little unfortunate that those two great characters, Gilbert and Sullivan, are not alive today, because had they been in the Chamber last Thursday they would have had all the ingredients for a first-class plot. We are all well aware of that well known character Poo Bah, in the Mikado, who found himself in the most embarrassing situation of being, in addition to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Lord Chief Justice, the Lord High Admiral, the Lord High Auditor, the Master of the Buck Hounds and the Leader of the Opposition. He also had a few other duties and he found it extremely difficult to divorce one from the other.

Mr. May: I was going to say that you had left one out.

Mr. COURT: If the member for Collie would like me to go through the lot I can just about give him the complete list of positions that Poo Bah made claim to in that masterpiece by Gilbert and Sullivan, but I think sufficient has been said to highlight the embarrassment of the poor gentleman concerned.

In this instance, we find that the Minister in charge of the State Government Insurance Office claims that he wants to have full, free, and fair competition with the private insurance offices; but as Minister for Education, he said he would not have a bar of such competition. He says—in unqualified language—that he wants a monopoly of a certain type of insurance—for the State Government Insurance Office. On this particular matter, it is interesting to note just what he did say—because this is no figment of my imagination; these are the actual words used by the Minister.

Frankly, I was amazed at the forthright manner he used to bring forward his Government's policy and the emphatic way he said he wanted a monopoly for the State

Government Insurance Office for at least one type of insurance business. Amongst other things, he said—

The form of the policy was drawn up—

He was referring to the school children's insurance policy, of course. Continuing—

—and the State Insurance Office was precluded from insuring the children on a 24-hour day basis, for seven days of the week. I do not propose to quote all the figures at this stage in regard to the number of school children who have been insured under the school children's insurance scheme, but suffice to say there was a big proportion. Only quite recently a private insurance company came into the field; it is seeking and is doing business of insuring children for 24 hours of the day, and seven days a week. If this Bill is passed the State Insurance Office will be on an equal basis with the private company.

I interjected by saying—

No, it will not.

The Minister continued—

If this Bill is passed the State Insurance Office will only be on the same basis as private insurance companies in regard to dealing in forms of general insurance.

Again I interjected by saying—

It will not; because, as the Minister knows, he will not allow the private companies to have the same means of contact with the schools.

The Minister got due credit in the Press for his next retort when he said, "That is a poor one."

I replied by saying, "It is an absolute fact." The Minister returned to the fray by declaring, "It is a very poor argument." And again I replied by saying, "You know it is a fact, because you gave the direction."

The Minister continued—

The State Insurance Office was operating in this field and the school-teachers were very happy about it. There is no argument on the part of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

The interjection I made here was, "You are seeking a monopoly for your own State Government Insurance Office," and the Minister replied, "This does not provide for any monopoly." I answered, "In practical effect that is what you are seeking."

Mr. W. Hegney: The school teachers are merely carrying out the wishes of the Parents and Citizens' Federation; that is what they are doing.

Mr. COURT: What the Minister proposes is a monopoly. The background of these things does not matter. It is a question of getting down to the basic facts.

Later on, by interjection, after the Minister had dealt with some other material, I said—

If you had the right to do this business, would you give a personal guarantee of free access to private companies as to the State office?

And the Minister replied, "No." There was no "maybe" about it; he just said "no."

Mr. W. Hegney: Because the Parents and Citizens' Federation want the State Insurance Office.

Mr. COURT: That is not so.

Mr. Brand: I know of a couple of branches that favour competition for school children's insurance in this State.

Mr. COURT: The whole object of my bringing this forward is that the Minister has completely pulled the props from under the argument that he has used during all the years I have been in this Chamber; namely, that his one object is to have full and free competition in this field.

Mr. W. Hegney: To have full and free argument!

Mr. COURT: The Minister continued, after making that emphatic "No", by saying—

As a matter of fact, I think the State Insurance Office is the proper one, because it is a Government instrumentality and has been in operation—

Then I rudely interrupted by saying, "Now you have let the cat out of the bag!" And the Minister replied—

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is a champion of free enterprise and a champion at anything which has a hit at any Government instrumentality. Why did not the private insurance companies engage in this form of insurance years ago?

To which I said, "People could have been insured if they had wanted." Incidentally, I will produce more facts on that later on. The Minister continued—

When the Parents & Citizens' Associations Federation acting on behalf of the Parents & Citizens' Associations of this State asked the Education Department if something could be done, the State Government Insurance Office was harnessed to the scheme. However, when it was found that the scheme was popular, another insurance company stepped in. It stepped in because it has the right to insure 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If this Bill is passed, the State Government Insurance Office will have the same right.

Mr. May: That is fair enough.

Mr. COURT: The member for Collie interjects, "That is fair enough."

Mr. May: It does not suit those in St. George's Terrace.

Mr. COURT: But the member for Collie overlooks completely, of course, what the Minister says in unqualified language, that if he has his way there will be no right for equal access to this type of business; and yet he still states, "All we are seeking is to have the same right as the private insurance companies".

Mr. W. Hegney: The State Insurance Office does not go into the schools.

Mr. COURT: The Minister has rather broken down that argument because in his speech he has referred to what the teachers do in regard to this scheme.

Mr. W. Hegney: You should find out what the procedure is before you criticise.

Mr. COURT: I know the procedure rather well. I have several children who bring forms home from school for the State Government Insurance Office.

Mr. W. Hegney: Are you in the State Government Insurance Office or in the Commonwealth General?

Mr. COURT: That is a personal matter; but if the Minister must know I am not insured with the State Government Insurance Office.

Mr. W. Hegney: I knew you were not.

The Premier: He would not be allowed.

Mr. COURT: Has the Minister been spying on my records?

Mr. W. Hegney: You would not be game.

Mr. COURT: The Minister makes a rather vital admission when he says, "I knew you were not". Apparently he checks up to see where we bank and to see where we insure. However, I have answered his question. It all savours of the old saying, "The State can do no wrong". But, of course, when it comes to the other side of the argument, and we have unfair trading legislation before us we hear about these so-called diabolical acts that private traders commit and these so-called monopolies; but when the State wants to do just that, it is held that there is nothing wrong with it and it is right and proper. The Minister says that this is a Government instrumentality.

Mr. W. Hegney: You always seem to be as happy as a boy with a tinful of tadpoles when you are attacking a Government instrumentality.

Mr. COURT: If the Minister casts his mind back, he will probably recall that a boy with a tinful of tadpoles was in his seventh heaven at that particular period of his life.

We have a proposition to submit to the Government in regard to this question of school children's insurance so as to indicate that we are not playing dog in the manger, as the Minister always implies we do; and the proposition is this: That we will support an amendment to the State Government Insurance Office Act to permit the State Government Insurance Office to

extend its school children's policy to cover school children 24 hours a day, seven days a week, if there is provision for equal opportunity for all those seeking to indulge in such business. I have not used the words "equal access" because I think there are many objectionable features associated with anybody having to visit schools for this purpose.

Mr. W. Hegney: The regulations prevent them, and that is the reason why neither the State Government Insurance Office representatives nor the private insurance companies' representatives can go into the schools.

Mr. COURT: The Minister is not going to say that we are so naive as to admit that the representative of the State Government Insurance Office has not access to schools in spite of the regulations?

Mr. W. Hegney: All right; go on!

Mr. COURT: We have some knowledge of what goes on in the schools in actual practice. We know that the regulation exists, but we also know it is "bent" on occasions to meet a set of circumstances. However, we are only asking for equal opportunity. I do not think any person in the community could properly object to that state of affairs. It is not a question of equal access to the schools, for which we ask, but equal opportunity.

Mr. W. Hegney: Will you give the State Insurance Office equal opportunity in regard to all forms of general insurance?

Mr. COURT: I am speaking about school children's insurance at the moment. Let us stick to one thing at a time. The Minister knows how I feel about the extension of the general franchise, and if he wishes to anticipate what I am going to tell him later, I will tell it to him now: I am opposing the Bill.

We have put forward a proposition, so the Minister cannot claim that the State Government Insurance Office is unfairly treated with respect to school children's insurance. It is a fact that a private company has come along and is prepared to write school children's insurance. It took the initiative in Western Australia, and extended the cover from the restricted form to an unrestricted form of insurance. The cover extends for 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. It was a big step to move from the restricted form of cover to this virtually unrestricted form of insurance. Most of the time, under the old restricted cover, children are under the supervision of the school teachers, both in the classrooms and on the playing field.

It is after that when the big risk in respect to children occurs. Under this other cover, which was introduced in about February of this year, provision was made for full cover for 24 hours a day every day of the year, regardless of whether the child was at school or in any other environment.



Mr. Johnson: Are you certain the risk is greater out of school than in?

Mr. COURT: I would say that the period during the waking hours of the child can be divided into two periods. The first is when it is under school supervision; the other period is when it is not. I would say the period when it is away from school is the greater risk. I am sure the hon. member will admit that when children are playing unsupervised—at the week-end for instance—the risk is greater than during the period when they are actually at school under the supervision of the school staff.

Mr. Johnson: Is that an opinion, or have you proof?

Mr. COURT: I am merely going on my own children. All their cuts and abrasions seem to occur during the week-end—not from Monday to Friday—because during the week-end they are engaged in greater freedom of activity. They go down to the river, or they might be out yachting or enjoying some other form of sport or recreation. I think the risk is greater at that time.

Mr. Johnson: I am not sure that it is statistically proven.

Mr. COURT: Statistics can be amazing things. I am merely quoting my own experiences as a parent; I am not relying on statistics. The hon. member might be able to produce from the National Safety Council a statement to the effect that it is more dangerous in bed than walking down the street. But I would doubt it very much.

Mr. Hawke: It is sometimes.

Mr. COURT: Let us have a look at this company which has offered to write this business; and is, in fact, writing this business in competition with the State office. The corporation is purely an Australian one. All its reinsurances are effected, I find, within Australia. So far as school pupils' insurance is concerned, its actions have been officially approved by all Ministers for Education in the Eastern States; they have been approved by the Governments of all States, with the exception of Western Australia.

There are well in excess of 750,000 students covered by this particular company under its school children's insurance policy. One case in point is the State of South Australia where over 90 per cent. of all school children are covered by this particular company. I am assured that in all States, except Western Australia, there is complete freedom in writing this business within the schools, and the company in those States enjoys the full co-operation of the teaching staff.

In Western Australia this company was first to offer a commission for school children's insurance. As a matter of fact,

I think it was that which triggered the great argument. The commission it offered was rather an attractive bait to the parents and citizens and to the school funds.

Mr. Norton: There must be a good profit in it.

Mr. COURT: If the hon. member does a thorough research into this—and I am sure the hon. member for Leederville will agree after he has carried out his usual thorough research—that there is not a particularly great profit in this; indeed I will be interested to see what the State Government Insurance Office premium is for the full cover, and what its losses are for three, four or five years after writing this business.

The claims procedure adopted by this organisation is such that it relieves the teaching staff of all work connected therewith. The procedure is a very smooth and easy working one. It is particularly simple. In most cases the claims are settled direct with the parents at the corporation's office. Where the parent does not actually call to settle the claim in person, I think there is some guarantee of payment in 24 or 48 hours—in most cases, direct to the parent.

The scheme was first introduced in Western Australia through the private schools in February, 1958. It is interesting to note that where a parent had equal opportunity of choice it resulted in a five to one selection by the parents in favour of the C.G.A. scheme. The scheme was then introduced at the University and the Teachers' Training College. When it was extended to the State schools it was then that certain directions were given by the Education Department; it was then that the equal opportunity disappeared. The reason given is the one to which the Minister referred earlier; namely, that no distribution of advertising material is allowed in the schools. We do not quarrel with that so long as there is equal opportunity—I stress, equal opportunity—rather than equal access. All this corporation has asked for at any time has been equal opportunity.

Mr. W. Hegney: Equal opportunity is not going to spill over so far as general insurance is concerned.

Mr. COURT: I have answered the Minister's previous interjection on this point. At present we are dealing with school children's insurance. I have already foreshadowed for him my opposition to the Bill; but if he wants to bring down a special amendment to deal with this matter of school children's insurance, we will support an amendment to give the State Government Insurance Office 24 hours cover provided there is equal opportunity.

Mr. W. Hegney: You want equal opportunity when it suits you.

Mr. COURT: Mr. Speaker, one cannot win with this Minister. One offers him something and he just snarls and sneers at it. I tried to be co-operative with him; but in spite of what he said the other night when introducing the Bill, he now rejects it out of hand.

Mr. May: You want to see him when he really snarls.

Mr. COURT: We shall see. It follows, as my Leader interjected, the Minister is a little more relaxed now than he was. Both he and the Minister for Transport have a feeling that their battle has been won and they can now relax, having got their pre-selections out of the way.

Mr. Rowberry: Why not congratulate them?

Mr. COURT: That is not relevant to this particular measure.

Mr. Graham: There will be some more noticeable victories in six months' time.

Mr. COURT: I want to make this observation, in passing, on the question of the C.G.A. This is not a battle of the C.G.A. v. the Government Insurance Office; it is a question of equal opportunity. I would point out to the Minister, that if so be he got this monopoly, it would not be long before the political pressures that would be applied in respect of this particular monopoly would prove an embarrassment to him.

Mr. W. Hegney: Have you looked at my speech? There is nothing to stop parents from joining the company you mentioned.

Mr. COURT: Maybe there is not. There is nothing to stop them going to Nebraska. But how difficult is it; and how difficult the Minister is trying to make it for the parents.

Let us trace the history of school children's insurance because there have been some observations made, and some quite wrong observations. It was not originally a State Government Insurance Office idea. This office was not the first in the field to write this type of insurance business by any means; that impression has got abroad.

In August, 1951, from the first official particulars I can find of this type of insurance in Australia—there may have been others previously, but this was the first large-scale attempt—a very influential tariff company commenced this type of business; not the particular company now vying with the State Insurance Office. It instituted a school pupils' accident scheme throughout Australia. At that time the premium was £1 per year. It was an experimental form of insurance and it was

reported on rather fully in the Banking Journal. If members were to look at the Banking and Insurance Record about August, 1951, they would find some reference to this type of insurance. That journal of the 20th August, 1954, refers to a later effort by another company.

In 1952 this matter became fairly prominent in discussions both in Parliament and in the Press, and we find on page 1512 of 1952 Hansard, the present Minister for Works asking the following question of the then Minister for Education:—

(1) What provision exists for reimbursement of expenses which parents are occasioned as a result of injuries sustained by children whilst at school or at sport connected with school?

(2) Will he endeavour to establish some scheme which will obviate the necessity, which apparently exists at present, to refuse financial help to parents with substantial bills for medical expenses for treatment of children injured at school, on the grounds that the injuries resulted from an "Act of God"?

The Minister replied—

(1) The Education Department accepts financial responsibility for full costs arising from accidents to children caused through defects in school buildings, equipment, playgrounds, or negligence of the supervising teacher during recognised play.

In other cases, liability is not accepted unless special circumstances attend the accident when ex gratia payments are made.

In cases where play or organised sport is held on premises other than school premises, the above conditions generally apply.

(2) The question of arranging for a comprehensive insurance policy to cover accidents not included above, has been examined from time to time, but experience over many years indicates that the case for insurance coverage of all accidents occurring during school hours has not been justified. The premium on such a policy would, it is estimated, cost approximately £4,000 per annum.

Of course, that is on the basis of the Government virtually taking out a blanket cover on all school children and extending beyond the legal claims a parent would have against the Education Department in respect of negligence in regard to faulty construction of equipment, buildings, and the like.

At that time there was considerable discussion, and I think the matter even entered the discussion of the Teachers'

Union as to whether this responsibility should rest with the Government and not with the parents. In October, 1952, the company that pioneered this scheme, so far as I can make out, had local discussions with State schools and with Miss Hooton of the Parents & Citizens' Federation. Negotiations were proceeding fairly smoothly with that lady acting on behalf of the federation. At that time she went East; on her return there were no further discussions carried on by her beyond her advising the company concerned that the matter was still under consideration. Incidentally, it was mooted before she went East that she would have a look at this scheme in operation in the Eastern States. At that particular time she was going to South Australia.

The next that the company concerned heard was not a refusal or a decline of its proposition, but a bald announcement in the Press that a State Government insurance scheme was to be implemented. I want to make that point because the corporation was ready to negotiate with the Parents & Citizen's Federation or with the Government, but it was not given the opportunity. Up until that point negotiations had been proceeding smoothly, and, the corporation thought, to some effect.

In February, 1954, we find the C.G.A., which is another company, introduced in South Australia a scheme based on 3s. 6d. per capita, 8s. 6d. for two children; and there were some other variations for family groups, etc., on top of that. That is the one referred to in the Banking and Insurance Record of the 20th August, 1954. It was approved by the Education Ministers in all the eastern States. That scheme, let me hasten to add, was not the comprehensive scheme which this particular company introduced into Western Australia in February of this year. Hon. members will, of course, remember the introduction in 1954 by the Minister of a special amendment to the State Government Insurance Office Act to permit that office to undertake school children's insurance on a restricted basis.

It has been implied by the Minister in his submissions on this Bill to us that Parliament restricted the franchise of the State Insurance Office in respect of that particular coverage, but my recollection is that the Minister only asked for that amount of cover.

Mr. W. Hegney: I do not say it was the fault of Parliament.

Mr. COURT: If the Minister were to read his speech he would agree that he implied the office was restricted in the type of policy that could be written. It was not the fault of Parliament because Parliament was not called on to deliberate on any other type of policy.

That is all I want to say at this juncture on the school children's side of this Bill. Because the Minister did place great emphasis on it, I thought I had a duty to give some of the history of this matter, and at the same time make it clear where we stand in connection with the subject. It is not my intention to deal with all the other points that one could deal with on this Bill. As members know, I had endeavoured on previous occasions to be fairly exhaustive in my contribution on a similar measure. It has been before us on several occasions. Even on this occasion I feel there are one or two matters that should be highlighted.

The next point, because of the Minister's claims, refers to investments by the State Insurance Office. It would have been strange if he had not been able to make the claims which he did make in connection with the State Insurance Office, because if it carries on insurance business and does not operate at a loss, it is quite obvious the office will accumulate funds which it must employ. Therefore it was not surprising that he made certain claims.

However, I was very interested in one claim that he emphasised: That was his claim, in connection with housing: that £50,000 had been invested by the State Government Insurance Office in the housing scheme. I made a quick canvass of the tariff fire and accident companies. It was not an exhaustive canvass by any means, but it showed that these companies alone have invested, in housing in Western Australia, £538,543.

We do not usually think of the fire and accident companies as having a great investment in housing in a State like this. We think of them having other investments; and frankly I was quite surprised with the magnitude of the amount. Let me emphasise that this is not an exhaustive figure which I obtained as a result of the canvass.

Mr. Johnson: Is the figure for this year or in all?

Mr. COURT: Their current investments at this point of time amount to £538,543. This figure does not include life companies, any of the non-tariff companies, or any of the companies that operate on a co-operative or mutual basis.

Mr. Heal: More houses, more business for them.

Mr. COURT: Surely the hon. member is not going to blame them for that. The more money we have in housing the better. The Minister for Housing should be delighted, as should the Minister for Labour. In addition, these companies have been fairly substantial investors in real estate in our city. Whilst people are inclined to scoff at the bricks and mortar of the companies, I think it is a good thing. Not only do they fill a badly needed requirement in respect to office accommodation,

but, in the construction of these buildings employment is made available in our building trade. They are all contributors by way of rates to local authorities, and they pay land tax to the State Government.

Mr. Brand: State Insurance must think that so.

Mr. COURT: The next point on which I wish to touch is the Government's attempted intrusion into life insurance. The Bill provides for the State Government Insurance Office to enter all fields of insurance with the exception of life assurance, but with the qualification that it can do a limited amount, as provided in one clause of the Bill. This refers particularly to primary producers. It is a repeat of last year's provisions when the Minister originally claimed that it was included as a result of representations from the Farmers' Union; but on subsequent deliberation, he agreed that there had been a misunderstanding.

It is important that I read a letter written by the Farmers' Union because it emphasises where the difference has occurred between the Government and that union as to intention. As a result of representations made by me to the Farmers' Union to see what approaches had been made to the Government, I received this letter dated the 14th November, 1957—

I have looked through our files in order to ascertain what we did regarding the provision of probate duty by means of an insurance policy. I find that we wrote to the Hon. the Premier, A. R. G. Hawke, on 13th August, 1954, following the carrying of a motion by our 1954 annual general conference.

This motion sought an exclusion from probate duty of that amount of a deceased person's estate . . .

I would like to read that portion again, because it is the crux of this submission—

This motion sought an exclusion from probate duty of that amount of a deceased person's estate as is represented by the value of an insurance policy specifically taken out to meet probate charges. We suggested that the policy should be taken out in favour of the State Government . . .

There is no mention, I might add, of the State Government Insurance Office, and that is where the misunderstanding seems to have occurred. It was suggested that the policy should be taken out in favour of the State Government. The letter continues—

. . . the Treasury being named the beneficiary, at the time of the issue of the policy.

If the policy was insufficient to meet the amount of probate the additional amount required would, of

course, be a charge against the estate. If it was more than sufficient the surplus would revert to the estate. The important thing is that the proceeds of the policy, to the extent to which they are applied in payment of duty, should not be included as part of the estate for the assessment of duty.

In replying last year, the Minister made it clear that it was not the intention of the Treasurer to exempt from the estate, or to exclude from the estate, the amount of the probate policy. People have been pressing, for goodness knows how long, to have that provision adopted by both Commonwealth and State Governments; namely, to exclude from the estate the amount of the probate policy. Of course, Treasurers are a bit fly to that one, and will not fall for the bait. It could create an anomaly, because a person who had taken out a policy would receive a very substantial concession in respect of probate and estate duties; whereas a person who had not taken out a policy would not obtain the same benefit. But the Minister made it clear—I want to be fair about this—that it was not the Treasurer's intention to treat this policy—State Government Insurance Office policy—as being an exclusion from the deceased person's estate.

In other words, the amount of the policy would be included in the estate and would be added to all other assets of that person. On the point of intrusion into the field of life assurance, I feel there is more to it than meets the eye. The Minister probably says, "As far as I am concerned, as the Minister, that is as far as I want to go." However, we certainly cannot expect that in the long term. Ministers come and Ministers go.

Mr. Brand: We prefer them going.

Mr. COURT: I see that the Minister is smiling at that one.

Mr. W. Hegney: It is just as well to be optimistic.

Mr. COURT: There is an old adage in the insurance world that life assurance must be sold; it is not bought. Those who are mixed up in the field of life assurance and have anything to do with the procurement of life assurance business, realise the significance of that old claim within the insurance profession.

If the State Government Insurance Office wants to intrude into life assurance it is sure to set up a mighty organisation going out after this particular business. The Minister cannot tell me that he will be prepared to sit and wait for the business to come along.

The Bill, when it is stripped of niceties, comes back to this: That by this exception which the Minister has included in the Bill, it envisages that the State Government Insurance Office is going to temporarily or initially undertake

one class of business for one class of person. This is obviously going to be uneconomical, and we know what is going to happen; the Minister will come back in a year or two saying, "We want to write more life policies. Our men go out to farms and farmers say they want an endowment policy, whole life, or educational or other type of policy." The Minister will say, "I am being pressed by these people," as he does with other things and demand extension of franchise.

Mr. Graham: Do you want to deny these people what they want?

Mr. COURT: The Minister and I are in completely opposite camps on this issue. He wants the Government office to do all this business.

Mr. W. Hegney: It would be a good idea for the Government to do all kinds of things.

Mr. COURT: We are dealing with insurance at the moment. The Government has no responsibility in that direction while the people are being fully and properly serviced.

Mr. Graham: Aren't the people entitled to have a choice?

Mr. COURT: The people have ample choice, especially as the Minister cannot point the finger of scorn at the life companies, as he and his colleagues are inclined to do with B.H.P. and the like. The A.M.P. and other reputable life assurance companies are purely mutual companies in most cases; and in the others they are so close to being mutual that the Minister cannot find fault with them. They are the ideal type of business to handle life policies.

Mr. Graham: I do not think anyone is finding fault with them. All I am asking is this: If people are desirous of utilising other business concerns, why should they be stopped from doing so?

Mr. COURT: I suppose the Minister realises how he is embarrassing his fellow Minister who has been trying to tell us that that is furthest from his thoughts; that he does not want to go beyond this restricted form of business. The Minister for Transport is telling us it would be a jolly good thing if everyone was allowed to write any form of life business with the State Insurance Office.

Mr. Graham: No. I hear you talk so much about free enterprise. What about giving effect to it?

Mr. COURT: There is free enterprise. If there is any field of business where there is free enterprise, surely it is the life assurance field. The State office has no reason to enter that field because of improper practices, unethical practices, or lack of any financial stability, or lack of service.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: What about people who do not believe in State trading, in the light of what has happened with regard to Rural & Industries Bank officers going into Government departments?

Mr. Graham: It is the right of any person to say yea or nay when approached.

Mr. COURT: I submit that people have the right to say aye, yea, or nay now. But the Minister wants to be able to hold this State Government instrumentality over their heads with the result that we could have an extension of this sort of thing into the civil service. Employees would be asked: Where are you insuring? Where is your life policy? That will be the next thing.

Mr. Brand: What about the circular that the Premier sent around?

Mr. Graham: Every civil servant had the right to refuse.

Mr. Brand: But how embarrassing it would be to the civil servants! Imagine yourself as the head of a department, or the next in charge, looking for promotion; and you are asked by your Premier to insure with the State office.

Mr. Graham: That is so much poppycock. I was in the Public Service and stood as a Labour candidate when a Liberal government was in office, and that did not embarrass me.

Mr. COURT: The Minister is trying to draw a parallel with an entirely different set of circumstances. Firstly, he was a socialist candidate at a time when there was a Liberal government in office, and it would not stop him for one minute any more than a private bank stopped the hon. member for Leederville standing for Parliament.

An hon. member: They even helped him!

Mr. Johnson: They made life so unpleasant that I was pressed into standing.

Mr. Brand: There is no gratitude with some people!

Mr. COURT: The hon. member knows very well that he could have gone back to his employment with the bank within certain defined and reasonable limits.

Mr. Graham: He must have been a very valuable officer.

Mr. COURT: It was a privilege offered to all bank officers.

Mr. Watts: Whether capable or not.

Mr. COURT: It is a paradox with that bank that the two members of its staff that accepted its offer were both Labour members. I think that the member for Leederville was one and Mr. Joshua was the other. I think they were both in the same bank.

Mr. Graham: One was ex-Labour.

Mr. COURT: The Labour Party was quite happy to put the A.L.P. brand on him at the time.

Mr. Graham: Until he was found out.

Mr. Brand: Until he found you out. That was the position.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Graham: I think the member for Greenough wanted Labour endorsement once.

Mr. Brand: No, he didn't!

Mr. COURT: I apologise, Mr. Speaker, for the digression, but—

Mr. Brand: I challenge the Minister to prove it at any stage.

Mr. Graham: We might accept your challenge.

The SPEAKER: We will have this discussion on another Bill. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will proceed.

Mr. COURT: I apologise for the digression, Mr. Speaker, but you must admit I was tempted away. In his second reading speech, the Minister said that if this Bill became law, it would provide a unique opportunity for the issue of such a policy—that is, this policy in connection with probate, which is a form of life assurance. Let us examine this to see how unique it is. When one looks at the field of life assurance offered already on fair and equitable terms, one wonders if there is any scope for anything unique in this field.

Mr. W. Hegney: It would be unique if you allowed the State Insurance Office to do it.

Mr. COURT: It would be unique—for a rather unusual reason. Not because of the privileges it would confer but because of the restriction it would impose on people; because if this clause is read carefully, one appreciates that once the policy is assigned to the Treasurer, for all practical purposes the assured person has lost control over the policy; and that is completely foreign to the normal procedure in connection with life assurance policies.

Let us examine some of the headings under which one can obtain life assurance protection at present. There is probate on a whole life basis; endowment; partnership (joint life); educational; family income or legacy; key man; temporary; superannuation; group; family; children's whole life; combined full assurance and temporary assurance; pure endowment; and whole of life assurances. I do not propose to give the details of each type of policy. If any hon. member is interested, I will let him borrow this screed from me.

Mr. Graham: I do not believe you know yourself.

Mr. COURT: I think I would take on a competition with the Minister, for a small prize, as to who could write the best

essay on these headings without reference to textbooks. I think I would take that risk.

Mr. Graham: I think you would be taking a risk, too!

Mr. COURT: I do not think I would be taking much risk with my prize.

Mr. Graham: Carry on!

Mr. W. Hegney: I want to insure all risks.

Mr. COURT: That would be used as an excuse to extend the franchise further; to ensure the Minister against an obvious risk. I do not want to press this matter any further on this occasion. My views are very well known to the Minister and to members opposite.

Mr. Johnson: They are very illogical, too.

Mr. COURT: We can always rely on interjections like that from the hon. member for Leederville.

Mr. W. Hegney: Why stop the State Insurance Office from going into life assurance?

Mr. COURT: There is every reason. We do not believe in any Government intrusion into this type of business. There is no need for it. If the Government would get on with the job of governing this country instead of trying to bring private enterprise down to its knees, we would have better government and a better State.

Mr. Graham: Where would you get a better Government from?

Mr. Brand: From about six other places.

Mr. Graham: You do not believe in the right of people to have different views from your own.

Mr. COURT: This Bill resolves itself into a political argument and a matter of political policy and ideologies. There is no need for me to point out that we are opposed to the extension of State trading. It is one of the moves in the Government's programme.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Socialistic programme.

Mr. COURT: The hon. member has read my mind.

Mr. Graham: Why is the Commonwealth Government starting a socialistic TV station in Western Australia?

Mr. COURT: We have been over the question of public utilities before. We have never objected to the Australian Broadcasting Commission. But there would be no commercial stations if the hon. member had his way.

Mr. Graham: No-one ever suggested that.

Mr. COURT: Dr. Evatt has, and he is the mouthpiece of your party on an Australian-wide basis.

Mr. Graham: When did he suggest that?

Mr. COURT: He has always been traditionally opposed to the commercial stations. There would only be the A.B.C. if he had his way, and he would vet its news, if he could.

Mr. Graham: I think that is the position in the home of conservatism in Great Britain, is it not?

Mr. COURT: The Minister is a bit behind! Commercial stations have been started under a Conservative Government.

Mr. Graham: Have they?

The SPEAKER: I do not think that is relevant to this Bill. This Bill covers insurance.

Mr. COURT: This Bill is just a further move in the Government's implementation, or its attempts to implement its policy of the socialisation of all means of production, distribution, and exchange. The Minister acknowledges that with a nod of his head.

The Bill is not necessary because the public is already well serviced on a highly competitive basis. Forgetting the life assurance field altogether, we have the tariff companies, the non-tariff companies, the so-called co-operative types of insurance companies and the mutual types. Not only do they compete within their own groups, but each group also competes one with the other; and if that is not full competition, I do not know what is.

Mr. Potter: It is still better to have another competitor in the field.

Mr. COURT: I repeat our proposition to the Minister regarding school children's insurance: We are prepared to support an amendment to the State Government Insurance Office Act to permit the Government office to extend its policy to cover school children 24 hours of the day for seven days of the week, provided that the Government ensures in that amendment that there is equal opportunity for the private companies in competition with the State office. I oppose the Bill.

On motion by Mr. O'Brien, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.1 p.m.*

## Legislative Council

Tuesday, the 9th September, 1958.

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

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

#### MANJIMUP TIMBER-DRYING KILN.

*Expenditure, Total Cost, Etc.*

1. The Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT asked the Minister for Railways:

Will he inform the House—

- (1) The cost of preparing the site of the timber-drying kiln at Manjimup?
- (2) The total expenditure on the project to date?
- (3) The estimated total cost of same?
- (4) Is it the Government's intention to transport all timber to the kiln from Pemberton and Shannon River by rail?