

Hon. G. B. Wood: Try to control football, and see how you get on!

Hon. G. FRASER: That has been mentioned in the debate. Has the hon. member examined the constitution of the W.A. Football League?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member should ignore interjections and get on with his speech.

Hon. G. FRASER: The football league is governed on almost the same lines as are set out in this Bill, with the exception that there is no chairman nominated by the Government. The league is governed by delegates appointed by each club, which this Bill sets out to do for the sport of trotting. Let members contradict that if they can! Every other sport is governed in much the same way. Representatives of the various clubs are elected to control the sport. That is practically what the Bill seeks to accomplish with regard to trotting. It is fair and reasonable. I support the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. Cornell, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendment No. 2.

House adjourned at 10.17 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 21st November, 1945.

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

QUESTIONS.

NATIVE SERVICE PERSONNEL.

As to Removal of Disabilities.

Mr. McDONALD asked the Minister for the North-West:

1, Is it intended that natives who have served in the Australian Defence Forces in the recent war and who would normally be subject to the restrictions imposed by the Native Affairs Act shall continue to be subject to such restrictions?

2, In view of the considerable number of natives who have rendered good service in the Australian Defence Forces, is the Government prepared to provide for the removal or modification of such disabilities in the case of native service personnel?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Minister for the North-West) replied:

(1) and (2) The Government is sympathetic to the cases of well deserved natives, and if they have served honorably, and provided they do not live as natives or associate generally with them, they may apply for certificates of exemption or certificates of citizenship, and if their applications are successful they would not be subjected to the provisions of the Native Administration Act.

FISHING INDUSTRY.

As to Aliens and Boats.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Industrial Development:

1, Is the fish supply for the metropolis dependent upon the industry of former enemy aliens?

2, Are there Federal and State plans as yet to include Australians in the industry?

3, Has the department on hand any vessels at Willmott's yards (Rocky Bay) suitable for fishing?

4, Has anything eventuated regarding the efforts of Mr. F. E. Williams of Cottesloe to start a fishing venture in Shark Bay?

5, If not, will he consider fitting out a suitable vessel for use in Shark Bay on a year's trial manned by an Australian crew to be worked on some share basis?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes, to a large extent.

2, Yes.

3, Four vessels at these yards are now being altered to the order of the State Government to render them suitable for fishing.

4, Mr. Williams has not so far submitted an acceptable proposal to the department.

5, No, but several vessels are being made available to ex-servicemen who are experienced fishermen and these vessels will commence operations early in 1946.

COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Mt. Barker Scheme.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Water Supplies: Has any further progress been made in connection with plans for the proposed water scheme at Mt. Barker, and if so, what progress?

The MINISTER replied: A detailed survey will be commenced in about a month's time.

TRAM DERAILMENT.

As to Action to Ensure Public Safety.

Mr. CROSS (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Is he aware that another tram left the rails of the South Perth tramline between Washington-st. and Gloucester-st., Victoria Park, at 10.5 a.m. today?

2, Is it a fact that this makes not fewer than four derailments of a similar nature at almost the same spot in less than four months?

3, How many derailments have there been between the Causeway and Berwick-st. in the last six months?

4, What action does he propose to take to ensure public safety?

The MINISTER replied:

1 and 2, Yes.

3, Three derailments.

4, This is a single track and it has no check rails. Like other tram tracks, it suffered during the war through the lack of labour and material, firstly, to maintain the track and, secondly, to replace worn rails. I can give the hon. member the assurance that when the Beaufort-st. maintenance work is finished, the labour and material available will be used to correct faults on the South Perth line.

TROTTING CONTROL

As to Inquiry by Royal Commission

Mr. SEWARD (without notice) asked the Premier:

1, Will the Government immediately appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into and report upon the very divergent and unproved statements made on both sides in the trotting dispute with a view to providing Parliament and the public with sworn testimony and documentary proof of the allegations made in order that Parliament may pass proper judgment in any proposed legislation?

2, If not, why not?

The PREMIER replied:

1, The matter will receive the consideration of the Government.

2, I think the answer might be "Why?"

BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

1, Loan, £956,000.

Introduced by the Premier.

2, Financial Emergency Act Amendment.

3, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.

4, Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Continuance.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

MOTION—TOURIST TRAFFIC.

As to Encouraging Urban Beautification.

Mr. NORTH (Claremont) [4.40]: I move—

That this House wishes to assist the tourist industry by removing as far as possible the numerous eyesores which disfigure our cities and towns. It therefore draws the Treasurer's attention to the successful move made by the Nedlands Road Board regarding street lawns, and suggests that State land tax collections could be adjusted to provide rebates to proprietors who remove eyesores.

The motion deals with a comparatively small matter compared to the very big questions before the House today. Nothing in the motion in any way detracts from my desire to support the Government in all the large works which are being undertaken and which will be undertaken, such as those relating to housing, railways, water supply, and a host of other important projects with which we have dealt in this House recently. The idea of the motion is that something along the lines suggested could be undertaken concurrently with those bigger enterprises, having in view the future position of the tourist industry if the proposals in the motion were adopted in some form or other by the Gov-

ernment. I have referred to the Nedlands Road Board as providing an example of what could be done to improve the appearance of our towns and cities without very much expense or any great overhaul or control. That road board has had a plan in operation for some years past.

I would mention at this stage that I do not wish to encroach on the preserve of the member for Nedlands; but it happens that some of the Nedland Road Board territory is in the Claremont electorate, near the sea, and some years ago I had the honour to represent also his district myself, when it was part of the Claremont electorate and was mostly bush. Under the tutelage of the present member for Nedlands, it has become a very beautiful suburb. The Nedlands Road Board has a useful policy in force in regard to street lawns. Under that policy, rates are struck and collected from the ratepayers. When the rate notices are sent out, they are accompanied by a document informing ratepayers that if they are willing to provide street lawns in front of their premises and maintain them to the satisfaction of the board, they will receive a rebate to the extent of 7s. 6d. per chain every year. It is a very small principle, but I consider it an important one. The surprising fact is that nearly the whole of that beautiful suburb has roads lined with lawns on each side. The lawns are between the house lots and the roads, and the only inducement residents have for maintaining those lawns is a rebate of 7s. 6d. per chain each year up to a limit of 22s. 6d. That amount the owner has to claim, and thereupon finds the amount deducted from his rates the next year; but he has to maintain his lawn to the satisfaction of the board's officer.

In this House recently, and in previous sessions, we have agreed upon the necessity for a strong tourist policy; and the Premier has announced the intention to give effect to such a policy. We are all waiting with interest to hear of the appointment in the near future of an officer to manage the tourist industry in Western Australia. It appears to me that, in the meantime, the beneficent example of the Nedlands Road Board, to which I have referred, could be followed under the provisions of the State Land Tax Act. We know that there are all kinds of controls

in force. For instance, a municipality can compel an owner to put a fence straight, and can prevent him from having shrubs and trees overshadowing streets. It can also condemn certain places as being unfit for human habitation. Nevertheless, eyesores can and do develop.

Not long ago a pressman was taken in a large transport plane over the city; and in an interesting account of his trip, he described how shocked he was at the number of rusty iron roofs he saw over the metropolitan area. I admit that there has been a war lasting for five or six years, but the same conditions applied before the war. Anybody who visits any of our cities or country towns cannot but come to the conclusion that tons of paint could be utilised in improving the appearance of properties, and that many iron roofs could be replaced by tiles or something else.

The Minister for Lands: Where would you get the paint?

Mr. NORTH: It is available now.

Mr. J. Hegney: You could not get a brush to paint with.

Mr. NORTH: We hope that the status quo will not be maintained for ever. To have the buildings in our cities and towns properly painted and the roofs put into good order would be a small beginning, and is something that could be done. The only tax the Government is allowed to collect now is the land tax; other taxation has been mostly taken over by the Commonwealth. Two rates of land tax are imposed: An unimproved rate of 2d. and an improved rate of 1d. When a person builds a home and improves his property, the rate of 1d is justifiable; but as years go by, places fall into a state of disrepair, and there is no power given to the local authority to make an owner keep his property in good order, until it reaches a stage when it can be condemned as unfit for human habitation, and that might be a long time ahead. I suggest that if the Government is interested in the tourist industry—and I know it is—it could adopt a simple method of brightening our built-up areas by making use of rebates under the land tax system, in much the same way as the Nedlands Road Board has done with such success with regard to its rating powers. A simple rebate of 7s. 6d. per annum in a rich suburb like Nedlands has been sufficient inducement to

residents to maintain miles of beautiful lawns in the streets. There is a tendency for the ordinary householder to neglect necessary improvements

I can plead guilty to the fact that when the time comes to paint my place I am inclined to postpone the matter for two or three years, unless there is an anxious mortgagee who wants his security maintained and sends a man around to chase me up. All over the city area and in country towns, properties are frequently not properly maintained. But suppose, for the sake of argument, there was power under the State Land Tax Act for the unimproved tax to be imposed when there was a deterioration of property! In that event, the owner would know that so long as he maintained his property in good order he would receive the benefit of the lower rate; but if he neglected the property by not painting it and permitting the roof to rust, then he would find himself obliged to pay the unimproved rate once more. That is one suggestion, but there are other ways, and it might be possible to set for homes a standard or ideal, such that the Government would be prepared to rebate all land tax on the block concerned. That would, of course, be a standard far above anything we have today.

I am told, by the member for North Perth, who lives there, that in Mount-street there is no real City Council control and some owners attend to the grass in the fronts of their properties, while others do not. If the inducement I suggest were given to the ordinary owner, who today neglects to paint his property, though it might mean gaining only a £1 or 30s. per year rebate in land tax, I think the work would be done. If that effect were multiplied by thousands, for all the homes in the metropolitan area and the country towns, we would achieve a considerable objective which would assist our tourist policy. Many properties have inter-party fences that are falling over, and the owners have no incentive to straighten them. I think if the plan I have outlined were applied in such cases the owners of properties would get together and see that the fences were put in good order. Although individually they may not seem of great importance, the total effect of all the points I have mentioned, even if applied only in a small area, would

provide a startling contrast to anyone visiting that area.

While I was waiting for transport this morning I jotted down a few notes about the discoloured and rusty roofs that I could see, untidy broken fences, and so on, all of which are eyesores that would be removed if a little inducement were provided. I do not think this idea needs much elaboration, and, if the Government will accept it, I have said enough.

Mr. J. Hegney interjected.

Mr. NORTH: I think there is a standing order that precludes needless repetition, but I can explain that point to the member for Middle Swan, even outside the House. I think it is a most important principle, and it amazes me, when passing through the Netherlands electorate, to think that so many thousands of persons can be induced, by a few shillings per year, to do such an excellent job. It seems that people are always out to gain something and it would appear that in this case they make an effort to improve the exteriors of their dwellings when they see a gain of a few shillings in it. I believe the Premier could juggle with the land tax in the way I have suggested, and in that way he could achieve the results I have indicated, over a wide area. If he were to consult the Town Planning Commissioner—who I hope has now recovered from the charge of having been called a "Pooh-Bah"—he might obtain a great many other suggestions for improving the homes of our people, in the interests of the tourist traffic, by making it worth while for householders to look to the upkeep of their properties.

I have often mentioned the matter of poles and street wires, which constitute an eyesore that could be avoided. If the Premier would consider entirely rebating the land tax on every block where the owner would carry out the work, including the placing underground of the street wires passing the block, it would make a great difference to the appearance of our streets. Many of these matters may seem trivial when applied to the individual home, but their effect in the aggregate would be great. If the idea commends itself to the Premier, I will be pleased because, in conjunction with other projects he has in mind for the tourist traffic, he will find it most effective. There are at present in the metropolitan area and in country

towns many idle reserves, without either grass or trees to beautify them, and that is another way in which the appearance of our towns and cities could be improved.

The other night the Premier told the House of a plan to build up to 80,000 houses a year for the whole of Australia, and in a few years to come we may find a complete transformation of the housing position, with everyone who wants a home in a position to own one. This idea of beautification will then be much more important than it is today. I am sure that the Minister for Lands, with his idea of beautification in his own home, on a certain line—

The Minister for Lands: Why on a certain line?

Mr. NORTH:—would be in favour of Government action to encourage beautification, instead of making it appear that allowing eyesores to develop is a better proposition. I think we have lived to see a complete change in the outlook on taxation. I cannot deal at length with other aspects at present, but the day is coming when taxation, instead of being looked on as something to be hated and escaped, will be so modernised and the proceeds used in such useful and interesting ways—such as for subsidies to reduce the price of necessary articles, and to provide pensions and other social services—that the people will come to realise that taxation will benefit them in the long run. That idea is worth stressing. Let us get away from the attitude that taxation must always be a horrible thing, something to be escaped.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gaseoyne) [4.58]: This is a peculiar motion, and it is far from being clear whether the ultimate objective is to assist the tourist industry or to remove the land tax.

Mr. Fox: Is that an eyesore?

The PREMIER: I think it is an eyesore when the assessments are received. On the point of what has inspired the member for Claremont to move this motion, there is also the question of whether it is in honest support of an improvement in the tourist traffic, or whether it is the result of inspiration he received walking down Tyrell-street or Stanley-street, Nedlands, because there will be noticed in that beautiful suburb the possession by many residents, of a tremendous

amount of civic pride and responsibility. There is in evidence in many suburbs, including Mt. Lawley, civic pride on the part of householders and of residents generally. Some of that civic pride may be incidental. It may be the result of inspiration given by two adjoining neighbours, which to some extent forces action regarding the beautification of other homes and the improvement of their surroundings.

Mr. Watts: It may be that the inspiration is given by their land tax assessments.

The PREMIER: Yes. The difference between a penny and two pence in the land tax might be a factor. Whatever the cause may be there is in the Nedlands Road District some assistance given in that direction by the road board to the extent of 7s. 6d. per chain in connection with road lawns, with a maximum, I understand, of 22s. 6d. There is the further inducement given by the road board by the beautifying of its office and its surroundings. There is no fence around the property and a most attractive rose garden and a wise choice of shrubs has a very beautifying effect. But the beautification of homes from the standpoint of civic responsibility may be far removed from the suggestion of help being rendered to make our already beautiful city attractive to tourists. Generally speaking, our city and its surroundings already possess beauties and attractions for tourists, particularly if we can induce a further extension of civic responsibility by our citizens without making any further inroads on the already very small sums that find their way into the State Treasury.

I have always understood that true beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If by the prospect of a rebate of 7s. 6d., we can induce householders to maintain street lawns in good order at a cost of about £7 in excess water, I think we must go further afield than merely to give credit to the rebate of 7s. 6d. as granted by the Nedlands Road Board. If we view the homes in the suburbs, we can readily pick out the house that is either owned by the occupier or is being purchased by him, and the house that is being rented. In almost every instance one could say immediately which house was owned by the occupier and which was rented. That could be determined by the appearance of the home, its maintenance and the surrounding gardens. With definiteness one could say which house was occupied by the owner.

In approaching this matter I am a bit cloudy as to whether the object is to assist in making our city more attractive to tourists, who will come here in any event and will freely acknowledge the beauties of the city, or whether the object is that we should use the land tax for the very questionable benefit indicated by the motion. There are many areas even in Nedlands, heavily built up as it is, where there are numerous vacant blocks, which still possess a rustic beauty that has its own appeal. Such blocks offer to their owners the prospect of a very substantial unearned increment.

Mr. North: There is the twopence, you know.

The PREMIER: There is that very small tax. Even so, many of the blocks there could not be purchased for hundreds of pounds, whereas adjoining blocks upon which homes have been erected were sold originally at under £100. We should approach this subject very much as realists. Whatever the Nedlands Road Board has endeavoured to inculcate and inspire with regard to civic pride, if members take the area bounded by Stirling Highway and Melvista Avenue and round to Mountjoy-road, they will find there houses side by side where one occupier may apply for the rebate of 7s. 6d., while, with respect to others, no inducement whatever would inspire them to go to the trouble of beautifying the surroundings of their homes.

The fundamental aspect in this problem is to encourage and educate our people into a sense of responsibility of citizenship. No matter how humble a home may be, the occupants could be inspired to make endeavours in their own interests and those of succeeding generations. I think it wrong to expect the Government to subsidise such activities for the very questionable benefit outlined in the motion. The encouragement of the tourist traffic is an objective that can be advanced on very valid grounds too numerous to mention, without the Government being associated with an activity that should be promoted by a proper sense of civic responsibility. I oppose the motion, which I do not think strikes at the root of the trouble. To suggest inroads into the land tax payments is quite wide of the point as regards the promotion of tourist activities, and I do not

think the motion will serve any useful purpose.

HON. J. C. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [5.7]: When I first read the motion I felt that the member for Claremont would probably draw attention to one feature to which he has frequently alluded, namely, the state of the jetties and other public conveniences on our foreshores. Had he done so, he would have dealt with a subject that affects the constituency I represent, which is disfigured by the presence of two or three jetties that were originally used for railway purposes in connection with seaborne traffic and which have long outlived their usefulness and are now eyesores. By the judicious expenditure of a small amount of money—although the amount required might be small it is quite beyond the capacity of the local municipal council to shoulder—those jetties could be made very useful and attractive from the standpoint of the tourist traffic. That applies equally to the Swan River. At various points along its banks there are jetties that were of service in bygone years but have been allowed to fall into desuetude and now constitute a source of danger. I have been on some jetties, including one at Claremont, where I saw big holes in the planking through some of which children have fallen and broken their legs or otherwise injured themselves.

Those jetties could easily be repaired and instead of being eyesores could be developed as utilities from a tourist standpoint. This applies not only to jetties in the metropolitan area, but to coastal towns such as Geraldton, Bunbury and, as a matter of fact, Rockingham, at which last mentioned place there is a classical example of a jetty that in the early years of our history served a very useful purpose in connection with the timber export trade. If that jetty were repaired it could be perhaps not a thing of beauty but of great service. The member for Greenough will probably be reminded of the position at Dongarra where there is a jetty at Port Denison which was availed of very largely by shipping in the earlier days. At present it is a menace to children and to holiday-makers. By the expenditure of a comparatively small amount of money that jetty could be repaired and it would be a great

asset to people who go there to spend their holidays.

Dongarra is in the centre of a very rich farming district, and people go there from centres a hundred miles or more away and also from the Murchison goldfields. It is a popular summer resort, and it possesses all the amenities of the ordinary seaside township. If that jetty were repaired it might not be converted into a thing of beauty that would be a joy forever, but certainly into a convenience that would be of great utilitarian service. We should encourage the idea of promoting the tourist traffic within our own State. The slogan "See your own State first" is highly commendable. Particularly is it appropriate at this juncture when it is almost impossible to secure berths on steamers, trains or aeroplanes for the purpose of travelling elsewhere. If the beauties of our own State were more widely known, people would not be so prone to seek holiday resorts further afield that are no more beneficial from the standpoint of restoration to health than are many resorts in Western Australia.

I should say that the motion could be availed of for urging the Government to do its utmost to encourage the tourist traffic locally and thereby assist in the provision of useful employment that will be perhaps not directly but indirectly remunerative from the standpoint of encouraging tourists. I could mention many places within the State that by the expenditure of a little money in the renovation of jetties and other facilities could be made very attractive for people and help to retain them in Western Australia when their vacations fell due. We see much blatant advertising of places far afield that when visited prove to be very disappointing inasmuch as they do not live up to the reputations established by means of illustrated advertisements. I am reminded in that connection of a broadcaster named Fitzpatrick who gives very fine descriptions of beauty spots in different parts of the world that are displayed on the screen, and I have seen some of the places so described and have found them to fall far short of the word pictures painted of them.

Mr. North: And it costs a lot of money to visit them.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Yes, and we have equally as beautiful places in Western Australia, and they can be utilised. I say nothing

about the fact that Fitzpatrick makes a living out of his patter. Western Australia could usefully spend money on those things which are now termed eyesores and which could be made into amenities to the advantage of the State.

MR. SHEARN (Maylands) [5.15]: I feel sure that every member of this Chamber will agree that we have nothing but admiration for the member for Claremont, who might be termed the research director into many matters of the utmost importance to the State. His present ideas are commendable, notwithstanding that he is proposing to make an onslaught upon the revenue of the State. The Premier, too, realises the approach of the hon. member to this question. Personally, I believe we have arrived at the stage when we must give more attention not only to our tourist trade traffic, but indeed to everything which makes for the future improvement of the State. There must be a greater measure of co-operation and a lessening degree of dependence on others. I also know of people who have done much, in conjunction with civic authorities, to beautify the environments of their properties. I have in mind also some of the improvement schemes which have been put into effect in the Eastern States. These schemes not only envisage what the hon. member has in mind, but also take into account the general beautification of the city or town.

Of course, it is one thing to bring forward a motion such as this and another to implement it. The member for Claremont contemplates a rebate of land tax for the person who beautifies the street; but the hon. member knows, having been the mayor of a town, that in fact the land which would be beautified really, without exception, is vested in and under the control of the local governing authority. Therefore, I suggest that it would be beyond the province of the State Government; it is a matter essentially for the local governing body. I agree with the member for Geraldton that the tourist traffic in Western Australia, as well as in other parts of Australia, particularly portions of New South Wales, should be the responsibility of persons, local authorities and State Governments. By such a co-operative effort, improvements could be effected and there would be added attrac-

tions from a tourist point of view, while incidentally the town or district would be beautified.

Personally, I would like to see this matter probed from an entirely different angle. I would like to see an officer appointed to investigate the latent tourist resorts in this State, both in and out of the metropolitan area. Those resorts should be surveyed, reported upon and a scheme prepared for their use. The Government might make some contribution towards that expense; but I do not consider the scheme presented by the member for Claremont is practicable. In the district with which I have the honour of being associated we have a number of areas upon which, as the Premier has pointed out, a considerable sum of money has been expended by the residents, who have not only beautified their own homes, but also the streets in front of them, thus making the whole locality very attractive. Here again, as the hon. member pointed out, it is not a question of the ordinary maintenance of those plots. So far as I am able to discover, the real point is the cost of water. The responsible officers of the Water Supply Department might be asked to investigate whether it is possible to instal a subsidiary water supply from the streets, and then the department might consider the striking of an equitable rate. In this matter the local authority might be of assistance.

So far as the motion is concerned, like the Treasurer I find myself unable to subscribe to it; but I hope that, since the matter has been brought to the notice of the House, the Premier will take an early opportunity to investigate both aspects of the motion, as well as the larger proposal to make investigations into our tourist resorts, many of what are equal to, if not better than, the famous tourist resorts in other parts of Australia. In this developmental work skilled and unskilled men could be employed and, as a result, the State will be able to attract a greater number of tourists than it has attracted hitherto. I again compliment the member for Claremont on his motion.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [5.22]: The motion consists of two paragraphs, each dealing with an entirely separate matter. The first paragraph expresses the wish

that this House should assist the tourist industry by removing, as far as possible, the numerous eyesores which disfigure our cities and towns. I do not for a moment think there is any question about that, provided it can be done within the limits of the finances that are available. The member for Geraldton has very properly drawn attention to a number of jetties existing in various parts of the State that undoubtedly could be made more attractive to tourists, but which at present are in a very dangerous state. I might remind the member for Geraldton that they have been in a dangerous state for years past; and that, unfortunately, he, as Treasurer for years past, did not see fit to make money available to put them in order. The Claremont jetty, which I suppose we all know, has reached such a state of disrepair that accidents occur; children fall down the holes in it. It is also within our knowledge that the jetty at Attadale is in entire disrepair. It is a most dangerous jetty for children to attempt to use. Then there is the jetty at Como, the jetty at Applecross and jetties at various parts of the river.

Mr. Doney: Are there any sound economic reasons why they should be repaired?

Hon. N. KEENAN: There is no economic reason, because they are not used. There is a reason, however, possibly economic, in making them available to children and so making them attractive to tourists. No-one will take exception to the expression of a desire that the tourist industry should be encouraged by carrying out those necessary repairs which the member for Geraldton strongly advocates now. I say "now" because I do not think he was such a strong advocate within a reasonable limit of time. I now turn for a moment to the second part of the motion, which deals with the Nedlands Road Board district. I entirely agree with what the Premier said, that it is a question of civic pride which produces the result we see in Nedlands, and not the very small, although well-meant, contribution to which the road board is a party. The board allows a reduction in rates in respect of each place which is kept up to a certain standard. The person has not only to maintain his own garden, but also a patch

of ground between the footpath and the portion of the road bituminised.

That is highly to the credit of the road board, but it is more to the credit of the persons who are living there and who are, as was very properly pointed out, ready to do that work, because they own the houses, because they are themselves the proprietors, and because every atom of pleasure that they get from the property is pleasure they know they will be able to enjoy during their whole lives, if they remain there. They are not liable to be put out by a landlord who might want to put in a tenant who will pay a higher rent. They are therefore proud of their property and ready and willing to assist to beautify it. I have no doubt, however, that to some extent an advantage is given to them by the road board. I do not know whether the Government would go to the extent of remitting portion of the land tax, even if it were anything substantial, which I do not think it is.

Mr. Withers: What would be the land tax on the average home?

Hon. N. KEENAN: I would not like to make a guess, but I should think it would be only a few pounds.

Mr. Withers: At the outside?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Yes. I suppose that the land tax on a quarter-acre block of land would not be much more than a few pounds.

The Premier: It would not amount to that.

Mr. Withers: The rate is 1d. in the pound on the unimproved value.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I am not in a position to say what the unimproved value would be. Say the tax is a couple of pounds. A person can go around Nedlands on a Sunday morning, which I sometimes do, and see men mowing the portion between the footpath and the bituminised road, and making it look undoubtedly beautiful. The road board and the residents of the district do their part to produce a wonderful result. But that does not at all deal with the first portion of the motion, for which I intend to vote, that the House does wish to see steps taken to repair the various jetties that have fallen into disrepair and which now constitute eyesores, instead of being useful and beautiful spots for tourists as well as for child-

ren, on every occasion on which they are used. I hope the House will pass the motion. It may be a pious one; the Treasurer may not find a single penny to implement it. In fact, in the past, Treasurers have treated similar motions as pious and have done nothing with respect to them. Still, it might be that our kind-hearted Treasurer will act otherwise, and in that case I hope I intend to vote for the motion.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [5.29]: I agree with the first portion of the motion. The Government might well give attention to some of the big eyesores which any person can see as he crosses the bridge at Fremantle when coming to Perth. In the Swan river we have one of the most beautiful rivers in Australia, but the mouth of the river gives no indication whatever of the beauties that one sees as one proceeds further up. It is time that one eyesore, the old bridge, should be removed. It is unsafe for traffic at present—there is a barricade at each end—and I understand that quite a lot of the timber in the bridge would be useful for furniture-making. There is a shortage of timber at present and when green timber is cut it has to be put in a kiln, and it takes several months to dry. There is a stretch of land between the two bridges which is an eyesore at present and the Government might well give attention to that, and also to the stretch that reaches from the old bridge up to the turn into Rocky Bay. That is easily visible to anyone who makes a bus or train journey to Perth.

The Premier: You are introducing new matter.

Mr. FOX: No, these are eyesores. The Government spent quite a lot of money on the foreshore in Perth when the member for Mt. Hawthorn was Minister for Works. If he had remained long enough as Minister, maybe he would have spent some money on the entrance to Fremantle Harbour. If we are going to show tourists anything, we should give them a good introduction to Western Australia. We should beautify the stretch of river from the railway bridge up to the point where it turns into Rocky Bay. First impressions are always best and, with such a beautiful river further up, we could show visitors that we have something worth displaying along the river. I do not know that it is wholly the responsibility of the Government or of

the municipalities of North Fremantle and Fremantle, but before the war, you will remember, Mr. Speaker, that, in company with the mayors of North Fremantle and the City of Fremantle, we made an inspection of these places that I have spoken about with a view to seeing whether something could be done to beautify them. I feel sure that the councillors would not be slow in assisting the Government if it made a fairly substantial contribution towards beautifying these places. There are some slips along the coast south of Fremantle. A fairly large sailing club there has certain facilities which are very primitive. Years ago, a rather large sum of money was spent by the Government in constructing a slip at the foot of Ada-street. That is in a bad state of repair at present.

The Premier: Which Government did that?

Mr. FOX: A Labour Government. I have made some efforts in having attention directed to it, and I draw the attention of the Treasurer to it now. The Rockingham Jetty has been mentioned. I am not too sure whether that is a private jetty, but it is a terrible eyesore.

The Premier: Tell us something about hoardings.

Mr. FOX: In addition it is dangerous. The Government might well give attention to it. I come now to the question of lawns. It is all very well to hold up Nedlands as an ideal residential suburb, but most of the people living there are men of leisure. We have only to look at the substantial homes in that district to know that the occupants are not on the basic wage. They are in a better position to attend to gardens and lawns outside, on the road, than are people who are in receipt of only a little above the basic wage and who have to work hard to earn it.

Mr. Doney: This comes into the motion, I suppose.

Mr. FOX: I know that in Fremantle there are many lawns on the footpaths, but they require a lot of attention in the summer; they also need a lot of water. I also understand that some municipalities give about 5,000 gallons of water a year to persons who have such lawns, but that does not go far in maintaining them. However, I support the first part of the motion, at any rate, and I hope the Government will give some attention to removing the eyesores I have mentioned, along with those that may be mentioned later by other speakers.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [5.35]: We might perhaps convey some misapprehension of what I think are the general views of members if this motion was negatived, assuming for one moment that it was negatived.

Mr. J. Hegney: Are there any eyesores in West Perth?

Mr. McDONALD: I shall tell you about them in a minute.

Mr. Watts: They can be found from Wyndham to Esperance.

Mr. McDONALD: I shall ask the member for Claremont if he has any objection to the second sentence of the motion being eliminated. I suggest that it might, by way of amendment, be excluded. The second sentence refers to the adjustment of land tax collections to provide rebates to proprietors who remove eyesores. I can quite see that the Treasurer, without further study at all events, would not be prepared to accept this proposal, however much merit it may have. But I want to say, in connection with the proposal dealing with concessions from taxation or rates for the provision by householders and other occupiers of additions to the appearance of the area in which they live, that I think it is certainly going to come. What is lost in pennies, in land tax, the Government will get back in shillings in additional tourist trade. The tourist trade can, in this State, be one of our major sources of revenue. We need to develop a tourist consciousness in our people, in particular in those with whom tourists come in contact, such as hotelkeepers.

I think that the Premier and all other members would be in agreement with the first part of the motion. I am not going to dilate on the matter of eyesores. Any member who is interested might well study an essay on eyesores by the famous American poet, Edgar Alan Poe. The only place I know of in Western Australia without a single eyesore is the town of Albany. I say that in all sincerity because I do not think it has a single feature to which even the most fastidious visitor could find objection. I have a personal grievance about eyesores because when I went to live where I do now, I looked out on the river, but now I look out on the chimney of a brewery. I have always taken very strong exception to that, and I also take

strong exception to the disfigurement of our landscape by hoardings.

The Minister for Lands: Hear, hear!

Mr. Abbott: Hear, hear!

The Premier: Especially those advertising Eastern States products.

Mr. McDONALD: We all have very keen recollections of the impressions we formed when entering a new city from the appearance of the approaches through which we have to go.

Mr. J. Hegney: The local authorities control them.

Mr. McDONALD: Not always, but they can to a large extent. I am in sympathy with the remarks of the member for South Fremantle. I want to say also that I do think that for the time being it is also a matter for the local authority which by rate concessions and other inducements can, I think, do an immense amount to improve the appearance of the area over which it has control. In order that we may have an opportunity of saying that, from the aesthetic point of view, as well as from that of the appearance that our State and cities present to tourists, eyesores should be removed, I am going to move to delete the second sentence of the motion. Before I do so, I would like to say that I have been very interested in the views expressed by members during the short debate on this question. They have given, I think, a lead to the Government as to the support it can expect from this House in connection with any measures it takes to ensure that offending features of our landscape are removed and to make more pleasing to the eye those which cannot be removed. I move an amendment—

That the words "It therefore draws the Treasurer's attention to the successful move made by the Nedlands Road Board regarding street lawns, and suggests that State land tax collections could be adjusted to provide rebates to proprietors who remove eyesores" be struck out.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco—on amendment) [5.40]: I am rather sorry that the amendment has been moved, because I agree with the motion as it is. The amendment will detract from it. We have still to learn whether the Treasurer agrees with the first part. It has been suggested that civil pride is the cause of the fine lawns

that we see outside houses. I know many people in Western Australia who own houses and have beautiful gardens, but they do not have any lawn outside on the street.

The Minister for Lands: It took me all my time to keep the trotters off my outside lawns for quite a while.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: The Minister certainly has civic pride. I know that by the roses he grows. We are at fault in Western Australia because we have no scheme for these things in our municipalities. The Nedlands Road Board evidently has a scheme by which it allows a rebate on rates. There is no scheme in other places. I have no fence around my house, and to maintain my outside garden I pay £26 a year for water.

Mr. Fox: It is easy to do that if you pay someone to do it for you.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: That is so. If rebates were made, the occupier of a house might be able to get someone to do the work for him and so keep the outside lawns going. Many years ago, when I was in other parts of the world, particularly America, I saw miles and miles of gardens without fences. That is made possible through a municipal scheme under which so much is allowed for a person to look after the lawn outside the fence. A rebate is allowed for that purpose, but, on the other hand, an extra charge is made to any person who does not do that. Householders are practically forced to maintain outside lawns. Therefore they have civic pride.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: It is done in Canberra.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: The same thing occurs there. It would mean a great deal to the tourist trade if we had a scheme in the municipal areas which would force every householder to maintain the land outside his own private fence. Am I allowed to speak to the motion as a whole?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member can only speak on the amendment at present.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands—on amendment) [5.46]: I have no objection to the amendment provided it is clearly understood that it is not a withdrawal in the smallest sense of the praise that was accorded to the Nedlands Road Board.

This debate has dragged into the light the admirable handling of its affairs, and the amendment might possibly be construed as withdrawing an appreciation which has been expressed of the work being done by that local authority. I would not desire to be a party to any such withdrawal.

Amendment put and passed.

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [5.48]: The member for Claremont deserves a good deal of commendation for bringing forward this motion, although no doubt the Government will feel that its business has been seriously delayed as a consequence.

The Minister for Lands: Today is the day set apart for private members' business.

Mr. ABBOTT: I commend the Premier for noticing that Mt. Lawley is one of the most beautiful suburbs in the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Lands: It is evident you have never been to Lake Monger.

Mr. ABBOTT: Whether he made that reference from the point of view of his position as Treasurer, well knowing that we had no eyesores in Mt. Lawley that required to be moved, I do not know. A good many of the eyesores around the river, such as old jetties, have been referred to. Possibly some use could be made of those old structures. The State Gardens Board has done a lot of good work and produced a good deal of revenue. Possibly it would be prepared to take over some if not all of these jetties and make use of them in connection with providing pleasure not only for tourists but our own citizens as well. If these jetties were brought under the control of such a body no doubt, with a little assistance from Consolidated Revenue, a very material improvement could be effected.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Perhaps there could be a co-operative effort between the municipalities and the citizens.

Mr. ABBOTT: Perhaps a small charge could be made for the use of these jetties. In other parts of the world if it is desired to go on a pier a small charge is made, and because of the multitude which uses those piers a considerable amount of revenue is produced. That is what I had in mind here.

Mr. Holman: Class distinction!

Mr. ABBOTT: I do not consider it to be that.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: A charge such as is imposed for the Sydney bridge!

Mr. ABBOTT: Yes. I emphasise that the citizens of Mt. Lawley are imbued with a keen sense of civil responsibility. They would welcome any scheme that would assist them further in their efforts to make their suburb one of the most beautiful in the metropolitan area.

MR. OWEN (Swan) [5.52]: I feel sure that members will agree with the first part of the motion. From the debate I almost expected some member to suggest that we should have a busy bee at the weekend in order to remove some of the eyesores.

The Minister for Lands: The municipal elections are being held next Saturday. You will have to put it off.

Mr. OWEN: One particular eyesore has not yet been referred to, namely, the Causeway, which is probably seen almost every day by certain members in this Chamber. I refer particularly to the rubbish tip there, which may have been started for the purpose of filling some of the lower-lying regions. I have noticed discarded gas-producers lying there. That is not the right place for such things. They should be put much further afield.

The Minister for Lands: Perhaps the City Council can tell you about that.

Mr. OWEN: The tourist industry should be fostered wherever possible, not only as regards cities and towns but in other parts of the State as well. In the Perth and Fremantle areas there are many eyesores which could well be removed. Apart altogether from that it should be possible to promote civic pride in various country towns. Civic pride should be encouraged by giving recognition to, say, local associations—I am not referring to road boards—so that they may be encouraged to improve the tourist attractions of their particular locality.

Nearly every town has some attraction for tourists of which the local inhabitants are justly proud. In Bridgetown the visitor is asked if he has seen such and such a lookout or such and such another beauty spot, and in Mundaring one is asked if one has seen the weir and its lovely surroundings. Although those places are beautiful

their beauty could be improved if the local associations and residents took an even greater interest in them. The recognition I speak of could take the place of some form of rebate of rates or by means of direct payments, or by the issue of certificates indicating the good work that had been done in improving the facilities appertaining to the areas concerned.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think that portion of the motion has been deleted and only the question of eyesores remains.

Mr. OWEN: Some encouragement could be offered to the people or organisations to which I have referred that would induce them to take the work of improvement into their own hands.

The Minister for Lands: What is an eyesore?

Mr. OWEN: Something that offends the eye.

The Minister for Lands: It depends on whose eye is affected.

Mr. OWEN: There may be abandoned public works and natural eyesores that would require to be removed.

The Minister for Lands: The gasometer is an eyesore.

Mr. OWEN: Anyway, the local authorities should be encouraged to remove eyesores that exist in their districts, thus improving the tourist attractions.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [5.56]: One of the greatest eyesores is something very close to this Chamber and it is very noticeable when one brings visitors to Parliament House. One is really appalled when one takes visitors to see the back portion of Parliament House.

The Minister for Lands: What is wrong with the foundation stone?

Mr. Thorn: It is out of place.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: If yesterday evening one had taken visitors to the portion of the building where "Hansard" is located and told them that the temperature of the rooms was 96 degrees they, too, might have been appalled. I should also like to refer to eyesores close to the Perth railway station. If one took visitors into Roestreet and showed them the awful caged-in houses they would naturally ask what those places were for. I am quite serious in this.

Those dreadful looking places are quite close to the central railway station and they constitute one of the greatest eyesores in the city. Then there are other dwellings of a similar character in and around Wellington-street, all dilapidated buildings. The Perth City Council should never have allowed such places to exist in the heart of the city. They should have been demolished years ago. I was very hopeful that provision would have been made for their demolition in the Municipal Corporations Act Amendment Bill, but it contains nothing to that effect. I am glad of the opportunity to say these few words on the motion as amended, and trust that something will be done by Parliament to get rid of the eyesores that are to be found even close to Parliament House.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [5.58]: I wish to draw attention to the eyesores that exist north of the Causeway and extend into the Bayswater and Belmont districts. In days gone by the late Minister for Works, Mr. McCallum, inaugurated a scheme for the development of the areas along the river foreshore south of the Causeway. We know what effect the reclamation works had on the river foreshore in that area. He was also the means of developing a civic pride on both sides of the river. That was one of his ambitions and to a large extent it has been consummated. The scheme also provided for an extension of the work further north into the Belmont and Bayswater districts. A dredge is required for the deepening of the river where necessary and carrying out the reclamation works, which would lead to improving the foreshore on both sides of the river. That dredge would, of course, have to pass under the Causeway. I know that the Perth Road Board and other local authorities are anxious to construct roads along the foreshore on both sides of the river. I am directing my remarks particularly to the Minister for Works. I expect that in the near future, when the dredge is removed from its present position, it will be used for the deepening of the Swan River and the reclamation of land on both sides of the foreshore from the East Perth power house to the Garratt Road bridge, and on the other side in the Belmont Road Board territory.

I know the Minister is making notes on this important question. It has been brought to my personal notice and also to the notice of the member of an adjacent electorate. The local authorities concerned have made representations to us with a view to their securing the dredge so that this very necessary work may be carried out. With the development of national fitness it is expected that a good deal more swimming will be indulged in by young people. If the river is clean it is obvious that many of those troubles which affect young people when swimming in the river in the summer will be less likely to happen. Youths residing in these districts use the river, and it is claimed that the algae and other stuff found in it is not good for their health. On the Belmont side of the river, particularly in the low-lying parts where the river overflows and there is a considerable amount of swampy land, the mosquitoes have been a source of great trouble. Because of the lack of manpower it has been difficult to control that nuisance.

From the health aspect, from the point of view of physical fitness and from the point of view also of the aesthetic beauty of the suburbs, the carrying out of this reclamation work will be of great advantage to the districts concerned. By the completion of the scheme inaugurated by the late Mr. McCallum it will be possible to remove a very considerable eyesore. I compliment the member for Claremont upon having brought forward this motion which has given me the opportunity to place these matters before the Minister for Works.

MR. HILL (Albany) [6.0]: I support the motion. The Government should take steps not only to remove eyesores that exist, but also to prevent what are valuable assets becoming eyesores in future. The member for Geraldton referred to the various jetties in different parts of the State that have fallen into a state of disrepair, and the member for West Perth said that Albany has not got an eyesore. I am sorry to say that I cannot agree with the hon. member. Through the neglect of the Railway Department, a very valuable asset in the Albany town jetty has been allowed to become an eyesore, though I understand that arrangements are being attempted by the Government to get

the municipality to assume responsibility for the maintenance of that jetty. On the opposite side of the harbour, there was another eyesore a few years ago. Then the war came, Singapore fell, and the Yanks decided to use that place as a base for flying boats. They spent £700 to repair the jetty. Now they wish to sell it, and I am told that the Government is interested. I hope the Government will make arrangements to take over that jetty.

MR. SPEAKER: Does that come under the heading of an eyesore?

MR. HILL: It was an eyesore.

MR. SPEAKER: If it is not an eyesore now, it will not come under this motion.

MR. HILL: Then would I be permitted to say that we want to prevent eyesores from developing in future? Reference has been made to Rockingham. In the neglected jetty there, we have another definite eyesore, but a short distance away is another jetty that cost £50,000. That jetty will be of immense value to Rockingham as a convenience for tourists. Who is going to maintain it, I do not know, but it would be a shame if it were allowed to deteriorate and become an eyesore. From the financial aspect, tourists pay the petrol tax and so do those who use motor boats and, consequently, a lot of the jetties that are used by motor boats and tourists should, in my opinion, be maintained out of funds derived from the petrol tax.

Question put and passed; the motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION—WOOL HANDLING DELAYS.

To Inquire by Select Committee—Passed.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [6.3]: I move—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into reported delays in the handling of trucks at wool appraisalment centres and matters relevant thereto, and to recommend improvements in methods regarding the same.

From time to time statements have been made as to the delays that occur in the handling of wool that is produced in this State. A month or so ago the Minister for Transport, in the course of a statement, put forward an entirely new point of view so far as I was concerned in stating that 1,646 trucks loaded with wool had arrived at Fremantle during the fortnightly period and that in the same time only 1,246 of those trucks had been discharged. It was obvious,

therefore, that 400 of the trucks had not been discharged in that fortnightly period, representing approximately 25 per cent. of the total which had reached that destination, and it was also alleged that somewhat similar happenings on a smaller scale were taking place at another appraisement centre.

I understood at the time that the point of view in the mind of the Minister was that the brokers had found it extremely difficult to handle the quantity of wool they received. I believe he said that although overtime was worked—a great deal more than the ordinary eight hours per day—in order to handle the wool, it had been found impossible to do so and, in consequence, not only was there delay at the appraisement centres, but also that the possibility of the expeditious handling of wool in other parts of the State was being seriously hampered for the simple reason that the trucks were not being turned around and, therefore, could not be used a second or third time as they ought to have been during the period referred to. It may be true that some of the 400 trucks had not arrived until the last day of the period, and therefore they perhaps might be excluded from the total, but in any event, from the public statement thus made, it was apparent that a considerable number of these vehicles were not being used in the manner in which they ought to have been used.

In other arguments that have taken place in recent times, the impression always was that, if any delays took place in dealing with wool transported to appraisement centres or during transport to those centres, the delay was the responsibility of or was occasioned by the neglect of the department concerned in transporting it. This point of view, I believe, received complete credence until the Minister made the statement to which I have referred. In fact, the impression has been abroad for a long time that there has been congestion in the wool stores. In March, 1944, it was reported in the Press that there was congestion in the wool stores and that the Primary Producers' Association had suggested to the Minister for Commerce that growers should hold their wool back and store it on their farms for approved periods, and that the Federal Government should make interest-free advances against it. This received an unfavourable reply from the Minister for Commerce, mainly on financial grounds.

I myself have, during the last three years including the current year, received many complaints of various delays in the transport of wool, and my information was such as to lead me to attribute all the trouble to the department concerned in transporting wool. When I heard the statement by the Minister, however, I came to the conclusion that there were probably other aspects that require our consideration. It is true that if there is delay in handling the trucks when they reach the wool appraisement centres, the department is in a position to ask for a claim demurrage. While this may contribute to the department's financial betterment to some small extent, it does not contribute to the turning around of the trucks or to the expeditious handling of the valuable produce contained therein. Let me refer to a paragraph that appeared in "The West Australian" of the 11th November, 1943, which stated—

A serious difficulty has arisen at a port of this State where many hundreds of trucks loaded with wool are now on demurrage awaiting unloading. At another port a similar development is likely. In an effort to ease the position, a conference was held between the Deputy Director-General of Manpower, the Chief Traffic Manager, and representatives of the State Wool Committee and the Wool Selling brokers."

Most of us who saw that statement two years ago were of the opinion that it was in consequence of the fact that owing to the hostilities raging on all fronts, it was purely a question of inability for the Manpower Department to provide labour, or for woolbrokers and those responsible for handling the wool to obtain it in any other way. We put it down, therefore, to causes dictated by the hostilities raging on all fronts at the time. The more recent discussion which I have referred, however, puts it in a rather different category, because the European war has been over for something like seven months and hostilities in the Pacific campaign ceased something like four months ago, but yet we find that the same type of complaint as was made in 1943 is still being made.

I am most anxious that there should be no false impression conveyed and that charges that are not soundly based should not be lodged against anyone. I do not wish it to be suggested that there is a lack of efficiency on the part of those responsible

the handling of the wool at the appraisement centres. If there is, we ought to take steps to assist them, so far as we can, to improve the existing state of affairs. If, on the other hand, the fault does lie completely outside their control and with some other department, either of the Commonwealth or of the State, it should be our duty to take such steps as we can to have that condition of affairs rectified. I do not wish to imply in any of my remarks that either of those sections of the community are not doing the best possible—

The Minister for Transport: You are in search of facts?

Mr. WATTS: That is so. But it is obvious that there is a creak in the machinery, and that creak has to be oiled and the machinery put into proper order. The wool industry is of such importance to Western Australia that it is clear we must have the best method for handling and transporting the product. It provides substantial revenues to the Railway Department and carries a higher freight and a higher per-ton-mile rate than is recoverable from almost any other type of freight that the railways carry. I believe that the average figure per ton-mile for the transport of wool during the last 12-monthly period was 3.2d., whereas the average was 2.1d. Wool provided a revenue for the railway of something like £112,000.

On the other hand, the brokers who are the people responsible for dealing with the wool at the appraisement centres and when it reaches the wool stores take from the industry a very considerable amount of money which, I am prepared to admit, they earn by their efforts in respect to the appraisement, handling, warehousing and so on. Still, we are entitled in the interests of the producers to ask that the most efficient methods, if they are not now being adopted, should be employed. I find from figures given by the Minister for Commerce that the wool clip of Western Australia for 1943-44 was of a value of £5,915,726. The average weight of clip for the past nine or ten years has been approximately 90,000,000 lbs. So far as commissions are concerned, the brokers are entitled to receive three per cent. on the first £2,000, two per cent. on amounts between £200 and £500 of the individual clip, and 1½ per cent on the balance. Taking the average of 2½ per cent. because the greater number

of clips in Western Australia are comparatively small, on £5,915,726, we find that the commission works out at £148,000 per annum.

In addition and among other charges of which I do not complain—I simply quote the figures as instancing the value of the industry to the State and to those people—there is one of ¼d. for receiving, weighing, warehousing, etc. On an average clip of 90,000,000 lbs., that is another sum of approximately £90,000 in one year. Therefore the total amount involved in those charges on the one year's wool clip is £238,000. In exchange for that sum, the community is entitled to be assured that ample storage space is provided and that the most up-to-date methods of handling are available, and that the wool can be handled without rolling-stock delays as and when it is received by rail.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. WATTS: Before tea I was recounting to the House the amounts which are received in remuneration for the handling of wool for appraisement and the disposal of same during appraisement by the brokers who are concerned; and I had estimated—and reliably estimated, I think—the total amount at £238,000 in one year. I was suggesting that the reception of that sum out of the total wool clip of this State warranted our asking that there should be nothing but the most efficient methods utilised in the handling of wool at appraisement centres, and in other matters relating to that handling. I had also commented on the value which the wool industry represents to the State and to one of the departments of the State most vitally concerned. I feel that we are, as the Minister said by interjection, in search of the facts in regard to this matter. If there are any delays which can be avoided, they should be avoided. It is our duty to ascertain whether they exist; and, if they do, to find ways and means to prevent their continuance. Because I believe that a very short inquiry into this matter would disclose the facts and put members of this House in possession of them, and also the departments of State concerned, I ask the House to carry this motion. I do not anticipate that any long-drawn-out inquiry would be required.

The Premier: How long do you think?

Mr. WATTS: It is difficult to make a flat statement; but if the Premier will accept it as a bona fide opinion, I would say four or five sittings of the committee would be required. That is the feeling I have after thinking the matter over quite carefully. Anyway, I move the motion in an effort to help in this matter, and to ascertain the true facts.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT

(Hon. W. M. Marshall—Murchison) [7.35]: If I adhered to procedure, I would move for the adjournment of the debate; but I do not propose to do so. In view of the necessity for easing the minds of wool producers in regard to the handling of their commodity, I have kept a constant watch upon the transportation of wool by the railways. Invariably I have called for figures of haulage of wool from the centre of production to the brokers for appraisal. From the figures submitted to me, it would appear that the railways are not altogether at fault in regard to the speedy transportation of this product. However, I cannot be critical of the Leader of the Opposition's consternation about this matter, seeing that he represents an electorate in which much wool is produced; and, further, that he leads a party whose members represent in the aggregate electorates which produce a huge quantity of the total production of Western Australia. When this matter was first brought under my notice, it was the first occasion on which I was made aware that there was any consternation amongst the growers themselves about the transportation of wool. From communications I received, they seemed to be very perturbed; and that perturbation was not without justification.

Producers have sufficient worries and troubles in the course of producing the commodities it is their lot to supply. Their path, so far as industry is concerned, forces them to be confronted with many problems over the year; and quite naturally when they feel that, due to no fault of theirs, some interference is going to be experienced which will jeopardise their financial prospects, there is every justification for their becoming somewhat concerned. However, we are in search of the facts. I have pointed out that I have been very watchful since the railways gave

an undertaking that so far as they were concerned they would be able to haul the wool at a given rate, terminating their responsibility for that particular class of work well within the specified time for appraisal.

I made special mention of two districts—Beverley and Kojonup. From the latest figures I have received in regard to transportation of wool from those centres I find that the railways have been faithful to their undertaking. I am advised that from the Beverley district, with the exception of two bogie wagons from a town named Dalebridge, most of the wool has now been hauled. The railways at the moment are under a heavy responsibility in regard to a Service order, and when that is completed—and it should be done in the very near future—that particular centre will be wholly satisfied. Kojonup has had its orders supplied direct in the main, and it is anticipated that by the end of the week—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think the Minister is getting away from the motion. I would point out that the House has already dealt with transport of wool to appraisal centres by the railways, and that the House has turned down a motion on that subject and the present motion deals only with the holding up of trucks at certain centres.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: That is the very point. That is the principal aspect of the matter: the holding up of trucks. I was trying to point out that the trucks are not now being held up so far as the Commissioner is concerned. I give way to your ruling, Sir, but that is one of the principal features of the motion—to ascertain exactly who is responsible for the holdup and why trucks have been held up.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House has already rejected a motion to inquire into the transportation of wool from districts to appraisal centres, and it was only yesterday that I informed the Leader of the Opposition that the motion he had proposed would not be allowed, and for that reason he decided to include only the holding up of trucks at centres.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I do not dispute your ruling, Sir. I was just trying to point out that we must find out where the trucks are held up.

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion says at the centres.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I should say that one centre is the terminal point from which the wool is held, and the other centre is the terminal at which it is lodged. Anyhow, it is not worth disputing your ruling. With trucks trading in with super., the particular district to which I referred will be supplied. I will agree with the Leader of the Opposition that this particular industry lends much to the economy of Western Australia. Those who produce wool are in a very awkward position if the transfer of the commodity from the farm to the brokers is not accomplished with all expedition. If the information I have in my possession is correct—and I have no reason to doubt its accuracy—it would appear that much of our rollingstock is held up at the terminals to which it is sent for the purpose of appraisement. However, that is just one side of the question. It would appear to me that what caused all the consternation, and what is a source of anxiety to those who produce wool, is that the railways endeavoured so to regulate the transit of this commodity as to avoid as far as possible having very much rollingstock held up at the terminals as a sort of warehouse for the brokers.

It would appear to me, without being over critical of the brokers, that there is something lacking in regard to the handling of this commodity when it reaches its destination; and I would point out that, from now on for the next few years, so short are we of rollingstock and tractive power that every unit capable of transporting commodities must be used to the absolute maximum. In consequence, we cannot afford to have our rollingstock held up at terminals awaiting the discharge of commodities; because while that takes place there are other industries suffering most acutely because of the urgent need for some form of transport. I do not know how the wool is handled at the terminal but an investigation may show that something beyond our knowledge at the moment causes the delay. In that case, providing it makes its investigation expeditiously, I think the committee may bring to light facts that will be instrumental in overcoming the difficulty experienced over the last few years.

There are several factors that may be responsible for these delays at the terminals. One such factor is the shortage of labour. It may also be found that the method of handling wool at the terminals is not a modern method, and perhaps there is also a lack of sufficient storage capacity. The railways will be in the same position for the next year or so as they are today, though I hope there may be some little improvement, but it will require a great deal of labour and material to bring our rollingstock to a state of maintenance where it can be fully utilised. Replacements must be made expeditiously and, while we are bringing units into commission, other units of our rollingstock are nearing the end of their useful life, owing to the heavy burden at present being imposed on the system. Like the Leader of the Opposition, I am anxious to know all the facts in this matter.

If information supplied to me by the Railways Department is correct, something must be done quickly, because the figures I have reveal an astounding position as to the number of units held up at the terminals. In the light of the limited transport facilities available it is remarkable that our railways have done as well as they have. I will not read the whole of the schedule that I have at my disposal in order to give members an idea of the number of units of rollingstock held up during this period, but I will give the daily carry-over so that they may have an idea of the number of units held in abeyance to provide storage space for this product.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

The Premier: Surely that is the answer to the move by the Leader of the Opposition for a Select Committee.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Evidently the rollingstock is being used materially for that purpose. It is true, as the Leader of the Opposition said, that while we charge demurrage, that is a point of infinitesimal importance compared with the necessity to get the maximum use from every unit we possess. I have had taken out the figures from the 1st October last to the 17th November, showing the daily carry-over of all trucks taken into Fremantle and North Fremantle and discharged therefrom. I will not give the dates or the number of bales on hand, received and

discharged, but merely the carry-over of the number of trucks held each day at the various terminals in the Fremantle district. That will show the number of trucks held instead of being utilised to carry further cargoes of wool, or for further haulage in other directions. Commencing from the 1st October the number of trucks carried over daily was 228, 234, 247, 167, 162, 199, 195, 134, 121, 97, 172, 364, 264, 226, 281, 242, 202, 377, 279, 310, 255, 250, 303, 205, 201, 144, 185, 156, 107, 134, 161, 182, 223, 196, 181, 230, 196, 131, 164, 156, 178 and, on the 17th of this month, 191.

Members will now have a clear conception of the number of railway units being held up at terminals. I can say little more because I have not, any more than has the Leader of the Opposition, the other side of the picture. These figures reveal that on certain days there is a greater number of trucks released than, for instance, on the succeeding day, which implies that by some means the brokers can handle a greater quantity of wool on one day than they can on the next. It is difficult to say how that comes about, without having an opportunity to review and consider the facts. If those figures are correct, as I think they are, there is urgent necessity for an inquiry as to why this is so, not only because we want to know why that position exists, but because we want the release of the units concerned so that they can be fully utilised, not only for the haulage of this commodity, but for the general haulage of merchandise throughout the system.

I ask the assurance of the Leader of the Opposition that if this committee is appointed he will deal with the question as expeditiously as possible, and that no undue delay will be experienced. I think it should be a simple matter as the investigations can be held within a radius of 10 or 12 miles from this House. There will be no occasion to leave the city and all the information required should be made available to the committee within a day or so. I am anxious that every possible unit of the railway system should be employed at maximum load and speed, in order that when the next season's clip is to be handled there will be no anxiety on the part of the producers as to the transport of their commodity. On behalf of the Government I ask the House to agree to the motion.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [7.55]

I think this inquiry may yield valuable results. It is a commonplace to say that the economic capacity of any transport system, whether by sea or land, depends on the rapidity with which the transport units are turned round in the port or rail terminal. The Minister for Transport has said sufficient to show the disturbing position that exists as to the use of our railway transport units. I would have liked to see this inquiry extend to a wider field. Members are aware that there is anxiety as to the transport of the forthcoming season's wheat from the sidings to the seaboard. The rapid transport and export of our wool and wheat are not merely related to the returns that the growers may receive; they are wrapped up with the vital matter of feeding and clothing the people in those countries where they are now suffering extreme privations.

From the economic and humanitarian points of view it is to be hoped that this inquiry will yield advice and instruction as to how our transport system can be put to better use to meet the demands that are now being made upon it, and the greater demand that will be made on it as soon as the new season's wheat harvest is due for haulage in a few weeks' time. I support this motion and I hope the inquiry will yield information that will not only advantage and protect the producers of wool, but will also assist in the transport of wheat, a matter of perhaps even greater importance, where failure to ensure rapid transport may lead not only to loss of economic advantages in this State but also to suffering and privation in those countries where people are looking anxiously for supplies of foodstuffs and clothing from Australia.

MR. WATTS (Katanning—in reply [7.58]: I would not have reason to reply but for the request by the Minister who addressed himself to this motion. The request was that the utmost expedition should be used in the conduct of the inquiry, if granted by this House. I give that assurance and will do my best, but there are limitations, of which he knows, as to the reporting staff. No doubt the best that can be done will be done to overcome that difficulty.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

Select Committee Appointed.

On motion by Mr. Watts, a Select Committee appointed consisting of Mr. Brand, Mr. Leslie, Mr. Cross, Mr. W. Hegney and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers, and to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned; to report on the 12th December.

MOTION—SUPERANNUATION AND FAMILY BENEFITS ACT.*As to Increasing Payments to Beneficiaries—
Defeated.*

Debate resumed from the 7th November on the following motion by Mr. Doney:—

That in the opinion of this House steps should be taken to amend the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act, 1938-1939, to provide that increases in the basic wage be proportionately reflected in the amount payable from time to time to beneficiaries under the Act.

THE PREMIER (Hon. F. J. S. Wise--Gaseoyne) [8.2]: The proposition contained in the motion is not new. It has been raised at intervals during the last five or six years since the commencement of the operation of the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act. In the course of his speech, the member for Williams-Narrogin mentioned that he thought it necessary that both contributions and benefits should follow the basic wage up and down. His motion, however, makes no reference to the question of contributions nor to any decrease in the cost of living. It merely asks that increases in the basic wage be reflected in the amount payable to beneficiaries.

Mr. Doney: Are you sure I did not make any reference to contributions? I thought I did.

THE PREMIER: I read the hon. member's speech very carefully. Although higher basic wage and cost of living allowance payments are made now, the rates of contributions have not been increased on that account. Therefore, over a period of, say, from 40 to 45 years the fluctuations in the cost of living would not all be upwards. As a matter of fact, the alteration on the average might well be in the opposite direction. At present the basic wage is higher than it was in 1939 but if an adjustment in the pension rates were made now to remedy that, it would mean that the

existing contributors would have to pay higher rates and the State would have to make very much higher payments to provide increases for those now receiving pensions and who, in the majority of instances, have made very small contributions. When the time for their pension payments arrived, if a fall in the cost of living had occurred, some of those called upon to pay higher contribution rates would only be entitled to lower rates of pension. I am wondering whether the hon. member gave any thought to that aspect, which is very vital.

If the motion were agreed to and it was possible to give effect to it, the additional cost, which would be very considerable, would fall primarily on the Government. I point out also that because of the very generous provision in the original Act in connection with the age selected at 30 years for the standard rate and for the concessional units to be contributed by the Government, it would mean that the State has been paying more than 90 per cent. of the cost of pensions granted to date. The State's share to date has exceeded £550,000, and another 24 years must elapse before the first retirements at the age of 60 will so affect the contributions to the State as to bring them back to the proportion of 50 per cent. in each case. Thus it is very obvious that the responsibility associated with an increase in the contribution, as envisaged by the motion, must cause a very severe impact not only on the State Treasury but on the annual Budget. The State's share under the provisions of the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act was £48,000 to 1941 and in the years that have succeeded has been respectively £77,000, £99,000, £117,000 and, for last year, £142,000. This year, with the retirements following the termination of the war, the State will have a debit of about £186,000.

I point out, too, that in the table which is to be found on page 3 of the report of the Superannuation Board, which was tabled in this House recently, members will find the percentages of the total sums payable to existing pensioners compared with the amounts paid by the Government. The variation is tremendous. The Government already, because of the selection of the age of 30 as being that at which all ages come in for the first units, makes a very sub-

stantial contribution and the financial liability imposed upon the State means, I submit, that we cannot at this stage accept any further responsibility to meet the point the member for Williams-Narogin has raised. To illustrate that point, I think it expresses the difficulty associated with the age-thirty-years selection. I am afraid many people lose sight of the fact that the majority of the contributors to the superannuation fund elected to take only the four concession units, which means that the State pays the major part of the cost of the pension. One unit means £26 per annum and four units, £104 per annum, for £2 per week for the contributor, or half that amount to his widow in the event of the contributor's death.

The 1,694 pensions in force as at the 30th June last included 1,442 on the four-unit basis only and most of the men concerned contributed from £11 to £67, and the State will therefore be responsible for practically the whole of their pensions. Then I would like the hon. member to take particular notice of the point that the contributor pays £40 odd up to the time of retirement, and if he lives for 12 years after that time, he will draw £1,250 by way of pension, and of that total the State will pay over £1,200. That is the generous position of the fund as affecting the older aged group.

Mr. Doney: I did not bring the generosity of the Treasurer into the matter at all.

The PREMIER: I am now dealing with the impact on State revenue of the present scheme.

Mr. Doney: I will concede the point on that ground, but not on any other.

The PREMIER: Every variation that is practicable—and I hope I can prove that this proposal in the motion is not—must impose a further annual impact that is quite unreasonable and, in fact, impracticable. The hon. member suggested in his speech that the contributions should also be varied. Careful consideration has been given to that proposal and it has been found to be impracticable. It is obvious that the fund must be based upon actuarial calculations. There must be a measure of the liabilities of the fund in order to determine the contributions and, unless we can get the measure of what is to be drawn from the fund, it is quite impossible to anticipate the rate

on which contributions should be based. If both are fluctuating factors, upon what basis could one determine the rate of contribution? One would need to have both intake and output to indicate the variations. In other circumstances, it would be in a state of jelly and absolutely unstable—quite impossible for actuarial soundness to obtain.

Even with the contributions adjusted to the cost of living, the increased burden on the Government would be considerable. The liability of the Government for the four age-thirty concessional units increases with the age of the contributor from the equivalent of 8s. 6d. per fortnight for the male contributor aged 30 on his next birthday if he elected to retire at the age of 65, to £40 12s. 6d. per fortnight if the contributor who was 65 next birthday elected the same retiring age. So members can see the tremendous responsibility for the aged groups that the State has already accepted in fixing the age at 30 and giving the older people within the Civil Service an opportunity to participate in the fund. I pointed out that the annual contribution by the State during the current financial year will exceed £184,000, to which contributions will not amount to more than £19,000.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: On top of that there is the £150,000 under the 1871 Act too.

The PREMIER: Yes, in addition to which the State contribution to the superannuation fund will be as I have indicated. Let us get this quite clearly. This draw is not in any way from the fund except to the extent of £19,000 and it means that it must come from the Treasury through the annual revenue. If a 20 per cent. increase were granted, the annual liability would be £221,000 and the respective proportions £23,000 and £198,000, representing the increased liabilities on the fund and the State of £4,000 and £33,000 respectively. But in addition to the financial implications, which are extremely considerable, and in addition to the fact that unless the intake can be measured and the outgoings anticipated there is the difficulty associated with administration in connection with the proposal put forward. For instance, there are three basic wage districts in Western Australia and contributors to the fund residing in all of them. The hon. member knows that adjustments to the basic wage vary from district to dis-

trict; and it is a fact that in some callings contributors move from one district to another.

I would also point out that existing pensioners would receive higher benefits to which they would have to contribute in order to maintain the soundness of the fund. I have been advised today that similar proposals were considered last year by the Commonwealth Government in relation to its scheme and were found to be unworkable. The Commonwealth Government rejected the proposal because of the unsound implications not only with respect to instability, but also with respect to the severe difficulties that would be associated with administration. Many years ago a scheme operated in New South Wales under which contributions were based on a percentage of salary. That scheme was found to be actuarially unsound, and it was in 1916 that the present scheme was introduced in that State to supplant the old one. The present scheme has since that time had a fixed rate of contributions; and all the States—including Tasmania; I think the hon. member raised the question of Tasmania—as well as the Commonwealth, now adopt the fixed rate system. To sum up the position: It is very clear that if this proposal is that the State Government should bear all of the additional costs involved, it is quite impossible.

Mr. Doney: I do not think you can possibly read that into my proposal.

The PREMIER: I am poising the two particular points only. If it means—

Mr. Doney: It cannot mean that, if you have read my remarks.

The PREMIER: If it means that, then it is quite impossible.

Mr. Doney: I agree.

The PREMIER: I am simply poising the two particular points. If it does not mean that, if it means that the contributions and the benefits should be varied up and down, as I have illustrated by the difficulties associated particularly with the actuarial calculations, it is both actuarially and administratively impossible. So it is wise at this stage to mention that, in addition to the impracticableness of this particular proposal, anything that is likely to impose an additional burden on the superannuation fund at this stage is not acceptable. I do not wish to anticipate anything that might at a subsequent time come before this House; but

I refer members to the report of the Superannuation Board. If members will study that report and the tables attached to it, they will realise that the fund is facing severe difficulties. Those difficulties, or many of them, were not anticipated. They have more than one cause. All of the causes are being thoroughly examined, and proposals might emerge which will warrant the consideration of the House at a later stage.

But I am quite definite on the point that neither the fund nor the State should at this stage be called upon to carry the added burden which this proposal involves. It is quite impossible for additional benefits to be considered at this stage, in addition to the added impact on the State revenue which the attempt to put into effect this proposal would mean. In discussing the matter with the Chairman of the Superannuation Board, with whom I understand the hon. member also had discussions—

Mr. Doney: No. That is not so.

The PREMIER: The hon. member either had a discussion with the chairman or communications passed between them.

Mr. Doney: Are you referring to the Superannuation Board?

The PREMIER: Mr. Bromfield.

Mr. Doney: I had no communication with him. I deliberately kept away from the board, as a matter of fact.

The PREMIER: I do not know that Mr. Bromfield has had communications from the district of Narrogin.

Mr. Doney: That is right.

The PREMIER: And in the cases submitted from the district of Narrogin this very principle was involved.

Mr. Doney: That might easily be so.

The PREMIER: Whether the hon. member is aware of the specific cases that were raised from his district direct to the board I do not know.

Mr. Doney: I do not know of them.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: It is a fact that cases have been referred from the district of Narrogin bearing on this very principle, and the replies have been very definite that there is that unsoundness associated with the inability actuarially to measure both the responsibility of the fund ultimately and the responsibility of the contributor initially, so that the fund will not have im-

posed upon it a burden which it cannot carry. But at this stage there is not the prospect of the Government facing the impost that this proposal would mean, and I am advised that it would be quite unsound to accept it.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.22]: With the object that underlies this motion I am entirely in agreement. I do not suppose there is much difference of opinion on that aspect of the matter between the Premier, myself and the member for Williams-Narrogin. The Premier's objection to the motion is based entirely upon its impracticability, either because of the State's financial resources being insufficient to meet the strain or, alternatively, because of the difficulty in arriving at any actuarial basis on which to assess the contributions and the possibilities of claims. I can of course bring myself to a considerable amount of sympathy with the Premier, as Treasurer of the State; but at the same time in my view it is hardly a sufficient answer to the objective of the member for Williams-Narrogin in bringing forward his motion. While the increase in the cost of living up to the present time, and as between the present time and the time this scheme was inaugurated, may not have been so great as seriously to reduce the value of the superannuation payment when it is received by the beneficiary, any further substantial increase in the cost of living would undoubtedly do so.

We should reach the state of affairs somewhat picturesquely set up by the member for Williams-Narrogin when he inquired what £3 would purchase today and what it might purchase at some future time, and what would be the position of the recipient of the £3 then when the value of it for purchasing purposes had very greatly decreased. We know perfectly well that in the last 10 years there has been an increase of approximately 25 per cent. in the cost of living as reflected in the basic wage. Without going into the question of what the increase actually has been, the basic wage has risen in that period from £3 14s. 11d. to approximately £5 per week: and even if we exclude from that the additional adjustment, I think of 5s., which was made, there has still been an increase in the cost of living of 25 per cent.

If that state of affairs continues for a period of another 10 years it is quite obvious that the recipient of £104 per annum, or £2 per week, under the superannuation scheme is going to be in a position much inferior to that which is contemplated, which the Government contemplates, and which all parties in the House contemplated, when the scheme was put into operation under the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act. It is to prevent the possibility of that position arising it is to take time by the forelock if practicable, and to assure the beneficiaries of this fund that they will not be put in such a position. It is humanly possible to avoid it, that the member for Williams-Narrogin brought forward his motion. So I think that his intention is entitled to sympathetic consideration. The position of the beneficiary under this scheme is entitled to even more sympathetic consideration in view of the distinct possibilities, because they will be receiving, it is true, tokens possessed of the capacity of purchasing something of the amount which they were promised under the superannuation scheme, but they will not be receiving the purchasing power which they understood they were to receive in exchange for their contributions, nor anything like it.

It is an unfortunate fact, apparently, that even actuarial calculations can be based on wrong premises and that in consequence wrong conclusions may be arrived at. I have read with some interest the report for 1944-45 of the Superannuation Board, from which I quote—

The first period of five years' operations of the fund was completed on 30th June, 1944. Section 29 of the Act provides for a quinquennial investigation of the Fund to be made by the Government Actuary. The main report was submitted by the late Mr. S. Bennet, F.I.A., Government Actuary, and reviewed by Mr. O. Gawler, F.I.A. (of Victoria), acting Consulting Actuary to the Government of Western Australia. The reports indicated that the rates of contribution had been on a scale lower than requirements.

For the Western Australian Act at its inception in 1938-39 the tables of rates of contribution were taken from the original Commonwealth Act, which had been based on Australian mortality tables derived from the 1921 Census. Although those rates had been adopted by the Commonwealth and later by the Victorian and South Australian Superannuation Schemes at the commencement, experience proved that they were inadequate

ensure the stability of the funds. Subsequent increases in rates by the other States and the Commonwealth endorsed the actuarial view that the 1911 tables were no longer valid.

In the first two years of operation of the W.A. scheme, the revenue exceeded four per cent., but war conditions with the control and restriction of investments and interest rates under National Security Regulations, resulted in the major portion of the securities now being in $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Commonwealth Stock, that having been practically the only avenue for investment. The average return for the five years, 1939-1944 exceeded $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., the average at the closing day of that term having been 3.2-3rds. per cent.

The actuarial reports and the recommendations of the Board, including proposed new tables of rates of contributions, have been submitted to the Minister. Section 41 of the Act provides that the prescribed new rates shall take effect from a date to be proclaimed after approval by Parliament.

That report indicates quite clearly that the figures used by the actuary were not such as to comply with the conditions that have existed in more recent years at any rate. It reveals a rather unhappy state of affairs. None of us wishes to see the superannuation and family benefits reduced in any way, either directly by a reduction in the amount payable to beneficiaries, or indirectly by an increase in the contribution because such an increase must indirectly reduce the benefit to be derived by the superannuated person. When one adds to the definite probability—in fact from the report almost certainty—that there are going to be increased contributions in order to catch up with the actuarial difficulties to which the board has referred in this report, and when, at the same time, we are assured by the Premier that it is impossible and impracticable to adopt any system whereby the cost of living increases can be reflected in the ultimate amount payable to the beneficiaries then it does appear that we have not built a house upon very firm foundations. It seems to me that we cannot leave the matter here. We cannot reasonably and decently say to the beneficiaries concerned in this scheme, "You shall pay increased contributions but you shall not participate in any increased amount, no matter where the purchasing power of your particular units may get to in the time to come." In my opinion it is all very well to say—

Hon. J. C. Willecock: They get the cost of living adjustments in their salary.

Mr. WATTS: They do not get it after being superannuated, and that is the question I am discussing. It is all very well for the Premier to say that it is impracticable and impossible. I submit to him that few things are impossible. They may be extremely difficult, or they may for the time being appear to be impossible, but if he can, with the aid of the skilled officers available to him, evolve some means whereby this difficulty can be overcome, I assure him that he will have every assistance that we can give him because I contend, in closing, that the present situation cannot be allowed to continue simply for the reason that there are difficulties lying in the way. We must do something—our utmost at any rate—to overcome those difficulties.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [8.33]: With the views of the Premier and Treasurer we are all in agreement. He has pointed out, and I think with complete justification, that any measure by which superannuation payments will be increased or reduced in sympathy with any rise or fall in the cost of living, is a matter of great difficulty and, from one point of view, an impossibility. I feel, however, that the matter ought not to be allowed to end on that note. We can well understand the point of view of the public servant. Those who have retired after having paid little into the fund will not, perhaps, worry a great deal. If they know the facts they will realise that they have had extraordinarily generous treatment from the public purse, but the younger civil servants may well feel that they will go on contributing for 30 or 40 years at the end of which time, because of the increases in the cost of living, they, and perhaps their widows after them, will receive a comparatively small income which, on present purchasing power may be adequate, but which, with any de-valuation of money, may mean extreme poverty.

When this Bill was first brought down some six or seven years ago, it generously provided that every public servant, whatever his age—or at least if over the age of 30—could on retirement receive a pension for himself and his wife by contributing on the same basis as if he had been paying ever since he was 30. In fact, some

men came in on the scheme at the age of 40 and some possibly later.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Some paid in for only eight or nine months.

Mr. McDONALD: They may have paid in only a few pounds, but when they went out they drew the same pension as a man would draw if he had contributed ever since he was 30 years of age.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: We had to make a start somewhere.

Mr. McDONALD: Of course a start had to be made. The result is an immense burden on the Treasury as the Premier has rightly said. But when this legislation was introduced it was pointed out by the member for Nedlands that it was a voluntary scheme. He took occasion to mention that unless the younger ones came in and helped to maintain the fund, then the burden on the fund, because all the older ones would certainly take advantage of it, would become extremely onerous. It may be that the Treasurer and the Superannuation Board should now consider whether the contributions should be made compulsory. After all, the scheme is not very old—only four or five years—and if the contributions were made compulsory I should imagine, without having studied the actuarial position, or in fact being competent to do so, that it would make a very great difference to the obligations on the public generally to find money for the pensions of retiring public servants.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: They would have to find more money.

Mr. McDONALD: If we had at the inception of the legislation made the contributions compulsory we might have been able to arrange a scale which would ensure more stability than the scheme apparently has. Another aspect is that it is a matter of interest for Governments, not only Federal but State too, to endeavour to ensure that the de-valuation of our money is arrested. In his book on full employment, written and published recently, Sir William Beveridge outlined the social security provisions of Great Britain which are on a most generous scale, and apparently without the means test, and said that their stability and value would depend upon maintaining the constant value of the English pound. Sir William Beveridge planned his scheme on the basis that the costs,

on the average, would have increased by about 30 to 33 per cent., compared with pre-war costs, when the scheme came into force, perhaps in a year or two's time. He did, however, make this stipulation that, to maintain the stability and full value to the beneficiaries of any scheme, every endeavour had to be made to ensure a constant purchasing power of the money unit.

I mention that fact to show that there is need for the most urgent exploration by all Governments, State and Commonwealth, of a means to arrest the present falling price of our money. Unless we do so it will be a matter not only of prejudice to pensioners, but of difficulty to all members of the community, especially those on fixed incomes or salaries. So the member for Williams-Narrogin has raised a matter of very general interest. The immediate application of any remedy appears to be extremely difficult or, as the Premier said, impossible, but from an indirect point of view there seems to be the possibility that something may be done in order to strike at the root of the trouble, namely, the reducing of the value of the pound which has inevitably gone on during the war years. But there may be an opportunity of reversing the process or of stabilising values now that we have more normal times with us.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [8.40]: I am in sympathy with the text of the motion. The question concerning me is the possibility of giving effect to it along the lines suggested by the member for Williams-Narrogin. I have been somewhat concerned about this fund for a considerable time. Last year when dealing with the question of the possibility of an increase to beneficiaries the member for Geraldton, who was then in charge of the Treasury bench, interjected that the matter was due for its five-year review. I have been waiting for the report in connection with this quinquennial review, as it is called and, on looking at the allocations of money as regards investments over the period, I was of the opinion that there would be a fair reserve, and had come to the conclusion, without the knowledge given to us in this report and by the Premier's statement, that this review would be for the purpose of a reduction in contributions or an increase in the benefit. It gives one rather a shock to see the position as outlined in the

report. I do not know how it can be overcome. I do not altogether like the idea of including the rise and fall of the basic wage.

Mr. Doney: If you have any other idea I am quite open to have it considered.

Mr. WITHERS: The motive behind this motion is quite all right, and I agree with it. It would be impossible in such a scheme as this, which is so small in variation, to tell a pensioner, when there was a reduction in the basic wage, that his superannuation payments would, as a result, be reduced. I do not think that is the right way of doing this. I hope it will be possible, over a period, to make adjustments whereby consideration will be given to any increase. Certain statements have been made in connection with the variation of interest; that the interest rate on the fund's investments has dropped since the inauguration of the scheme. That is so, but it has not dropped to such an extent as to make the difference shown in the debit and the revenue sides of the fund. Then again one can hardly claim yet—the scheme has not been in operation six years—that longevity has played its part against the fund, because we would imagine that a man who retired at 65 would, in five years' time, pass on. The five-year-term should not have had such a material effect on the fund. I am in sympathy with the idea behind the motion, and I hope the Premier will be able to find some way out of the impasse in order to give consideration to those coming under the scheme.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [8.46]: If I remember rightly, the member for Williams-Narrogin was not in possession of the report of the Superannuation Board at the time he put his motion on the notice paper.

Mr. Doney: Or at the time I moved it in the House.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Had he been in possession of the report, I do not think the motion would have come before the House at this stage. The report of the board in connection with the quinquennial investigation carried out some little time ago indicates that the condition of the fund at present is far from satisfactory. Therefore it would be unwise at this stage to do anything that would tend towards increasing the draw upon the fund. The board states that

the report of the quinquennial investigation has been forwarded to the Minister for his consideration. The Premier, in speaking to the motion, said it was possible the Government might have to introduce legislation based upon the facts contained in the report dealing with the quinquennial investigation. It is clear that we would be most unwise at this stage to pass a motion of this sort.

Members should also bear in mind that many of those drawing pensions from the superannuation fund and many likely to go on the fund in the future are not well informed on Parliamentary procedure and, if the motion were passed, they might easily interpret the decision of the House to be one that would practically assure to them in the near future or in the not distant future the very thing with which the motion deals. It would be most undesirable for the House to pass any motion at this stage that would be liable to create such an impression in the minds of the men and women concerned. We have to display a fair measure of responsibility in connection with the financial condition of the fund. If we carry the motion we would not be displaying any measure of responsibility at all. One of the main arguments advanced in support of the motion was that the cost of living has increased somewhat since the scheme was put into operation, with the result that the purchasing power of money received by way of pension is not what it was at that time.

It was also suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, and I think also by the member for West Perth, that the purchasing power of money might continue to decline because of the possibility or even probability of the cost of living increasing further from year to year. It is a very debatable point as to whether the cost of living will continue to increase. Prices were held fairly solidly during the war, taking all things into consideration and, provided price control is continued throughout Australia during the next five years or so, we might reasonably conclude that no further increase of any consequence in the cost of living is likely to take place. In any event I do not think we can anticipate future happenings in regard to cost of living. If, as was suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, the cost of living increases during the next five years to the extent it has done during the last five years, it will

become a major problem affecting not only the position of pensioners under this fund but also the position of everyone in Australia. If the cost of living increases to that extent during the next five years, there will be a crisis in Australia and everyone will be seriously involved in it.

We would be unwise to try to anticipate the development of the problem, and we would certainly be unwise to try to do anything by way of this motion to deal with it piecemeal in relation to its probable impact on pensioners coming under the fund from time to time. Something has been achieved by the moving of the motion, inasmuch as the debate will indicate to the public the probability that the whole basis upon which the fund rests will require the serious consideration of Parliament in the not distant future. To that extent the debate has been worth while. I trust with the Premier that Parliament will not do anything at this stage that might mislead pensioners and certainly will not do anything that might indicate a failure on the part of members of the House to shoulder a responsibility regarding the financial condition of the fund, in view of the report by the Superannuation Board and the report likely to be made available in the near future covering the quinquennial investigation into the general conditions of the fund.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin—in reply) [8.53]: The House or the portion of it that listened to my remarks some three weeks ago should have been under no misapprehension whatever as to what my intentions were. I thought the House had not misunderstood me in that direction, and I had better mention it again in order that the point may be cleared up. I went to some trouble to let members understand that there was no question of any blame whatever resting upon the present Premier or upon the ex-Premier. I made it plain indeed that such blame as might be attachable to anyone at all was attachable to every member who was a party to the passing of this legislation.

My desire in submitting the matter for the consideration of members was to safeguard the future of contributors to the fund now and those who in due course will become beneficiaries under the scheme. I

expressed the hope in the motion that a certain result would ensue. I care not along what lines my objective may be achieved; I care not at all whether it be by the method I suggest or by some other method; I am concerned only that the result be achieved. Consequently, I think the Premier should not have tied the House down to the precise method suggested by me. It would have been competent for anyone had he thought of a different method to submit it, and while speakers took occasion to disagree with the method I suggested, they could not in the time at their disposal—and three weeks have elapsed since I brought the matter forward—present a better suggestion.

The Premier: Much more might be said, but for the fact that we might be anticipating something else.

MR. DONEY: I understand what is in the Premier's mind and I appreciate it too. I perhaps did not appreciate, before I heard the remarks of the Minister for Works, what I now know to be in the mind of the Premier. I appreciate the seriousness of the position and probably will not push the motion to the extent I had intended to do a little while ago. Although the remarks of the Premier did not convey the impression, I think he really understands that my hopes in this matter were completely justified. In any event, what do we need but the report itself to justify the motion? It shows plainly indeed that the fund is not in the position it should be in and the position in which most of us imagined it was in. The actual words are—

The reports (quinquennial investigation reports) indicated that the rates of contribution had been on a scale lower than requirements.

That indicates, of course, a major fault on the part of the actuaries at the time they were constructing the scheme. If there was such a fault, obviously it needs to be remedied. I do not care by what means it is remedied, so long as they are just and fair. I recall the Premier's saying that in respect of a certain contributor, a sum of £1,250 had been paid to him by the fund on his retirement and that, of that very substantial sum, every pound with the exception of £50 was paid by the Treasury. I ask, what actuarial principle or calculation could possibly justify a payment of that

ort? I do not know whether, when the actuaries did their work, that result was anticipated.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: The House undertook that obligation voluntarily.

Mr. DONEY: So that was over and above the requirements of the actuaries! I know the House assumed the responsibility, but now I am told in effect that the actuaries did not come to the conclusion that ultimately payments would have to be made on that strange basis. It is quite obvious that I am answering a problem propounded by somebody during the course of the debate. The Premier says it is necessary for him to reject any proposal that would entail an added burden on the Treasury. I ask him whether he can cure an ill that he very well knows to exist without increasing the burden on the Treasury. I do not think it can be done, but if somebody will intimate that it can be done, I should be very glad to hear of it. Of course, when it is admitted by the Premier and by the report that a serious disturbance has taken place within the machinery of the scheme, that intimates, without going any further, that a remedy is required. That being so, my motion is justified.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: The abolition of the means test for the old-age pension will rectify it to a great extent.

Mr. DONEY: I am willing to admit that.

Hon. N. Keenan: That would not have been taken into account by the actuaries.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: No!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DONEY: The ex-Premier is submitting that rather as an excuse for the actuaries not having completed their work in the form they might have done. I desire to correct the Premier in regard to this matter: He said he had looked through my remarks and found nothing to suggest that I was concerned with payments by contributors following the up-and-down line of the basic wage. My colleague then on my right went to the trouble to look the matter up and marked places in my speech, calling attention to the fact that on four occasions I had made reference to the point the Premier said I had omitted.

In one part of his remarks, the Premier spoke as though I questioned the generosity of the Treasury with regard to payments under the scheme. I had not that question

in my mind at all; but if I had, the fact that it paid £1,200 out of £1,250 to a beneficiary would certainly have settled that argument. I had hoped that the Premier—or his colleague, the Deputy Premier—would have intimated to me that he would take early action. I hope the Premier is listening to this. I repeat: I had hoped that he would intimate to the House that early action would be taken to cure the ill we know to exist. If a cure is applied now the expectation is that before long everything will be all right. I am wondering whether by interjection—

The Premier: I do not want to be disorderly.

Mr. DONEY: How very punctilious the Premier can be! I want him to intimate that he has in mind early action in regard to curing that ill. If in any way his wit can conceive of as being proper this difficulty can be overcome, I will not submit the motion to the vote of this House but will withdraw it.

The Minister for Education: Perhaps he can write you a letter!

Mr. DONEY: The Premier not caring to commit himself to any remarks, I will conclude what I am saying, and will let the matter go to the voices.

Question put and negatived; the motion defeated.

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 7th November.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna) [9.4]: I do not intend to delay the House in regard to this Bill which has been thoroughly discussed and was ably and understandably introduced by the Leader of the Liberal Party. It is—

A Bill for an Act to make provision in the Criminal Code for a special penalty where death to a person is caused by the negligent use of a vehicle; to amend section six hundred and sixty-two of the Criminal Code; and for other purposes incidental thereto.

The purpose of the Bill is to provide in certain circumstances for a lesser charge than that of manslaughter to be preferred. In the event of a person, through negligence or reckless driving, causing a person's death, there has been no other charge than manslaughter preferable against him. This

Bill makes provision for an intermediate charge, with a maximum of five years' imprisonment. The Traffic Act provides for dealing with careless drivers of vehicles but the penalty is very light; I think the maximum is six months' imprisonment or a fine. If the Bill becomes an Act, there will be an intermediate penalty. This has been in operation in Queensland for many years, and England has also made provision for it. The Bill is identical with one passed in this Chamber last year. Unfortunately that measure went to the Legislative Council a little late, and I think it only reached the first reading stage.

The only observation I would like to make is that the Justices' Association is anxious to have the Bill passed by Parliament. Some of its members have had experience as coroners, and they feel that if it becomes an Act it will enable more convictions to be registered. As the Act stands, juries are disinclined to find a person guilty of manslaughter, in many cases. The juries contend that, as manslaughter carries the penalty of a life sentence, it is too severe. If the measure is passed it will not remove the possibility of a man, who has been guilty of careless driving and has killed a person, being charged with manslaughter; but if a person is indicted for manslaughter, a jury, after having analysed the evidence closely, can find the accused guilty of a lesser charge than manslaughter. The Bill will not only be helpful to persons on the bench, but also will give discriminatory powers to juries.

It has been suggested in this Chamber that the introduction of the measure indicates that we do not hold our juries in very high respect. I want to assure members that that is not so and that we have every reason to think that the decisions of our juries are always just and impartial. We have no fear that the integrity of their decisions can be disputed. In regard to Section 662 of the Criminal Code, an anomaly seems to have crept in quite unconsciously. By our deleting the words "apparently of the age of 18 years or upwards," a judge will be given the option of sending any youth under the age of 18 to a reformatory school. The judges have found that as the Act stands, it is necessary to amend it to enable them to deal with the more youthful offenders in this way.

I hope the measure will become law, and I feel that it will be of great assistance to the general community. There will be a

maximum penalty still for manslaughter and an intermediate penalty provided when a person is found guilty of an offence of lesser nature than manslaughter, with a maximum of five years' imprisonment. There will be the Traffic Act to fall back on for a person driving recklessly or carelessly without hurting anyone. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; Mr. McDonald in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Reckless or dangerous driving.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 after the word "ninety one," the words "and in the same chapter as that section" be inserted.

This is necessary to confine it to the section of the Code.

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

Clauses 3, 4, Preamble, Title—agreed to.
Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Council's Message.

Message from the Council notifying that it had disagreed to amendment No. 2 made by the Assembly now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; Mr. McDonald in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The Assembly's amendment to which the Council has disagreed is as follows:—

2. Insert a new clause to stand as Clause 3 as follows:—"3. A new section is inserted in the principal Act after section sixty-nine as follows:—

69A. If upon any petition for dissolution of marriage on the ground set out in subsection (6) of the last preceding section it shall appear to the Court that the petitioner has at any time during the period of five years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition been guilty of such conduct as would have enabled the respondent, had he or she so desired, to present a petition for dissolution of marriage on any ground other than the ground set out in subsection (6) of the

last preceding section the Court shall dismiss the petition, excepting that in every case where the ground on which the respondent might have presented a petition is one of those specified in paragraph (a) of subsection (3) or subsection (4) of section sixty-nine of this Act, and the petitioner has proved his or her case, the Court shall have a discretion as to whether or not a decree shall be made."

The Council's reason for disagreeing is—

The acceptance of this amendment would prevent many frustrated marriages from being dissolved.

Mr. McDONALD: The Committee will recollect that when the Supreme Court Act Amendment Bill dealing with divorce was considered by the Committee, two amendments were adopted. One of those amendments was moved by the member for York, providing that if the petitioner should be in arrears with payments of maintenance under any court order or any agreement his petition for divorce should be refused. In other words, no petitioner who had been under liability to pay maintenance could receive any benefit under the Act unless the maintenance payments were up to date. That amendment has been accepted by the Legislative Council. The second amendment adopted by the Committee of this House was that moved by the member for Kalgoorlie. His new clause was not, however, adopted by the Legislative Council. When the matter was before the Committee of this House, I suggested that the new clause, though based on what appeared to the hon. member to be responsible grounds, should be rejected, and, consistent with that attitude and with my general belief, I move—

That the amendment be not insisted on.

That would mean that the Bill would be passed, ultimately, with the amendment moved by the member for York, but without that proposed by the member for Kalgoorlie. I will not repeat the arguments that were fully canvassed when the matter was last before the Committee but merely say that the issue is simple. The new clause means that, apart from desertion or failure to comply with an order for the restitution of conjugal rights, no person can obtain any relief under this proposed legislation if, during the five years prior to his petition, he has been guilty of any matrimonial offence. Under that amendment, if a man separated from his wife for ten or 12 years or more before he

brought his petition, and possibly formed an association with some other woman, which turned out to be happy and which continued up to the time of the petition, possibly with children born and living as a result of that association, the court would have no discretion but would be compelled to reject the petition because within five years of the time of his petition that man would have been guilty of the offence of adultery under our existing divorce law. Under the hon. member's amendment, the court has no discretion and if within the preceding five years the petitioner has been guilty of a matrimonial offence, with the single exception of desertion or non-compliance with an order for the restitution of conjugal rights, he must lose his petition and can obtain no benefit under this measure.

Under the measure as it would be without that amendment, in the illustration that I gave, the court would have complete discretion whether to grant the divorce or not. The court might say that in view of the man's association it was considered that he was not worthy of relief and that therefore his petition should be rejected, or it might say that this man's association with the other woman had been a happy association and that children had been born and had grown up, and that their interests must be considered and therefore, from all points of view, the petition should be granted and the marriage dissolved and the petitioner possibly allowed to marry the woman with whom he had formed the association. In other words, under the amendment of the member for Kalgoorlie the petitioner has to be without any possible blame, even a single lapse, during the preceding five years, but under the Bill without that amendment the court can exercise its own discretion as to whether any breach of matrimonial law should or should not be overlooked. In the circumstances, I suggest that we accept the view of the Legislative Council that the amendment of the member for Kalgoorlie should not be included.

Mr. STYANTS: I hope the Committee will maintain the attitude that it adopted when this measure was discussed earlier and not only that but the attitude that has been adopted on five other occasions when this proposal has been before it. The original

Bill, without the amendments that were carried, and my amendment which is now in question, proposed to legislate in a manner that is entirely revolutionary as far as British justice is concerned, in that it provides protection and relief for the guilty party. That is entirely opposite to the tenets of British justice. With the addition of the amendment I propose, the innocent party in a petition for divorce, in the case of a wife proceeding against her husband for divorce, will have 14 different grounds on which she can receive a divorce, and in the case of a man proceeding against his wife, ten grounds for divorce. It is based on the principles of all other legislation; that the innocent party can get relief.

In moving this amendment, I was prepared to make two exceptions to it, firstly in the case of simple desertion where a man and his wife found they could not agree and decided to separate, it would be possible, after a lapse of ten years, for either party to bring a petition. In this case it would not be held against either party that they had deserted the other for a period of three years. In the case of a woman refusing to obey an order for restitution of conjugal rights, it would not debar her, after a period of ten years, from getting a divorce. The member for West Perth said it is a simple matter, and I agree with that. It is a simple question of whether Parliament is to legislate to provide for a man who has deserted his wife and children, and I place particular emphasis on the deserted children. While I can imagine some circumstances in which a man may desert his wife, I can find none to excuse a man deserting his children and refusing to provide maintenance for them, leaving it to the taxpayers of the State to do a job that, morally and legally, he should have been prepared to do.

That is what the proposal will mean if my amendment is not adhered to. The child-deserter will be able to clear out, evading his responsibilities and leaving them to the taxpayers of the State. He will be able to commit every offence in the matrimonial calendar and, because he has lived apart from his wife for a period of ten years, he will then be able to go to the court and, if his wife is so disgusted with his conduct that she refrains from going to the court and making it cognisant of his character and actions, he

can get a divorce on the ground that he has lived apart from her for ten years.

Mr. Abbott: Would you agree if he had provided for his children in the meantime?

Mr. STYANTS: There are many things apart from maintenance. I know of instances where men have left their wives and children, instances where a man may have left for the purpose of going to live in adultery with another woman. I ask members if we should provide relief for a man who has deserted his children and his wife and has immediately gone to live with another woman?

Mr. Triat: The Council called that a frustrated marriage.

Mr. STYANTS: Frustrated, because they tire of the obligation they undertook when entering into matrimony; tired because one woman was not enough for them. We find that not only wives are deserted. Particularly in wartime a number of husbands are deserted. The wife clears out and lives with another person, and it is put up to us that, because they have some illegitimate children, we should open the door and allow divorce because they have lived apart for ten years. I admit that a responsive chord is struck when children are brought into the matter because they are the only ones with whom I have any sympathy in this regard. I am not concerned at all with the undeserving people but I am willing, in accordance with my amendment, to give the relief suggested to the innocent party. I hope that the Committee will adhere to its previous decision and insist upon the amendment.

Mr. McDONALD: The fundamental question is whether when parties have been separated for at least 10 years and there is no likelihood of their ever coming together again, a marriage that is dead in everything but name should be terminated if one of the parties so desires. I suggest that we do not insist upon the amendment.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not propose to repeat my arguments in favour of the amendment moved by the member for Kalgoorlie. All the arguments so far have been based on the supposition that the man is the deserting party, but the measure will be useful for the other sex, particularly in the days through which we are now passing. Apart from that, I would hesitate very long before I agreed to assist any party that goes

to court with unclean hands seeking the clemency of the court in a matter that is of an extreme character. In certain circumstances we are prepared to accept the Bill, but only in the interests of the party that approaches the court with hands that are clean.

Mr. McDONALD: Naturally the Bill applies equally to women as to men, entitling them to relief from a marriage that is dead and finished. With the arguments that have been advanced by the member for Nedlands and the member for Kalgoorlie I have every sympathy, but all that we do under the Bill is to inform the court that it can look at the hands of a petitioner and if they are clean it will have discretion to annul the marriage. We do not propose to give any petitioner an open cheque to sign away his or her marriage but merely provide that after a separation for 10 years, and if there is no chance of the parties ever coming together again, the court shall have power to dissolve the marriage.

Mr. STYANTS: What merit is there in condoning an offence for a period of 10 years? Why not be honest and frank and say that those who favour the measure will condone the offence for 12 months or two years or five years.

Mr. Watts: Or six weeks!

Mr. STYANTS: A proposal to condone such an offence merely on the basis of lapse of time is a contradiction of our conception of law. If a man commits a murder and the law does not catch up with him for 15 years, the penalty he has to suffer is no less severe. If parties have been separated for 10 years during which the wife, or the husband, and the children have been deserted and merely because in the immediate five years prior to the divorce petition being submitted the petitioning party has committed no matrimonial offence and therefore is to be entitled to a divorce, is wrong.

Mr. J. Hegney: The parties are getting older all the time.

Mr. STYANTS: And we may hope, getting better. If my amendment is not insisted upon, we will provide many unworthy people with an opportunity to secure their divorce. In many instances the interested innocent party will be so disgusted that he or she will not go to the court to inform it of the petitioner's con-

duct. Then again in the divorce court more than in any other, perjury is committed to an extent that frequently calls for comment on the part of the judge. A person so lacking in principle as to commit any of the 10 offences set out in the matrimonial divorce laws will not scruple to prevaricate or deliberately lie to the judge.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I cannot understand why the member for West Perth is so worried about this matter. What is a period of five years?

The Minister for Works: I think he has been misled.

The Minister for Lands: And he is very young.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Some of our men have been away at the war for five years or more, yet we are asked to give consideration to others who have lived in luxury and in vicious sin and to assist them to terminate their marriages. The argument by the member for West Perth regarding the discretion to be vested in the judge was set aside by himself when he quoted the action by a person named Joske who granted a divorce because it was good for the children! If any member knows anything about children living under such conditions, he would not care to leave such matters to the discretion of a judge. We know the judges differ remarkably in their decisions, as a result of which one is boomed and another is not so regarded.

The Minister for Lands: Through judges differing lawyers make money.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I know of one instance where the parties are waiting to get before a certain judge because they expect the case to go through more easily. The member for West Perth has been trying to get this matter through Parliament for a long time. At first it was a period of three years, then five years and then three years and so on. The issue has been five times before Parliament and now he suggests that after separation for 10 years divorce should follow automatically. Surely after 10 years if the parties are in earnest at all, they can live separately. The men who went to the war had to live apart from their wives for five or six years, and surely these other poor creatures can do it here.

Mr. ABBOTT: I feel that, as I voted on this amendment, I must now express my rea-

sons for doing so. No human law can provide for all contingencies or for absolute justice. We must all wait for the final day, which I firmly believe will come, when we will have to meet our Maker and be judged on that point.

The Minister for Lands: You are getting the wind up us now!

Mr. ABBOTT: The Minister may treat it lightly, but I do not.

The Minister for Lands: I would not expect you to treat anything lightly.

Mr. ABBOTT: Therefore, I take as a basis, mercy. That is the law of Christ. His first principle was mercy. Throughout His life that is what He taught. He also taught that it was exceedingly difficult to judge the merits of any particular case in this world.

Mr. J. Hegney: Judge not, that ye be not judged!

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Let him that is without sin cast the first stone!

Mr. ABBOTT: It is impossible to judge justly between a man and a woman because no-one knows exactly the mental difficulties that either has faced in association with the other.

Mr. J. Hegney: In that matter we are not the judges. Christ is the judge.

Mr. ABBOTT: That is what I am suggesting. A man and wife separate. Who is to judge which is right? Surely, after they have remained apart for ten years and have lived decently, it is time the law showed some mercy. It may be that the wife had good moral grounds for leaving her husband which she could not prove in a court of law. The husband's treatment of her may have been very cruel, so cruel as to justify her in leaving him. Afterwards she may, through carelessness, commit an indiscretion, it may be nine years after the separation. She did so because she fell in love with a man. We all know the temptations to which such people are subjected and, foolishly she fell. After having lived separate from her husband for nine years and lived a chaste life, is she to be denied the right to re-marry because of that one false move? The same thing may apply in the case of the husband. If that is the law of Christ, I do not understand it as such.

Mr. J. Hegney interjected.

Mr. ABBOTT: I may have a more broad minded view than has the hon. member. My religion taught me.

Mr. J. Hegney: Mine did not teach me that.

Mr. ABBOTT: We know what the hon. member's is. So I appeal to the court to show mercy.

Mr. Needham: And justice.

Mr. ABBOTT: I think I will leave that to the opinion of the world. I do not worry so much about the man, but about the woman. We should be merciful. After ten years, it is time that mercy was shown.

Question was put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	10
Noes	25

Majority against 15

AYES.	
Mr. Abbott	Mr. Owen
Mr. Graham	Mr. Smith
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Willmott
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Wilson
Mr. North	Mr. Cross
(Teller.)	
NOES.	
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Doney	Mr. Read
Mr. Fox	Mr. Seward
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Shearn
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Styants
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Hill	Mr. Triest
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Watts
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Wise
Mr. Needham	Mr. Withers
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Panton	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived; the Assembly's amendment insisted on.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [9.58]: Every clause in this Bill has been well flogged and there is not much left for anyone else to say. Much of it, however, is debatable and therefore I think it wrong to bring it down at this stage, so late in the session. The Bill concerns municipal councils. We also know that at present

municipal councillors are engaged in elections and that after the elections they will be in recess. It has therefore been impossible for them to get an expression of opinion from their councils. If the Bill is rejected in another place, I daresay many people will say, "Thank God for the other place." As I say, however, most of the Bill is worthy and if it is thrown out the Government may re-introduce it early in the session next year. That is all I have to say. I make a protest against the Bill having been brought down so late in the session and without giving the municipalities time to discuss it and let their members know their decisions.

MR. PERKINS (York) [10.0]: There is just one aspect that I desire to comment on and that is in regard to the attitude of the Government in setting itself up as a judge over and above the local authorities as to what they desire in their particular areas. We in Western Australia do not allow a very great amount of latitude to our local authorities. The various Acts under which they function—the Road Districts Act, and in this case the Municipal Corporations Act—do not give them the same scope as do the enabling Acts in certain other parts of Australia. In Victoria the local government system has been developed to a much greater degree and much wider powers are given to the local authorities than are given in Western Australia. The same thing applies to an even greater extent in England. There I understand the local authorities carry out a great many functions that the central governments are accustomed to carry out in Australia. I have not had the time to do any extensive research into the actual position in England but I do not think there is much dispute about that point. We have the statements coming from representatives of all political bodies in Australia that their policies include decentralisation.

I submit that the only way to bring about effective decentralisation in Government is to allow greater powers to these local governing authorities who must be the agents through which decentralisation of government can be carried out. The attitude that the Government is taking on this particular Bill tends to take away powers rather than give added powers to local authorities, in this case the municipalities.

Whether or not we agree with the provisions in this Bill, or whether we agree with plural voting and the hours of sitting of local authorities, such matters are, surely, for the local authorities themselves to determine as they suit their particular needs. If we are not going to grant autonomy to the local authorities in those particulars, how are we going to bring about a greater measure of decentralisation by entrusting wider powers to them? I am very much tempted to deduce from this attitude of the Government that it is not particularly sincere in its—

The Minister for Lands: You are not allowed to say that about anybody.

Mr. PERKINS:—desire to bring about this greater decentralisation of power. Personally, I believe that such decentralisation is desirable, and it is necessary if we are going to get the best government of our country. I point out that the attitude adopted by the Government on this Bill is in marked contrast to that which it adopted on another Bill over which there is a dispute at the moment with the other House. The reason that the Government gives for insisting on its amendment is to the effect that the local authorities should be allowed to determine their attitude on a particular question.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in discussing a Bill before another place.

Mr. PERKINS: I am not discussing the Bill but the Government's attitude on another matter. On one Bill it states its policy is that local authorities should determine whatever action they are going to take in regard to a particular matter.

The Minister for Lands: We would rather force them into the State Insurance Office, but you would not stand for that.

Mr. PERKINS: If the argument the Government is going to use on one Bill is good, surely it applies with equal force when considering another Bill.

The Minister for Lands: There is no analogy between the two.

Mr. PERKINS: The Government's attitude on one of these Bills is opposed to its outlook on the other.

The Minister for Lands: The member for York is more illogical than usual.

Mr. PERKINS: That is only the Minister's opinion. I am not going to enter

into the merits or demerits of the provisions of the Bill before the House at the moment.

The Minister for Works: That is your job.

Mr. PERKINS: What I object to is that any central government should set out to circumscribe unduly the local authorities in determining what suits them best in their particular areas. I hope that the Minister, when replying to the debate, will make clear what is the general policy of the Government in regard to this matter. Does he desire local government to be developed to greater lengths in this State and that we in Western Australia should emulate, to some degree, the very effective local government systems that have been developed in the Old Country and in other parts of Australia, or is the policy of the Government to shear the local authorities of some of the powers they already possess, as this Bill seems to be attempting to do? As I mentioned earlier, in other parts of Australia greater powers are given to the local authorities. I instanced Victoria, in particular. Under the enabling Acts of that State provision is made for the local authorities to carry out many of the works that are done by the central authority in this State. I think that those of us who have an accurate knowledge of the administration of local government in Victoria would not deny that there is much to be said for the system under which Victorian local authorities work. I have heard competent observers state that it is an objective we should aim at in Western Australia.

As our country is developed it will be more and more difficult for the central government to deal with machinery matters—other than broad policy matters—as they affect the individual districts of the State. If we are going to attempt to carry out such a policy and deal with all these comparatively trivial matters in which policy is not particularly concerned, then it will seriously overload this Parliament. If, on the other hand, we are going to entrust to the local people, in their own districts, the management of the affairs affecting themselves, it will be necessary to develop the power and authority of our local authorities. I am very doubtful without going into the merits or demerits of the clauses in this Bill, whether such a Bill as

this will be good for the local authorities or not. If a policy as envisaged by this measure, is carried on, it will make the local authorities more and more subservient to the central body and will effectively prevent the building up of a really good local governing system in this State.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam—in reply [10.10]: I hope I might be able to remove from the House the depressing influence that has been placed over it by the speech of the member for York and those of two or three other members who took part in the debate. The member for York adopted the very easy and convenient attitude of refusing to deal with the contents of the Bill, and refusing to go into the merits or demerits of each proposal in it.

Mr. Perkins: Many other speakers had already done that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I submit it is the duty of every member who speaks upon any Bill to discuss the merits of the Bill's contents and explain why he proposes to support or oppose the measure.

Mr. Perkins: If my objections were well founded you would not go on with it at all.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member told us that the question of plural voting is one to be decided by local authorities. This is the most extraordinary claim made during the whole of the debate. One would never imagine that the local authorities are the creations of this Parliament—that they obtained their existing power from this Parliament, and that this Parliament is in a position at any time to take away any of those powers or to grant further powers.

Mr. Watts: No-one disputes that, but the advisability of doing it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In other words the local authorities are the creations of this Parliament. One could easily conclude, from some of the speeches made, that Parliament was almost the creation of the local authorities; that they should receive much more consideration; that they should be given much more widespread powers and that Parliament should in no wise do anything to supervise their activities or restrict in any way their operations. The member for York went so far as to claim that the Government was not particularly sincere in

regard to some policy dealing with decentralisation of power that it is supposed to have. The word "power" is of course one of terrific importance. Just what this policy the Government is supposed to have I do not know. It would have been much better for everyone concerned if the member for York had defined exactly what he meant in that regard. However, it is not the policy of the Government to give additional powers to these local authorities created by Parliament unless the Government is convinced that the powers will be used efficiently, and unless the Government is also assured that all, or most of the people living within the areas will have the opportunity of playing a part in the system of local governments operating in their particular centre.

The member for Subiaco put forward a most illogical complaint by stating that local authorities had had very little or insufficient time to study the contents of the Bill. This measure was introduced on the 8th November and today is the 21st November. I submit that every municipal council within the metropolitan area and most of those in the country have had reasonable time to study the Bill.

Hon. N. Keenan: What was the date of the second reading?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I explained the Bill to the House on the 8th November.

The Minister for Lands: The Perth City Council has had two or three committee meetings on it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If municipal councils within the metropolitan area and within reasonable distance of Perth say that they have not had reasonable time to study the Bill, that in my opinion is a very frank admission of their incompetence and incapacity and, if anything, an argument against this Parliament granting them any additional powers.

I wish to reply briefly to an assertion made by the member for Victoria Park, because it was made in such a manner as to indicate that the Government gave much more consideration to people associated with trotting than to people associated with the carrying on of municipal government.

Mr. Read: That was my opinion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That opinion is ill-founded; there is no justification for it. The Government authorised

one of its officers to carry out an investigation into the conduct of trotting in this State, and indicated to the public that those who wished to make any information available to the officer were at liberty to do so. In connection with the Municipal Corporations Act, the opportunity is available continuously for every municipal council in the State to make known to the Government its views on any amendments which it thinks should be made to the Act. Individual municipal councils and associations of municipal councils use that right frequently. It has been used by municipal councils and their associations within recent months, and several of the proposals in the Bill have been included as a result of representations made to the Government by the association of municipal councils in the country and some by local government authorities in the metropolitan area. So the contention of the member for Victoria Park was most unfair and, to my mind, contained an element of viciousness which I hope was not intended. The member for Nedlands, in one of his delightful flights of imagination which we all enjoy so much, painted a remarkable word picture of the Minister controlling local government becoming a bureaucrat if the Bill became law.

Hon. N. Keenan: Or an autocrat.

The Minister for Lands: Would that be worse than a Pooh-Bah?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: He warned us that the passing of the Bill would establish a foundation upon which might be built a very dangerous system of totalitarianism. The hon. member was one time a Minister of the Crown and I do not know that his administration was distinguished to any remarkable extent by democratic tendencies.

Hon. N. Keenan: You know nothing about it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know only what I have heard, and I do not generally place much reliance upon what comes to me in that way, but I have a slight suspicion that on occasions the hon. member himself was capable of developing totalitarian tendencies and bureaucratic inclinations.

Hon. N. Keenan: Are you following that lead?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In any event, the answer to the hon. member's

suggestion is that these local authorities are the creation of Parliament. They obtain their powers from Parliament, and Parliament does nothing harmful if, in its wisdom, it places in the hands of the Government or the Minister some right of supervision or veto over matters of considerable importance. I would not be surprised if some legislation passed by the hon. member's Government in 1930-33 did not contain provisions that gave appropriate Ministers the right of supervision or even the right of veto over the activities of municipal councils and road boards.

Hon. N. Keenan: I put through the very Act you have in front of you.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Some opposition was expressed during the debate to the proposal to make provision for the development and application of uniform building by-laws. This is one of the provisions that has been asked for by the Local Government Association in the metropolitan area. It was suggested during the debate that the application of uniform building by-laws throughout the municipalities would be most unsuitable. It was claimed that what might suit one municipal council area would be most unsuitable to another. I quite agree with that contention but, if members had studied the Bill more closely, they would have found a provision giving the Governor-in-Council power to modify any uniform building by-laws wherever conditions in a municipal district justified modification.

Mr. Doney: Following those lines, it would not be long before you came to the point where they would no longer be uniform. Is not that so?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Bill does not aim at establishing uniform building by-laws throughout the State. What it aims at is developing a system of uniform by-laws that will be applied as widely as possible but, where local conditions are such as to require a modification, the modification will be effected to meet local conditions in any particular area.

Mr. Doney: Is it along those lines that the Municipal Association expressed itself?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have explained that the Local Government Association of the metropolitan area asked that a system of this kind be incorporated in the Municipal Corporations Act.

Mr. Doney: What about the other associations?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Nedlands opposed the provision in the Bill giving a municipal council the right to establish abattoirs outside its own boundaries, and he suggested, rather slyly, that it would be a great thing for the municipal council to build its abattoirs in the adjoining road board district. He thus suggested, in effect, that it would be a very happy thing for the people in the municipality to push this rather undesirable industry, or utility, on to its next-door neighbour. I am not quite sure whether the member for Nedlands was really serious in his contribution on this point, or whether he was engaging in some slight mental recreation for which he is noted and which we as well as he himself, enjoy very much. The point, however, is that over the years population has grown in many municipal districts until today their boundaries are being pressed upon very solidly, and there is no room within the municipal boundaries to establish and carry on abattoirs sufficiently large to meet local requirements. Where then is it to be established, if it cannot be established within the boundaries of the municipality concerned? Of course, it might be quite easy for a member representing a district like Nedlands to say that the municipality of Narrogin must establish its abattoirs within the municipal area; that is because the district of Nedlands has no abattoirs within its boundaries nor will it ever have.

The Minister for Lands: Not even Dalkeith.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That applies to a number of municipal districts within the metropolitan area. They are served by central abattoirs not in their own areas. I therefore suggest to metropolitan members, who might be inclined to follow the lead of the member for Nedlands in this matter, that they seriously try to view the situation as it exists in many country municipalities and realise the impossibility, because of the growth of population over the years, of establishing up-to-date and sufficiently large abattoirs within the municipal boundaries for the purpose of meeting local requirements. It is not suggesting anything

unfair to say that the municipal council should have power to establish abattoirs within the area of an adjoining road board; no disability would arise to the road board or to the people within it, because there is ample land in every country road board district and, unfortunately, not a very great population in many of them. So the question of obtaining sufficient land, removed from population to some reasonable extent, is not a difficult one in country districts. I hope this part of the Bill will be approved by members when we reach the Committee stage. There was a great deal of discussion on plural voting and many mixed arguments were put up against the proposal in the Bill to abolish that system for municipal council elections.

Mr. Watts: And also for the proposal, equally mixed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Most speakers against the proposal claim that not sufficient arguments have been put forward to justify abolition of the system; but very few members, if any, tried to justify the continuance of the existing system. We were told that plural voting should be continued in operation because those who contributed the most revenue to the municipal council should have the greatest number of votes. If that argument can be applied logically to municipal council elections, it can be applied ever so much more logically to Parliamentary elections; but I doubt whether one member in this Chamber would be prepared to apply the same argument, or try to apply it, to Parliamentary elections. It is fair to say that everyone within a municipality plays a part in maintaining the municipality and plays a part in carrying on the industrial and other activities within the municipality. The member for Geraldton very clearly pointed out to members how little, comparatively, is contributed to the greatness of the City of Perth by the landowners of the City of Perth, and how very much is contributed to its greatness by all the people in the metropolitan area, and in addition by all the people in the country districts.

Landowners in reality can be a hindrance to the growth and progress of a municipal district. Those who think that the development and progress of a local governing area necessarily come from the landowners are making a very foolish mistake. The progress and development of such an area de-

pend upon the spirit of the people in the area. If the spirit of the people generally is conservative and non-progressive then the local governing authority will be backward and will remain so until such time as the spirit of the people changes. I therefore suggest to members that the great thing to be considered with respect to the maintenance, progress and development of a local governing area is the spirit of the people as a whole. If we could check carefully each local governing authority and consider the men and women responsible for its activities, we would find that not very many of them would be landowners. We might find that most of them would be ordinary every-day people inspired by the spirit of community service and anxious to give the greatest possible service in making their towns and districts worth living in.

Mr. Perkins: Do those people not usually own homes?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not necessarily. I know some home-owners in local governing districts who show no interest in the district outside the boundaries of their 50 ft. x 150 ft. block of land.

Mr. Read: But they contribute money for the upkeep of the municipality.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I might not have known that except for the interjection of the member for Victoria Park!

The Minister for Lands: Every man who drinks a pot of beer does that!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think we can say, without fear of successful contradiction, that everyone in a local governing authority district contributes towards the revenue of the local governing authority. If they do not contribute by the direct payment of rates, they contribute by the trade they give to the storekeepers, by the money they circulate in the district, which helps those who do pay the rates to pay them. The member for Victoria Park, for instance, is a chemist in the district of Victoria Park, which is within the boundaries of the Perth City Council. He pays his own rates directly to the municipal council; but I suggest to him, and I think he will admit, that his customers are the people who in reality provide him with the wherewithal to pay his rates.

Hon. N. Keenan: That does not go back far enough; who starts it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It does not matter how far we go back. Everybody concerned gives some service or other, and by that service comes into possession of wages, salary or income.

Mr. McDonald: The economist says that the private producer ultimately provides everything.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We need not enter into that. I say that every man in a local governing authority's area who works or renders some service and comes into possession of money contributes directly or indirectly to the revenues of the local governing authority. So I think no argument has been put forward to justify the continuance of plural voting, to justify giving to one man more votes than to another man. It is a vicious system.

Mr. McDonald: The best argument is the State electoral system.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no justification for it, and I am surprised that any member in this House should stand for its continuance.

Mr. Leslie: We want to hear some justification for a change.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have left the member for Mt. Marshall until last. I have done that deliberately, not with any hope of impressing him, let alone converting him, but for the purpose of replying to his invitation, which was almost a demand, that evidence or information be provided to indicate where municipal councils have done anything under plural voting which might indicate that the system has led to the election of members to municipalities who, by virtue of their positions there, have done things of a serious character which they should not have done. When the hon. member was speaking I made reference to the City of Perth (Rating Appeals) Act. Those members who were in the House the time the Act was passed will recall that Parliament had to take action in that direction because a majority of the members of the Perth City Council at that time were imposing rates in such a way as to develop something which was bordering on the scandalous. Because of the position which had been developed by the Perth City Council—or a majority of its members at that time—Parliament, on the

evidence placed before it, passed a special Act setting up a special appeal board to hear and decide appeals against rates imposed by the council.

Mr. Watts: That was not necessarily the fault of plural voting.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Oh well! Of course, that contention could very easily be applied to anything that might be brought forward.

Mr. Watts: Was the Sydney Municipal Council scandal the result of plural voting?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I could not say.

Mr. Watts: Then do not say the other thing.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If we go back some time, we remember some flats erected within the boundaries of the Perth City Council, and that one of the councillors was associated with the business. I think, too, that some of us believe that the Perth City Council does not do a very good job in looking after the cleanliness of the City of Perth in many directions. So I think that if we cared to take up sufficient time, we could bring forward a great deal of information which could reasonably be said to indicate that the plural voting system has led to the election of some members to the Perth City Council, at any rate, who have used their positions in the council to do things which should not have been done. The main argument in connection with the proposal to abolish the system of plural voting is not associated with any isolated or general instances of that kind. The main argument is that it is unfair, unreasonable, undemocratic and entirely out of date to give to one ratepayer more than one vote in connection with the election of a member to a municipal council. So this particular question is the main question covered by the Bill. It is the major provision in the Bill; and the feeling of the Government is that it is not prepared, as a Government, to continue increasing the powers of municipal councils unless the present inequitable and undemocratic system of plural voting is abolished.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Rodoreda in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 44:

Hon. N. KEENAN: This is the clause which changes the tenure of office of a mayor from one year to two years. On the second reading, I gave certain reasons, which I do not propose to repeat, why we should preserve the present arrangement. Shortly put, where mayors have been a success, I do not know of a single case in which there has not been a re-election. On the other hand, if a mayor is not a success we would be very glad to get rid of him at the end of one year. I have never heard any complaint made on behalf of municipalities that there is any expense involved that otherwise would not be involved. I ask the Minister to consider whether he should proceed with this clause.

Mr. DONEY: On the face of things there is little to take exception to in this proposal. Certainly there will be odd occasions when a mayor will be elected whose qualifications will not justify his continuance in office. If he was a failure in his first year there would be no urge to have him there for a second term. The appointment of a mayor for a period of two years has a great deal to commend it. It would mean a lesser cost to the sitting mayor or, for that matter, to other contestants for the mayoral position. The Minister when speaking upon this phase of the Bill mentioned the road board method of electing a chairman and spoke as though he was attracted by that method.

The Minister for Lands: He did not put it in the Bill.

Mr. DONEY: That is no news to anyone. I am going to suggest that some metropolitan member might submit an amendment along the lines of having the mayor chosen by the method adopted by the road boards. I am not going to vote against this clause.

Mr. WITHERS: The member for Williams-Narrogin is dealing with a separate subject. This has nothing to do with the election of the mayor, but the terms of his office.

Mr. Doney: We know all about that.

Mr. WITHERS: With a ward system there may be three wards with three members representing each ward so that if those representatives elected a mayor there would be eight councillors and one mayor. The mayor would have to use his casting vote

quite a lot in the case of deadlocks. It seems to me that we should leave the method alone. Provision could be made whereby we could have a mayor recalled under certain conditions. We made a mistake in the consolidation of the Municipal Corporations Act, in 1938, by cutting out the second ratepayers' meeting each year and having only one meeting. Tomorrow night there is a ratepayers' meeting of the City Council and also one in Bunbury, and an election is to take place on Saturday. If we had two meetings as in the past, the ratepayers could discuss the whole of the operations of the council, but now they do not know them until right on the eve of the elections. There is no virtue in extending the term to two years. I intend to oppose the clause if I am here when the vote is taken.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The simple ground advanced by the member for Nedlands in opposition to the extension of this period to two years is that if a mayor is a success at the end of 12 months he will undoubtedly be given a renewal of office by the ratepayers, and if he is not a success he will be defeated. The mayor is simply the chief officer of a local authority and is elected by the ratepayers. His authority is to expend the funds received from the ratepayers, or by way of loans. We can make a comparison with the Premier of the State who is elected for a period of three years and is entitled to hold office for the term laid down in the Constitution. He is the chief representative of the State and has control over the spending of hundreds of thousands of pounds more than is involved in any municipality. Members of the Legislative Council are elected for a period of six years and their responsibility extends over the whole State. Ordinary members of Parliament are elected for a period of three years and their obligations and responsibilities outweigh those of a mayor of a municipality. I am inclined to move an amendment that three years be the term of office. One year is now the period and I think two years is a reasonable compromise.

Mr. McLARTY: I support the proposal to give a mayor two years in office. If it were to give him three years I, like the member for Pilbara, would seriously consider it. A mayor is elected by the whole of the ratepayers and goes before them with some policy. If that policy is accepted and he is re-

turned, that policy, to a considerable extent, becomes that of the municipal council generally.

Mr. Withers: Not necessarily so.

Mr. McLARTY: No, but it does to a large extent. A municipal body is an important body and I do not think a mayor has a fair chance to put his proposals into operation in 12 months. There may be a lot of discussion about those proposals, and he may have to overcome opposition, so I do not think 12 months is a reasonable time to enable him to put that policy into operation. I hope the proposals to give a mayor two years office will be agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In municipal councils divided into wards the councillors themselves are elected by the ratepayers in respective wards, and are elected for a period longer than one year, generally for three years. The mayor, whether the municipal district is divided into wards or not, is elected by the whole of the ratepayers, and yet has only one year in office. If it is right to give councillors, elected by only some of the ratepayers, three years in office, surely it is not asking too much to give the mayor, elected by the whole of the ratepayers, two years in office.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 49:

Mr. LESLIE: I am prepared to concede that there is need for alteration of the system of voting in councils, where the council is divided into wards not only for electoral purposes, but also for the financial administration of the council, where the revenue of the council is divided into wards, and the expenditure in each ward is limited to the revenue of that ward. Then I say that the ratepayers in each ward, or the land owners or occupiers in the ward, are entitled to elect a member for the respective ward, because under that system each ward becomes a separate authority within the whole of the council. In a case where the finances of the council are pooled, as I believe is the case in the Perth City Council, and the money is expended over the whole area of the municipality, regardless of the revenue received from each ward, I am prepared to concede that the land owner or occupier should be limited in his voting power to the election of a representative for one ward, as Clause 3 sets out. In the short time at my disposal, I have endeavoured to draw up an amendment to meet

my case, but I cannot do it. I will ask the Minister to give consideration to it.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 22nd November, 1945.

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

QUESTION.

HOSPITAL NURSES.

As to Release from Army.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL asked the Chief Secretary: Has any reply been received from the Commonwealth Government in reply to the suggestions made by the State Government regarding the release of nurses from the Army for service in public and private hospitals, as stated by the Chief Secretary on the 17th October?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: The following reply was received by the Hon. the Premier, on the 19th inst., from the Hon. the Prime Minister, in reply to various suggestions which had been made, and the serious staff position which exists in public hospitals:—

Reference your telegram 25th October regarding shortage of hospitals staffs in Western Australia. Consideration has been given to your request for secondment of women's Army and Air Force personnel but regretted that existing pressure on Service establishments has made action not possible. Army advises that it has already adopted policy of giving priority releases to members of A.A.M.W.S. or A.W.A.S. who intend to commence civil nursing training, but that this cannot be extended to non-nursing employment in civil hospitals. Army