

Legislative Council

Thursday, 22nd November, 1951.

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

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Coal Mines Regulation Act Amendment.
2. Natives (Citizenship Rights) Act Amendment.

Passed.

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

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th November.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland—in reply) [4.36]: Nearly every member of this Chamber has taken the opportunity to explain his views with regard to building controls and the wisdom, or otherwise, of their retention. Some divergence of views was expressed on this important subject, but I was glad to learn that the majority of members, irrespective of political creed, believe that the Government's recommendation that controls should be continued for the time being is in the best interests of Western Australia.

A minority of members have expressed a sense of surprise and disappointment that a Liberal-Country Party Government should support the continuance of controls. Wedded as it is to the principle of private enterprise, the Government has given a great deal of mature consideration to the question of controls. The House may be assured that this Government will relax controls as soon as possible and to such an extent as would be in the interests of the State. As members are aware, controls have been relaxed to a degree and my colleague, the Minister for Housing, antici-

pates that all controls, except in regard to large buildings and industrial structures, halls, etc., may be relaxed by June next.

In this regard I wish to advise the House that regulations have now received Executive Council approval to provide for the increase of expenditure annually on renovations to residences from £100 to £200, and on business premises from £200 to £400. Had life in this State continued in the even tenor of the prewar years, it is possible that controls might long since have been abolished. But these are not normal times. On top of the building lag caused by six years of war and the difficulties experienced by industry in practically starting from scratch to cope with the tremendous postwar demand for materials, we are faced with an unparalleled increase in population, which is throwing a further strain on our building and production resources. For these and collateral reasons, the Government, while expressing its abhorrence of controls in normal times, is firmly convinced they are still necessary.

I have referred to the Minister for Housing every suggestion made by members during the debate and I am informed that each will be given serious consideration. Those who expressed their opinions will be pleased to hear that the Commission in future intends to give greater opportunities for the building of factories, industrial warehouses and social buildings. I deprecate remarks that were levelled at the State Housing Commission and its officers and feel sure that the majority of members in this House do not subscribe to those expressions.

Some prominence was given during the debate to the Doran case. Mr. Watson alleged that the reason for the refusal of the Housing Commission to grant Mr. Doran an application to renovate his house at West Perth was the earlier criticism by Mr. Doran of the Commission's treatment of his proposal that he enter into a contract for the supply of precut homes. This is not correct, as the prosecution of Mr. Doran took place some two years after the events referred to by Mr. Watson and had no bearing on the decision of the Commission to take action against Mr. Doran for a palpable and high-handed infringement of the law.

It was stated by Sir Charles Latham that the Commission refused to approve of the work ordered by the Perth City Council. This is not so, as the work being carried out by Mr. Doran was far in excess of the council's requirement's, which called only for certain renovations to the premises. Mr. Doran's proposal was to convert into flats a residence that was then housing a number of people. Its purpose was the obtaining of higher returns from an investment, and it meant dislodging existing tenants at a time when the Commission

was experiencing considerable difficulty in finding accommodation for evicted persons.

In the course of Mr. Watson's remarks on this subject he referred at some length to negotiations which took place between the State Housing Commission and Mr. Doran regarding a contract for the production of 500 precut timber-framed houses. The first approach regarding such a proposal came from Mr. Doran himself when he saw the then Minister for Housing, Sir Ross McDonald, on the 29th December, 1948. Little further action took place until the 26th July, 1949, when the chairman of the Commission conferred with Mr. Baron-Hay, chairman of the Land Settlement Board, prior to approaching Mr. Doran, and obtained Mr. Baron-Hay's consent to the obtaining of a supply of precut houses from Mr. Doran, in addition to those he was supplying to the Land Settlement Board.

Negotiations were then opened up with Mr. Doran and proceeded to the stage of approaching a contract agreement. Towards completing the final details, an interview took place between the chairman of the State Housing Commission, the Commission's technical officer, Mr. Doran and the latter's accountant. During the discussion it was realised that it was not possible to arrive at an agreement. Mr. Doran, at this late stage in the negotiations, expressed his uncertainty as to whether he could do the work for the Commission, and also whether he could do the work at the price.

As a result of Mr. Doran's inability to make up his mind, he was informed at the meeting that the Commission would not proceed with the contract. Subsequently, with the consent of the chairman of the Land Settlement Board, a number of house components were purchased from Mr. Doran, and his brother, Mr. W. C. Doran, was employed to erect them in the metropolitan area and country districts. From this action it does not appear that the Commission held any bias or ill-feeling against Mr. Doran. The Commission was anxious to do business with Mr. Doran, and to that end everything possible was done to reach agreement. Part of the offer made to him was a grant of £1,000 to enable him to reorganise his works to speed up production of precut units.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Was that offer made to him in writing?

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I take it that it was. The Commission was most disappointed when Mr. Doran's indecision compelled it to withdraw from the negotiations. In his speech, Mr. Murray stated he could not find where power was vested in either the Minister or the Commission to direct building materials of any description to any one part of the State. Such authority is included in Sec-

tion 26 of the principal Act, in which Subsection (1) (c) sets out that the Commission may—

give such directions or impose such conditions as it thinks fit in relation to the storage, delivery, disposal, use or application of any building material.

Again, Mr. Roche was critical of the price paid by the Housing Commission for the erection of houses precut by Bunning Bros. He instanced two builder friends of his, one of whom thought he could erect such a house for £200, the other suggesting a figure of from £250 to £300. On the other hand, a builder in a large country town 100 miles from Perth recently refused to accept a contract to erect such a house as the contract price of £390 was insufficient.

The suggestion that distribution of materials could well be left to merchants was made by Mr. Parker. The raising of exemption limits to 15 squares and the necessity to direct materials to country centres make it necessary that control of distribution remain with the Commission as it goes hand-in-hand with the permit system, and it is felt that it is not the function of merchants or manufacturers to accept that responsibility, as has been suggested from time to time. It must also be remembered that if merchants controlled material, there would be no chance of taking action for breaches, particularly in cases where the value of the work carried out under the original permit was above the statutory limit for annual renovation.

The Commission is able to check the purpose for which the material is desired and decide accordingly. At present there is consistency of decision by an authority with an overall picture, whereas if the control were placed in the hands of merchants, there would be a number of authorities making decisions in similar matters, which could lead to anomalies and inconsistencies. There has been a great deal of effort put into the production of basic materials, as a result of which it is hoped as soon as possible to lift control over some items now in short supply. Even now, action is being taken to remove control over porcelain enamelware. During his comments Mr. Jones suggested that land was being resumed at an inequitable price. The actual position is that the Public Works Department undertakes all the land resumption work on behalf of the Commission and the Government as a whole. A specially qualified officer adopts a very fair valuation—

Hon. G. Bennetts: I do not think he does.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT:—which, if not acceptable to both parties, gives the person from whom the land is acquired the right to ask for a special assessing by way of appeal. Sir Charles Latham asked for information with regard

to imported houses, and he was doubtful of the value of the chairman's trip overseas. The chairman travelled to England and the Continent to negotiate contracts to obtain houses. This action was very necessary as a contribution to our housing programme, without making any impact on local labour and materials.

He was successful in arranging for the supply of 750 houses from Austria, the first shipment of 450 of which is expected within the next few days, the balance to follow early next year. Labour to erect these cottages has been selected overseas and numbers of workmen have already arrived and are preparing the sites. In addition, the chairman of the Commission also arranged a contract for 500 small timber-framed cottages for the Railway Department, a number of which have also come to hand.

Again, Sir Charles is out of court when he alleges that Housing Commission homes are higher priced than those built privately. The Commission's base price arrangement results in houses being erected at a figure below average building costs, in addition to which the standard of workmanship is equal to that of average private building and meets the requirements of the War Service Homes Finance Scheme.

In an effort to indicate an exorbitant cost in the administration of the Commission and in the number of staff employed, Mr. Watson quoted figures. He failed, however, to compare that expenditure with the number of houses built, or the capital expenditure involved. He failed also to take into account the various activities of the Commission, which not only included the erection of rental homes under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, but also the construction of houses for home-ownership under the provisions of the War Service Homes Act and the State Housing Act. In all last year the Commission completed 1,782 homes and expended an amount of £5,000,000 in home construction, land purchase and development, etc. In the postwar period, the Commission has satisfied over 7,000 families suffering housing difficulties.

This is, I feel, a tribute to the work done by the Commission. In addition, the Commission arranged accommodation for approximately 170 of the 255 families against whom orders have been made for possession of the premises they were occupying. These figures are up to and including Friday last, the 16th November. At this date 687 eviction notices had been registered, 12 of these being registered during the week. In the week, seven warrants for ejectment were executed. Five of these evicted families were found temporary accommodation by the Commission, and two families declined to accept such accommodation. It is of interest to note that one of the evicted families was that of a soldier who leaves next week for service in Korea.

Question put and a division called for.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: May I make a personal explanation? I have arranged with the Minister for Agriculture to pair with him in his absence. I would have liked to support the Bill, but will have to abstain from voting.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	.....	16
Noes	.....	8
Majority for	.....	8

Ayes.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. C. H. Henning
Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. Sir Frank Gibson

(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. J. Murray

(Teller.)

Pair.

Aye.	No.
Hon. G. B. Wood	Hon. Sir Chas. Latham

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Section 20 amended:

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I move an amendment—

That in lines 1 to 10 the words "amended by—

- deleting the figure one in brackets, thus, (1), in line one;
- adding after the word, "material" in line two of paragraph (b), the following paragraph—

(c) use, cause or permit to be used, any building material in a building operation."

be struck out and the word "repealed" inserted in lieu.

The amendment is designed to repeal Section 20, which refers to materials controls as distinct from building permits. If the section is repealed, it will still not be possible for a citizen to build a garage or a fowl-house without a permit from the Housing Commission. Timber and tiles and many other building materials have already been released from control. Remaining controls are virtually confined to bricks, piping, asbestos and cement.

Despite what the Minister said in replying to the debate, I consider that the merchants and producers who have a knowledge of the commodities and of the requirements for them are much more capable of rationalising and effecting a speedy and satisfactory distribution than is a group of civil servants. Even in respect of materials which are controlled, we find that merchants still exercise quite a discretion in the distribution of the goods. In the brickworks, the asbestos factory and the cement works, there are literally hundreds of releases all of which, so far as the merchants are concerned, are on a par, and they have to exercise discretion in distribution in satisfaction of those releases. In the same way as the timber and the tile merchants are controlling distribution of goods today without interference from the Housing Commission, and are doing a pretty good job, so should that be done with regard to all other materials.

The particular trouble today seems to be in respect of the brick position. I understand there are two factories which make pressed bricks only—the State Brick Works and the Cardup brickworks; and there are a number of other brickworks which manufacture only wire-cuts. A builder gets a release for 20,000 bricks. He may want 10,000 wire-cuts and 10,000 pressed bricks. Pressed bricks may be available for delivery or, on the other hand, the wire-cuts may be available. If the building is being constructed of pressed bricks on the outside and wire-cuts inside, his supply of wire-cuts is not much use unless he has pressed bricks also.

Accordingly, builders have developed the practice of pooling their releases for individual jobs and even of pooling their resources amongst themselves with a view to speeding up the building of houses; because it stands to reason that it is much more satisfactory to have two blocks with 30,000 bricks on each, sufficient to build a house on each, than to have 10 blocks with 6,000 bricks on each lying idle and awaiting further supplies which cannot be delivered for many months. The builders evolved that system to overcome the difficulties caused by the operations of the Housing Commission and the direction of materials under its control, but apparently because the Commission had not thought of the idea or felt its authority was being flouted, it withdrew the releases and told the builders the practice must cease.

Not only builders but also responsible union leaders desire to see the control over bricks lifted. In the "Daily News" last evening Mr. French, secretary of the Brickyard and Pottery Workers' Union, said—

No amount of Government assistance will do what could be achieved by lifting all controls from the industry and letting it work out its own economy.

I commend that statement to the Committee and am convinced from extensive inquiries that the time has come to cut the red tape relating to the obtaining of building materials, though I do not advocate the lifting of the necessity to obtain permits for building.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Without control over distribution, building operations in the north of the State would practically cease. The merchants now have virtual control over the distribution of materials that are controlled and complete control over the distribution of materials the use of which is not restricted. If controls over materials for the erection of 15-square houses were lifted, those on the spot would procure the materials and people further from the metropolitan area would go without. It has been said that controls are fettering private enterprise. I believe private enterprise is fettered by controls only in the metropolitan area, if at all.

To illustrate that I might mention that private enterprise has received help through the distribution of materials by the Housing Commission in the north of the State. At Wittenoom Gorge the Blue Asbestos Coy. has completed 91 houses and has 69 more under construction. All that work has been made possible by the use of materials obtained under releases from the Housing Commission. The company has also been enabled to construct an £18,000 power house and a £10,000 hotel, as well as rows of single men's quarters, mess-rooms and so on, and a water system which necessitated the use of a large quantity of galvanised piping. The North-West Whaling Coy. at Point Cloates has also received valuable help from the Commission.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Do you not think they would have got the material had releases not been necessary?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I do not think they would have been as far advanced as they are today, because these materials have been directed to them by means of releases.

Hon. H. Hearn: We have heard it said that big business would get all the material if there were no controls.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Mr. Hearn remarked that the controls were fettering private enterprise but that has not been their effect in the North. The Australian Iron and Steel Coy. at Yampi Sound and the Air Beef people at Glenroy Station have also been helped by the Housing Commission. If it were a matter of "first come, first served," city merchants would not trouble to pack and ship materials to the North when they could sell all available supplies locally.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: It is a wonder we existed in the North years ago.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I was surprised at the hon. member opposing the Bill because the North is still very short of houses and they cannot be built unless material is made available.

Hon. A. R. Jones: The Housing Commission cannot direct materials unless they are available.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The trouble is that private enterprise is not producing the goods.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Not even State enterprises are doing that.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: When private enterprise can produce sufficient goods to meet the demand, there will be no need for controls. I oppose the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not wish to stifle discussion, but lately there has developed a habit among members of speaking at great length during the Committee stage. The passage of legislation would be facilitated if members would endeavour to reduce the length of their speeches when Bills are being dealt with in Committee.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I said previously that for two years no houses were built in the country but that in the last two years many have been built, owing to the control of materials by the Housing Commission. Mr. Watson said that the building of those houses was due to the lifting of controls over timber, but I can inform him that timber is the hardest material of all to procure in the Geraldton area.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Apparently Witte-noom Gorge is well supplied with timber.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I asked a building contractor his opinion of the control over building materials and he replied, "It is irksome but very necessary." He was one of the men who have to procure material with which to build houses, and if we do not take notice of men such as that we will not get far. I oppose the amendment, and I think we must pay some heed to the necessity for helping those who are trying to improve the housing position.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I too oppose the amendment. The advantages that Mr. Watson claims will accrue from the de-control of certain materials are not borne out by what Mr. Logan has just said about timber, which is not controlled, being very scarce. It is scarce in many districts.

Hon. H. K. Watson: It is not nearly in the same mess as bricks.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: The hon. member should not say too much about bricks. The trouble with timber today is that it has to be seasoned, and that is one of the reasons for its shortage. Nevertheless, that does not prevent certain large building firms obtaining the best of the timber

and leaving the rubbish, or perhaps nothing at all, for the smaller section of the community.

Hon. H. L. Roche: How much building timber is seasoned today.

Hon. H. Hearn: Green timber is used in buildings.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: That is because suitable dry timber is not available.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: It is because the carpenters do not like to work with dry timber.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: We know there is a difference between timber that has become dry and very hard through lying for a long time and timber that has been suitably dried for building purposes. If the carpenters could get the latter, they would work with it. The use of green timber in houses eventually results in the walls and ceilings warping. At the present time timber is not controlled and it is much harder to get now, by certain people, than when it was controlled.

This is particularly the case with flooring boards. I know this is so because I have endeavoured ever since flooring was decontrolled, to obtain some for different people, particularly self-help builders. On the other hand, people in a larger way can get as much as they want. If this class of timber were controlled, it would be distributed equally. An interjection has been made regarding bricks. When bricks and cement were decontrolled, quite a number of people were building brick fences and balustrades on verandahs; they were also putting in granolithic paths.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Only a few.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: It is no use the hon. member saying that, because I have made it my business to find out just what is happening. While that was going on, quite a number of people were wanting bricks for chimneys for their wooden houses but were unable to get them. The advantages that Mr. Watson has endeavoured to persuade us will accrue as a result of control, are not borne out by experience and I oppose the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I think many of the points I intended to make have been covered by previous speakers. I have stressed the general desire of the Government to release controls as soon as it can be done, and there was an announcement in the Press to the effect that building that could now be done without a permit was up to the value of £200 for a residence and £400 for a commercial building.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That does not give you any release of materials.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: That is being gazetted immediately. It is in order that releases can be made that these easements are being gazetted, and as soon as materials are more plentiful it

is proposed to ease controls progressively. As Mr. Logan pointed out, if there were no powers of direction given to the Commission, then the housing programme in the country would suffer seriously, and that is one of the matters with which we are immediately concerned. We have to take action at once to increase the number of homes at Collie because coal is a primary necessity for the industrial life of the State.

We cannot get extra coal without extra men; we cannot get extra men without having extra houses, and the only way we can get those houses is through power to direct labour and materials. All country districts are receiving consideration. Mr. Watson's amendment would completely nullify the Bill. If there were no powers remaining to the Commission, anyone who had a permit already could divert the materials he was receiving to erect brick fences, fancy porches and so on, which would reduce the material available for houses. That is why these controls must remain for the present. I hope members will realise the effect the adoption of Mr. Watson's amendment would have and that they will reject it accordingly. I oppose the amendment.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It seems foolish to grant permits for houses of 15 squares and not have a permit to obtain the materials for it. It is all right for the Minister to say we must have these controls. I know the business people want to spread their businesses as much as possible and we have heard a lot about what will happen if controls are lifted. But that is not correct. The country people, of course, have a full realisation that the State's wealth comes from the country and not from the city and that business will prosper if they can develop the manganese at Peak Hill or the asbestos at Hamersley Range, or say, the pyrites at Norseman.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: I bought five tons of cement at Onslow the other day.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: We should not give people permits for 15-square houses without the necessary permit for materials. It is stupid to do so.

The Minister for Transport: I do not think there is any difficulty about timber.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The Minister said a moment ago that there was a difficulty.

The Minister for Transport: If you direct materials, labour will follow.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: It is much more difficult to get tradesmen to go into the country and build than it is to get the timber there. That is the difficulty. As the Minister knows, tenders are called time and time again for building in the country and not one is received. There

are, of course, some people who have been building for the Government for a long time.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There is too much red tape.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Why does not the hon. member help me to stop this red tape? He wants building on the Goldfields, but we have always had difficulty in getting homes there. I remember the Leader of the Labour Party of the day saying that it was too uncertain. If things become normal again and there is no urgent need for asbestos, I feel sure that Wittenoom Gorge will be empty. At the present time it is far better to use the asbestos that nature has provided for us than to import it. I am satisfied that a business man would do a better job for the country than some of the officials at Plain-st.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: While some members pointed out the effect which Mr. Watson's amendment would have on building materials, I do not think they realise the restriction that will be imposed if the proposals in Clause 3 are carried. As I construe it, one would not be able to use a sheet of iron or a sheet of asbestos for repairs without a permit. It is not only making the position restrictive, but is also making it ridiculous. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition in another place has advised the Government to remove permit restrictions and release restrictions on all buildings up to 15 squares. I think that is a sensible proposal and that the Committee would be well advised to support Mr. Watson's amendment. I have no fear as to what would happen in the country areas. I am satisfied that the merchants would see that their business was maintained as the amendment intends they should. I doubt whether the supplies we are getting in the country are influenced at all by the system of releases.

The Minister for Transport: Definitely they are.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: So many releases in the metropolitan area are unfulfilled that, unless merchants wish to maintain their country connection, there is no need for them to send to the country. Under the system of releases, as great a scramble occurs for material in short supply as there would be if the restrictions were removed. The amendment suggests the removal of the restrictions, and that would permit free enterprise an opportunity it lacks at present and most certainly would facilitate building and building operations.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: I oppose the amendment. The use of the word "control" as applied to materials is unfortunate because it is a mere matter of allocation. The Commission has the applications of people requiring materials and is in the best position to assess the urgency

of the various needs. If the amendment is accepted, the whole Bill might as well be rejected.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I oppose the amendment. But for the work of the Housing Commission, much trouble would be experienced in getting building supplies at places like Bullfinch and Norseman.

Hon. H. Hearn: How do you know?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I wish to clear up a slight misunderstanding regarding my reference to tenders for Government works. The trouble is the time involved, and contractors simply will not bother to tender. One contractor complained of the tardiness of the Government in paying accounts.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The Minister and Mr. Boylen suggested that if the amendment were carried, it would nullify the Bill. Nothing could be further from the truth. The amendment is merely designed to put bricks and other controlled items in the same category as timber and tiles, which are not controlled.

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

Ayes	.....	7
Noes	.....	16
Majority against	.....	9

Ayes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. A. L. Loton	(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. C. H. Henning
	(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	Hon. G. B. Wood

Amendment thus negatived.

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

Ayes	.....	16
Noes	.....	7
Majority for	.....	9

Ayes.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. C. H. Henning
Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. W. R. Hall
	(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. R. M. Forrest
Hon. A. L. Loton	(Teller.)

Clause thus passed.

Clause 4—Section 32 repealed and re-enacted:

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I move an amendment—

That in lines 4 and 5 of paragraph (a) of proposed new Subsection (1) the words "or imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or both fine and imprisonment" be struck out.

The amendment speaks for itself. My object is to give members an opportunity to show where they stand in relation to penalties after a period of five years and on the eve of the withdrawal of controls as suggested by the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Flagrant violations of the law require severe penalties, not with the desire to be vindictive, but in order to act as a deterrent to people seeking to profit by non-compliance with the law. The Committee can express its opinion on the vote as to whether a severe penalty will enforce obedience to the law, or whether this penalty is not sufficiently severe.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I shall vote for the amendment because I do not believe vicious penalties do any good. This looks like the last occasion that we will see a Bill of this sort.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Oh, yes!

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I am taking the assurance given. I believe that this is the last time we shall see a Bill of this nature.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: I oppose the amendment. I do not consider the penalty is vicious. It would not be applied in its entirety unless the breach were excessively grave.

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

Ayes	.....	13
Noes	.....	12
Majority for	.....	1

Ayes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. C. H. Henning	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. J. Cunningham
Hon. L. A. Logan	(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. R. J. Boylen
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5—agreed to.

New clause—Amendment of Section 9:

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I move—

That a new clause be inserted as follows:—

3. Section nine of the principal Act is amended by adding to Subsection (2) the following paragraph—

(j) to any building operation the total cost of which does not exceed four thousand pounds.

This will mean that a person will not be required to apply for a permit in respect to a building operation, the total cost of which does not exceed £4,000. The Minister has told us that by June next, or thereabouts, there will be no controls except for the largest of buildings. It is hardly necessary to wait until next June before exempting from the Act control over buildings up to 15 squares. In my amendment I have used the basis of money rather than squares, but I am not greatly concerned about just what is used. I do not mind if the figure of £3,000 is substituted. I want any building up to 15 squares to be exempt. We cannot build much for £4,000.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: An effect of the new clause would be one that Mr. Watson has declared himself to be very much against, and that is it would involve an assessment of values, which, in turn, would mean an increase in the staff of the Housing Commission to do the work. We have rapidly rising costs at the moment. This would not be fair to the country as compared with the city because of the increased cost of materials and labour in the rural areas. The present system of controls is flexible so that they can be eased according to the flow of materials. It is the declared policy of the Minister for Housing to release controls as soon as possible, and when materials are available. I hope the Committee will not accept the new clause.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I understand that the proposal is that no permit will be required for any building whatsoever costing £4,000. I cannot support the new clause because it does not stipulate that the building is to be a dwelling. If limited to dwellings I would support it.

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope the Committee will not agree to the new clause. If it is carried we might as well boot the Bill out on the third reading because the remaining portion will be so ineffective as to be practically useless. A lot of unnecessary buildings would be started immediately. There might be some merit in the new clause—I do not say there would be—if it sought simply to exclude houses. I do not think Mr. Watson can be serious in putting this forward.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I am serious. It is within the competence of the hon. member to alter this by amendment.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is hard enough now for people to get houses without permitting unnecessary buildings to be erected. If members want the Bill to go overboard they will support this proposal, but if they think there is any value in the legislation they will oppose it. To house the people will be impossible if we carry an amendment like this. I hope it will be beaten by a thumping majority.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am not in favour of the proposed amendment and I am prepared to move a further amendment to it to provide that the buildings shall be for dwelling purposes.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Your object would be achieved if you moved to insert the word "residential" before the word "building".

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is my idea. I move an amendment—

That in line 4 after the word "any" the word "residential" be inserted.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I cannot agree to the new clause because it will enable people to spend £4,000 on billiard-rooms, ballrooms or some other non-essential works. I am sure that is not the hon. member's intention, but it would be possible to do this if the new clause were agreed to.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Mr. Watson's proposal would go a long way towards defeating the whole purpose of the Act, and I agree with the Minister that to police the provisions of this new clause would make the whole setup unworkable. For instance, what items would be included in the sum of £4,000? How could we arrive at values in places spread over all parts of the State?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I support both the new clause and the amendment because, if we agree to this proposal, there will be a certain degree of freedom from building restrictions. I think we could take the risk of people building ballrooms and billiard-rooms and so on, because the number would be negligible. All the objections that have been raised to the proposal can be used year after year.

Hon. H. K. Watson: And will be.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Judging by the remarks of certain members who have supported the legislation, there will be no opportunity, within our life span, of ever getting rid of controls of this sort. I have little confidence in the assurance that this year, next year, sometime and perhaps never, controls will be eased. The move will never come.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Not until Parliament asserts itself.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Those who believe in freedom and initiative should support the new clause.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not know why Mr. Watson chose a monetary figure because it is so elastic. Costs change from time to time, and a man may start to build with the figure at £220 a square and, before he is finished, the cost will be anything up to £250 a square. That happens every week. There will be a tremendous difference between the country and the town, and I do not think any pastoral member would agree to this, because a 15-square house at Port Hedland would cost much more than a 15-square house in the city. Why should a man in Perth be able to build up to 15 squares and a man in Port Hedland to only seven or eight squares, because of the monetary provision?

Hon. H. K. Watson: I will answer the query raised by Mr. Craig.

The CHAIRMAN: I think the discussion is drifting away from the purpose of the amendment before the Chair. The Committee is dealing with an amendment to the proposed new clause, that amendment being to insert the word "residential" after the word "any". I want members to confine their remarks to the amendment before the Chair.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I must oppose the amendment because I cannot see how there would be any restriction upon a person at Mandurah, Rottneest or anywhere else. If this amendment is agreed to, people will be able to build week-end cottages wherever they like.

Hon. H. HEARN: I propose to support the amendment because it will give free enterprise an opportunity and it is time we had a correct approach towards the whole question of controls.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I can now answer Mr. Craig's query. The reason why I adopted the monetary basis is because the whole section adopts that basis. If we expressed a squareage instead of a monetary value, it would have some advantages, but we would finish up with more court cases than we would know what to do with. We would certainly need to have an elaborate definition of the word "squareage".

New clause put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	.....	6
Noes	.....	19
Majority against	.....	13

Ayes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. A. L. Lotoh	Hon. H. Hearn

(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. A. R. Jones
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. C. H. Henning	(Teller.)

Pair.

Ave. No.

Hon. Sir Chas. Latham Hon. G. B. Wood

New clause thus negatived.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—STATE HOUSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 13th November.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [7.33]: I support the Bill because I believe that from time to time it has been agreed that the franchise for the election of members to the Legislative Council should be broadened. If we go back over the years it will be realised that when first established the Council was the only branch of the legislature in Western Australia. In the early days of the State it was composed of representatives of the people who at that time were property owners.

One could assume that during the infancy of the State that possibly was the correct way to select representatives who might be called upon to govern the State, because at that time there were certain people domiciled here who were not permitted to vote. That privilege was granted only to those who had seen fit to emigrate to this State and create an outpost of the British Empire. By so doing they contributed to its development by bringing with them finance, goods and chattels. So the Legislative Council was set up with provision for the election of certain representatives and others appointed on a nominee basis.

As the State has expanded over the years it has been thought fit to broaden the franchise for the election of members. Within the last few years a Bill to amend the Constitution Acts Amendment Act was brought down to enfranchise people who lived in flats and similar residences so that they would have a vote for the Legislative Council. We now propose to go a step further. I believe that the wives of those who are householders in this State should be entitled to a vote.

The Bill does not make it quite clear as to who constitutes a "householder," but, in my opinion, a "householder" means a person who lives in a house and pays rent. Whilst it might be said that the term does not embrace the wife of a householder, I think it does; but if the meaning of the term is not sufficiently plain perhaps an amendment could be moved to make it clear. If that were done I would be pleased to vote for it.

The women in this State play just as important a part as do the men, and it is ridiculous to suggest that because a man is recognised as the head of the family, he should be the only person entitled to a vote. We know that the majority of couples who live in a marital state do so on a partnership basis. It is the wife's function to endeavour to maintain the house and keep it in a proper state in accordance with her husband's income. When we look at the other side of the question, it is found that if a person has sufficient money to purchase other property and place it in his wife's name, she becomes eligible, as a freeholder, to vote for the election of representatives to this Chamber, whereas the wife of a householder does not enjoy that privilege.

I believe that the wife of a householder, in carrying out her function in the home, plays an important part in the affairs of the State and she should be entitled to take some part in the election of representatives to this House. Over the years it has been said that one must have a stake in the country before one is entitled to a vote for the Legislative Council. I do not know whether a stake in the country means that one must have hard cash in the bank. On reflection I do not think it does because quite a number of people could have large sums of money in the bank but would not possess freehold property and therefore would not be entitled to a vote at Legislative Council elections.

But if they turn that money into bricks and mortar, they become eligible to exercise the franchise for this Chamber. I cannot see any reason why a person who supports his wife and family and, by doing so, assists in supporting the industries in the State, should not be regarded as having as much a stake in the country as a man who has money invested in bricks and mortar. I do not think any argument can be raised against that.

The other important provision contained in the Bill refers to what is termed "plural voting." There are ten provinces in this State and if a person is fortunate enough to own property in each of those provinces, then he is able to record a vote in every province should an election be held. I do not know whether that is recognised as government of the people for the people by the people, because it does give

an advantage to those so situated over others who are not so fortunate. Of course, there are others who will spend their money in the town or province in which they live, and are therefore entitled to only one vote.

In these times, when we claim to be democratic and modern in our outlook, we should agree to some broadening of the franchise. There is another provision in the Bill for decreasing the age limit for membership of this House from 30 to 21. Whilst I am not sure that that is of importance, I point out that a person 21 years of age is regarded as fit and proper to carry out the duties of a member of the House of Representatives, the Senate, the Legislative Assembly of this State and also of municipal councils and road boards. To be elected as a member of this House a person must be at least 30 years of age. There appears to be no valid reason why that should be the minimum age.

The principal provisions of the Bill relate to the granting of a vote to the wife of a householder or flat owner and to the abolition of plural voting. The legislation as submitted to this Chamber is not the same as when introduced in another place, because it has been drastically amended and to all intents and purposes it is a Bill that complies with the policy of the Government which introduced Bills based on similar lines and which, on the hustings in 1947, told the people that it was its policy to broaden the Legislative Council franchise.

Here is another opportunity for members of this House to decide whether they are to depart from the old ideas which, to my mind, should be relegated to obscurity in the mists of Time. They should not be permitted to continue when we claim today that we are both democratic and modern. I appeal to members to give the Bill their favourable consideration.

HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North) [7.45]: The Bill was introduced in another place by the Leader of the Opposition and has been presented to us as amended in Committee. In effect, it has a completely new body.

Hon. E. H. Gray: But it is a bit slimmer.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It is now really a Government Bill, and the extraordinary part about it is that the measure was introduced here by a private member—the Leader of the Country Party in this House.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: No, by the Leader of your own party.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That is a unique circumstance.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But I did not introduce it!

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It was introduced by your own Leader here, Mr. Gray.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Of course, that is so; but actually it is now a Government measure.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is very helpful of you to assist the Government.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The Labour Party is always helpful to the Government. However, the object of the Bill is to amend the Constitution Acts Amendment Act in relation to the franchise of this Chamber. It is intended to broaden it in conformity with the promises made by the Leaders of the two Government parties during their election campaign in 1947. The first amendment seeks to alter the age qualification for entrance to this Chamber. The desire is to reduce the age of a member permitted to sit in this House from 30 to 21 years.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: That is a bit too revolutionary for this Chamber!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: At present a man of 21 is qualified to be a member of the Commonwealth Parliament and of the various State Legislative Assemblies, and he is also qualified to go overseas to fight for the country. In those circumstances, I do not know why that qualification should not extend to membership of this House. The second amendment seeks to alter Section 14 by stipulating that the Chief Electoral Officer must be satisfied regarding the credentials of an elector, and there can hardly be any argument against that.

Another amendment is to delete the word "sterling" from the reference to annual values of property which at present must be not less than £17 sterling. We are not now working on a sterling basis and it is highly desirable to alter that provision so that values will be in terms of Australian currency. Then again, it is intended to extend the franchise to include the occupants of self-contained flats and wives of householders. There is no good reason why those people should not enjoy the privilege of voting for this Chamber. The Deputy Premier thinks there are good reasons why they should have the vote, and I agree with him.

The measure adds to the disqualifications by preventing anyone who, although enrolled, may be of unsound mind or have committed the offences mentioned in the Bill. Formerly they were disqualified from being enrolled, but now, even if enrolled, they will be disqualified from voting in the circumstances I have indicated. Although the Bill is now a Government measure, I intend to support it. It is high time that the outlook of this Chamber was broadened and made more democratic. It has been stated on several occasions that the property qualification is the one on which the franchise for this Chamber is based. I cannot for the life of me see any reason why merely because someone inherits or possesses property, he should have any more claim to a vote for the Legislative

Council than the fisherman who owns a boat valued at £5,000 or the owner of a transport truck costing £2,000 or more.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: You would not describe it as a property franchise today, would you?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Perhaps in these days it is not strictly a property franchise, but I am replying to arguments raised in this House by making that comparison. Mere possession of property does not indicate greater ability than that possessed by a fisherman who owns a costly boat.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: The wife of a householder need not display ability, but you would give her the vote.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: She would display every ability in her housekeeping. However, it is no good arguing with people who are prejudiced and undemocratic, because it is impossible to change their outlook. The Bill represents a step forward that will meet with public approval. The amendments embodied in it are in conformity with the Government's election promises in 1947. On one occasion the Government submitted legislation to give effect to those promises, but the measure was rejected by this House. Not to be denied, the Liberal and Country League and Country and Democratic League Government is having another shot to implement its promises.

Hon. L. A. Logan: This matter is not included in the party platform.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: If leaders of political parties make promises from the public platform during an election campaign, is anyone justified in saying they need not be carried out because the subject is not on the party platform? Many members of this House sat on the platform supporting Ministers who made the promises.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They will vote for the Bill.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Their own party leaders have brought forward this Bill by amending it as they have, and the honour of submitting the legislation to this House was given to the Leader of the Opposition here.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: There is no Opposition in this House. It is a non-party House!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That was demonstrated in the House last night. I hope that all the Liberals and democrats in the House will support the measure.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [7.51]: I have listened with interest to the debate on the Bill. Normally I would not have spoken, but in view of Mr. Gray's remark that there have been several changes in the House and he was not too optimistic in expecting their support for

this legislation, I desire to make it clear that I have to dampen his optimism somewhat. Mr. Strickland referred to the body of the Bill. The best thing to do with the body is to put it in a cool chamber and let it stay there.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Still in the mists of Time!

Hon. C. H. HENNING: As Mr. Craig pointed out, the franchise for this House is based on the property qualification. I was surprised to hear some of the remarks about the qualifications. If members were to look at the electoral card that has to be filled in, they will find that it refers to freeholders, householders, leaseholders, Crown leaseholders and then contains the following:—

A person whose name is on the electoral list of any municipality or road board in respect of property within the province of an annual ratable value of not less than £17.

Below that there is the statement—

If property is rated on the unimproved capital value, there is no right of enrolment as no annual ratable value exists.

Suggestions have been made regarding the position of the wife of a householder. A farmer's wife does not count as does the wife of a householder, and so has no entitlement. We have heard a lot about the work done by wives of householders, but I guarantee a farmer's wife does more work than any householder's wife.

Several members interjected.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I simply will not listen to any interjections. The Bill is not a genuine endeavour to equalise the franchise. For the reasons I have just stated, I am not prepared to vote for any amendment, because I believe that if the constitution of this House is to be altered, any Bill to achieve that should originate in this Chamber. I oppose the second reading.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [8.1]: I am surprised to hear Mr. Henning say that the farmer's wife works harder than the wife of any other man. It all depends on the circumstances. One farmer's wife might have only her husband and herself to look after. There are many people who have up to 10 children.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Do you not think that farmers have families?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. I know, of course, that some farmers' wives do a good job, but I am not going to let any member get away with the assertion that farmers' wives do all the work.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Who said that?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The hon. member said that farmers' wives work harder than other women.

Hon. C. H. Henning: It is true.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It is not. It depends on the circumstances.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You go on to a dairy and see!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Some women I know, who are not farmers' wives, have sickly and delicate children to care for, and they work just as hard as the wives of farmers. This Bill gives the farmer's wife the same opportunity to have a vote as is given to an ordinary person.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: The Bill does not say so.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am surprised at members saying that their wives are not as important as they are. My wife is more important in the house than I am.

Hon. H. Hearn: Hear, hear!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: If it were not for the good work of our wives and the care they exercise over the children, I do not know where husbands would be. That is putting it straight. A man can put on his hat and walk out.

Hon. W. R. Hall: And then he walks in again!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am surprised that the Government did not bring in a Bill for compulsory enrolment.

Hon. L. A. Logan: You would call that democratic, would you?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. I think that if there were more people on the roll the result would be just as favourable to Liberals and to Country Party members as it would be to Labour members—perhaps even more so. I intend to support the Bill. Tonight I am on the Government's side; and we have to help the Government out.

On motion by Hon. R. J. Boylen, debate adjourned.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (SUPER-ANNUATION AND PENSIONS).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [8.5] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to fulfil a promise made to State Government employees and ex-employees to review pension benefits in the light of the ever-growing increase in the cost of living. Three different categories of pensioners will receive increased pensions if this Bill is approved by Parliament. It is proposed that payment of the increases will commence from the pension period nearest to the 1st October, 1951.

The Bill, which proposes to amend the three Acts under which these pensions are payable, has been framed in a similar manner to the Act passed in 1950 to in-

crease statutory salaries and parliamentary allowances. The Acts affected by the Bill are—

1. The Superannuation and Family Benefits Act of 1938-1950 by which pensions are payable under the voluntary contributory scheme which came into operation on the 1st July, 1939.
2. The Superannuation Act of 1871-1947, under which free pensions are payable to those permanent salaried officers who commenced service prior to the 17th April, 1905.
3. The Government Employees Pension Act, 1948, which provides for the payment of free pensions to permanent wages employees who commenced work before the 17th April, 1905.

Before dealing with the Bill, I think it would be advisable to acquaint members with the action which has been taken to ensure that the greatest possible benefit within the limits of the State's capacity, will accrue to the greatest possible number of beneficiaries.

I think all members will agree that the State should provide the fullest possible measure of protection to its old employees in their retirement. There are, however, limits prescribed by financial considerations and similar benefits payable by other Australian Governments beyond which we cannot go. For the financial year 1950-51 the pension Bill of this State was £551,656, made up of—

Free pensions—		
Salaried employees	£162,601	
Wages employees	28,909	
		£191,510
Contributory pensions		360,146
		£551,656

It is estimated that the increases proposed in the Bill will result in a further payment of £102,200 annually. This is a very heavy responsibility, more particularly when it is realised that the cost of pensions under the 1871 Act in the year 1938-39, which was then the only provision for the payment of pensions to ex-employees, was £134,241. In a little more than a decade, therefore, our annual pension bill, by the end of this financial year, will have increased by more than £519,000 or to a total little less than five times the cost in 1938-39.

A prime necessity is that we regulate the scale of our beneficence according to what is done or is proposed by other Australian States. Repeated and regular inquiries are made to ensure that our State does not lag behind others in its treatment of employees both in respect of

salary and wage conditions and superannuation benefits. Turning now to the Bill, it is proposed to increase pensions paid under the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act on a scale similar to that granted by the Commonwealth last year; namely, an increase of 20 per cent. in respect of the first eight units, such increase to be met from Consolidated Revenue.

The unit value of those particular units would be increased from £32 10s. to £39 per annum, and all other units would remain at the value of 12s. 6d. each or £32 10s. per annum. The increase will be applied to existing pensions as well as to future pensions, the increased annual cost to the State being about £74,000. The increase will commence from the 5th October, 1951. It is also proposed to increase the scale of units from the present maximum of 20 to 26. In view of the cost of living and the adjustments in salary rates, the unit range was previously increased beyond 12 in 1947.

The maximum number of 20 units is allowed an employee in receipt of a salary of £1,040 and over, to contribute for a pension of £650 per annum. This pension, however, now is not much greater than the present basic wage of approximately £536 per annum. Such an amount of pension would debar a contributor from receiving Commonwealth social service benefits, in spite of the fact that he makes substantial social service contributions, in addition to his payments to the State superannuation scheme. The provision of a maximum of 26 units affords higher paid contributors on the higher ranges of salary the opportunity to provide pensions for themselves on retirement on a scale which could be regarded as adequate to enable them to live in reasonable comfort after long and faithful service to the State. The maximum pension for 26 units under the new scale will be £897 per annum, but the number of cases will be limited.

In addition to the features mentioned, the opportunity has been taken to include in the Bill two items of a machinery nature to facilitate the working of the Act. The first of these refers to a contributor who receives an increase in salary after the date on which his contributions cease and after the date of his elected retirement age. If this increase brings his salary range into a new superannuation unit group, he will be permitted to increase the number of units he holds. The other amendment deals with the provident account. At present a male employee is permitted to withdraw the whole or portion of subscriptions made to the account at the expiration of five years.

Recently certain newly-appointed employees were required to make subscriptions to the provident account as a condition of service, in lieu of superannuation or life assurance. To ensure that in such

a case an employee does not withdraw his subscriptions at the expiration of the five years, a proviso has been added to the relative subsection to exclude him from the general provisions of that subsection. The Superannuation Act of 1871-1947, originally provided for the payment of pensions to permanent officers on the basis of a maximum pension of two-thirds of the average salary of an officer during the last three years of his service, the maximum pension being based on 40 years' continuous service.

Only officers whose commencing date of employment was prior to the passing of the Public Service Act on the 17th April, 1905, became entitled to pensions under this Act. Pensions are "free," being entirely met from the State's revenue without any form of contribution by the officer. These pensions were increased in an amending Act of 1947, which provides for the following increases:—

Twenty-five per cent. on all pensions up to £288 per annum, and the increase of pensions between £288 per annum and £360 per annum to £360 per annum.

It is now proposed to extend the benefits in the following manner:—

By further increasing pensions up to £260 per annum by 20 per cent.—maximum additional benefit £52 per annum;

by increasing all pensions between £260 per annum and £650 per annum by £52 per annum; and

by increasing pensions between £650 per annum and £702 per annum to £702 per annum.

The annual cost of these increases is estimated at £23,500.

The increase to the lower pension group, that is, pensioners now receiving £260 and less, will bring their rates of pension to equality with the average salary on which their pensions were originally based, in all cases where the officer had served for 40 years or more. In other cases up to current pensions of £360 per annum, the proposed increase will move the pension rate to near equality with salary on retirement.

It is recognised, of course, that the great majority of pensioners who will receive a pension of around the £300 per annum mark, retired at a time when such a salary was adequate for their needs. Now, of course, salaries they then received have been doubled, and even trebled. That, however, is a problem which the Government of Western Australia with its restricted financial resources cannot hope to remedy fully—it can only mitigate the circumstances and must expect the Federal Government through its social service benefits to accept a share of the responsibility. Some easement of the means test

has already been provided by the Commonwealth Government and more may be expected. To an extent, therefore, the lot of pensioners in the lower bracket has been improved by the State and Commonwealth, and may be further improved.

The limit of £702 for benefits under the 1871 scheme corresponds with the maximum amount payable to a contributory pensioner at present. The proposed increase in the availability of units from 20 to 26 will ultimately increase the contributory maximum pension rate to £897, but it is not expected that any officer at present in the service will obtain a pension higher than £702 per annum for some time.

The Government Employees Pension Act came into operation on the 1st February, 1949. It was the result of representation for the recognition of wages men, mostly railwaymen, who had served continuously in a permanent capacity from dates prior to the 17th April, 1905, and who had been refused pension rights under the 1871 Act. The maximum pension of £2 10s. per week was based on four units of pension under the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act of 1939.

Altogether about 300 retired wages men were brought under the provisions of this Act but deaths have since reduced their number to 200. It is proposed that they, in common with four unit pensioners under the contributory scheme, shall benefit by having their pensions increased by 20 per cent., bringing up a maximum pension of £156 per annum instead of £130 per annum, which they have been receiving. I explained earlier in my speech that the increases proposed by the Bill have been based on the greatest possible benefits to the greatest number of pensioners.

Of a total of 3,900 persons receiving pensions at the 30th June, 1951, only 15 will not receive an increase under the Bill. These 15, however, are all receiving "free" pensions of more than £702 per annum, and even though it would not cost much to extend the benefit of £52 per annum throughout the whole list of pensioners, the Government is of the opinion that there is no immediate necessity to grant them something which no other member of our service can yet obtain. Seventy-three per cent. of the estimated annual increase of £102,200, which will occur if the Bill receives parliamentary sanction, will be paid to pensioners now receiving less than £5 per week. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [8.18]: It is not usual for me to advocate passing a Bill through the second reading and Committee stages in one evening, but tonight I am asking members to adopt that course. I do so for this reason, that there are a number of the 1871 pensioners who were transferred from the State service to that

of the Commonwealth and who are now members of the Commonwealth Public Service Retired Officers' Association.

I understand that unless this Bill is dealt with in Committee tonight and a similar measure passes through the Commonwealth Parliament within the next few days, those men will not receive the benefits of this legislation. The Prime Minister's secretary has advised the local branch of the association that immediately the State Parliament has passed this measure, complementary legislation will be put through the Commonwealth Parliament, which is due to rise on the 29th November.

If we can put this Bill through the Committee stage this evening, it will then be far enough advanced for a wire to be sent to Canberra in order that legislation may be passed through both Houses there next week. If that is not done, these pensioners will not receive the benefit of this measure until the Commonwealth Parliament meets again, probably about April next.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—COAL MINING INDUSTRY LONG SERVICE LEAVE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [8.24] in moving the second reading said: The principal Act was introduced last year at the request of the Commonwealth Government for the purpose of implementing in this State the terms of an award issued by the Coal Industry Tribunal in October, 1949, granting long service leave to certain employees. This award specifically applied to members of the Australian Coal and Shale Employees' Federation, the Collie Miners' Union at that time being affiliated with the federation, which is primarily a New South Wales organisation.

As the Collie Miners' Union subsequently left the federation, some doubt has arisen as to whether members of the union were covered by the award, particularly in the case of miners who joined the organisation after the breakaway. To overcome this difficulty and with the approval of the Commonwealth Government, the definition of "award" in the principal Act was amended to include any award made by the local representative of the central reference board in regard to the Collie Coal Miners' Industrial Union of Workers of Western Australia, this being the registered name of the main union at Collie.

Since the Act was passed, the local reference board has issued awards relating not only to the main union but to several

craft unions forming part of the coal industry, such as the Collie District Deputies Union, the Amalgamated Engineering Union (Collie branch), the Australasian Society of Engineers (Collie branch), etc. In addition, variations and interpretations of awards have been made by the central reference board. The Commonwealth Government has asked that the principal Act be amended to widen the scope of the definition of "award" so that it will include all awards, interpretations and variations made prior to the 18th April, 1951, and all which are made subsequent to that date and are declared by proclamation to be included within the interpretation.

The Commonwealth Government which supplies the money for the long service leave, reserves the right to nominate the awards which shall be included within the interpretation, and the reason for the inclusion of the date mentioned—the 18th April, 1951—is because it has agreed to the inclusion of awards issued to that date. Awards issued subsequent to such date, will, after Commonwealth Government approval, be brought within the interpretation by proclamation. The Bill, if passed, will not only clarify the position but will also provide a simple future procedure, and for that reason is most desirable.

The State Government, with regard to long service leave administration, acts in effect as agent for the Commonwealth Government, and is reimbursed for all its expenditure. The fund is administered in this State by the Coal Miners' Pensions Board, which possesses the necessary records and has a system covering both pensions and long service leave matters. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [8.28] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to extend the length of the training period required of persons desirous of qualifying in Western Australia for a midwifery nursing certificate. At present a person possessing a certificate for general nursing has to undergo a further training term of nine months to obtain a midwifery certificate. The Bill proposes to extend this period to twelve months. In the case of a person without previous nursing training, the Bill seeks to extend the present training term of 18 months to two years.

Some years ago the training periods in Great Britain and New Zealand were also increased from nine months and 12 months to 18 months and two years. New South Wales and Victoria have followed suit and similar action is being contemplated by the other States. As a result, the countries and States that have taken this step no longer recognise the Western Australian midwifery certificate as equivalent to their own, and require any midwife from Western Australia desiring to practise in their countries or States, to undergo an additional period of training.

I am informed that some trainees from this State have already gone to other States to undergo their training, rather than remain in Western Australia and obtain a certificate which is not recognised elsewhere. It is natural for a nurse to wish to undergo her training at the centre providing the highest qualifications and whose certificates are acceptable elsewhere. This is a serious matter so far as Western Australia is concerned, as it has the effect of reducing the trainee intake at the King Edward Memorial Hospital, which is our largest training school, and which, to a great extent, is staffed with trainee midwives. It will also have the effect of reducing the staff at the King Edward hospital by no longer making it attractive to trainees from other States and from overseas.

The King Edward Memorial Hospital has been regarded as one of the finest training institutions in Australia and nearly half of the trainees there at present come from other States and countries. Of the 47 trainees at present at the hospital, 26 are local girls, seven of whom had no previous nursing training, 17 are from other States, mainly New South Wales and Victoria, three came from Great Britain and one from India. In addition, fifteen further interstate applications have been received for the next class as well as four from overseas. It is unlikely that further applications of this nature will be received if the Western Australian certificate is not recognisable elsewhere.

As well as these factors to which I have referred, it has been found, in common with the experience in Great Britain, New Zealand and in the rest of Australia, that the present training periods are too short to allow of a sound and complete training in midwifery. It must be remembered, too, that the general reduction in working hours has some effect on the time available for practical training. The policy at the King Edward hospital is for the nurses to work 48 hours a week, eight of which are overtime. The necessity for the working of overtime now is an indication that it would be advisable to ensure that no reduction takes place in the staff of the hospital. Little financial sacrifice would be demanded of any trainee by reason of the longer training period, as trainees

receive a weekly wage of £6 14s. 7d. On obtaining her obstetrical certificate, she would be paid £9 3s. 1d., per week in her first year as a sister.

At the written request of the Nurses' Union, the Bill, if passed by Parliament, will not be proclaimed until the completion of the nurses' quarters at King Edward hospital, which I am informed may be about March of next year. The Minister for Health has informed me that she has been advised by Dr. Love, representing the honorary staff of the hospital, that it is most advisable in the interests of the reputation and standards of King Edward Memorial Hospital, that the periods of training be extended as provided in the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [8.34]: I trust the House will agree to this measure. I do not want to say much about it except to reiterate what I said on another measure last week, namely, that to be trained in something and then to be deprived of reciprocity so that one cannot pursue one's interests in other parts of the world, is very wrong. I understand that unless this Bill is passed, we will fail to obtain reciprocity with the Eastern States, which means that our midwifery nurses will not be able to find employment in other States of Australia and we will not receive applications from nurses in other parts of Australia, as we do now to come to King Edward hospital for training.

I have made inquiries regarding the necessity for this amending legislation, and I agree with the Minister that it is essential that this matter be dealt with and the Bill passed. In conversation with the matron of the King Edward Memorial Hospital, I also learned that there are some applications from the Eastern States still pending, awaiting the passage of this Bill. So, if our training is not such as to make reciprocity possible with the Eastern States, applicants would not come to Western Australia. Therefore, I think it is vital that we pass this measure and bring our training of midwifery nurses on to a basis of reciprocity with the Eastern States.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 8.47 p.m.