

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 31st October, 1950.

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

QUESTIONS.

SWAN RIVER CRAFT.

As to Legislation for Licensing.

Hon. H. HEARN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Having regard to the recent fatalities on the Swan River and the circumstances surrounding same as reported, will the Government give consideration to introducing legislation providing for the examination and, on qualifying, the issuing of licenses to persons using craft on the river in the interests of their own safety?

(2) Will the Government take the necessary action to prohibit the use of craft on the river by persons not so licensed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) This matter will be considered by the Government.

(2) Answered by (1).

HOSPITALS.

As to Wooroloo Sanatorium Beds and Patients.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN (for Hon. N. E. Baxter) asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What amount of money, if any, has been allocated and approved for the building of hospital extensions at Wooroloo Sanatorium?

(2) When is it proposed that these building extensions will be commenced?

(3) How many beds will be available upon completion of the building extensions?

(4) How many beds are available at Wooroloo Sanatorium at present?

(5) What was the daily average of occupied beds over the past year?

(6) How many cases were admitted to Wooroloo Sanatorium during the past 12 months?

(7) How many cases of active tuberculosis were discharged from Wooroloo Sanatorium in the past 12 months?

(8) How many known cases of active tuberculosis are resident in—

(a) the metropolitan area;

(b) country districts?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2) and (3) Nil. No additions to hospital wards at Wooroloo are contemplated at the present time, but consideration is being given to the erection of a 200-bed chest hospital in the metropolitan area.

(4) 249 beds.

(5) 244.

(6) 220.

(7) 52.

(8) (a) In the metropolitan area, active cases with positive sputum—175; (b) country districts—100.

HEALTH.

As to Perth Chest Clinic Examinations.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN (for Hon. N. E. Baxter) asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) How many persons were x-rayed at the Perth Chest Clinic in the last year, and what were the respective numbers of—

(a) male;

(b) female;

(c) children?

(2) How many persons have been x-rayed at the Perth Chest Clinic since its inception?

(3) Has any check been made on the number of migrants x-rayed at the Perth Chest Clinic?

(4) If so, what percentage of these have proved to be active cases of tuberculosis?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 31,987 during the year ended the 31st December, 1949, comprising—

(a) 14,714 males;

(b) 16,633 females;

(c) 640 children.

(2) and (3) 83,200 approximately, which includes 10,050 new Australians. Films of nominated migrants numbering 2,500 have been submitted by Commonwealth for check.

(4) Approximately five (5) per thousand. (Figures taken out for year ended the 31st December, 1949. Figures for this year will, of course, be dependent on full investigation of cases. It is anticipated the percentage will be approximately the same.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1, Transfer of Land Act Amendment.

2, State Housing Act Amendment.

Returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

3, Inspection of Scaffolding Act Amendment.

Passed.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Hon. A. R. Jones and Electoral Act Amendment Bill.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I wish to refer to a mistake apparently made by the Press in reporting what happened when a division was taken on the second reading of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill. The Press reported that six Labour members and two Country Party members, Messrs. Loton and Logan, supported the second reading. The fact is that there were only five Labour members who supported the second reading. I was the third Country Party member who supported the second reading.

BILL—FAUNA PROTECTION.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Saving:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Can the Minister tell me why under paragraph (b) the Native Administration Act and the Justices Act are not included? I understand that where this Bill conflicts with the Fisheries Act, the Vermin Act, the Whaling Act and the Zoological Gardens Act, the provisions of this Bill, when passed, will prevail. Why does not the paragraph mention these other Acts?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I would like to know what is in the hon. member's mind and how this Bill will conflict with the Native Administration Act. I do not see how it can.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: To make my point, I really have to refer forward to Clause 23. As I read that clause, it means that a native, with the sanction of the owner, can enter private property and take sufficient game for food.

The Minister for Agriculture: He cannot go on to private property.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: But this clause applies to an instance where he obtains the sanction of the owner to enter his land. Does that mean that a native can go on to private property, with the permission of the owner, obtain game and either keep it for food or sell it?

The Minister for Agriculture: I cannot see any conflict there with the Native Administration Act.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Very well, I am prepared to leave it until a later stage.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—Interpretation:

Hon. G. FRASER: I want to ask the Minister why reptiles are being protected, as they are covered under the definition of "fauna" in this clause. All reptiles are reptiles to me, and if I see any I will kill them and look at the Act afterwards. The Minister, when moving the second reading of the Bill, possibly dealt with this point, but I did not hear him. I do not think reptiles need protection, because they can protect themselves.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not happy about the word "reptiles" being included in the definition. It was probably inserted to cover such reptiles as bungarras, which are quite suitable for food. I suggest that the word be left there, and the Act amended later if necessary. I believe the hon. member did mention something about this in his second reading speech, but apparently I have overlooked the matter.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Look at Clause 14.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The interpretation of "to take" is rather dangerous in that it says that because one pursues, hunts and destroys an animal, he is liable to prosecution. We have had many instances before where a definition has been stretched to cover all sorts of interpretations, and it is by that means that lawyers and others live.

The Minister for Agriculture: We cannot make it lawyer-proof.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: It is very wide in scope to say that, because a person pursues or hunts an animal, he is liable to prosecution.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: This legislation is for the protection of fauna.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: A farmer would have to secure a permit to destroy the vermin. If he did not have one, he would be liable to prosecution if he endeavoured to hunt vermin off his property.

The Minister for Agriculture: The object of the Bill is to protect fauna.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Because of the point I have raised I take exception to this provision. A farmer should not be liable to prosecution because he hunts vermin off his property. Then again, there is the reference: "to attempt any of the foregoing." When does a person start to attempt to pursue an animal? Can the Minister give an explanation of that?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Bill seeks to provide an interpretation of the term "to take." A man would be prosecuted only if he were taking fauna on a sanctuary or in some place where the animals were protected. I think most of us agree that some animals should be protected, but should kangaroos and emus be present in such numbers as to be vermin, this provision would not apply.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It would not apply to vermin at all.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, but as Mr. Parker pointed out, this measure is for the protection of game.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I disagree with the Minister's view. During his second reading speech he referred to a line drawn from Gingin and he pointed out that kangaroos, for instance, that were to be found north of that line would be declared vermin but they would be protected south of the line. The animals need not be on a sanctuary at all and yet be a nuisance to a farmer in the neighbourhood.

The Minister for Agriculture: He could get a permit to kill them.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: A man should not be required to wait until he obtained a permit before he could hunt vermin off his crop.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This would not apply to kangaroos on a man's property. If in any district, whether it be a protected area or even where there was a sanctuary, kangaroos went on to a farmer's crop and the man went out to shoot them or clear them off his property, would anybody be foolish enough to prosecute him? What hope would there be of securing a conviction in such circumstances? I think in a case like that every member of this House would take a chance and would get away with it.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: A man is able to obtain a permit to destroy vermin should it be necessary, but that would apply only when the animals were on his own property. The animals might be on an adjoining block or even on a sanctuary. Should a farmer be required to wait until the animals came on his property before he could hunt them off?

The Minister for Agriculture: He would not be allowed to go into the sanctuary.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: That makes the position worse because the animals travel from the sanctuary to the farmer's property, and he must wait until the animals are there before he can deal with them. I think some amendment is required.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: During my speech I referred to a line proceeding east from Jurien Bay and I pointed out that people could get licenses to kill fauna that were proving a nuisance on properties. I emphasised the fact that already exemptions have been granted for certain areas where fauna have become a nuisance. The department is not unreasonable. If its attitude were harsh, I would soon ask the chief inspector to declare a line further south below Jurien Bay. When objection is taken to depredations by fauna, permits are always issued. If members do not want fauna protected, they do not want the Bill.

Hon. G. FRASER: I think Clause 14 covers the point I raised with regard to the inclusion of the word "reptile." Under that provision a close or open season can be declared by proclamation respecting any fauna.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I agree with the point raised by Mr. Fraser regarding the inclusion of the word "reptiles." I do not think it would be hard to amend the definition of "fauna" by transposing the words "reptiles" and "frogs" and inserting other words so that that portion of the definition would read, "frogs and reptiles, except those reptiles dangerous to the lives of persons and domestic livestock." I move an amendment—

That in line 8 of the definition of "fauna," the words "reptiles and frogs" be struck out.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: But Clause 14 covers that position.

Hon. A. R. JONES: A person has first to go to the authorities to obtain a permit to kill reptiles. As the Bill stands, it is open to ridicule.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not quite sure what the amendment really means. It is usual to submit copies of such amendments so that consideration can be given to what is proposed. I confess I am not very happy about the inclusion of reptiles in the Bill.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Why not take the word out of the Bill altogether?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There is something in that suggestion.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The points raised are covered by Clause 14, under which the Governor has power to make proclamations. Without a proclamation being made, there would be no such thing as duck shooting. The Governor could also make a proclamation permitting the destruction of all snakes. I have heard

people say that carpet snakes are valuable in stores because they eat rats and mice. The Governor would be empowered to make a proclamation under which good reptiles would be saved from destruction, while noxious ones would be destroyed. I do not know whether the bobtail goannas are good or bad reptiles, but there are numbers of them.

Turning to the definition of "to take", this would cover the beginning of a hunt. Down south kangaroos are protected; and if a person began a miniature hunt with dogs and horses, he would be committing an offence. It would not be necessary to wait until a kangaroo had been killed. The individual could be charged when he started the chase. A great many of the animals and birds it is desired to protect are driven away and we desire to avoid that. Again, the definition of "to take" includes attempting any of the processes set out in the definition. The Criminal Code provides that a person can be found guilty, not only of doing something, but also of attempting to do something. The best example is that of attempted murder. A person does not succeed in his effort to murder somebody, and he is charged with attempting to do so.

In this instance, if a person attempts to kill, or do any of the things set out in the definition, he will be liable. It would be somewhat difficult to prove that an attempt had been made at some of these things. For instance, we could not prove that someone had attempted to chase fauna, though he could be charged with attempting to kill or attempting to sell. However, I think the definition is quite all right. The whole position is covered by Clause 14. It is for the Governor to act; and I take it that if he does not do so representations will be made with a view to seeing that some action is taken. If kangaroos or opossums are becoming objectionable in certain places, the Governor will lift the protection afforded them.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Mr. Fraser raised the point about the inclusion of reptiles in this clause. I imagine that the inclusion of reference to frogs and reptiles was designed to stop their introduction into the country from outside. It is well known that large frogs were introduced into the canefields of Queensland with a view to eradicating a certain pest, but have themselves become a pest. In the South-West of this State the kookaburra is becoming an absolute curse because it is destroying all the little birds. From open places the robins have disappeared and also the blue wrens. It is only in thick country that these birds can be seen. So although the introduction of a bird from another place may have advantages in the early stages, such bird may become a nuisance because it has no natural enemies.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Under Clause 14 the Governor could declare all reptiles vermin, with the exception perhaps of some kind of lizard. If I had anything to do with it, I would say that all reptiles should be declared vermin unless it could be shown that a certain kind ought to be protected.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I cannot understand why reptiles have been included in this clause. I do not expect the Minister or anybody else to have a thorough knowledge of what is in the minds of people who frame legislation of this kind.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have not any idea of what is intended in regard to reptiles, but there may be a good reason for their inclusion.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not know of one. I do know that all the reptiles with which I am acquainted are great destroyers of the very creatures we want to preserve.

The Minister for Agriculture: I agree.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Mr. Parker has referred to Clause 14. That begins by stating that except to the extent which the Governor declares by proclamation, all fauna is wholly protected throughout the whole of the State at all times.

Hon. L. Craig: Unless they are declared vermin and come under the Vermin Act.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes. There are no reptiles that are declared vermin as far as I know. Certain vermin attack other vermin. For instance, the goanna and many snakes destroy rabbits. It is very difficult to know where to begin and where to end with this sort of thing.

The Minister for Agriculture: Some people advocate the preservation of foxes because they eat rabbits.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I know. As soon as we set aside sanctuaries for the preservation of fauna, we provide places for the preservation of animals that become a pest as well. Immediately we establish a sanctuary and the animals within it are protected, foxes will go in by the hundreds and destroy the very creatures we are trying to preserve. This is not an easy problem to solve. It has been suggested that some people make pets of carpet snakes because they eat mice around the house. I have lived a long time on a farm and I have never yet known anyone who wanted a carpet snake as a pet. Anybody with any sense in farming country keeps poultry, and there is no greater pest so far as chickens and eggs are concerned than are snakes, which take every egg and every small bird they can get hold of. I do not know why the word "reptiles" was inserted in this clause.

The Minister for Agriculture: I do not know that it will do any harm.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not know whether a turtle is regarded as a reptile. I am nearly sure that it is. There may be some reason for preserving turtles, though I do not know what good they are. At all events, we could have used the word "turtle" if it was necessary to protect them. I cannot see this Bill doing all that is desired. As soon as we set up a sanctuary for certain creatures, we set up a sanctuary for other animals that will attack the ones we want to preserve.

Hon. L. CRAIG: That does not apply to birds. We set up sanctuaries to protect birds from human beings. Birds needs a sanctuary.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I know they do; but immediately a sanctuary is established for them, it is an invitation for foxes and all sorts of other animals to come in and attack them. Even snakes have attacked nests in trees. I think, however, we had better leave the clause as it is.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: It would be unwise for the Committee to pass legislation which is not clear and which is more or less ridiculed by the people. Several folk have spoken to me about the Bill, and they have used jocular terms concerning the reference in this clause to reptiles and frogs. The Minister cannot say why a snake should be protected. Someone the other day asked if it was proposed to tie up a snake and then obtain a permit to shoot it! Surely the Bill could be framed in such a way as to do what is required and yet sound sensible. There is no need to rush the Bill through the Committee stage. Perhaps the Minister could obtain a little more advice from the department and then members could frame amendments that would cover the points that have been raised.

There is something in what Mr. Loton says about sanctuaries and game reserves. It is not easy to keep vermin from coming into one's property if there are thousands of acres of protected land nearby. Unless that protected area is essential, and going to do some good, it should not be gazetted as such. A junior member of the department could come to the conclusion, perhaps after speaking to one or two irresponsible people in the country, that it would be a good idea to protect a certain area of land. If he sends his recommendation on to the committee it is quite likely that the recommendation will be put into effect.

With all due respect to the members of the committee, I doubt whether they know much about local conditions in certain areas. Sir Charles Latham has an amendment in view which will ensure that local authorities will be consulted. These authorities can give very useful advice and

information to the committee and, although the committee need not accept the advice, it will at least have the opportunity of getting the local views. To my mind the Bill requires to be tightened up and areas of land that are not to be used for sanctuaries should not be locked up and so harbour vermin.

I know of areas where there are only a few kangaroos, but if they were made into sanctuaries it would not be long before they were over-run and landowners would be faced with more troubles than they have today. It has been said that it is possible to get a permit to destroy these fauna, but it is not possible to take a kangaroo now without a permit and there are all sorts of restrictions. I do not like the idea of a grazier feeling that he cannot carry a gun across his own property if he wants to take that gun for some purpose. Under some of the provisions in this Bill it would be illegal for him to be carrying a gun.

The Minister for Agriculture: A sanctuary is Government land, not private land.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: But if it is being used—

The Minister for Agriculture: It is only land vested in the Crown; read the interpretation.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Why should Government land be used to worry landowners?

The Minister for Agriculture: It would not.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: There is a strip of land between the Peel Inlet and the Indian Ocean and the country along the beach is Crown land. It is used mostly for grazing purposes because there is no development there. Along the Peel Inlet there is timber country. All of it has been purchased and fenced and there are a few people using it for grazing. What chance will those people have if several thousand acres along the rocky plains are to be used to harbour kangaroos or vermin? We do not want to breed kangaroos. If so, why not let the people utilise that land and have the right to carry rifles and make use of them when they find it necessary?

The best way to decide about these reserves is to obtain the local knowledge that is available. Decisions can be arrived at after that has been done. A lot of vermin is a great worry to farmers. Something has been said about protecting the forests. Can any member tell me what for? What have we in our forests that is ornamental or useful enough to protect? Surely we would not class parrots and cockatoos in that category and those birds do very well in the forest areas. I am most anxious that no officers or inspectors shall be able to go out and, after seeking advice from people who do not know very much about the question, come to the conclusion that a certain decision is the right one. If advice is sought from

the local authorities it will be a much better idea, and the advice given will help to put the committee on the right track.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Too much importance has been placed upon the word "reptile." If we have an open season on all reptiles we will upset the balance of nature. Snakes and lizards keep the rabbits within reasonable bounds, and it would be disadvantageous, in many ways, to destroy them. Mention has also been made of frogs. The Minister gave some sort of explanation that the word was intended to cover frogs that may be imported—such as those imported into Queensland. Frogs were not imported into Queensland, but the State imported toads which are poisonous. If a domestic pet plays with a toad, or is bitten by one, the pet invariably dies. Apparently the touch of the toad is sufficient to destroy the average pet.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: When introducing the Bill I said that members would be surprised to see that frogs were included in the definition. It was to prevent the introduction of pests that frogs were included in the definition of fauna. In regard to the sanctuaries mentioned by Mr. Tuckey, I would state that the committee would not take any notice of any junior officer who happened to want a sanctuary in a certain place. To say a thing like that is paying a poor compliment to the committee. It is a responsible body and it certainly would not set up sanctuaries everywhere. The whole question of vermin is protected by the Vermin Act. The Chief Inspector of Vermin is on the committee. Do members think that he will allow kangaroos, emus and so on, to run amok in certain districts?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: He cannot take them out of the Vermin Act.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, he cannot.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: That Act overrides this.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Of course it does. He has only to come to the Minister concerned and say that there are too many kangaroos in a certain area and they would be declared vermin. Like Mr. Cunningham, I agree that too much has been said and thought about the word "reptile." Clause 14 covers the whole situation.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not want to be difficult but if we strike out certain words and then reinsert others, it may make it difficult later on when some more important point is being discussed.

The CHAIRMAN: The difficulty is that we cannot make a very sensible clause out of it if we insert after "reptiles" the words "except those reptiles dangerous to the life of persons and domestic livestock." If Mr. Fraser can sustain his point I think

we are quite justified in striking out the words "frogs and reptiles" with a view to making sense.

Hon. G. FRASER: I think the difficulty could have been got over by taking out "and" which follows after "frogs."

The CHAIRMAN: It would still be very badly constructed.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: One of our troubles is that we are taking the frogs out and then putting them back! Once we take them out we cannot put them back. We would have to do it in two or three bites.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: As long as there is no bite from the reptile.

Hon. A. R. JONES: In view of Mr. Parker's assurance that the position is covered in Clause 14, I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 to 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—The Fauna Protection Advisory Committee:

On motions by the Minister for Agriculture, clause amended by striking out the word "two" in line 3 of Subclause (3) and inserting the word "three" in lieu; by striking out the word "and" in line 3 of paragraph (a) of Subclause (3); by adding the word "and" at the end of paragraph (b) of Subclause (3); and by inserting after the word "reappointment" in line 11 of paragraph (c) of Subclause (3) the word "and."

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 11—Functions of the Committee:

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That a new subclause be added as follows:—

(3) In making any inquiry required by the provisions of this section, the Committee shall refer the subject matter of the inquiry to the relevant local authority in the district of which the matter under inquiry may have effect and shall obtain such information and advice as the local authority can give relevant to such matter, and the Committee shall not advise or make any recommendation to the Minister unless and until a report on such matter has been received by it from such local authority.

This clause provides for the functions of the committee that have already been mentioned in Clause 10. That clause provides that the committee shall consist of six members who are to be the chief warden of fauna, the chief inspector of

vermin, the Conservator of Forests and three others. At least one of the three shall be a person other than a civil servant. I should say most of them would be civil servants.

The Minister for Agriculture: Not necessarily.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Four out of the six provided for would be. It is felt that in some of these districts a local situation might arise where it might not be possible for any of these six men to have the necessary local knowledge, and this amendment provides that the committee appointed under Clause 10 should interview the local authority operating in that district. I think that would be wise, as nobody would know better than the local authority of the requirements and disabilities of the district.

I hope the Minister will agree to this amendment, because not only would it strengthen the hands of the committee, but it would also give greater confidence in this Act which is being introduced for the first time in Western Australia. The new subclause would not bind the committee to accept the advice of the local authority but it instructs it that before it sets aside a sanctuary or declares any fauna protected, it should consult the local people, through the local authority, which is their representative. Quite a number of people fear that in the event of there being a sanctuary where a few kangaroos or emus exist it may provide a breeding place for rabbits, foxes or dingoes.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: That is covered by the Vermin Act.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am anxious that we should not set aside sanctuaries where vermin may breed in large numbers, because one is not permitted to go into a sanctuary with a gun. We may set aside a sanctuary and find foxes getting in.

Hon. W. J. Mann: They are more or less protected.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: They are not protected intentionally but because of the other animals there. I have known sanctuaries in New South Wales to harbour rabbits which could not be shot because they were in a sanctuary. What is going to happen in a case like that?

The Minister for Agriculture: The Vermin Act overrides them all.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not think it is as easy as that. I know of the case of a man who was fined because his rabbit netting could not keep rabbits out, and he protested that they were getting in from the sanctuary nearby, but he was fined nevertheless.

The Minister for Agriculture: Where was that?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: In New South Wales.

The Minister for Agriculture: That must have been a long time ago.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No, it was quite recently.

The Minister for Agriculture: I thought you were referring to the time you lived there.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Oh no, this is quite recent. I can assure the Minister that the amendment will not injure the Bill but will give confidence to the people where land is set aside for sanctuaries, as they will feel that they are getting some protection by being consulted.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I would have no objection to the amendment, provided a time limit were inserted. Nothing could be done until a report was received from the local authority, and that body might not supply a report for six months.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Make it "immediately," if you like.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The report should be furnished, say, within a month.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The amendment will not improve the clause. What is meant by the "relevant local authority?"

The Minister for Agriculture: If there were emus in one district and not in another, you would have to go to the local authority where there were emus.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: But what is the meaning of "relevant local authority?"

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It means the right one.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Well, what is the right one? It does not say the local authority constituted under the Road Districts Act. There is no such thing as a relevant local authority. I could argue that it might be the Vermin Board, but that might be wrong.

The CHAIRMAN: You could insert "local governing authority."

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is only a general term and has no legal significance. Surely members of the committee will be competent to judge the position and should not be tied by red tape through having to go to the road board! The amendment will hamstring the committee and delay expeditious action.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I support the amendment. No-one would be better acquainted with requirements than the members of the road board. They would understand the position better than would civil servants in Perth.

The Minister for Agriculture: Civil servants would have a greater overall knowledge of the position.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: When action of this sort is contemplated, it is only right that the local authority should be consulted. Any such question referred to a road board, I believe, would receive prompt attention.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Normally, what would happen is that the local authority would make representations to the Vermin Board which, in turn, would declare certain fauna to be vermin. I consider that the amendment is unnecessary and will make the provision more cumbersome.

Hon. G. FRASER: Under the amendment, there is a possibility of the committee being unable to act. I have no objection to the committee making contact with the local authority in order to obtain information, but it could not act until a report had been received from the local authority.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have suggested a time limit. Otherwise, I could not accept the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: No amendment on the amendment has been moved.

Hon. G. FRASER: Unless a time limit is inserted, I shall oppose the amendment.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I am afraid that Mr. Parker is not conversant with some of the circumstances. Even if the advice of the local authority were obtained, to make a right decision would be very difficult, because the matter is not an easy one. I consider the amendment is a safeguard and would improve the Bill.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Some members do not seem to appreciate the position. All fauna will be protected unless the Vermin Act declares otherwise. Under the clause, the Governor may exempt certain areas, and the committee is to advise the Governor as to permitting certain fauna to be killed as game. The Governor may declare a certain time and place for the shooting of duck. The amendment, however, would mean that before he could do so, he must consult the committee who, in turn, must consult the local authority before even an open season for duck could be declared. I feel sure that is neither intended nor desired. In some districts it might be advisable that kangaroos should be destroyed, and all that would be necessary would be to have kangaroos declared under the Vermin Act. The amendment will really defeat what Sir Charles Latham wishes. He has read the Bill as one to permit destruction, whereas its intention is to prohibit destruction. In my opinion, the Bill would be far better without the amendment.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am not sure that that explanation is entirely correct. There is power to protect, or not to protect. To say that the Vermin Act covers everything is entirely wrong. It declares vermin in certain areas, but the same fauna is not vermin in other places. There is no reason why we should not get the advice of the

people in the districts concerned. I see no reason why there should be any delay. Most road boards control the vermin boards in their own areas, and know what is going on.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I do not like the amendment, although the Minister does not see much demerit in it. The committee will consist of men who have specialised knowledge, and I assume they will make adequate inquiries in any district. I have the highest respect for many local governing bodies, but we must not lose sight of the fact that they have their percentage of silly people, too. To hamstring the committee and waste its time by having to apply to these authorities is unreasonable, unless there is a time limit. But I do not think even that is necessary. I suppose there are people in Esperance who know more about ducks and the proper season for them, than the average person, but I assume that the men on this committee will not be far behind in such knowledge.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: If the Bill passes, the committee will have to recommend areas to be sanctuaries, and other areas to be ordinary game reserves. It is not easy for such recommendations to be made by people who do not know the local conditions. White Lake, on the road to Mandurah, should be a sanctuary because the road is used by tourists, and we should encourage tourist traffic. It would be easy to make a recommendation to that end, but can anyone tell me what ought to be done with Peel Inlet? Could the six members of this committee make a decision between themselves? I do not think they could. There are arguments for and against. There is a tremendous amount of bird life on that large sheet of water, and there is also a lot of fish there. In one way it ought to be made a sanctuary because Mandurah is one of our most attractive holiday resorts, but what would happen to the fishing industry if it were? If the committee wants advice on that sheet of water, surely the local governing authority is the best fitted to give it. Provided a suitable time limit is included, I cannot see anything wrong with the amendment.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I cannot see anything wrong with the amendment, except that a time limit would be advisable. Conditions vary in different localities, and it would be unwise to expect residents of the Geraldton district to be able to tell people in the far South-West what should happen to wild life in that area. Each district has its own peculiarities. Under Subclause (1) the committee is instructed to make inquiries, so that if the amendment were carried it would go to the people in the area concerned for the purpose of making those inquiries.

The Minister for Agriculture: It could do it by letter and save a lot of time in some cases.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes. I am certain that the local authorities would appreciate that, and when once a decision was arrived at they would co-operate with the Government, the advisory committee and all concerned in seeing that the provisions of the Act were carried out. The more we can co-operate with the people in the various areas, the better the effect of the legislation is likely to be.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The amendment is unnecessary because I believe the measure will protect everything in the way of animal and bird life, and until such time as any local authority applies to the department, through the Vermin Board, which has an overriding effect, then nothing will be done to save fauna where it is desired to save it. The amendment to my mind would slow up anything a road board wanted to do in regard to the destruction of kangaroos and other vermin. On the other hand, if the authorities under the Bill wished to set up a sanctuary, they could do so, and a local authority would still have the right to apply to the Vermin Board if that sanctuary were harbouring any pest. I think the position is adequately covered.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: During the tea suspension I have made some minor alterations to the amendment and desire to insert the words "road board" in lieu of "local authority". I therefore ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That a new subclause be added as follows:—(3) In making any inquiry as required by the provisions of this section, the committee shall refer the subject matter of the inquiry to the road board in the district of which the matter under inquiry may have effect, and shall obtain such information and advice as the road board can give relative to such matter, and the committee shall not advise or make any recommendation to the Minister unless and until a report on such matter has been received by it from such road board unless such road board neglects to furnish such advice immediately after its first meeting.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The request from the committee might arrive on the morning of the day on which the road board was meeting, and might not get on the agenda. Some road boards meet only once a month and the amendment could therefore cause considerable delay.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The greatest possible delay would be 21 days.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It might be at least six weeks, as some road boards meet only once a month. In such circumstances I do not think the committee could wait for advice from road boards in some of the more remote areas. I feel that the committee might know more about fauna generally than would some road boards, and I cannot support the amendment.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Could we not postpone discussion of this clause so as to allow members to study the amendment? It contains the words "unless and until" and then, further down, the word "unless" again. I think some of those words are redundant.

Hon. G. FRASER: I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out all words after the word "effect" in line 8.

That would make it obligatory for the committee to notify the board of its intentions.

The CHAIRMAN: Very few members have copies of the amendment, and it might be better to report progress.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If we continue with other clauses, Sir Charles could move to have the Bill re-committed for the purpose of further considering Clause 11.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps consideration of this clause could be postponed.

On motion by the Minister for Agriculture, further consideration of the clause postponed.

Clauses 12 to 14—agreed to.

Clause 15—Licenses:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I take exception to the wording of paragraph (a) of Sub-clause (3). I do not think the Minister should be able to delegate those powers to "any warden", though I do not object to their being delegated to the chief warden.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Such delegation would occur only in rare cases, or in cases of emergency.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: And in any case this has regard simply to the issue of licenses.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think this provision would be in any way dangerous. It does not have reference to honorary wardens, and I think it should remain.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 16 to 19—agreed to.

Clause 20—Authority of wardens:

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I wish to deal with paragraph (a) of Subclause (3). I can quite understand that when a warden finds a person committing an offence, he can

take out a warrant to enable him to deal with certain things. However, after the offender is taken before a Justice of the Peace, would it not be better for him to issue a warrant to a member of the Police Force to search the offender's house rather than to issue it to a warden?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Such an instance would only arise when a policeman was not available. A Justice of the Peace would not ask a warden to search a house if a member of the Police Force was close at hand. However, the offence might occur away out on the Nullabor Plain, far away from any member of the Police Force.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I think the difficulty could be overcome by simply stating that a Justice of the Peace could issue a warrant to search the house. Surely, when he issues the warrant it would have to be executed by a member of the Police Force. I move an amendment—

That in line 16 paragraph (3) (a) after the word "issue" the word "his" be struck out and the word "a" inserted in lieu.

I will later move to strike out in lines 16 and 17 the words "directing the warden named therein, or all wardens."

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Even if that amendment is passed, there is nothing to prevent a Justice of the Peace from issuing a warrant to a warden to search a house.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: I should think it would be left to a member of the Police Force to execute.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If the words are struck out, that still would not apply. I take exception to these amendments being brought forward without notice, Mr. Chairman. I have no idea as to what is intended by the Advisory Committee in all these provisions, and I have had no opportunity of finding out. If these amendments were put on the notice paper, it would give me a chance to make some inquiries. I will raise no objection to this amendment, but if any other amendments are moved, I will have to ask the Committee to report progress.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I am quite willing to withdraw my amendment and move it again when the Bill is recommitted. I moved it because I think it is unwise to issue a warrant to a warden to search a house, seeing that that is rightly the duty of a policeman.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I sympathise with the Minister. This is a good example of how a hastily conceived amendment, which is designed to achieve a purpose, fails in that respect. If the hon. member's amendment were passed, the clause would then mean that anyone could be issued with a warrant to search a house.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is right.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: A Justice of the Peace may issue a warrant to a policeman, a warden or to all wardens in the same way as he could if the clause stands as printed.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the hon. member wish to withdraw his amendment?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Having respect for the Minister, I will ask leave to withdraw it and I will place it on the notice paper.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I seek an explanation as to Subclause (3) (b). This means that if a warrant is executed by day it is directive, but if executed by night it is not obligatory. Why the differentiation?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Because it would not be executed at night except under special circumstances.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I accept that explanation.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 21 and 22—agreed to.

Clause 23—Exemption in certain cases:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: This is the clause to which I drew attention in my second reading speech, and I do not think the Minister made any explanation in his reply. I am concerned about a native destroying fauna. My interpretation of this clause is that whether a native takes game on private property, Crown land, or on private property on which he has permission to hunt, he can only do so if it is for food.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is correct.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I cannot place any other interpretation on that. If that is so, I fail to see why a native, simply because he comes under the provisions of the Native Administration Act, cannot be employed to destroy game.

The Minister for Agriculture: He can, if he gets a permit.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The clause states that he can take game for food only.

The Minister for Agriculture: He can do whatever he likes if he obtains a permit, the same as anyone else.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: That is all I wanted made clear.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 24 to 28—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—WOOD DISTILLATION AND CHARCOAL IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and, on motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, read a first time.

BILL — SUPERANNUATION, SICK, DEATH, INSURANCE, GUARANTEE AND ENDOWMENT (LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES' EMPLOYEES) FUNDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (ALLOWANCES AND SALARIES ADJUSTMENT).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [8.2] in moving the second reading said: The intention of this Bill is to give effect to the recommendations made by Sir Ross McDonald and the Public Service Commissioner who were requested by Cabinet to review salaries and allowances fixed by statute. They were requested to review other salaries which are subject to fixation by the Governor or ministerial authority with the object of co-ordinating all such salaries and removing existing anomalies.

The salaries and allowances which require revision by amendments to statutes and which are dealt with in this Bill relate to the—

Auditor General

Public Service Commissioner

Stipendiary Magistrates

Parliamentary salaries and allowances.

Judges' salaries were also reviewed, but it was considered that the adjustments proposed should be covered by a separate Bill, which should also include amendments to the legislation relating to judges' pensions. A Bill has been prepared incorporating the recommendations and this will be presented shortly for the consideration of members. There are, therefore, two measures for which parliamentary approval is required in order that the proposed adjustments of salaries and allowances recommended may be made.

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

Dealing first with fixed salaries of Government officers, the adjustments which were approved in 1947 were, in general,

effected by a flat rate increase of 10 per cent., plus £100. No provision was made for variations in the cost of living or the decreased purchasing power of the £. As 20 years had passed since a review had been made and associated salaries had been fairly substantially increased in the meantime, the increases to these salaries then approved were by no means generous and were considerably less proportionately than the increases given to members of Parliament at the same time.

No attempt has been made in the proposals which are now submitted to restore what has been lost over the years or to relate the present purchasing power of the salaries of the officers concerned with the value of their salaries at any time in the past. Due consideration, however, has been given to the salary rates of comparable positions in other States, and a measure of protection is contemplated in the provisions of the Bill against the adverse effect of cost of living increases in the future. With the passing of this Bill, the salaries of the Auditor General and Public Service Commissioner will still be below the average for Australian States, but will be reasonably consistent with the salaries of their confreres in South Australia and Tasmania. The salaries of stipendiary magistrates will also be brought into line with comparable salary rates elsewhere.

In recognition of the current practice in a majority of the other States—Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania—which has for its purpose the protection of margins against the encroachment of salary rates variable with the cost of living, provision is made to enable the Governor-in-Executive Council to determine the actual salary rates to be paid from time to time within the limits set out in the Bill for each of the officers concerned. The salary limits within which adjustments may be made will therefore remain with Parliament. In order, however, that the proper relationship may be preserved between the remuneration of such officers and the remuneration of senior officers who hold their appointments under the Public Service Act, it is proposed that the Governor-in-Executive Council shall have the power to adjust salaries, when necessary, in accordance with the rise and fall of the basic wage, and any other variations—other than an increase under a reclassification or normal salary increment—which affect the salary rates of senior officers in the Public Service. It is intended that the authority of the Governor will not be invoked except to effect variations when they accumulate to the amount of £50 per annum.

For the information of members, it is proposed immediately after the passing of this Bill, to recommend, for the approval of the Governor-in-Council, that the an-

nual salary rate of each of the officers concerned, within the limits set out in the Bill, shall be:—

	Salary.	Limits of Adjustment.
Auditor General	£1,700	£1,550 - £2,000
Public Service Commissioner	£1,850	£1,550 - £2,050
Stipendiary Magistrates—		
Senior, 2 positions	£1,400	£1,250 - £1,550
Junior, 2 positions	£1,325	£1,250 - £1,550
Junior, 1 position	£1,250	£1,250 - £1,550

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

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

With regard to allowances to members of Parliament, under the existing law as amended in 1947, members, with the exception of the President, the Speaker and the Chairman of the Committees of each House, receive an allowance of £960 a year, plus an additional £50 to members who represent a constituency any part of the boundaries of which is more than 50 miles from Parliament House. The Bill proposes that the allowance of a member shall be £1,000 in lieu of £960, and that the allowance of £1,000 shall be increased according to the variations in the basic wage, in multiples of £20 per annum. On this basis the immediate increase will be £40 in allowance plus £80 basic wage increase since the 15th October, 1947, at which date it was £5 9s. 3d. A further increase of £20 will be payable if the basic wage rises to £7 7s. 7d. Basic wage decreases are also provided for, but so that the allowance will not fall back below the base of £1,000.

The salaries of the President, Speaker and Chairmen of Committees of both Houses will be similarly increased by £40, plus £80 basic wage increase since October, 1947, and their salaries will be similarly varied in the future as applies to members.

A suggestion has been made that the salaries and allowances affected by this Bill should be related to the purchasing power of money and they should be restored somewhere near to equality with their real value in earlier years. Acceptance of this suggestion would mean that instead of basic wage adjustments, salaries above the basic wage would, under the present inflationary trends, be very considerably enlarged from time to time until the price level became stable. It is considered that such a principle could not be applied to salaries under the Bill without claims being made to apply the same principle generally. This would involve very large and unpredictable increases in the salaries and wages bill of the State, and would have an inflationary tendency of a very grave nature.

I feel sure that the holders of the higher paid offices fully appreciate that they have a responsibility in these times to absorb, within reason, some of the falling values of money as an example to the rest of the community. At the same time, such officers must be allowed the necessary margins over the remuneration of officers working under them and the proposals in this Bill, which I commend for the approval of members, have been designed to afford reasonable protection in this respect. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [8.16]: I hope the public do not think what is proposed in the Bill is an increase in the salaries of members of Parliament. It is nothing of the sort. Prior to 1947, the Chief Justice, the President of the Arbitration Court and the Public Service Commissioner were appointed by the then Labour Government as a committee to inquire into the question of fixing a reasonable salary for members. The amount stated in the Bill is that to which the committee agreed. While there has been a considerable increase in the basic wage since that date, it is in order to conserve the value of the money as it was at the time the inquiry was made that this Bill has been introduced. Members will be aware that a committee from both Houses has been giving consideration to the financial position of members generally. That committee waited on the Treasurer and asked him to give attention to the fact that the value of our money has so depreciated that it is becoming somewhat difficult for members of Parliament to carry out their duties on the salary allotted.

It is needless for me to say—you, Mr. President, are perfectly well aware of the fact—that the duties of members have become more exacting every year. I suppose there are a number of professional men in this House who fully realise that a great deal of time has to be given to

the public, which curtails the time they have for their professional duties. I have been in the Parliament of this State for a very long period and I am familiar with the duties of members. I know that not only have they become more exacting, but members have to be much more skilled than when I first entered Parliament, in order to deal with legislation submitted and requests made by electors, and matters to which attention has to be given on behalf of electors and the general public. Ours has become quite a full-time job, and that applies not only to Australian politics but to politics overseas as well.

I was talking to a member of the House of Commons a little while ago in this Chamber, and he told me there was a time when he had very little to do so far as his political work was concerned, but that now there is hardly one hour of the day which he can devote to professional work. He has therefore had to give up professional duties in order to pay attention to his parliamentary functions. The same applies very generally. I suppose the public have become much more learned than in the past. They are not so easily satisfied, and the times are much more difficult. We live in a world that is always in a hurry, one which requires a great many more concessions and consideration than when we lived the ordinary common life that prevailed when you and I, Sir, were boys.

Hon. L. Craig: A long time ago!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Quite a fair time ago. But even Mr. Craig has seen some changes in his short life, and no doubt he will see more in the future. I have made these remarks because I happen to be a member of the committee appointed to investigate the position; and I am very pleased to say that, with very little difficulty, we were able to persuade the Treasurer that it was not a question of increased salaries but of maintaining the value of the money set aside for members of Parliament in 1947. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [8.20]: One objection I have to this Bill is that it contains a fault which seems to have appeared in more than one Bill brought before the House this session; that is, that it is a single Bill amending four Acts. I suggest that, as a matter of parliamentary convenience; as a matter of the proper amendment of existing Acts; and as a matter important to all those who will have to refer to Acts of Parliament in years to come, the correct and sensible way to amend Acts is to have a separate Bill in respect of each Act to be amended. It will be noticed that the Title of the Bill is the very obscure one—"Acts Amendment (Allowances and Salaries Adjustment) Act, 1950." This is the second or third Acts Amendment Bill with which the House has had to deal during

the present session; and I suggest to the Minister that, in future, any Bill which is brought down should relate to the amendment not of several Acts but of one Act only.

I confess I am not altogether enamoured of the proposed new Section 6B which the Bill would include in the principal Act. This provides that salaries shall be adjusted by £20 for each complete amount of 7s. 8d. as determined by the Industrial Arbitration Court, pursuant to the provisions of the Industrial Arbitration Act. The only virtue I can see in the new section at the moment is that it at least relieves us of the indignity of being provided with tea money, overtime and dirt money. It seems to me that, having regard to the position we occupy, and to the fact that when a man stands for Parliament he knows what the allowance is to be, that allowance should be stated at a flat figure without any frills at all, and I must confess that I am not happy at all about the provisions of proposed new Section 6B. As Sir Charles Latham has said, members of Parliament have many things to occupy their minds.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And their time.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The daily routine at the moment consists of looking at the weather report, the market report and the cricket results. After this Bill has been passed, I assume that our daily avocation will also consist of having a look at the basic wage variations delivered from time to time by the Arbitration Court.

Hon. G. Fraser: I hope the hon. member is speaking for himself as to how he fills in his day.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: If the hon. member will assist me in voting against this provision, I shall be pleased, because I intend to oppose it.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan, debate adjourned.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 24th October.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South) [8.24]: I am sorry that once again we have had presented to us a Bill of this type as a continuance measure. I am beginning to think that the proper Title of this Bill might be "Always—not for just an hour, not for just a day, not for just a year, but always." If the House agrees to this measure in its present form, I feel that the operations of the small home-builder will be stultified more than ever. When the original Bill was passed in 1945, currency had a different value from that of today, but we are finding that almost the same provisions are applicable.

The present proposal is to continue the operations of the Act until the 31st December, 1951, which means that we have 15 months ahead of us. It is to be hoped that if the House agrees to the Bill, it will no longer be necessary to continue the Act at the end of the period provided. It may be wishful thinking, if the figures supplied by the Minister are to be taken into consideration. He said that before the war 2,000 houses had been built annually, and that a recent survey had indicated that by the 30th June, 1955, we shall need another 30,000 houses for our population, exclusive of migrants who, we are informed, will total 15,000 per year.

We thus find that, by 1955, there will be need for 30,000 homes for our own population, and over a period of five years the number of migrants will total 75,000. Yet, according to the Minister's figures, the most we can expect is from 8,000 to 9,000 homes per year, which means that at the end of five years we shall have built 45,000. That will leave a balance of 15,000 to be divided amongst the 75,000 migrants. For the year 1947-48, 2,771 homes were completed, and 3,075 were in course of erection. In 1948, 3,244 had been completed, and 3,843 were in course of construction. But in 1949-50, 3,509 had been completed and 5,031 were in course of construction. So it appears that between the years 1948, 1949 and 1950 we have gone back to the extent of 334 homes.

The Minister for Transport: You are referring to extra homes built?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I am referring to houses completed.

The Minister for Transport: Completed during that year?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Yes. The Minister said that 3,843 were in course of construction. I am hopeful that the Minister will be able to throw more light on the subject than he did at the second reading; and I trust that in the event of this Bill being passed, a greater percentage of materials will be allotted to country districts.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Hear, hear! To the Goldfields.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I think the hon. member must have forgotten Esperance.

Hon. G. Bennetts: To Esperance, too.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I hope that materials will be available for Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Albany, Geraldton, Carnarvon and Derby; and that those places will receive a fair percentage of the materials on hand. The cry all the time has been that too small a percentage of materials in short supply has been available outside the metropolitan area. I do not know how that comes about. There is one method of allocation with which I do not agree. I do not think one person should be more or less in control

of all the galvanised iron that comes into this State from Lysaght's. I do not think that is right. I know that the Housing Commission has an overriding authority but I think it would have given more satisfaction to all concerned if a group or committee had been appointed to allocate all materials. During the summer months people in the country areas applied for galvanised iron to construct water tanks. It was almost impossible to secure that iron in many of the country areas and yet in the metropolitan area certain plumbers could supply tanks to those country areas.

Hon. L. Craig: Imported material.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: It was not imported material. The iron came from Lysaght's in the Eastern States and if a person in Fremantle or Perth can manufacture tanks and supply them to country areas, surely it would be far better to send the iron to country plumbers and let them build the tanks to supply their districts. I will reserve my decision on the Bill until a later stage.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [8.31]: This Bill seeks to increase the allowable amount that can be spent on houses and industrial buildings. It increases the money value but does not increase the quantity of materials because since the Bill was first introduced costs have more than doubled.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Not the Bill.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am sorry, I meant the Act; the original Bill which became an Act. The question I want to ask myself, and one I wish the House to give attention to, is just how long are the residents of Western Australia—

Hon. A. L. Loton: Always.

Hon. L. CRAIG:—men and women whose people have been here for a generation or more—to be prohibited from building their own houses and effecting necessary repairs. I have gone to some trouble to make a short survey of the building position now and in the future, and although we are assured that the position is gradually clearing up, I very much doubt it, and I will quote some figures to prove that statement. In 1947 we constructed 1,790 houses; in 1948, 2,700; in 1949, 3,200 and in 1950, 3,500. We hardly got going in 1947, and since 1948 we have increased our annual construction by only 800 houses. The number of workmen employed has increased by only 1,000.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Does that include the private builders?

Hon. L. CRAIG: That is all workmen employed on the erection of houses. I am not blaming the Government for anything. I made this survey to see if there was any hope for people who want to build houses without a permit. I am not blaming anybody for this state of affairs. We have had 51,000 migrants arrive in this

country in the last three years, or an average of 17,000 a year. We have only just got into our stride, and next year the number of arrivals will be considerably in excess of that figure. The annual increase in Western Australia is 8,500 a year, so on present figures we have 25,500 people more every year in Western Australia. With the increase in population, natural increases will grow, and it is anticipated that the number of migrants arriving will also increase. If we take a household—that is, the average number requiring a house—as four, that would be above the average. Using that number, we will require 6,375 houses per annum on our present figures and we are not halfway towards it yet.

There are many hundreds of people whose grandfathers and fathers and they themselves were born in this country. They developed it, and many of them want to leave the rural areas to their sons and come to Perth to live. They have no young children—they are just couples. They have no chance of building houses now, or for the next four or five years, unless some change is made. On the figures, they have not a hope. Indirectly, the housing shortage is caused by migrants, and that cannot be denied. I ask myself: For how long are the residents—the real people of this country—to go without houses in order to make way for Maltese, Poles and all the others? They are good people but still people that do not require the preference or should not have the preference that is given to them today. I am not blaming anybody for it but I think the time has come when anybody who requires a small house should be able to build one.

The Minister for Transport: They have not a preference.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The point is that migrants are acquiring houses and are preventing other people from having them. I know what I am talking about. I know of some people in the last fortnight who have come down from the country. These couples are getting old and they left their farms. They have more money now than they ever had before, and for the first time in their lives they have sufficient money to buy houses.

Hon. H. Hearn: You would not stop migration, surely?

Hon. L. CRAIG: No, but I want our own people to have a greater preference in the building of houses than they have had in the past. These people have had to pay £6,000 and £7,000 for houses that are worth only £2,500. They have had to pay these prices because they can see no possibility of their building houses. They want only little homes. I intend to move an amendment to the Bill so that anybody who has the money will be able to build a house up to 12½ squares without a permit—

Hon. H. K. Watson: Hear, hear!

Hon. L. CRAIG: —providing they are going to live in it themselves.

Hon. G. Fraser: They can do that now.

Hon. L. CRAIG: No, they cannot. They cannot even build a house of five or six squares.

Hon. G. Fraser: They can do so now.

Hon. L. CRAIG: They cannot.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Yes, they can.

Hon. L. CRAIG: No, they cannot. If one wants to build a house of five or six squares one has to get a permit.

Hon. E. H. Gray: No, only for the material.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Then I will look forward to those two members supporting me in my amendment.

Hon. G. Fraser: There is no need to. They can do that now.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Therefore the hon. member will support me, and I will look forward to that when I move my amendment.

Hon. G. Fraser: I never support anything that is useless.

Hon. L. CRAIG: This Bill also seeks to allow a person to spend £100 on painting his house. The limit today is £50 and it is impossible to paint any house for that figure.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Unless you do it yourself.

Hon. L. CRAIG: We have not the spare time that perhaps the hon. member has. Some of us work for our living.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I have already said that he is a busy man, so you cannot give the show away like that.

Hon. L. CRAIG: To paint an ordinary bungalow-type house of five rooms, with kitchen and bathroom—that is, paint it inside and outside—costs about £150 today. In the country areas it would probably cost considerably more. I know of one case where the cost was £300. So, £50 is not much use. Why should not people who have been here all this time have the right to keep their places in decent order without asking anybody whether they can or cannot do so? Why should they not be able to go down and buy sufficient paint to keep their homes in decent condition when the same quantity of paint is being used on new houses for new people? I say the time has come when the residents of this country should have equal rights whether they have children or not, because they have had children and are now getting older. So, I hope the House will support my amendment to increase the allowable amount on painting from £50 to £250.

I have a further amendment dealing with the maintenance of homes and I use the same argument. People who have been in houses for years and whose homes are getting old should have the right to

do certain maintenance on them. As members know, wood deteriorates and perhaps a person wants to put a lean-to or washhouse on to his home or make some improvements to it. In the past the maximum allowable sum, per year, has been £50.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They could get a permit for it.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not want them to have to get a permit. I want them to be able to do it without one. How long does it take to get a permit? I think that the function of Government is to govern for the peace, order and good government of the people here—

Hon. H. K. Watson: Hear, hear!

Hon. L. CRAIG: —in preference to anybody else. I am not decrying the need for migrants but I think that our own people have a prior right over anybody else and so my amendment will enable them to do improvements or repair work to their houses up to an amount of £250. Anybody knows that it is not possible to do much for that sum. One cannot erect a new room. One could build a washhouse and probably a bathroom as long as it is constructed of wood and iron, but it will not allow the construction of any sort of brick structure. The time has come when people who live in this country should not have to ask anybody whether they can do ordinary maintenance work on their homes. I am dealing with homes in which people live themselves, not property let to tenants. I do not think my amendment is unreasonable.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: In your amendment you do not confine it to Western Australian or Australian-born citizens.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am not confining it but I think the people should have equal rights.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: It would not exclude migrants.

Hon. L. CRAIG: No, but how many have their own homes? I do not want to exclude them, but I want our own people to have the right to do this work without having to ask anybody. The fourth amendment will, if it is agreed to increase the allowable amount on industrial buildings from £100 to £500. The Bill proposes to increase it from £100 to £200. It is not worth spending £200 on an industrial building because by the time the architect prepares the plans and equipment is purchased, the £200 has gone. I know that £200 is not worth spending on repairs to an industrial building because one cannot get very much done for that figure. To do repair work, or additions, to an industrial building requires at least £500.

We have been informed, indirectly, that these changes are likely to take place. I think they should be put in the Act. I also point out the marriage rate in Western

Australia, which is over 4,000 per annum. Nearly all married couples are seekers for homes. They are not four-unit families but two-unit ones, and so the figure that I gave as an average of four people to a family is very generous. The average number of people going to new homes would be nearer three than four, so unless some easing of restrictions is carried out I can see people like myself, for instance, who live in the country and whose children are grown up, not receiving permits for years to come.

Two or three years ago I said to the secretary of the Housing Commission jocularly, "Take my case as an example. I have grown-up children and live in the country. Suppose I wanted to come to Perth to live, when would I get a permit?" He said, "If you are very lucky, perhaps in 10 years." Whether we were joking or not, I do not think it is fair. I quote my own case for the fun of it, but there are hundreds of people who are similarly placed, and I think they have some rights in this country whether they have children or not.

Hon. H. Tuckey: There are harder cases than yours.

The Minister for Agriculture: You can buy a house.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I could, but suppose I wanted to live near the hon. member, then what would the position be? I hope the House will agree that the time has come when our local people, irrespective of what their qualifications are so far as children are concerned, should have the right to put up houses and if they already have houses, they should be able to maintain and keep them in order. The amendment I have on the notice paper will enable them to do so.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [8.47]: I am very worried about this building proposition. In many parts of the Goldfields we are stinted for timber. In the Esperance district timber is sold at 6d. a running foot, that is, for 3in. x 2in. jarrah. Even if they could get the timber, what chance would the people in the outlying districts have of building homes?

Hon. L. Craig: You cannot get that timber in any quantity.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: That is what was told me by a builder. So we can see the cost of a home in that district. The timber has to go from Bunbury to Perth and up to Coolgardie—

Hon. L. Craig: Why from Bunbury?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Or perhaps from the mills. There is nothing closer than 25 miles this side of Bunbury. The timber position in all the Goldfields areas is the same. They take a back seat because timber mills are handy to the metropolitan area and it is easier for the con-

tractor to take delivery here rather than to rail it to these far-distant places. There is also a shortage of rollingstock, and it is much easier for the timber to be delivered in the city. Wherever one goes in the metropolitan area houses can be seen going up like mushrooms, but in the country hardly any are seen. There are no nails or anything else. Such supplies are all available here in the city.

We want decentralisation; we want to keep the farms going to produce food for the State, but if we cannot assist the people on the land, then we will not get the food we require to feed our own population. I had a case in point about which I wrote to the Minister for Housing. There are cases where people are married and are unable to get homes and have not sufficient money to build a home. It would be a good thing if the Commonwealth and State Governments saw that their own population were housed, and gave them some encouragement, even if it is only by providing them with homes and allowing them to pay them off on time payment. Consideration of our own population is far more important.

In the mining industry we find people arriving, working a few days in a mine and then leaving. Last year the turnover of men in the mining industry at Norseman was 400. They came to Norseman, worked a week, found they could not get a home and left. We have to do something for Norseman and we must get houses for these people, so as to encourage them to go into the back country. Though we want the migration, I think it would be a wise thing to restrict it for about six or 12 months to enable us to put our own Australian people and their children into homes, and give the people a chance to bring their children up decently. I know of a case of a man in one of our metropolitan suburbs who is married and has one child. His wife is expecting another child in a couple of months. He is living in Fremantle in a room and his own wife is not allowed to see him on the premises. His child had to go to Southern Cross, and his wife had to go to the Hollywood Hospital to work, in spite of her condition. This family is naturally worried and although those people have applied for a home, they have not been able to get one.

I think such people are entitled to get homes, and the Government should see they have first priority. Mr. Craig mentioned that he wanted a home here. The same thing would apply to myself. Over many years I reared a large family on the basic wage. If my wife and I wanted to come to Perth, we would not be able to get a home. There is no-one who has done more for the country than those, like myself, who have reared large families, and yet we could not get a home. On the contrary, others are able to do so immediately.

Hon. L. Craig: You can buy one in Mount-street.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: If I had the money I would be able to do so. It is not all of us who have the capital. There are many migrants coming in who are well cashed up—

Hon. H. Hearn: Is that not to the good of the country?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Why should locally-born Australians be penalised because of these people? I hope the Commonwealth and State Governments will see that the Australian-born people are provided with houses.

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

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—Central) [8.55] in moving the second reading said: This is a very important Bill, particularly to the country districts and also, of course, to the whole State. It seeks to amend the Bush Fires Act of 1937 which in turn repealed the previous Act on the statute book. I remember the debate in this House in 1937 when, I think, I had 15 amendments to the Bill. We then thought it was pretty well a perfect Act. But of course times change and experience teaches us that no matter how perfect we think an Act is, after a few years we find it has many undesirable features and that many features which were not in it originally should be included.

Under this Act there is a Rural Fires Prevention Advisory Committee to advise and assist the Minister. The committee comprises nine members, three of whom are recommended for appointment by the executive council of the Road Board Association. Many suggestions from all over the country are forwarded from time to time to that committee, indicating in what manner the Act might be improved. Therefore, we have experienced and practical advice coming from all parts of the country, suggesting amendments to the Bush Fires Act. The suggestions I have mentioned have increased tremendously since the disastrous bush fires last summer in the southern portion of the State.

Local authorities were asked for their opinions and these and other suggestions which were submitted to local authorities for their comments formed a firm base for the committee to work on. To ensure that no part of rural opinion was rejected, the personnel of the committee, for the purpose of considering the suggestions, was increased by one in order that all four wards of the Road Board Association should be represented. Therefore we had representation from all over the southern portion of the State. I would also add that it is proposed to add this extra member to the permanent complement of the committee.

This will increase the total number of the committee to 10, including four representatives of the Road Board Association.

It will be noted in the Bill that certain provisions in Sections 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20 and 39 have been made, subject to the provisions of proposed new Section 46. The sections I have quoted all make reference to the immunity given under Section 44 of the Act to local authorities, bushfire control officers and members of bushfire brigades for damage, loss or injury caused by them in the execution of their duties. Some doubts have arisen as to the satisfactory nature of these various references, and to rectify this all references have been linked together in one clause, the proposed new Section 46.

Under the Act the Minister or an officer acting with his authority can grant permission to burn and may apply certain conditions. No authority is provided for the cancellation of any permit, so this is provided in the Bill. Subsection (4) of Section 8 of the Act is repealed as its provisions are re-enacted in proposed new Section 47. This is a liability provision inserted to deter indiscriminate lighting of fires. The Act provides that the Minister may permit burning off on railway land during prohibited times, such permits to be for a period not later than the 15th January of any year.

This action has been rendered necessary in view of the extent of the railway reserves and the impossibility of completing burning within the usual time. In most cases, it has been found that burning can be finished by the 15th January, but there are many swampy, low-lying areas in the lower South-West that carry a heavy growth of grass which is still too green to burn by the 15th January. These isolated spots prove dangerous when they have dried off and have been the cause of many fires.

To overcome the difficulty, the Bill proposes to delete all reference to the 15th January and to give the Minister the right to grant extensions at his discretion to both the Railway Department and the Forests Department, the latter having similar difficulties to those experienced by the Railways. At present the Forests Department can be granted permission to burn outside prohibited times for any period not exceeding eight weeks in any year. It is proposed not to authorise any general railway and forest burning after the 15th January, but to give authority for essential burning in unusual circumstances.

Local authorities are not now permitted to burn during prohibited times, and the Bill proposes that the Minister may grant permission in cases where it is necessary to burn in order to reduce or abate a fire hazard that cannot be done in any other way. This amendment has been requested

by many local authorities, which require it for such purposes as burning firebreaks for building or for clearing reserves.

Amendments requested by local authorities have also been made to provide for the burning of clover to facilitate the collection of seed. For the information of members who may not know, I point out that before clover seed can be gathered, the surplus grass has generally to be burnt off. This leaves the seed on the surface so that the rollers can pick it up. Amongst these amendments is one requiring the officer authorising clover burning to specify the number of men to be in attendance at the fire—the number to be at least four—and also to specify what firefighting equipment shall be provided for immediate use. These fires have generally to be lighted in a dangerous part of the year.

Hon. W. J. Mann: They are not big fires.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, and they are generally controlled, but in order to make double sure, more men will be required to be in attendance. The Bill also makes it clear that occupiers of land adjoining the area proposed to be burnt must be advised of the intention to burn. Another new provision will require local authorities, when issuing clover-burning permits, to publish particulars in the local newspapers and to publicise the permits in any other way thought fit.

The Act provides that at least two days' notice must be given to adjoining holders of intention to burn bush on any land. Under the Bill, this notice has been extended to four days. Sometimes a person is away when notice is given, and it is a desirable safeguard to increase the time and thus afford an adjoining holder opportunity to make arrangements to be on the spot. The Bill also provides that notice shall be given to the secretary and the bushfire control officer of the local authority instead of, as at present, to the secretary or the bushfire control officer. In another place, an amendment was made requiring the secretary or bushfire control officer to acknowledge the notice to burn by forwarding approval in writing. This was done to protect the applicant in case of any dispute or litigation arising and to enable the bushfire control officer to impose any conditions thought necessary on the burning.

Then again, the Act provides that tractors must carry a fire extinguisher and that the exhaust pipe must be fitted with a spark arrester. This is a desirable provision. Two or three years ago, we had an unprecedentedly large number of fires throughout the country and the railways were blamed for most of them, though I know of my own knowledge that most of them were caused by tractors. It is dangerous to use a tractor in a wheat crop unless it is fitted with a spark arrester.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Would not the exhaust go up?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: On most tractors in the farming areas the exhaust does go up. The Bill proposes to exempt diesel tractors used in the timber industry from these requirements, as it has been found that spark arresters impair the efficiency of these tractors by curtailing their power, thus affecting their work towards timber production. In another place it was decided to exempt also tractors used in orchards as it was considered that there was no fire hazard in orchards and that most of the tractors so used have down-swept instead of vertical exhausts.

Under the Act local authorities are authorised to order any person to plough or clear firebreaks. The Bill empowers a local authority to order breaks to be burned, ploughed or cleared in order to remove any dangerous material, and to specify when this work shall be done, and whether it shall be done as a separate operation or in conjunction with another person on an adjoining property. One of the main reasons for these amendments is to assist with the burning of breaks on land adjoining railway reserves.

To help to combat fires caused by railway engines, the Railway Department has instituted a scheme involving the co-operation of local authorities, bush fire brigades and landholders in the burning of breaks. This scheme is proving satisfactory in most districts, but in some places landholders will not co-operate. We tried it in the York district, and while some people were anxious to help, others would not, and thus the efficiency of the scheme was marred. It is of no use having co-operation with the Railway Department to burn a tract of one mile and then miss a mile. The burning must be continuous right through. The amendments will enable local authorities to insist that the persons concerned burn breaks.

In my opinion the most important amendment is that giving a bush fire control officer, or where there is no such officer, the local authority, power to prohibit or postpone the lighting of a fire if he considers there is any possibility of the fire escaping. In such a case, the burning permit fee will be refunded to the payor, if necessary. Where a fire is to be lighted within two miles of a State forest, a forest officer may prohibit or postpone the lighting of a fire if he considers it necessary.

These amendments have been under consideration for some time, but the Road Board Association has been loth to accept them as it considered this was a big responsibility for one man to have. However, since the disastrous fires in the South-West last summer, I believe the local authorities have altered their views and are in favour of the amendments. Authority is also given in the Bill for firebreaks to be burnt to control or prevent the spread of bush fires. These breaks may

be burnt only when supervised by a bush fire control officer or, in his absence, by the senior officer of a bush fire brigade. This provision is considered necessary as the burning of breaks can be dangerous if not done under the direction of an experienced person.

In another place, an amendment was successfully moved to delete Section 35D. This section provided that Sections 35A, 35B and 35C should continue in force until the 31st December, 1950, only, and the Bill proposed their continuance until the 31st December, 1952. Therefore, the sections will operate so long as this legislation continues in force. The sections mentioned provide for a reduction in fire insurance premiums to persons with crops in areas which were approved after an officer of the Forests Department had inspected and reported on the standard of the bush fire brigades.

Local authorities to the number of 39 have applied for their districts to be approved and, of these, 27 have been granted approval. It was considered that these provisions, which operated for the first time last year, contributed to the improvement of bush fire brigades. Of course it encouraged them to get good equipment, and they had the ratepayers behind them because of the reduction offered in their insurance premiums. The Government considered that last year's experience was not sufficient to determine whether the provisions should become a permanent part of the Act, and therefore it was proposed to give them a trial for another two years. The provision limiting the duration to the 31st December, 1950, was inserted by this House in 1948. Of course, the House may restore the date to 1952 if it thinks desirable.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Do not encourage us!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In my opinion, the amendment made by the Assembly is quite desirable. I was against the limitation, as I am satisfied the scheme is working well and has done much to encourage the improvement of bush fire brigades. So I hope the House will approve of permanence being given to those provisions. The Act provides that, in an approved area, the insurance rate for crops shall not exceed 75 per cent. of the premium charged in non-approved areas.

Another amendment proposes that where a successful prosecution is launched by a local authority, the whole of the penalty shall be paid to the local authority, instead of one-half as at present. In another place, an amendment was inserted requiring local authorities to arrange for the insurance of bush fire control officers, members of bush fire brigades and voluntary helpers against personal injury sus-

tained while engaged in fighting fires under the direction of a bush fire control officer or bush fire brigade captain, and also to insure against loss of or damage to the equipment of a brigade or to privately-owned equipment used under the direction of a bush fire control officer or bush fire brigade captain.

I think I have explained all the provisions of the Bill. It is essentially a measure for consideration in Committee. I feel sure that the second reading will be carried, and though some of the proposed amendments may not meet with the approval of members, I consider the Bill a good one. It is based on practical experience acquired by the Advisory Committee since 1937, and I feel sure that the new provisions will meet with the requirements of most people in the country. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [9.15]: I would like the Minister to tell me whether the Bill seeks to provide for the insuring of females against injury as a result of bushfires. As we all know, female workers on farms, such as housewives and other female help, always assist when there are fires. They look after the refreshments and aid in putting out the fires.

The Minister for Agriculture: Ask your colleagues the definition of "voluntary labour."

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The Yilgarn Road Board is concerned about this question. It wrote to the State Insurance Office on the matter, as follows:—

Bushfire (Personal Injury) Insurance.

Your letter of the 22nd September last re the above, wherein it was stated that females are debarred from cover, was considered by my board at their last meeting.

The road board is perturbed and wants an assurance from the Minister that the Bill will cover females.

On motion by Hon. A. R. Jones, debate adjourned.

BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [9.17] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is a simple one with the object of providing that banks may print the stamp duty on cheques instead of continuing with the present practice whereby they have to take the cheque books to the Treasury to have the cheques embossed. As members know, all cheques have to carry stamp duty, and if the amount is not embossed by the Treasury, a 2d. revenue stamp may be placed on the cheque. About 10,000,000

cheques are printed each year, and the embossing of them takes up a good deal of time and incurs a certain amount of expense to the Treasury, and, in addition, it involves quite an appreciable delay to the banks.

The practice of allowing the banks to print the stamp duty is in operation in New Zealand, New South Wales and Tasmania, and it has been very successful. The banks are required to furnish monthly returns, and of course they have to pay the duty just the same as they do now. The amendment will save the Treasury expense and time, and will secure to the State the same revenue as it receives at present. The Treasury will be protected by the fact that it will be allowed to have inspectors to inspect the books and returns of the banks. Provision is included for revocation of this privilege, in respect of any bank, if it is found not to conform to the provisions of the Act. That is a simple explanation of a simple Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [9.21] in moving the second reading said: The Licensing Act includes in Section 98 the term "prohibition." In the measure which was passed in 1923, Section 98 provides—

In the year one thousand nine hundred and twenty-five, and in every fifth year thereafter, on a day to be fixed by proclamation, there shall be taken a poll of the electors in every electoral district on the proposal that prohibition shall come into force in Western Australia; and the voting paper shall be in the form in the Sixteenth Schedule:

Provided that where on the taking of a poll prohibition has been previously carried and is in force, the proposal shall be that licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquor shall be restored; and the voting paper shall be in the form in the Seventeenth Schedule.

When the Bill was introduced in another place it was intended to extend the period, as has been done since 1925, for a further five years. I want to tell members some of the early history with respect to the holding of the poll.

In 1922 a poll was taken, and that was before a great number of amendments were made to the Act. On the taking of the

poll, using Assembly electoral boundaries—and this shows what little care was taken by the public with regard to what was right or wrong—the people of Nedlands, which had only one hotel, had the hotel closed, and in Menzies, where there was a superabundance of hotels, the number was extended. Cue-Day Dawn was one district, and Menzies was another, and the people there decided that they wanted more hotels. That was at a time when the Goldfields population was going down considerably.

Members will recall that in the early 1920's, the outer Goldfields areas were starting to retrogress badly, and the hotels were doing very poorly. But the local people, who felt they might have their hotels closed, decided that it would be better to vote for an increase rather than a decrease in the number of licenses. Because that poll closed a number of hotels in the metropolitan area when they were required for residential purposes, it was decided that the Licensing Act should be thoroughly overhauled. A Select Committee, which was subsequently turned into an Honorary Royal Commission, was appointed, and it did a great deal of useful work in knocking the law into shape.

Just after the passing of the statute it was regarded as one of the best Licensing Acts in Australia. What was known as the Licenses Reduction Board was set up, and it had the duty of deciding what hotels should be closed in the Goldfields areas, and it paid, in some cases, what I might term paltry compensation for the closing of licensed premises. I remember one hotel-keeper who received compensation of £1. The law certainly cleaned up the trade and made vast improvements. It provided for better accommodation and management of hotels. That came about as the result of a poll which was taken in 1923.

When the Act was amended, Section 98 was included, and it provided that in 1925, and every succeeding fifth year, the people should have the right to determine whether they would or would not have prohibition. In 1925, so satisfied was everyone with the conditions then prevailing, that not one district voted for an alteration; and I believe that if a poll had been taken at any of the succeeding five-yearly periods, the result would have been the same. I dare say if we took a vote this year it would be found that there would be more in favour of leaving the number of hotels as it is today rather than altering it. The demand at the present time is for better and more hotels; and particularly so in the agricultural and metropolitan areas.

I think I would agree again, as I have in the past, with the necessity for further postponing the poll, because there is no justification for it. The only justification would be to ask for an increase rather than a decrease in the number of licenses. Today there are more women, and possibly more men, who feel the need for hotel licenses than there were in the early days. I am of

opinion that the Bill should have been left as it was but, unfortunately, another place decided that an alteration should be made. Personally I do not think there is any justification for singling out the Licensing Act, any more than any other Act of Parliament, for reference to the public.

The people of the State have the opportunity each three years to elect their members in the Legislative Assembly, and if they do not trust their representatives, then they can put others in at the next election. There have been very slight alterations made with respect to another place except when there has been a redistribution of seats; and the same thing applies to this House. So, members of the public, generally, are well protected by their representatives. It does not matter how much I might advocate the closing of hotels, I know I would get a sad result at a poll taken to determine the question. It is in a half-hearted manner that I move the second reading of the Bill because I think it is useless to postpone the poll for another year.

If members vote against the Bill, I think I might join with them. When I agreed to move the second reading in this House it was with the intention of postponing the poll for another five years. If, on looking back over the history, members think there might be some justification for an amendment, I might not say otherwise, but that is not before us tonight. The point before us is whether we should give the public the right to determine—for another five years—whether or not they desire prohibition throughout the State.

Hon. H. Hearn: It is only one year.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Under the Bill, the poll would not be held until 1951, whereas the Act at present requires that it shall be held this year. The Bill seeks to postpone the holding of the referendum for one year. I do not think we should postpone the holding of the referendum at all, unless we postpone it for five years, as has been done in the past, or else strike the provision for it right out of the Act. I submit the Bill to the House, leaving it to the common sense of members to decide what should be done. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Suburban) [9.32]: I was pleased at the enthusiasm with which Sir Charles introduced the measure to the House, but I regret that the purpose of the Bill before us is not to repeal the provisions of the Licensing Act that deal with the referendum, which can only put the State to a lot of unnecessary expense.

The Minister for Agriculture: Cannot it be amended?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No. I thought of moving an amendment to strike out all the words after the figures "1951," but if we did that, another place would be

certain to make another amendment that would create an even worse position. Let us have the referendum straight away, without loss of time, and I am sure its results will be such that the Government, during the next session of Parliament, will bring down a measure to repeal this portion of the Act. For the progress of Western Australia it is essential that we provide more accommodation for tourist traffic, for which our State offers tremendous possibilities, but we cannot encourage tourists as we have not sufficient accommodation for them, either in the metropolitan area or the more distant parts of the State.

We cannot persuade anyone to provide proper accommodation for tourists unless we allow them to supply liquor also. Tourists demand more in the way of luxury accommodation than does the ordinary citizen, and they are prepared to spend their money on good living while they are in this State. We have here everything that they require, except suitable accommodation, and the only way that such accommodation can be provided is by increasing the number and quality of our hotels. When the Licensing Act was originally passed, the liquor trade was vastly different from what it is today. At that time there were a great number of beer shops or pubs, but they are now hotels—places where people can secure good accommodation—

Hon. E. M. Davies: Half of them cannot provide accommodation at present.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is so, but every effort is being made to improve the accommodation, and to that end we must allow people to sell liquor.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: The Bill has no reference to that aspect.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am trying to impress on members the fact that if we throw the Bill out the referendum will have to be held this year, and I believe the result of such a poll will be that the Government will be forced next session to bring in a measure to repeal that provision of the Act which deals with the holding of a poll every five years. That would do away with the farce of having to adjourn the poll, every five years, for a further period of five years. If that provision of the Act were struck out, we would have more hotels—

Hon. G. Bennetts: What about decent hostels, instead of hotels?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If the hon. member could persuade people to conduct hostels, instead of hotels, he would be doing the State a service, but persons cannot make a reasonable profit on providing accommodation unless, in conjunction with it, they are allowed to sell liquor. I would point out also that the majority of tourists desire the opportunity of consuming a certain amount of liquor. Far from ob-

jecting to the total abstainer, I admire him, but I do not see any reason why those who dislike liquor should prevent others from obtaining it.

To many of us, liquor is an essential medicine. When I have a cold, the nicest medicine I know of is a good hot toddy. A great number of those who are in favour of prohibition are quite prepared to accept from a doctor a prescription that contains quite a lot of spirit. I prefer my spirit as spirit, and sincerely trust that members will vote against the measure in order that we may have the poll straight away and decide the matter, thus avoiding the farce of having to go through this procedure every five years.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [9.40]: There are three things that we can do in dealing with this Bill. We can throw it out, which means that we will have the poll; we can pass the measure as it is, which will defer the poll for one year, or we can amend the measure in order to defer the poll for another five years.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is correct.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Mr. Parker has already told the House what the result of a poll would be if it were held, so why should we put the State to an unnecessary expense which it cannot afford? I think that all members have received letters from temperance societies and others, during the last 12 months, asking them to do certain things. I have replied to some such letters and have told the writers what I thought. I will act tonight in accordance with what I told them. In replying to those communications, I said I thought it stupid of the people of Nedlands to express themselves in favour of being dry, while the people of Subiaco vote in favour of being wet, and so on, which is about what would happen if we had a poll.

Hon. A. L. Loton: That is local option.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I know that. I do not think it is necessary to hold a poll, as we know what the result would be. How can we get over the difficulty? I would suggest that we amend the figure "1951" to read "2000." If the consensus of opinion of members is that the wishes of the anti-liquor traffic people would be overwhelmingly defeated at the poll—I think 80 members of Parliament should be able to sum up the feeling of the community—why go to the trouble of holding a referendum? We should forget about the poll and tell the people what we believe the result of a poll would be. I feel that we should amend the Bill so as to defer the poll for many years.

Hon. E. M. Davies: We cannot amend the Bill.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: We could insert the figures "71" instead of the figures "51."

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Why pass the problem on to our grandchildren?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Why should we put the State to the expense of holding a referendum? It is time we started to reduce expenditure, and we will not do that by agreeing to the holding of this poll.

Hon. A. L. Loton: What would the poll cost?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am not sure, but I expect it would cost in the vicinity of £20,000 or £30,000, which could much better be spent in some other way.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [9.42]: It is high time we forced the Government to shoulder its responsibility and find out what the people of Western Australia really do want. I think members are right in expressing the opinion that the poll would not result in prohibition or local option, but the Act states that we must have a poll and, as Sir Charles has pointed out, the poll has been deferred by various Governments from time to time, since 1925.

I have no doubt that the Act requires a thorough overhaul. I heard it said in another place that a Select Committee should be appointed to inquire fully into the matter, and that, having done so, it should be asked to frame a new Act, which should then be dealt with in both Houses as a non-party measure. It is obvious that succeeding Governments have deferred the question of a poll in order to avoid responsibility, and I feel that the present Government should face up to the position and hold the referendum.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: This is not a Government Bill.

Hon. A. R. JONES: It was introduced by a private member, but its purpose is to shelve the question of a poll for a further five years, and I think it is our duty to see that the poll is held.

HON. H. HEARN (Metropolitan) [9.45]: I have listened with a deal of interest to the discussion and, in particular, to my friend, Sir Charles Latham, when he introduced the Bill. I believe that this is the time when we should allow the people to have their say. When the decision was made in another place to postpone the poll for another 12 months, it was merely a question of one party not being prepared to face the issue and being agreeable to someone else taking up the battle.

This is the time when we should refuse to pass the second reading of this Bill and find out how the people feel on the question of local option or prohibition. I believe, too, that if the miracle happened and there were any reduction of licenses, there would be some trouble not only for the city but also for the country because we businessmen know the tremendous difficulty experienced in obtaining accommoda-

tion at present as distinct from the difficulties confronting the tourist trade. I will vote against the second reading.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [9.47]: I intend to oppose the second reading. I want to know the attitude of Ministers on this Bill.

The Minister for Agriculture: Quite open.

Hon. G. FRASER: I want to know why this Bill has been introduced by a private member. Here we are, up to the second last month in the session and as yet we have not heard from the Government as to the conducting of a poll, and the Act lays down that that shall be done.

The Minister for Agriculture: There are two months left yet.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is impossible to hold a poll within two months.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why not have a snap election?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not care about snap elections. The election cannot be held in the Christmas week so that limits the time, at the very most, to seven weeks from now for making all the arrangements for the holding of a referendum. The Government has been hiding behind a private member and is not prepared to stand up to its obligations.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: He is a pretty big one, too.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why blame this Government?

Hon. G. FRASER: I am blaming this Government because it happens to be in power at the time when this referendum should be held.

The Minister for Transport: What did your Government do in years gone by?

Hon. G. FRASER: It passed a measure to postpone it.

The Minister for Transport: Before that?

Hon. G. FRASER: In 1930 the Minister's party was in power. The last poll was conducted in 1925. The Minister's party was in power from 1930 to 1933 and in the year 1935 we were on the edge of the depression.

Members: No!

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What about 1940?

Hon. G. FRASER: In 1940 we were at war.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What about 1945?

Hon. G. FRASER: In 1945 the war was still not over.

Hon. L. Craig: It is not over yet.

Hon. G. FRASER: This is the first opportunity any Government has had for a clear field in the conducting of a poll. Right up to November of this year no move had been made by the Government to conduct the poll or to introduce any legislation to postpone it.

The Minister for Transport: How do you know there are no arrangements made for the conducting of the poll?

Hon. G. FRASER: The Government does not do such things in secret. Quite a lot of time is needed for the booking of halls and the engagement of staff. The poll has to be conducted right throughout the whole of the State. Does the Minister want me to think that if such a move was in train we would not know anything about it? So we now find that the Government is trying to make me believe that arrangements have been made for a poll to be conducted.

The Minister for Agriculture: You make inquiries at the electoral office and you will be surprised.

Hon. G. FRASER: Perhaps I may be, but has the Government stated its intention to conduct a poll? Has it made any notification as to its attitude on the question as a whole? No, we hear nothing from the Government.

The Minister for Transport: It cannot say anything until the will of Parliament is heard.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is not a question of the will of Parliament. This is not the way to find out the feelings of the people on this matter.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: What other way is there?

Hon. G. FRASER: By the Government taking action and not asking a private member to do the job. Ministers might be surprised at the attitude of members on the question. If the Government had intended doing anything this year it should have taken action long before now in order to let the people and Parliament know what its intentions are. If the Bill intended to extend the holding of a poll for five years, my attitude might be entirely different.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Was not that the intention of the original Bill?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know. I only know what is in the Bill now before us.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: You know what happened in another place.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know; I am only concerned with what happens here. We are faced with the postponement of the poll for a further year. It is ridiculous! I might say that the Act itself is ridiculous and I might want another Act, but I will not disclose my intentions

as to the Act until I am afforded an opportunity of doing so. I am certainly not going to accept a private member's Bill and so relieve the Government of all responsibility on this question.

The Minister for Agriculture: Would you support the Government if it desired to delete the whole section relating to the poll?

Hon. G. FRASER: I will disclose my attitude as to that when the Minister introduces a Bill on those lines. I will certainly not disclose it on this Bill. To postpone the poll for 12 months is only tinkering with the question. Let us have a full dress rehearsal on the liquor question and the conducting of polls. Let Parliament discuss all angles and then let us bring the Act up to date along the lines we think today. Such an overhaul is long overdue. For those reasons I intend to vote against the second reading.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [9.55]: Any proposal to take a poll on prohibition is a shocking waste of public funds. It is the function of a Government, whichever one is in power, to do whatever it can to avoid the wastage of public moneys. I am told that the only thing to do with this Bill is to throw it out, which would mean that a poll would be conducted this year. It would also mean that it would cost the Government £10,000 or more, and the community generally perhaps £50,000, as someone has estimated. We should do everything we can to avoid that shocking waste of money. I do not know why we cannot amend the date in this Bill and send it back to another place. At least, after the third attempt, we might be able to prevent this shocking waste of public funds.

Hon. G. Fraser: You can make it next year.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You can make it 1960.

Hon. L. CRAIG: One could insert any year one liked, and I am not sure that that year would not do and at least make an effort to ascertain what another place does with it, and so put the responsibility on it. We know that it would be a waste of money and effort to conduct this poll, and it is our duty to ensure that public funds are protected, in the same way as we would if handling our own money. I am extremely reluctant to vote for the holding of a referendum this year.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Suburban) [9.57]: No matter what we may do with the Bill, the country is committed to holding a poll. It is so committed to doing that in 1951 by the Bill in its present form, but if we reject the measure, the Govern-

ment is bound to hold it in this year, 1950. If we alter the date to some other year, it still has to take a referendum.

Hon. L. Craig: What have other Governments done in the past?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: This Government and other Governments have been dodging the issue. The Temperance League is anxious that people should enjoy the rights existing under this Act. I recommend to the House that the Bill should be rejected and thus, as the parent Act now stands, we will see the holding of a poll in 1950.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [9.58]: I support the second reading of the Bill, not because I like doing so but because it is the appropriate thing to do. Successive Governments have evaded their responsibilities, and this is the first time that the responsibility has been shouldered by a private member. I think the Government has been careless and indifferent. I object to wasting at least £10,000 of public money. I have my own ideas on the liquor question. I am not a total abstainer and, although I respect the efforts of the members of the Temperance League in striving for prohibition, I cannot see why they do so after seeing the disastrous effects in America when prohibition was introduced there.

I am surprised that a well-organised body such as the Temperance League does not confine its energies to improving the liquor laws of Western Australia and thus ease the problem in that way. I think the Government is responsible, and if the Bill is defeated a poll will have to be hurriedly organised. There will be no opportunity for those in favour of prohibition or against it to organise their campaigns. It will be a complete farce to ask people, within two months, to conduct a poll.

Hon. H. Hearn: Did they not expect it?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: This is the responsibility of another place. The members there are closer to the people than we are; our franchise is limited. Why should we take the responsibility on such an important issue, when it is the duty of the Government to state its requirements and submit them for our consideration? I hope the Bill will be passed, much as I object to the 12 months limitation, in order to give those who believe in liquor traffic and those who believe in its abolition time to prepare their campaigns.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [9.59]: After giving the Bill careful consideration, I am going to vote against it, although it presents an extremely unsatisfactory state of affairs. The law at present provides for the conducting of a poll this year, 1950, and although we have known that all the year, at the end of October this state of affairs now arises.

We will not get anywhere by blaming anyone in particular. I shall content myself by saying that it is an unsatisfactory situation that should not have been allowed to arise. I agree with those who have said it might be just as well to get the poll over. I am also in accord with the opinion expressed that the result is a foregone conclusion. On the other hand, the law of the land provides for the holding of a poll.

Hon. L. Craig: The law can be altered.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Neither the Government nor anyone else has endeavoured to do that. The Bill, however, seeks to postpone the holding of the referendum for one year.

Hon. L. Craig: We could make it 10 or 50 years.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: We are dealing with a Bill that contains a proposal to postpone the poll for one year. I see no merit in that proposition. It would be better to allow the people to decide right now what they desire. If the majority for or against is large and convincing, the result will be a pointer to induce Parliament next year or at some early date to amend the Act accordingly.

I am sorry to differ from the views of my leader, Mr. Gray. I feel this is a question about which the people could make up their minds in five or 10 minutes. We all know whether we are for or against the liquor trade. I certainly do not consider the holding of the poll should be put off for 12 months to enable the protagonists on either side to spend a vast amount of money in setting forth the merits of their respective cases. The people of Western Australia can be trusted to arrive at an intelligent decision right now. So far as I am concerned, we could go on with the poll at once; the sooner we get it over, the better it will be.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Is it to be decided on a simple majority?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: No. The law provides for a three-fifths majority.

Hon. L. Craig: And 30 per cent. of the electors must vote.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Yes. There must be a three-fifths majority, not a simple one. I oppose this measure which has been introduced with so little enthusiasm by its sponsor.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [10.3]: I oppose the Bill. I heard one member say that he was in favour of allowing the Act to continue and spoke about the necessity for accommodation for tourists and so forth. I am greatly concerned about the accommodation question, especially when we ascertain the real position as we travel about the country or come to town. It is so difficult that I

would do anything to assist in increasing the accommodation whether it be in hotels, hostels or elsewhere.

I am not concerned about making provision for the rich. I am interested in making it available for tourists but more particularly so that we could bring people from the country areas to enable them to have a holiday in the city. Today it is utterly impossible to secure accommodation for anyone who has children. With any move that will enable hotels to provide additional accommodation, I shall be 100 per cent. in favour. The Act provides for a poll to be taken.

We are a democratic people, and as such the people should be allowed to express their opinion at a referendum. I am a non-drinker, but if I want a cool drink I prefer to go to a hotel. I shall vote in favour of the continuance of the liquor trade. Whatever a person wants, he is entitled to get. He earns his money and should be allowed to spend it as he wishes. I am of the opinion that arrangements for the referendum should have been in hand long before this, and the matter should have been dealt with by the Government, not by a private member.

Hon. J. M. THOMSON (South) [10.5]: I propose to vote against the Bill. To postpone the referendum for another 18 months is only to put off the evil day.

Hon. L. Craig: Why not more than 12 months?

Hon. J. M. THOMSON: If we must incur the expenditure that has been mentioned tonight on a referendum of this nature, the sooner it is held the better, and a decision arrived at. Parliament would then know what the people desired, and quite likely that would be the finish of it, or at least for some considerable time.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [10.6]: The Bill puts the whole House in a quandary as to what is the best to be done in the interests of the people. It seems to me that we are in the same position as the defendant who was asked if he had left off beating his wife. No matter what we do, it will be a matter of debate as to whether we have or have not done the right thing. I cannot see what we will gain by voting against the Bill. There will still be the necessity to hold the referendum, and it will have to be a hurried one that will be held within the space of about seven weeks. The poll will no doubt be an abortive one.

It is well to emphasise that, as has been pointed out, 30 per cent. of the people will be required to vote and there must be a three-fifths majority in favour of prohibition. Only by a miracle could we arrive at a favourable decision under those conditions. It will mean a colossal waste of

public money, as Mr. Craig pointed out. What is more, it will draw quite a number of people into heated arguments with the result that we will not get the volume of production that is so essential at the moment.

Hon. G. Fraser: They will not have time to get into heated arguments if the poll is held this year.

The Minister for Agriculture: That would be a good thing.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: To vote for the Bill and have the referendum held in 1951, simply means that there would be more time to work up a bigger and better poll. It will simply cost more money, and have the same result.

Hon. L. Craig: We can make it 1961 or 1971.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I would only put it off if I thought the Government would investigate the whole question and arrive at a decision to repeal the Act, if thought wise to do so. My own feeling about the poll is that it would be most unwise to put the matter before the public. I suggest we give serious consideration to postponing the referendum, provided we get some idea of the Government's intention regarding the whole problem. Just to go on postponing the poll indefinitely is deliberately to shirk our responsibilities, and the Government's responsibilities lie more in the direction of deciding whether the poll shall be held or the Act repealed. My personal view is that if there is a poll, the effect would be that the Act would be repealed.

Hon. G. Fraser: We might force the Government into it if we defeat the Bill.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: If we defeat the Bill tonight, I do not think it would be possible to bring in another Bill this session to repeal the Act.

Hon. L. Craig: We can amend it to do anything we like.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I would be in favour of a still further postponement provided there is some assurance from the Government that the problem will be tackled by a complete investigation. The Licensing Act as a whole requires reviewing. Many of its provisions need alteration. I do not believe the public desires prohibition. I do not believe that what is proposed will assist in bringing about any improvement in the services we require. Some persons look at the whole question with a view to seeing that the conditions under which alcohol is sold and consumed are dealt with in a manner that will be beneficial to the public. Others consistently advocate something that in other parts of the world has proved disastrous and which I feel sure would prove disastrous here. I think nearly every member of the House has spoken

on the Bill except a representative of the Government. Before members, like myself, who are in doubt, make up their minds how they shall vote, they should be given some idea of what the intentions of the Government are in the matter.

HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North) [10.12]: I oppose the Bill. I remember the prohibition poll that was taken in 1925. It was a long drawn out campaign that involved the spending of a large amount of money and it created a lot of ill-feeling between people who live in country towns particularly.

Hon. L. Craig: Why a poll at all?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: In those days the people were very bitter about the whole thing. As Mr. Craig suggested, why the necessity for a poll at all? In any case, I see no reason why a referendum of this nature should involve a long drawn out campaign. Most people have fixed views on the liquor question one way or the other. They need no priming on the matter nor any announcement of policy. They already have their minds made up on the question. I am inclined to think it involves a waste of public money, especially when we recognise the fact that the people who want the referendum want prohibition.

I do not know what price the book-makers would give, but I think the chance of winning prohibition is very slender. If it were a matter of saving public funds, we could consider extending the date in the Bill to 3051, and then there might be something in it. Then again we must remember that people who really believe drink is the curse they imagine it to be, have been promised this poll for many years. Both Labour and anti-Labour Governments have shirked the job of providing the poll. We know that during the war years it was not practicable to hold a referendum in 1940 or 1945, just as it was not practicable to hold State elections during that period. I think that extending the period by one year will simply mean a long drawn out campaign and a lot of bitterness. I therefore intend to oppose the Bill.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [10.16]: I believe that when Parliament gives an undertaking to any section of the community that undertaking should be honoured. I am under no illusion as to what will happen when a poll is taken, being quite satisfied that the great majority of the people do not desire any alteration in the present set-up—or very little. They might require some change in regard to the provision of more living accommodation in licensed houses and a few matters of that description; but so far as the sale of liquor is concerned, I am quite certain they would want no alteration.

However, I think that since previous Parliaments have found it expedient to postpone the taking of the poll, we should now, or within a reasonable time, face up to the position once and for all. I agree that to take a poll between now and the end of the year would be quite outside the bounds of commonsense, because there would be a lot to be done. My complaint against the Government is that it did not face up to the position earlier and that it did not make some provision for the taking of a poll before the assembling of the next Parliament. For that reason I will support the Bill so that the Government will have a little additional time to make the necessary arrangements.

I quite agree that the people who urge the taking of a local option poll have a very slender possibility of realising their ambition with regard to prohibition; but they have been given an undertaking that a poll will be held, and if Parliament is not prepared to stand up to its undertakings to the people it will begin to lose their confidence. Parliament should not make promises it has no intention of carrying out.

We could debate this question of the tightening up of the licensing laws for a long time, and perhaps quite a good deal could be said. But on the matter of a local option poll, I feel that, distasteful as it will be to have to put up something that we know is more or less futile, Parliament is under an obligation to these people to give them what they ask for. If I had my way, I would tell them that after that poll there would have to be great evidence of a considerable change in the public mind on this question before the taking of any further poll would be considered.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [10.21]: I intend to oppose the measure because of the long period of procrastination in regard to the taking of a poll. For 25 years a poll has been postponed. After all, we owe a debt to the people under this Act, and I do not think it is fair to them to postpone the referendum for a further 12 months. The cost has been referred to. My opinion is that the cost in 12 months' time will be a lot more than that of a snap referendum at present. If there are to be amendments to the liquor laws, there has been plenty of time to bring those amendments forward. I think a poll should be held, and I therefore intend to vote against the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [10.21]: I had not intended to speak on this measure. It is a private members' Bill and members are free to support it or reject it as they think fit. However, some

members have taken the view that the Government should have entered into this controversy in a much more decisive way.

The Government has not sheltered behind a private member. The question of holding a poll was under discussion. We had notice that a private member intended to introduce a Bill. That gave opportunity for a free vote, without any question of party affiliation, on an issue which I suppose is more hotly debated than almost any other issue in our social life, with no strings to it as far as party regimentation was concerned. Members who have taken the trouble to see what happened in another place will know that members of the Government there voted on both sides of the question.

Hon. G. Fraser: You will find that here, too.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Yes, I think that applies both to the Government and Opposition parties in another place and here. I contend that they have the right to express their views and to vote as they wish. I shall oppose the Bill because I think the question should be settled once and for all. I have no doubt whatever what the issue will be; but I think that once we have had an expression of opinion from the people by means of a poll, the responsibility will devolve on the Government—and we will accept it—to do something to tackle the question of a long overdue reform in regard to our liquor laws. That is a responsibility we will gladly assume because we shall feel we have a mandate from the people to do so and will have some indication of their feelings in the matter.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
(Hon. G. B. Wood—Central) [10.24]: I have no time for the taking of a poll, this year, next year or in five years' time, because not only do I believe that a referendum would be a waste of public funds; but, like Mr. Strickland, I remember the bitterness that was engendered in 1925, when I lived in a small town, amongst people closely associated with one another, on the question of whether or not there should be prohibition.

We are faced with the alternatives of postponing this referendum till next year, when there will be a long and bitter campaign, or of having a quick, snap referendum in a few weeks' time. I will vote against the Bill to avoid that bitter campaign. I did not know what view my colleague was going to express; but members of the Government take the attitude that, on a private member's Bill, they are free to express their own private views, and that is what I am doing.

In answer to the challenge of Mr. Fraser that the Government is not ready to take a referendum, I would reply that

we are ready—and the quicker the better! Who wants to go out on a long campaign stirring up trouble—and that is what it amounts to? Surely the parties are ready! I have every respect for the anti-liquor people—I am nearly one of them myself, but not quite. But I believe they are misguided; and if we could put off the taking of a poll for all time, we would be saving them from themselves and from spending a lot of money.

I do not believe these people would be in the race in a referendum with the forces, and the people, arrayed against them. We remember that in 1925 only a section of the people voted for prohibition, and since then we have had before us the bitter experience of America. One of my own colleagues in the Government was a strong advocate of prohibition in 1925, but he has told me that today he would vote against prohibition; and he has changed his attitude on account of the experience of America. I believe that thousands of people who voted for prohibition in 1925 would be opposed to it on this occasion. I think we will spend less money by having this poll before January, and I therefore propose to vote against the Bill.

Question put and negatived.

Bill defeated.

House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.