

investigating what has taken place in the Eastern States where there are huge schemes, we can submit something to overcome the objection of the farmers we will have achieved an excellent result. I simply quote this to show that there is a possibility of increasing the water supplies in the metropolitan area. Mr. Davidson had this to say—

I will outline briefly the Avon project as submitted by me to the Government some years ago. I drew attention to the possibility of at least three large storage areas on the Avon between Toodyay and the edge of the coastal plain where the Avon River breaks through a narrow gorge at the foothills. I have walked from Northam to Midland Junction and followed the original trial survey of the transcontinental line finding the pegs and bench marks. Following my submission of the scheme to store the seasonal and periodic flood-flow of the Avon, with which was coupled a suggestion for harnessing part of the 486 ft. drop from the river at Northam to the Swan at Midland Junction, the Director of Public Works, Mr. Dumas, and Mr. McCullough, the Assistant Chief Civil Engineer of the Railway Department, and myself, visited two of the dam sites and made an inspection of the transcontinental trial survey.

Mr. Davidson believes that water could be easily and cheaply stored so that it would be available to irrigate the West Swan. I commend to the Government my suggestion to consolidate, instead of our country and Goldfields water supplies, all our water supplies because I think to do so would be of benefit to the State. At a later date I shall submit for the consideration of the Committee of the House a request that a Select Committee be appointed that could later be made into an honorary Royal Commission. I do not intend doing that with a view to holding up the work. The Government has already started to raise the bank of the Wellington Dam, and also of the one at Mundaring. That work can proceed. We know that at the beginning of next year a general election is to take place.

It would be in the interests of the State if we could give this scheme closer consideration than is possible under present conditions. I admit that this project has been talked of for many years, but when I look at the map I believe suggestions to improve it could be made although I am not going to criticise the work of the engineers. It is possible that we could arrive at a solution of the problem facing country members, and also the Government, brought about by the strong opposition to the present water

scheme by the farming community owing to the cost which will be imposed on them.

On motion by Hon. G. B. Wood, debate adjourned.

## ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday, the 3rd December, 1946.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 9.27 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Thursday, 28th November, 1946.*

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

## QUESTIONS.

### SOLDIER LAND SETTLEMENT.

*As to Dairy Holdings Purchased, etc.*

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Lands:

1, As to the 495 dairy holdings (offered by the Rural and Industries Bank for War Service land settlement purposes), which number was later reduced to 300, and ultimately to 225, was the position stabilised

at the last named figure, and have these 225 farms been actually purchased by the Commonwealth Government?

2, If so, have any, and how many, yet been occupied by returned Servicemen?

3, If not, what are his anticipations in that regard?

4, Does the Commonwealth Government still adhere to the 50-cow minimum?

5, As to wheat and sheep farms, do the 50 properties on offer for Service settlement from the Rural and Industries Bank represent the maximum to be secured from that source; how many, if any, of these have been finally taken over, and what is the probable fate of the balance?

6, Have powers of resumption yet been exercised under the Closer Settlement Act in respect of privately-held land?

7, If so, in respect to how many farms and what total number of acres, and are there substantial expectations of suitable properties from this source?

8, With regard to direct sales of privately-owned properties are offers from owners increasing or slackening and, in either case, are they sufficient in number to meet the Government's requirements?

9, What number of offers referred to in question 8 has been withdrawn from sale on account of alleged excessive delays in Canberra?

The MINISTER replied:

1, (a) No. (b) No properties have been purchased to date.

2, None.

3, Nineteen properties early in the New Year. Others to follow at regular intervals.

4, Yes.

5, Of the 189 Rural and Industries Bank properties reserved in the wheat and sheep areas as likely to be suitable for War Service Land Settlement, 56 have been rejected, 82 have been recommended for purchase, and 51 are still to be inspected. All Rural and Industries Bank properties are now submitted to the War Service Land Settlement as to suitability, but most of them will not satisfy the minimum requirements as to size and earning capacity. It is difficult to estimate the number that will finally be purchased.

6, No.

7, See answer to 6.

8, (a) Slackening. (b) No.

9, 338 properties have been withdrawn, some while under consideration by the State and others while under consideration by the Commonwealth. A considerable proportion of these were withdrawn when the Rural Loans Scheme was put into operation. A number was withdrawn before inspection and valuation.

#### FARMERS' UNION OF W.A.

##### *As to Approval for Incorporation.*

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Justice:

1, Has he held up his approval for the incorporation of the Farmers' Union of Western Australia under the Associations Incorporation Act, 1895?

2, If so, what are his reasons for so doing?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes.

2, Because it is considered that the rules of the Union are not in accord with the definition of the word "Association" in the Associations Incorporation Act, 1895.

#### ROAD BOARD ASSOCIATION AND CHAMBER OF AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRIES.

##### *As to Conference and Subjects for Discussion.*

Mr. PERKINS asked the Minister for Works:

1, Has he invited representatives of the Road Board Association to a conference with representatives of the Chamber of Automotive Industries and himself?

2, If so, what subjects are listed for discussion at such conference?

The PREMIER replied:

1 and 2, An invitation has been extended to the Road Board Association, the Country Municipal Councils' Association and the Chamber of Automotive Industries for two representatives of each of these organisations to confer with two representatives of the Public Works Department on the 9th December, 1946, to discuss the Chamber's proposals on the question of the creation of a co-ordinated system of licensing motor vehicles throughout Western Australia.

**RAILWAYS.***As to Mosman Park and Cottesloe Crossings.*

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Was the improved footbridge at Mosman Park over the railway station constructed by the Public Works Department?

2, In view of the demand of numerous residents in the Cottesloe area for facilities to enable old people and mothers with prams to cross the railway at Cottesloe station, particularly from the northern end, will he state whether the new job at Mosman Park is to be followed at Cottesloe?

3, If no action is proposed at present, should a deputation wait on the Minister for Works and himself regarding a request for this improvement?

The MINISTER replied:

1, No. It is being constructed by the Civil Engineering Branch of the Western Australian Government Railways.

2, A new bridge at Cottesloe is not proposed at present.

3, If claims for a new bridge at Cottesloe are submitted in writing to the Commissioner of Railways they will be considered.

**EAST PERTH POWER HOUSE.***As to Use of Alternative Fuel.*

Mr. McDONALD asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

1, What would be the cost of making alternative provision at the East Perth Power House for the production of electricity for the metropolitan area from liquid fuel?

2, Within what time is it estimated that the necessary plant for this purpose could be procured and installed?

3, In view of the unemployment and loss involved by stoppages of electricity supply due to failure of coal stocks, is it considered that the cost of an alternative plant, utilising liquid fuel, would be justified to ensure continuity of electricity supplies?

4, Is he aware that an increasing number of industrial firms are now establishing auxiliary plants to generate electricity from liquid fuel?

5, Would it not be more economical if an auxiliary plant utilising liquid fuel were

established at the East Perth Power House for use when required, thereby saving further capital outlay by business and industry in the metropolitan area in the provision of private and individual auxiliary plants for electricity generation?

The PREMIER replied:

1, It is not an economical proposition to provide oil burning equipment at the East Perth Power Station to supply the whole of the electrical power required for the metropolitan area. The estimated cost to equip five (5) boilers in the "A" Station is £39,150. This would allow of a rationed supply to industry.

2, The time before this equipment could be in use would depend on delivery. No date could be given with any reasonable degree of accuracy.

3, No.

4, Yes.

5, No.

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS,  
PRECEDENCE.**

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [4.35]: I move—

That for the remainder of the session, Government business shall take precedence of all motions and orders of the day on Wednesdays, as on all other days.

This motion is being moved a little later than usual. Last year, private members' business from October was taken on alternate Wednesdays and, from about this date, it was suspended and Government business took precedence. I appreciate the co-operation of private members during the whole of this session, and wish to assure them that opportunity will be given for the fullest consideration of any private members' business remaining on the notice paper.

Question put and passed.

**BILL—MARKETING OF POTATOES  
(No. 2).**

*Recommittal.*

On motion by the Minister for Agriculture, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clauses 5, 7 and 21.

*In Committee.*

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

### Clause 5—Interpretation:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:  
I move an amendment—

That after the word "of" in line 2 of the definition of "agent" the words "or sell or deliver" be inserted.

This will conform to a promise I made when the Bill was in Committee to provide for the inclusion of distributors as well as receiving agents. I propose to enlarge the definition of "agent" to include persons who sell or deliver.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister is so determined to have this Bill framed on lines of which he approves that it is no use arguing about the matter. But it is quite an innovation to use definition clauses to explain the powers, duties and authorities of any person. Definitions are used only to make clear language subsequently employed in a measure. This definition is going to be used to explain the duties of certain persons who afterwards may be appointed by the board.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:  
I move an amendment—

That the definition of "licensed distributor" inserted by a previous Committee be struck out.

There is no necessity for this definition, as the Bill does not subsequently contain any reference to licensed distributors. The definition was inserted when it was believed that further amendments would be made to the Bill making provision for such distributors. As those amendments were not subsequently made, there is no point in having this definition in the Bill.

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

### Clause 7—Constitution of Board:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Members will recall that when we amended this clause previously, we got into some difficulty and the clause as finally approved was not what the Committee really desired. To ensure that the clause shall read as was intended, an amendment is necessary. If I judge the requirements of members correctly, they were that two persons should be nominated by the Minister and neither was to be a person interested in the production of potatoes. That was achieved in a rather

negative way and it is far better to make it positive. I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of paragraph (a) after the word "and" the words "at least one of such persons shall possess mercantile experience in the handling of potatoes but shall not be" be struck out and the words "who are not" inserted in lieu.

Hon. N. Keenan: Why is the word "and" necessary?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:  
I think the syntax requires it.

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

### Clause 21—Registered agents:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:  
I move an amendment—

That a new subclause be inserted as follows:—“(5) While registered as aforesaid and within the area, if any, defined by the Board an agent may to the extent authorised by the Board take deliveries of potatoes from growers or sell or distribute potatoes on behalf of the Board.

The Board may impose conditions as to the exercise by the agent of his authority from the Board, and the agent shall observe and perform such conditions and such other duties and functions on behalf of the Board as the Board directs.”

We have amended the definition of agent to enable it to cover specifically persons who will act as distributors. This amendment is in furtherance of the same idea.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:  
I move an amendment—

That Subclause (6) be struck out.

This subclause is no longer required.

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

Bill reported with further amendments.

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

### Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th November.

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [4.40]: This Bill is to continue the operations of the Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act, 1945. It might appear to be a very innocuous Bill, but it is to

continue what I consider to be the very objectionable principle of control and regimentation by the Government.

Mr. Fox: You are a bad judge.

Mr. ABBOTT: However, having in view the conditions as put forward by the Premier, it seems to be unavoidable. He stated that blackmarketing in the building industry is rampant in the Eastern States and, from what I hear, that is true. It is peculiarly rampant among labour in the Eastern States. The labour there engaged in the building industry works for three or four days for its normal employers and does black market work for the rest of the week. That is only natural, when we consider the conditions under which the men work. A forty-hour week gives them every opportunity and the tremendous taxation gives them every incentive. The sooner those conditions can be altered, the sooner will it be better for everyone concerned.

I was pleased to learn from the Premier that a responsible commercial representative had been appointed in the Eastern States to act as our liaison officer for the purpose of obtaining the necessary building supplies and to ensure the availability of shipping space. It is appreciated—by me at any rate—that this idea has been followed up at last, because I have urged it in this House for the last two years. I have urged that a commercial representative should be appointed in the Eastern States to watch the interests of the Government in this connection, as well as the interests of private industry. I am glad to see that that has now been done and has been attended with considerable success. I hope the Government will give more attention to ideas put forward from this side of the House.

The Premier: We have had an officer over there for two and a half years.

Mr. ABBOTT: A part-time officer.

The Premier: No.

Mr. ABBOTT: I have urged such an appointment for more than two and a half years. The last comment the Minister made on the subject was that there was a part-time representative and that his appointment had proved very successful, so whether he has been there for two and a half years or not does not matter. His appointment was four years too late.

The Premier: You were not here then.

Mr. ABBOTT: I was. Look up the debates.

The Premier: You were unavoidably absent. There has been a permanent representative over there for two and a half years.

Mr. ABBOTT: I was pleased to see that Mr. Wallwork's endeavours have resulted in many channels being cleared and an improvement being effected in the supply of building materials. The Premier has pointed out that one of the major bottle-necks is lack of shipping, and that relates to the speed with which ships can be loaded and unloaded. It is regrettable to have to realise, as we all do, that the efficiency of the work on the Fremantle wharves during the last few years has diminished to a serious degree.

Mr. Fox: It is a pity some of you fellows would not go down and try it.

Mr. ABBOTT: I have worked on the wharves since the member for South Fremantle has.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think that has anything to do with the Bill.

Mr. ABBOTT: We can see what such responsible people as Mr. Illidge, President of the Perth Chamber of Commerce, think of the present position. At a meeting of the Federated Chambers of Commerce of Western Australia at Kalgoorlie, that gentleman, as reported in "The West Australian" of the 17th October, said—

The "River Fitzroy" arrived at Fremantle on July 30th last, but the goods from this vessel were not received into the warehouses until Friday last.

That would have been Friday, 11th October, so from the 30th July to the 11th October was the time taken to get the goods off a ship from the Eastern States.

Mr. Fox: Talk a bit of sense. You do not understand the position.

Mr. ABBOTT: The member for South Fremantle will not. He is not game to.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. ABBOTT: The reason for this was the Harbour Trust undermanning the wharves and the lumpers disobeying the regulations of the Arbitration Court.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in referring to the Arbitration Court.

Mr. ABBOTT: I want to show that the Premier dealt with one of the chief bottle-necks in the building industry.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Premier made no reference to the Arbitration Court in his speech.

Mr. ABBOTT: He did not, but I am trying to link it up in this way.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am afraid the hon. member cannot link it up in that way. He must keep to the Bill.

Mr. ABBOTT: As the Premier has stated, one of the chief difficulties is the bottle-neck resulting from lack of shipping and, as is well known, one of the chief causes of that bottle-neck is the unfortunate manner in which the loading, unloading and turning about of ships is carried on at present at the Fremantle wharves. Mr. Illidge, of the Chamber of Commerce, dealt with that matter and is reported to have said, "The turn-about of vessels at Fremantle—"

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Has not the hon. member already made that statement?

Mr. ABBOTT: No. Mr. Illidge is reported as having said—

The turn-about of vessels at Fremantle was now taking 50 per cent. longer than in pre-war days. Shipping agencies declared that there was an immense congestion of cargo at Fremantle owing to the present methods and waste of handling. The speed of working was low. The sorting and stacking of cargo at Fremantle was the worst in Australia. Consignees did not receive proper notice of when ships would receive outward cargo. No Sydney cargo had been shipped to Fremantle for over two months.

Mr. Fox: That was not the fault of the lumpers.

Mr. ABBOTT: I think it probably was the fault of the lumpers that no-one was able to get supplies from that ship from the 30th July to the 11th October. There is undoubtedly a good deal of waste time in shipping at Fremantle today and I hope the Premier will see that the scope of Mr. Wallwork's inquiry covers that phase of the industry.

The Premier: If I wanted a liaison officer I would not pick you.

Mr. ABBOTT: The Premier might do worse.

The Premier: I could not do worse.

Mr. ABBOTT: I just want to point that out.

Mr. Fox: Oh, for the good old days! Put men on the scrap heap at 40 years of age—that is what you want.

Mr. ABBOTT: The hon. member should have been on the scrap heap long ago.

The Premier: You should be there now.

Mr. Fox: You should have gone there long ago yourself.

Mr. ABBOTT: I doubt it.

The Premier: Well, keep it clean!

Mr. ABBOTT: The Premier, during the course of his speech, gave some figures regarding construction under the housing scheme up to the 31st December, 1945, and also for the 10 months ended the 31st October, 1946, but no figures were given dealing with the construction of war service homes. If the Premier has those figures readily available I should be interested to see them. Then again the Premier expressed the hope that the Western Australian quota of 2,500 homes for the year ended the 30th June next would be increased to 3,000 houses.

In all the circumstances, I hope that some more liberal view may be taken in connection with priorities so as to enable young married couples to share at least in the houses that will be allocated. I think these young people who are starting off in life deserve every encouragement and assistance. In that respect, I am sure the Premier is thoroughly sympathetic. From what I have said, members will probably have gauged that I consider the continuance of this legislation to be the lesser of two evils, and that control ought to be exercised for another year. However, the sooner the element of control is removed the better it will be for everyone. The Premier informed members that the Building Congress has taken no exception to the Bill, and, as far as I can find out, that is the position. In the circumstances, I support the second reading.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [5.2]: We are still living in an age of scarcity despite the fact that the war ceased more than a year ago. In the circumstances, I shall support the Bill. I see no alternative whatever to that course, but the difficulty that concerns me, in common with other representatives of city areas, is that during the past few years we have been importuned by electors to devote nearly all our spare time to endeavours to find accommodation for them, or to get one or other of the various permits required whether for building purposes, to secure

berths on a ship or a train, or, as happened in one instance, to secure a passage to Rottneest Island. I am very much afraid that some members have lost caste to an extent with their supporters because of their inability to accomplish what has been sought.

I have one very unfortunate case in my district. An elector has a wife who was very sick and he had a doctor's certificate indicating that it was necessary for him to take her to the hills immediately. For four or five years that man has been trying to erect a small place at Kalamunda or Darlington. He had all the materials required and the contract entered into preparatory to operations commencing. At one stage the plans were passed, but for some reason or another they were subsequently annulled. His efforts in that direction are still held up. Such instances make the situation very difficult for members of Parliament. In fact, I have been asked to get people out of gaol before now!

The Premier: Possibly they will be asking you to amend the Ten Commandments!

Mr. NORTH: Quite so. I am sure we will all be quite pleased when the controls that exist today can be removed. During the present situation that is not possible, and there is no alternative. In the circumstances, I shall support the second reading.

**MR. NEEDHAM** (Perth) [5.5]: With other members I was keenly interested in the speech delivered by the Premier when he introduced this legislation for a continuance of the control over building materials for a further 12 months. I felt somewhat uneasy when the member for North Perth was addressing the House, being under the impression that he intended to oppose further control. Before he finished that hon. member indicated that he realised he, with others, had to bow to the inevitable. It would certainly be very unfortunate indeed if the control over building materials were lifted now. The Premier indicated during his speech that it was very unfortunate for this State that the requisite controls were not imposed somewhat earlier. That they were not so imposed was not the fault of the Government but was due to a lack of co-operation between the Commonwealth and

the States, and when the Commonwealth Government saw fit to lift the controls, that gave the State Governments a chance immediately to re-impose them.

It was cheering to hear the Premier say that he hoped the target of 3,000 homes would be reached early next year. That is good news, but I fear that an even higher target will have to be aimed at before the acute housing shortage is made up. The Premier referred to the cost of housing in New South Wales and said that after the controls had been released there, building costs rose until they were now the highest in Australia. Goodness knows what would happen in this State from that standpoint were the controls lifted! Every member agrees that building costs today are much too high and the continuance of the control contemplated by the legislation is most desirable. Earlier in the session I and other members made reference to the high cost of house construction, which now represents a figure that takes them without the reach of the average worker. That serves to indicate the necessity for a continuance of the control over building materials.

The price of a house in which a man and his family could live comfortably is today considerably in excess of what it cost for a similar house in pre-war years. The average worker who is anxious to build and enjoy the security of his own home realises that under present day conditions it will take him the remainder of his lifetime to secure his equity and finally to own his dwelling. In fact, it may even take some portion of the lifetime of his children. The real reason why I am taking part in this debate is to refer particularly to the increased cost of houses. In a question I submitted to the Premier I expressed the hope that Mr. Wallwork, who was appointed to inquire into the supply of building materials, would also be requested to investigate the reasons for the high cost of house building.

It has been suggested that the principal cause of the increased cost lies at the door of the workers in the building trade. The member for North Perth indicated that, in his opinion, portion of the blame attached to the waterside workers. To lay the whole of the blame for the increased cost of building at the doors of the workers is merely a libel. The building trade workers today are

doing just as good a day's work as they ever did. Their wages have certainly gone up and to that extent there would be a corresponding increase in building costs, but that does not by any means fully explain the reason why houses are so expensive to build these days. I want the workers to enjoy the best housing conditions it is possible to provide for them in proportion to their means to pay.

I again express the hope that Mr. Wallwork in the course of his inquiries will endeavour to find out what are the real reasons for the extra cost of building. The increased wages for labour may be a factor but do not indicate a solution of the problem. To urge that the building trade worker is not doing his best these days is a libel. Those who make such a statement merely generalise and never submit any proof in support of their contention. In my opinion there are other major reasons for the situation, and I again urge the Premier to suggest to Mr. Wallwork that he direct his inquiries towards discovering where the real trouble is and what are the factors contributing to the high cost of building. I welcome the Bill and trust it will assist in the solution of the housing problem of today.

**MR. SEWARD** (Pingelly) [5.13]: I do not intend to delay the debate for long because I recognise it is necessary to renew the legislation. When the Bill was before the House last year it went to a conference, but finally it was passed in the form agreed to by the managers representing the two Houses. I remember that about two or three months afterwards I had never before seen so much painting as went on in the city. Some buildings were painted from roof to basement and in one instance the lower storey was painted three times in a colour that was supposed to be unobtainable at the time. I do not know how it could possibly have occurred. We passed the legislation and embodied in it various forms of restraint limiting the use of such materials to a certain amount. I think we prescribed that not more than £50 could be spent on the repairs to a private house and not more than £100 on business premises.

Despite that fact, within a few months not less than half-a-dozen buildings in Perth were painted from roof to basement. Of course, they may not attract very much notice in the city; but country people coming

to Perth who are not able to get building materials ask, "How is it that these people can have the work done in the city, while we cannot have it done in the country?" One business firm had a stone storey added to its building, and I think sufficient wood was used in the scaffolding to build a couple of houses. That makes one wonder what is the use of passing legislation such as this, when it is so flagrantly flouted. However, I recognise the need for continuing the control over building materials, and I must certainly admit that I have not seen so much repair work, including painting, going on during recent months.

The Premier: Paint is not controlled.

**MR. SEWARD**: But the labour in painting the buildings occupied two or three weeks. Many workmen were engaged on it and the cost must have exceeded £100. I hope we shall not again see what certainly looked like a complete disregard of an Act upon which so much time was spent last session. I fully intend to support the Bill, but I wanted to give utterance to these remarks.

**MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER** (Subiaceo) [5.17]: I am sorry I seem to be against most of the members of the House, but I cannot let the Bill pass without raising a protest. In my opinion, until building materials are decontrolled, building will be both costly and slow. Hundreds of people who today wish to build houses own their land, have the materials and also have a builder who would erect them, but they cannot get a permit. I shall quote one instance of eight people, including a young child, living in three rooms, one of which is a kitchen. In another instance, a young soldier, his English wife and a young baby, live with the man's father, mother, sisters and brothers. They have the land, the materials, and a builder ready to go on with the work, but cannot get a permit.

**MR. FOX**: How many rooms have you got?

**MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER**: The hon. member has never called to see.

The Premier: Will you give me the names of the eight people living in the three rooms?

**MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER**: Yes. I will give the Premier the names of many more.

The Premier: I would like to have them.



Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I shall be glad to supply them. The member for Perth said that building would become costly if we decontrolled building materials. It might, but only for a very limited period. It was contended by the Premier, I think, that we might build luxury homes; but who today wants to build a luxury home, knowing that we cannot obtain domestic help at all? All we want is simply some place in which to live. Many returned men are willing to put their deferred pay and an extra £100 or £200 into a building, if they could only secure a permit. Even if the building were a little more costly, it would at least be relieving the present congestion. As I have said, many young people are living with their "in-laws" in one or two rooms, and many of them are exceedingly unhappy. The wives of the men are distraught because, as I say, they are living with old people, and in consequence are very unhappy. I can supply to the Premier the name of another young man, a young corporal who came to tell me that his wife and child were living in one room and that they simply could not exist there any longer. He showed me a doctor's certificate advising his wife to go away. It is all very well for members opposite to smile. I wish some of them had to live like that.

The Minister for Lands: That is propaganda. Who is smiling?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Members opposite! The Minister for Lands is smiling like a tiger.

The Premier: It is quite untrue.

The Minister for Lands: I was trying to look intelligent.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Both young and old people are unhappy because they cannot secure homes, and the reason is that building materials are controlled. If they were decontrolled, I contend these people would be able to get homes. I do not want to be misunderstood. I am not asking for decontrol of rent.

Mr. Needham: Would you lift the control over building materials?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Yes.

Mr. Needham: You would be making a big mistake.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I do not think so.

Several members interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: At present we have so many controls that we might call our Australia not Australia-bound but Russia-bound. Only this morning another person came to me whose name I can give the Premier. He was able to get a permit but could not get a permit covering a garage. He was told, "You can have the building, but we consider you do not need a garage." He did need it, but bureaucracy said that he did not.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Would you permit him to have a garage as against a house for the eight persons living in one room?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: No, I would not. However, if we had decontrol of building materials, it would not matter whether the garage was erected or not. It is this control that is stopping the progress of Australia. The member for Perth talked about continuing the control for another year. I recall that in England after the last war it was said that controls would last only for a short time, but they continued for 13 years after the war—not so far as buildings were concerned, but over rents. I consider that until these controls are removed, we are retarding the progress of Australia. I therefore am wholeheartedly against the Bill.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle) [5.23]: Evidently the member for Subiaco represents the well-to-do portion of the community. I can quite realise what would happen if we had no control whatever over building materials. The people most urgently in need of homes would not get them. The well-to-do people, with money to invest in brick buildings, would get preference and would let the houses at exorbitant rents. They would be the people who would get all the bricks and the other necessary building materials. It is ridiculous to talk about discontinuing this control. In my opinion, the Workers' Homes Board is doing an excellent job. The member for Subiaco mentioned several cases of hardship, but I do not know why, if she is so well acquainted with those cases, she has not made representations to the proper authorities and endeavoured to get homes for these people.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: How do you know I have not?

Mr. FOX: Because the hon. member says the people are still living under the conditions she mentioned. Many similar instances were brought under my notice and I have been able to get homes for very bad cases of hardship.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Because you are privileged. You are on the Government's side.

Mr. FOX: I am not privileged at all. Mr. Bond, of the Workers' Homes Board, is doing an excellent job. The board does not favour any person. It does not grant favours to Labour members any more than it does to Opposition members. In fact, I think that at times Opposition members have done better than members on the Government side of the House. But I have nothing more to say on that subject, because I believe those entrusted with the control of building materials give a fair deal to everyone. Politics do not come into the matter at all.

The Premier: Hear, hear!

Mr. FOX: I say that with the full conviction that I am speaking the truth. I have no doubt that other members who have been in contact with the Workers' Homes Board will say the same. I had to wait nearly four years for something to be done for a personal friend, and that will show just how much political pull I have. I believe the existing shortage of houses could have been obviated if those who were in power 25 years ago had done their job. We heard quite a lot from the member for North Perth and I feel justified in saying a few words in reply to him. What led to the present shortage of houses was this: In 1925 the sum of £20,000,000 was set apart by a National Government to build homes, but up to the outbreak of war in 1939 only about £1,000,000 had been expended and very few homes had been built. I suppose we know the reason. It was because the people interested in home-building did not erect the class of home required by the ordinary working man. The working man wanted a home that he would have a reasonable chance of paying for—a wooden house with perhaps a tiled roof, costing between £500 and £600 before the war. Instead, those interested in house-building erected homes, costing from £800

to £1,000, that would not require any great expenditure for repairs.

If the National Government had done its job during the period from 1925 to 1939, we would not be in our present rotten position. I go further, I say that had the Workers' Homes Board been empowered to borrow money, many more homes would have been built between 1930 and 1939. I have not much more to say, but I wish to make further reference to the remarks of the member for North Perth. He made sweeping statements, without any explanation. It is very easy for him to stand up and say, "Such and such an organisation does the worst job in Australia." He knows nothing about the work in that particular industry. The work is not done in the same way in all the ports. In Fremantle a much greater service is rendered than in any other port of Australia. In Fremantle the Harbour Trust does all the shore work.

In most of the other ports the shipping companies do all the work. In Western Australia, the Harbour Trust sorts the cargo, stores it before it is shifted, stores it after it comes out of the ship, stacks it according to the marks of the various firms and delivers it. That is not done in other ports. The member for North Perth makes a sweeping condemnation without knowing anything whatever about the subject.

Mr. Abbott: Do you not think it is taking too long now?

Mr. FOX: I wish the hon. member had a good consignment coming from the Eastern States and that the lumpers knew exactly what he said! That is the way in which industrial disputes start throughout Australia. Men run the workers down to the lowest; they say they do not do a decent day's work. I remember the time when right throughout Australia hundreds of men stood up and—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. FOX: I would like to reply to the member for North Perth.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member has replied to the member for North Perth.

Mr. FOX: I have not said as much as I would like to. At any rate, if you, Mr. Speaker, will not permit me to proceed I shall have to rest content with what I have said.

Mr. Abbott: Tell me afterwards.

Mr. FOX: I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

**MR. J. HEGNEY** (Middle Swan) [5.29]: I propose to support the second reading of the Bill. I think it essential that control should be continued. I represent an electorate in the metropolitan area which has diverse interests and a somewhat scattered population. It is a district where buildings are growing in number. I have just come in from a part of the electorate where the Workers' Homes Board is completing several homes. I know of people who are anxious to secure homes in the district and so I come in close contact with the department dealing with the control of building materials. Every person on whose behalf I have made representations to the department is getting fair and reasonable consideration. I told them of the difficulties of securing a permit and said that if it was not for the fact of there being control of materials they, as people in lower income groups, would not have a chance of getting homes because those who have the wherewithal to buy materials would be the ones who would be building. The workers would not be in the hunt. For that reason I have not yet met one person who is dissatisfied with the system of apportioning the materials available for the benefit of those who are the worst housed.

There are difficult cases in each electorate, and the trouble is war-caused. I can recall being on a deputation to the late Rt. Hon. John Curtin when he dealt with the matter of the timber supplies of Australia, and of Western Australia particularly. He replied to a leading article of "The West Australian" at that time, and pointed out that the timber resources of this country were required for building hutments and warehouses close to where the Australian troops were engaged with the enemy. Our housing programme was retarded because the skilled craftsmen were engaged in other activities. Over 300 carpenters were building wooden ships at Fremantle. I can recall the member for Irwin-Moore urging on the Government the necessity to build these ships. It was only possible for ships to be built in Western Australia by our carpenters becoming shipwrights. While they were doing that they were not building homes. Many carpenters, not engaged

on ship building, were employed on defence work throughout the country.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: About 80 carpenters were diverted to ship building.

**Mr. J. HEGNEY**: Over 300 carpenters were engaged in ship building in this State, and while they were so employed they were not building homes. Before the war many of our workers were badly housed—that certainly was the position in my district—because they did not have the income to pay a decent rent or to buy a home. The war has come and gone and many workers have saved money during the period of the war by virtue of having been in the Armed Forces, or having had full-time and better employment. Consequently they are in a position to build homes whereas, in pre-war days, they were not. Because there is more than £500,000,000 of the people's savings in the Commonwealth Savings Bank, and very little material available, there is need for control.

I represent many workers in the Middle Swan electorate, and I have told them quite frankly that without these controls they would have no chance at all of getting houses for years to come. We know that piping, which is so necessary, is difficult to obtain. If there was an open go we can imagine the black marketing there would be. The State Government is to be congratulated on having accepted this responsibility. The Commonwealth Government shed this control because it was unpopular; because of criticism and general dissatisfaction. That Government lifted the control in the case of homes costing up to £1,200 so that, for a while, there were no restrictions. As a result there was a demand made on resources and materials available at the time and that rendered it difficult for the more worthy cases to be dealt with. Without building controls many structures, that are not so urgent as are houses for the people, would be erected. Hotels, picture theatres and such buildings would be constructed. They might be useful from the point of view of the convenience of the people, but we are trying to provide adequate housing accommodation for everyone. Our home building is well in arrears.

The member for South Fremantle emphasised that the Commonwealth Government—the Bruce-Page Government I think—introduced a Commonwealth housing scheme and

appropriated £10,000,000 for the purpose of building houses in Australia. Only a small portion of that sum was spent on building homes throughout the Commonwealth. Before the war the Workers' Homes Board, which was engaged in building homes, had difficulty in getting loan funds for the purpose. If I remember correctly there were 700 applicants waiting for houses. Private contractors were building homes, but the difficulty was to secure sufficient funds for the purpose of developing a housing programme in the interests of the people. There was, as a result, inadequate housing accommodation prior to the war, due, in some cases, to lack of funds and shortage of income on the part of the people because of having passed through 10 years of depression. It would suit me if controls were lifted, but I think the right and proper thing is for this Government to continue them until adequate supplies of building materials are available.

**MR. HILL** (Albany) [5.38]: I cannot allow the remarks of the member for Subiaco to pass without saying something. I am still classed on the electoral roll as a plumber, and I still take a certain amount of interest in the building business. Controls are necessary owing to the acute shortage of building materials, and if they were lifted there would be chaos. I was pleased to hear the Premier, by interjection, ask the hon. member to give the names of the cases to which she referred. I have had a lot to do with the Workers' Homes Board and, although I am not a member of the Government—in fact I am a critic of it—my dealings with the board have not been affected in any way. I have received nothing but courtesy and assistance from the officials of the board, and I refer particularly to Mr. Smith, the assistant secretary, and Mr. Bond, the secretary. I stress the fact that while the shortage of materials continues it is essential, in the interests of the State, that controls be maintained.

**MR. CROSS** (Canning) [5.40]: I would not have risen but for the remarkable utterances of the member for Subiaco who, knowing nothing whatsoever about the subject, makes reckless statements which some people might be silly enough to believe. We must either have control or chaos. Let me give an illustration of what has happened in the

case of one article that is not controlled. Everyone knows that recently there was a bad famine in India. Now, linseed comes from India and because of the shortage there none was to be shipped to Australia. It was well known that not only would there be a shortage of linseed oil paints, but also of that special paint known as dulux. That paint was not controlled, and neither was linseed. Two shrewd men in the Eastern States bought up practically the whole of the stock of dulux in Australia. I tried in four States to get a quart tin of dulux of a certain colour, but there was none available, and neither was there any flat paint; and there is none now. But one or two people have plenty of these commodities to be dish-ed out in contracts that they get in the East because they were wealthy enough to buy the lot.

I know people in this State who are waiting to build hotels, and there are two theatrical companies wanting to erect a series of theatres. If the controls were lifted they would have equal preference with housing. I was pleased to hear the member for Albany mention the fairness of the officials, including Mr. Bond, Mr. Smith and Mr. Irvine, of the Workers' Homes Board. They have laid down a policy to give permits to the people who deserve them most. Today I had to write a letter to a man at Mt. Hawthorn. He has a wooden house in which only he and his wife live. He wants to build a new home in Subiaco for the two of them, and, because Mr. Millington was away, he asked me to get a permit for him.

**MR. SPEAKER**: Order! The hon. member must say, "the member for Mt. Hawthorn" and not, "Mr. Millington."

**MR. CROSS**: I apologise. I told this man that he had no chance of getting a permit, but I did see the Workers' Homes Board.

**MR. J. Hegney**: Not to live in Subiaco, anyhow.

**MR. CROSS**: He wanted to build a larger house, and he had plenty of money to pay for it, too. The position is acute, and there are worse cases than those mentioned by the member for Subiaco. Well, what can we expect when the building of houses ceased in this State for six years and when, during that time, our population increased by 40,000? The only proper way for everyone to get a fair spin is to permit the materials, that are available, to be given to those who

most deserve them, and that is what the Bill seeks to do. I support the measure and entirely dissociate myself from the irresponsible remarks of the member for Subiaco.

**MR. PERKINS (York)** [5.45]: I intend to support the Bill. In the circumstances I think one should say something about how the control system is working. We all regret the necessity for such control, but the fact is that these essential materials are in short supply through no fault of any particular persons or organisations. The function of the Workers' Homes Board is merely to apportion the materials in as fair a way as possible. I believe it is doing an excellent job. All my experience indicates that it is attempting to be as fair as possible and, while it is inevitable that some mistakes shall be made from time to time, the officers of the board appear to be as careful as they can be, and I have no doubt they are being scrupulously fair. The position now existing is an extremely difficult one, but to lift the control would make it ten times worse than it is at present. Many members have spoken of the amount of non-essential building that would then be likely to go on. I agree that such building would be injudicious, but an even worse effect than that would be the inevitable increase in building costs.

I believe that at present a very material factor in increased building costs is the uncertainty of obtaining supplies of materials. Builders all say that if they could get a team of men on to a job and go straight through with it and complete the building, their costs would be considerably reduced compared with what they are when they only get a portion of the building done and they are held up through a shortage of materials. That unfortunately is happening at present. I believe that through its control the Workers' Homes Board is doing all it can to ensure that buildings in course of construction are being carried through with the minimum delay that is possible in the circumstances. Therefore not only from the point of view of apportioning the materials as fairly as possible in the circumstances I also believe that in order to keep the costs of building within reasonable bounds, it is vital that this control should be carried on. The position has been very much worsened

by reason of the difficulty that most country people found through the period between 1930 and 1940, the years of depression, when the prices of most agricultural products were rather low.

While there was a very great need for building in country districts at that time unfortunately most people living there, particularly the farming community, found themselves in a financial position that prevented them from carrying out the necessary building although they themselves would agree and any other disinterested party would agree that there was a great need for such building. The financial position of the farmers and most people of the community has today improved, and there is a strong urge to do much of that building which should have been done between the years 1930 and 1940 if the financial position had made it possible for these people to carry out such a programme. Now, unfortunately, building supplies are short just when there is a great need to carry out a housing policy. Not only is there pressure brought to bear on a building programme but there is this unnatural lag in building particularly in the country districts due to the unfortunate position that occurred between 1930 and 1940.

Perhaps an explanation of the position as I see it in country towns may not be amiss. It is extraordinary to me that there have not been more applications for houses under the Commonwealth Housing Scheme from country towns. There have been a few of these, but not as many as one would have expected. The housing position in those country towns at present is more acute than it is in the metropolitan area. The position exists in country towns that while there is only limited housing available, no more labour can be employed there. I know of cases of various business undertakings, banks for instance, where more married men would be employed in country towns if houses were available. As the housing is not available, those people are not employed. Unfortunately this is having a bad effect on the normal development of our country towns.

Some of the houses in the wheatbelt towns that are available for letting are not of a particularly good type, and seem to be rented at from 12s. 6d. to £1 per week, the average being 16s. or 17s. per week. The demand seems to exist for that type of

house, whereas the average cost to the tenant of the houses that are being erected by the housing commission ranges from 25s. to 27s. 6d. per week. That is based on the actual cost of the house and on the economic rent, or rent computed at one-fifth of the family income. In most cases one-fifth of the income permits of tenants paying from 25s. to 27 6d. per week. People who are living in houses the rent of which is less than £1 a week are disinclined to apply for commission houses which will cost them anything from 25s. to 27s. 6d. a week. Notwithstanding that they could get a much better house to live in if they secured one of the commission houses, they apparently prefer the cheaper type.

Mr. Watts: Undoubtedly that is so.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not want to stop the hon. member, but I think he is getting away from the Bill and dealing with price-fixing and all sorts of things.

Mr. PERKINS: I am pointing to the reason for the lack of applications for homes from country districts. I have discussed this matter already with officers of the Workers' Homes Board and I think they probably appreciate the position now. To any person not conversant with the general situation, the set-up must seem to be extraordinary. I think that in many cases people who could afford to build in these country towns, and who are living in rented houses costing less than £1 a week, are not applying for permits to build because they believe that costs are high and there is some difficulty in getting permits. They are therefore delaying their applications until some future time. I believe it would be the means of easing the position and making it less difficult if those people were to apply for building permits and get into their own homes because they are permanent residents in the towns concerned. They would thus free the houses they are now living in for people who are not permanent residents, but desire somewhere in which to live. It is a complicated position, but it is one for which no Government department is responsible.

To my knowledge the Workers' Homes Board in all its sections is doing its best to meet the position and assist people to improve their lot. The only other feature to which I wish to refer is in regard to repairs on farm properties. Many applications are

coming from people for ordinary repairs in such instances. There is no direct provision in the regulations for the allotment of material for such a purpose. Here again I have found that the Workers' Homes Board has been prepared to stretch its interpretation of the Act to the limit, and in cases of great urgency I have found that it has taken all steps possible to make such materials available on our farms, particularly in regard to water supplies. I support the Bill and cannot imagine that any other action can be taken than to carry on the control which, although we do not like it, we realise is absolutely vital at present.

**MR. McDONALD** (West Perth) [5.56]: I would not have risen but for the fact that almost every other member has risen. This is a measure which I think, in general, should be passed. So far as my own side of politics is concerned, it is specifically written into our political views that until materials return to normal there should be control of housing, that first priority should be given to returned soldiers and those in sub-standard houses, and then that the larger families of children should be catered for. If we are to carry out that objective, we must have some controlling agency, and the controlling agency in this case is the Workers' Homes Board. There is the contrary view. Within the last half hour or so I have been running through the latest publication issued by the United States Department of Information. They have their own view there. It is going to be interesting to see whether they will more speedily return to lower costs and greater supplies of materials than will those countries that have a regulated economy. I think they were premature in what they did. What they have done is to restore, with some exceptions, the law of supply and demand as a means of regulating the supply of materials, and in particular they have restored freedom of contract regarding wages which had been pegged as they have been in Australia.

There is considerable resentment at the pegging of wages which are pegged by law just as our right to deal in building materials and the erection of houses is also pegged by law. I think that all these controls of wages, as well as of building materials need to continue during the period when we are far from getting back to normal conditions and a proper equilibrium between

supply and demand. At present we are determining in the Commonwealth sphere whether some relaxation cannot be allowed in the case of wages. It is possible that some relaxation, not too expansive so as to upset the economy of the country, may be allowed in regard to pegged wages.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** I hope the hon. member is not going to start an argument on the basic wage.

**Mr. McDONALD:** No, Mr. Speaker. I am dealing with control generally and pointing out that our control system is a wide one and is one of the chief factors having a place in our economy.

**Hon. W. D. Johnson:** If you single out one factor, you must also study the effect on the others.

**Mr. McDONALD:** That is so. We cannot allow wages to go up indefinitely without upsetting or affecting the cost of houses. It is a broad picture we have to regard in dealing with matters of this kind. I hope that the economy of our country will permit of some assistance being given in the case of those who are limited by pegged wages to some extent and so I hope that an extended production of materials will gradually allow of some relaxation in controls.

In the meantime, the measure introduced by the Premier to continue this controlling Act for a further year is a very modest one, and I think it should be accepted by this House. The resentment against building controls does not come from people who may be described as wealthy, if such exist today. In my experience, those people have their homes and are not concerned. They are fortunate in having good homes already. The resentment I spoke of comes from people on smaller incomes, people with not much capital, perhaps £200, £300, £500. These people argue, "I can go to a building society or some institution and get my house built. I do not want help from the Government. Why, therefore, am I prevented from doing so by your building controls?" In other cases, men have a little money, sufficient to buy materials and they put their case in this way, "I can build this house myself and there is no need to employ labour for the building. Why, therefore, cannot I get material?"

It is from people in those positions that the restiveness against building controls

arises. Taking the long view, however, they must be subordinate to the public interest and to the allotment of preferential rights to those people whose need is greatest, and to see that this is done is the function of the Workers' Homes Board today. In addition, it is re-assuring to public sentiment and feeling to know that we have a responsible body endeavouring to make certain that there is no exploitation, no monopoly or the exercise of influence to get an undue share of building materials in such short supply. I consider that the board fills an important function in giving the public confidence that the materials in short supply are being allocated according to the most equitable system that we can devise.

I should like to say—and I am sure I voice the sentiments of every member in this—that we have learnt to expect a high standard of public duty from all our State public servants. They have been guided by a due sense of responsibility, and we are fortunate in having public servants who approach their duties with such a sense of responsibility. This attitude, I am sure, is the attitude of the Workers' Homes Board, and we feel in its members the same confidence as we feel in other departments of the public service.

**The Premier:** That is very gracious of you and it is very true.

**Mr. McDONALD:** I have uttered similar sentiments before, but I think it worthwhile repeating them on this occasion. As a member of a party that first introduced controls during the war and brought in price controls within four days of the outbreak of war, I feel that controls must, in the interests of the people, continue for some time yet, and this particular control of building materials and housing is one that should remain in force until we can see that the equilibrium of supply and demand has been restored.

**HON. W. D. JOHNSON** (Guildford-Midland) [6.5]: I would like to add a few words to the remarks of those who have supported the Bill and would like to support all that the member for West Perth has said. I wish that all departments were as scrupulously fair in their judgment and administration as the Workers' Homes Board, in my experience, has been. I believe there are places where we might have

a little more fairness and a little more equitable distribution. However, that point is not under discussion.

There are one or two aspects that I would like to amplify. I subscribe wholeheartedly to the statement that, without control, the workers—I mean the people most in need of homes—would get possibly less consideration than they are receiving under existing conditions. The member for West Perth spoke of a man who has £300 or £400, and the man who has shares in a building society and could get assistance to build from the society; but we have to think of those poor wretches in receipt of the basic wage, struggling to bring up a large family, men who have not £300 and have not been able to take a share in a building society. We can sympathise with the point of view of the man who has saved £300 to spend on a home. He says, "I have been saving my money and my wife has been putting up with grave domestic inconvenience because we wanted to get the home we have been dreaming of." That man finds he is being put off from month to month and is not given an opportunity to use the money he has set aside for this special purpose.

There is only one way to deal with this and that is for members to follow up, in their individual constituencies, the decisions of the board on the applications approved. By a process of comparison, we can judge—or at least I believe I can—the soundness of the board's administration. I keep a list of all the applications and permits that come under my notice and regularly go to the Workers' Homes Board and see Mr. Smith or Mr. Bond, produce my list and with him go through the board's decisions. By such means I am able to check up on what is being done. In going around my constituency, I may see other buildings being erected that I knew nothing of, and I can check up on them also. I have done quite a lot in this way, and while I have experienced a little irritation at times when I could not get my own way, I cannot say that in any of my checking have I found that any injustice was actually being done.

Let me give an idea of where the criticism comes in. I recall the time when the house costing up to £1,200 was freed from Commonwealth control. This

lasted for only a brief period but, in that brief period, a speculative builder started the erection of a couple of houses. The matter was rectified in a matter of days, but the foundations of those houses had been laid and the material for them had been rushed on to the job. I immediately checked up to ascertain how this man got started so quickly, and learnt that he had hopped in at once and started the foundations and got as far as he could with the buildings within the time, using all his resources to that end. He had sense enough to appreciate that this freedom would be short-lived. Indeed, he admitted that he knew it could not last, and so he made the maximum use of it. He actually built two houses for speculation; he did not need them for himself.

Hon. N. Keenan: Where was that?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: In the metropolitan area.

Mr. Mann: What is his name?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: There is no need to give his name.

Mr. Watts: In which suburb did this happen?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I am merely giving an illustration. Quite a number of people have quoted the work of this speculative builder. The material had been acquired, and naturally the board had to permit the houses to be completed. The builder had started in all good faith; he had a perfect right to start building. Actually he had more energy than other people and got in while he was able to do so. Many people, however, would quote such an illustration and blame the board for it, whereas the board had no jurisdiction to interfere. The Government, appreciating the position and influenced by the board's experience, quickly stepped in and stopped the looseness created by the change-over from Commonwealth to State control.

There is another matter bearing on the supply of material. A large quantity of material is being utilised for the Commonwealth housing scheme. The member for York made a good point—I know this from practical experience—that the local authorities in a number of country towns did not respond to the invitation sent to them. Forms were sent to the local authorities to ascertain what they needed in their areas in the way of increased housing accommodation. In Midland Junction, for some reason or other,



a certain amount of hostility was displayed to the Commonwealth housing scheme. The matter was discussed in the workshops. While the people of that district were hesitating and criticising, the people of Bassendean lost no time in getting their forms completed for the housing required in that place. The result was that the board, having the requisition signed by the Bassendean people, was able to get the authorisation for those houses, but the Midland Junction people missed because they did not submit their applications at the time. The buildings in Bassendean progressed, and there was public criticism that houses were being erected in Bassendean while little or nothing was being done in Midland Junction. This difference was largely due to the misjudgment on the part of one authority and the activity on the part of the other. This brings me to the point dealing with the control of materials. Take Bassendean as an illustration, where upwards of 50 of these Commonwealth houses are being erected. Their requirements have to be supplied from the materials available in this State.

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

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: When the House suspended for tea, I was pointing out that in this State a fair number of Commonwealth houses were being built and that they had to be supplied from the State's production of building materials. I think the Premier, when speaking to the Bill, pointed out that there were about 570 Commonwealth houses in course of construction. We have only to appreciate that number to realise the draw which that has made upon the limited materials available. The Workers' Homes Board must keep those buildings going and try at the same time so to distribute the materials as to relieve the distress of others claiming accommodation and unable to be accommodated by the houses built by the Commonwealth.

*[Mr. Rodoreda took the Chair.]*

Mr. Doney: In what parts of the State do you think the housing shortage is most acute?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I think it is becoming more acute in the country districts. I was about to develop that point. The position is that of the 570 houses which are

being built, the big majority, I should say, are being erected in the more congested centres of population or, one might say, in the more industrialised areas, with the result that the absorption of the materials for those Commonwealth houses, which are somewhat circumscribed in their service and in the area which they propose to serve, does make it difficult and limits the amount of material available for country applicants. The country applicants evidently did not appreciate the advantages to be gained by applying for a Commonwealth home, and we must all realise that the Commonwealth's policy was decentralisation. The Commonwealth Government was preaching decentralisation of a most pronounced kind at the time it distributed the application forms for people to declare whether they did or did not want homes built. Therefore it would appear from the figures and the actual operations that the country people did not apply, even proportionately to population, to the extent that those in other parts applied.

Mr. McLarty: Country people did not get any preference.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No; but I am of opinion that had there been more enthusiasm in the country as to the advantages to be gained from the acquisition of a Commonwealth home; if there had been an enthusiasm proportionate to that exhibited in the metropolitan area, the position would have been totally different today. I do not want to repeat myself, but the materials available are being absorbed by those 570 homes in course of construction, and will be used in many hundreds that are in course of preparation; and there is a hampering of operations in the country districts because of competition from that type of building.

Mr. Doney: Do you not think that if the country people had been amply advised, in the same way as the townspeople were; they would have responded?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I think all local governing bodies throughout the State received the invitation at the same time.

Mr. McLarty: That is true.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I base my opinion on knowledge of my own electorate where road boards and municipalities received the invitation at the same time. That indicated to me that it was a general invitation and one that was widely distributed,

not in this State alone but in every State of the Commonwealth. The position is, of course, that it was evidently not as fully appreciated in one place as it was in another. Again, we must realise that there are distinct advantages in pushing on the building of Commonwealth homes. I admit that it does limit the chances of families quoted by the member for West Perth and those referred to by the member for Subiaco. But the fact remains that homes are being erected on the most economical basis, and that is what we have to study. The State could not undertake building on mass-production lines. When I say "on mass production lines," I mean that the State's resources are not as great as the resources of the Commonwealth, and there is therefore an unlimited opportunity, from a financial point of view, for the Commonwealth that is not available to the State. So, by adopting the wise course of making the maximum use of Commonwealth money, we enabled the Workers' Homes Board to go in for mass-production—which, of course, brings economy as distinct from the position with regard to the erection of individual homes, which are more costly.

I admit that the Commonwealth home, generally speaking, is more stable and more expensive. The workmanship is good and the materials are of the best. The number of timber houses erected is small compared with the number of brick houses. I am speaking from knowledge of the metropolitan area only. The reason is that these homes are erected as much as possible in centres where there are already roads, electric light and other public necessities available. That is to say, they are erected in brick areas, and a great number of the buildings are influenced by that circumstance. In addition, it would appear that the Commonwealth leans towards stability to a greater extent than possibly the State would. We can understand that, because, after all, its policy is Australia-wide. We have the distinct advantage of a wonderfully lasting building material in the shape of jarrah, and also asbestos, and with those materials an economic home can be built that is very habitable and can be made very attractive. Nevertheless, the Commonwealth does not specially cater for that kind of building. It looks upon its building ambitions as being more Commonwealth-wide than State circumscribed. There is another phase. This policy as adopted by the Work-

ers' Homes Board is sound and economic from the point of view of State needs. We have to be sensible and realise the State's limitations. We are not one of the favoured States able to build up very big reserves.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation taking place.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: In other States, where big reserves have been amassed, those reserves are largely held for the extension of building, but in this State we were not fortunate enough. War expenditure here did not give us an opportunity to accumulate reserves to that extent, with the result that if it were not for the Commonwealth homes, our building programme would not be as far advanced or as buoyant as it is, and would not be proceeding at its present pace. That position would not have prevailed if we had not had this Commonwealth capital to assist the State to carry out its obligations. So I think it is a distinct economic advantage to the State, although I appreciate it is subject to criticism by those who feel they should get some of the materials. The fact remains, if we take the long, sound, economic view, that the Workers' Homes Board, no doubt influenced by both Commonwealth and State policy, is proceeding along right lines.

There is another interesting position. The member for Subiaco made a great appeal for the repeal of controls; but we have to be sensible about that also, because we know there is a tremendous lot of black money held by people. When I say black money, I mean money stored under mattresses and in other places; money that has never been declared because of the taxation liabilities and implications. The little information one can obtain on the matter is most interesting. People who have been hoarding this money are experiencing considerable difficulty in getting rid of it. So long as there are controls, they will continue to have trouble in disposing of it. If the proposition of the member for Subiaco were given effect to, they would have a wonderful avenue for unloading that money by converting it into building materials. It would thus be absorbed. They do not care what they pay. Without controls, they are the people who make prices soar, because they have this hidden wealth and have to dispose of it.

Today there is any amount of this money and thousands of people throughout Aus-

tralia are suffering headaches because they cannot unload it. What they are asking for and desire is a free go, such as the people in America had. As the member for West Perth knows, after a little freedom of that sort, the position became so hopeless from a community point of view—so chaotic—that the American administration had again to exercise some control. The explanation is that this money is available and money that is hoarded is money which runs loose when controls are removed. People have hoarded this money, and it is a source of anxiety to them. They do not know what to do with it because the Taxation Commissioner is watching their every move. They would use the removal of controls as a glorious opportunity to dispose of it. From that point of view, I like controls.

The more control there is and the longer it lasts, the sooner we shall be able to tax these people who have evaded responsibility by not declaring their full income and paying the taxation they should have paid, the same as other citizens. We pick up the papers regularly and read where the taxation authorities have caught such people. They will all be caught sooner or later, provided we maintain the controls, but without control they will escape. I want to see the control continued for that purpose, to assist the Commonwealth Treasurer to get that which is his and which should not be hoarded by individuals who have not been straightforward in declaring their incomes. I agree with the member for West Perth that we must take control of wages and see that they are so adjusted as to fit in with the general economic position of the Commonwealth. If we control wages we must control commodities and prices, or it will be distinctly unfair.

It would be a grave injustice to the workers to say that they shall be controlled in one direction while others are removed from control and given opportunity to exploit. I am proud of the position in which Australia is, and I do not think that in any other part of the world the economy is so balanced and justly controlled as in the Commonwealth today. The attacks made on Mr. Dedman when he first started these controls will be remembered. He was flayed from pillar to post, but he stuck to his guns and did his job, and all who are just will say that he was one of the ablest men we have had in Australia during that period.

He carried out the desire of his Government, with the result that today our economy is sound and bears comparison with that in any other part of the Empire or of the world.

Mr. Doney: But control is quite normal in wartime. It is inescapable.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Yes, but the hon. member knows perfectly well that it was adversely criticised in this House during wartime.

Mr. Doney: Yes, that is so.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It was a job well done, but while it was being done there was a great deal of adverse criticism. Thank goodness we had a Minister strong and determined enough to see it through, regardless of criticism. The position in Australia today is sound as compared with other parts of the world.

Mr. Mann: How do you know? Are you an authority on world affairs?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No. I leave that to the hon. member, who has more opportunity of reading and studying than I have. Possibly he could absorb and digest it better than I can. All I do is to read and try to digest what I have read, up to my capacity. Having done that, I have the courage to express my views, both publicly and in this House, where they are recorded. On my reading and on my study of economics, I am satisfied that Australia is sounder today than any other part of the world. No doubt the member for Beverley will show me where I am wrong but, if he cannot do that, he has no right to challenge me when I am outlining my conclusions and convictions. I commend the State Government for its foresight in introducing that Bill at an earlier stage to overcome the weaknesses that had crept in owing to the £1,200 limitation. That was a grave mistake on the part of the Commonwealth Government, but it was rectified as soon as it was discovered, because of the activity of this Government and the Workers' Homes Board, and the legislation that was introduced.

Since then we have had our troubles, but the board has watched the position carefully and the Government has appointed experts, and has given them authority to investigate and discover what was wrong with the supply of materials, and so on. As a result of that, increased amounts of material have been available, and the production of bricks

and timber has increased. Then the Government introduced this measure, controlling materials. That was an exceedingly wise move, comparable to the Government's attitude on the dangerous £1,200 limitation. It would be a calamity to this State if it were not continued and if the controls were lifted. If the member for Subiaco has any consideration for the people in her electorate who have not much money and who have not been able to save, and are rearing families with the hope of getting homes at some time through the Workers' Homes Board, she should appreciate that they will never get a look in until all this black money is expended and the buoyancy gone. Without control, by the time the worker's turn comes he will be disappointed and possibly his family and he will be broken-hearted. I therefore believe control to be essential, not only in this regard, but in regard to many factors operating throughout Australia today.

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington) [7.53]: A great deal has been said on this measure and I think the whole field has been fully covered. It is not surprising that so many members wish to say something about it, seeing that housing affects all our electorates and is one of the most important matters with which we have to deal. I am glad to support the measure and I realise what a chaotic condition we would get into if we did not exercise some control over building generally. The Premier rightly said that without control certain buildings that could not be justified, and which would not be given a priority under normal circumstances, would be gone on with. As it is, building costs are too high and the work is not being put into some houses. Still greater control should be exercised, not only over the price of materials but over the actual cost of the buildings to be erected. It is difficult, but nevertheless I think the attempt should be made.

Some members have referred to the position that arose relating to country applications not coming in as freely as was expected. That is true, but it is also true that all country road boards were notified that applications should be made, and plenty of publicity was given to that fact. I think one of the reasons why applications did not

come in was that many people were opposed to renting houses. They were prepared to build houses on their own blocks. If houses could have been obtained on the rental purchase system I feel sure there would have been many more applications. I hope the Premier will revert to the rental purchase system as soon as possible, and I cannot understand why that should not be done. If a man is living permanently in some district and takes one of these houses, I cannot see how it would adversely affect the position if he were allowed to purchase his house on a system such as was in vogue prior to the war—on a rental basis.

Mr. Abbott: And as cheaply as possible.

Mr. Fox interjected.

Mr. McLARTY: If the hon. member has any money to invest, I would not advise him to invest it in houses for renting, at the present time.

Mr. Watts: Or at all.

Mr. McLARTY: I think the day has gone, to a large extent, when people wanted to invest their money in houses to let. There is no doubt that the only solution to this problem is greater production, and to bring that about we must have peace in industry. The policy of Governments throughout Australia should be to try to obtain a holiday in regard to industrial hold-ups, and to get some stability. I wish to pay a tribute to the administration regarding housing generally. The task of the administration is not a popular one today. It brings plenty of criticism, a lot of which is unjustified, because many people have no true appreciation of the building position. Their own difficulties become magnified, according to their own ideas, and therefore their criticism is lop-sided and is very often made in ignorance. If they knew the facts they would not offer criticism. The administration is doing all that is possible to overcome the difficulties, and is doing an excellent job. I support the second reading of the Bill, which is absolutely necessary.

**MR. DONEY** (Williams-Narrogin) [7.58]: The housing problem is not a product—as some speakers seem to suggest—only of the exasperatingly slow manner in which houses are being built, but also of

the highly improper manner in which existing housing space is being utilised. My colleagues tell me that during my absence before tea, on duty in another part of the House, I missed a debate on housing that was outspoken to an unusual degree, and was more than a little acrimonious at times. I quite understand that if members spoke their minds the debate would have been both outspoken and acrimonious. I, too, have my moments of anger on this matter, particularly when I reflect that those who suffer most through the housing shortage are those who should not be allowed to suffer at all.

I imagine that in regard to this particular phase of the problem, we shall be of oneness of mind. I refer to the absolutely tragic—I can think of no other more appropriate and descriptive word than that—start in married life of so many young people due to the most alarming shortage of houses and the amazing rise in the cost of housing and materials, together with the disgusting and altogether heartless cupidity of those who have houses and flats to rent and who can witness the mental suffering of those requiring accommodation without being moved. The House will surely reflect with feeling on this phase of the problem. Young soldiers with their young wives and their babes are, everyone will concede, getting absolutely the rawest deal possible from the country the young men served so faithfully and so well for so many long and weary years. Their position is pitiful. I have close relatives among the returned men and some are suffering keenly, not perhaps day by day but certainly week by week in consequence of their search for houses, which they know full well are so short in supply that they will not find accommodation possibly for a year or two.

I allow, of course, that the Government, in a position like this, will have the right to some justifiable excuse, because the position prevailing here—I think we all must admit this—does obtain in any country affected by the war and must be vastly more acute in Britain and the countries where the cities were smashed by bombs. The suffering there must obviously be to a degree substantially greater than is the case here. Allowing for all that, it is a reflection on the power and capacity of this or any other Government, when it is seen

that they take absolutely no action whatever, so far as I can discover, to check the rapacity—I think that is the correct word to use in this connection—of those very greedy people—I refer to the owners of houses and flats—who flout the law with impunity. It is known to me and possibly to other members as well, that from £2 to £3 10s. per week is being charged for small unfurnished flats, frequently in parts of the metropolitan area considerably removed from the city centre.

The Premier: It is quite wrong for you to say that the Government has taken no action.

Mr. DONEY: Then, in correction, I will say that the Government has taken no action so far as my observation goes. Anything it has done is not very noticeable.

The Premier: Your powers of observation are very poor.

Mr. DONEY: That may be the Premier's opinion.

Mr. Cross: You must be blind.

Mr. DONEY: My observation may not lead me to know exactly what has been done because I do not live in the city.

The Premier: You do not know much about it at all.

Mr. DONEY: But nevertheless I think the Premier will agree that in making my comments I am trying to be fair.

The Premier: I do not agree that that is so. You do not know what has been done.

Mr. DONEY: When the Premier by interjection tells me something that I do not know, and tells me that a lot has been done, he does so on the basis of his greater knowledge. If, as he says, a lot has been done, I can say from my observation that an amazing amount of work has yet to be done.

The Premier: And an amazing amount of connivance with the people who are renting.

Mr. DONEY: Yes.

The Premier: You tell me how to break that down.

Mr. DONEY: The Premier indicated that I was placing the responsibility for the lot of this on to the Government.

The Premier: Of course, you were.

Mr. DONEY: Then if the Premier wants to have it that way, he can.

The Premier: That has been your deliberate intent.

Mr. DONEY: I have tried to be fair to the Government. Neither the Premier nor anyone else can stop me from saying what I believe to be right. I have been told that there is such a practice as "paying for the key." It was only a few weeks back that I learnt what that really meant.

The Minister for Lands: An innocent abroad!

Mr. DONEY: I found out, so acute is the housing situation, that people are willing to pay £20 or £30—some will pay less and, I am given to understand, some are willing to pay more—to greedy landlords or landladies who insist upon having that much before handing keys over.

Mr. Cross: Can you prove one case?

Mr. DONEY: No, I cannot prove one any more than the hon. member can prove some of the stupid stuff he puts up in this House from time to time. Although he cannot prove his stupid statements, he continues to make them. I am not contending for one moment that I have proof of all these things.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: At any rate, you are quite right about it.

Mr. DONEY: Members do not go to the trouble of substantiating every statement they hear before making use of it. Does any member opposite when he hears statements made, always insist upon ascertaining whether the statement is based on fact?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Of course, it is correct.

Mr. DONEY: Then I can inform the member for Canning that even members on his side of the House know that what I have stated is correct.

Mr. Cross: I did not say it was incorrect. You were repeating hearsay statements.

Mr. DONEY: What I have stated exists throughout the city. Why bother to pass laws if they are not enforced? I know very well that they cannot always be enforced in their entirety, and what has occurred is not entirely the fault of the Government. In every country great difficulty is experienced in enforcing laws that are passed. That does not alter the fact that laws are made and there are insufficient at-

tempts to enforce them. With respect to the class of landlord and landlady to whom I have been referring, it will surely not be denied that opportunities are available to the Government to procure the details. Is any member prepared to deny that? They will not deny that there are young mothers, perhaps waiting for their firstborn and endeavouring to secure accommodation, who find that they are not wanted. I know that is true. Young mothers with babes or young children find themselves right on the bottom of the priority list when it comes to securing flats or houses. I think members will agree that that is a violation of the law.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: How would you overcome it?

Mr. DONEY: We know it exists.

The Minister for Lands: This is the new order!

Mr. DONEY: Surely some effort should be made to ensure that the laws we pass are duly enforced. Every attempt should be made to search out these guilty folk and punish them. I do not want it thought that I regard the Government as being entirely free from culpability in this matter. About a month or five weeks ago a case came under my notice of a man and his associates who, with considerable financial backing, secured the ownership of some 180 acres of land to the east of Scarborough. Members will agree that it is possible on such an acreage to make provision for some 600 houses, after making due allowance for streets and so on.

Mr. Withers: We will use that for the new prison site.

Mr. DONEY: If the hon. member has not yet spoken to the Bill he will have his chance later on.

The Minister for Lands: Do not encourage any more!

Mr. DONEY: When an application was duly made to the Town Planning Board for the right to subdivide the land and go on with the building scheme, the subdivision was denied.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Hear, hear! That is so, and very sound too!

Mr. DONEY: Perhaps the member for Guildford-Midland has some knowledge of it.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I know nothing at all about it, but the policy is sound.

Mr. DONEY: The hon. member may have some knowledge about it, of which I am not aware.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You do not want to scatter the population. Let us concentrate it more.

Mr. DONEY: I see!

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It means providing more of various requirements.

Mr. DONEY: This is amazing! Here we have in the most concentrated part of the country an accumulation of population which means forcing us to build higher and higher instead of proceeding along more healthy lines and building wider and wider.

The Minister for Lands: Let us hear more about your 600 houses.

Mr. DONEY: Whether I be right or wrong—I insist that I am right—I ask the Premier to devote some attention to the file. I will not mention the name but I think the Premier will recognise the individuals I have in mind, and I urge that the decision that has been made should be changed to one more favourable to the project, one that will permit the gentleman I have referred to and his colleagues to go on with the building operations.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I hope the Government will not fall for that kind of policy.

Mr. DONEY: Then I take it the member for Guildford-Midland is opposed to settling people in the Scarborough area and elsewhere along the seacoast. He is opposed to settling them in the suburbs but wants them to be crowded in as close as possible to Perth all the time. If that is his policy, I imagine that the hon. member—but no-one else—will stand for it. As I indicated earlier in my remarks, I was not in the House during the initial stages of the debate, and I hope that during their remarks members did not castigate the Workers' Homes Board.

The Minister for Lands: It got it all right, and you should have been here!

Mr. DONEY: If I may place my own interpretation upon the Minister's remark, I gather that nothing at all was said about the board. For my part, I desire to pay a tribute to the Workers' Homes Board for what it has done over many years past. Particularly do I refer to its operations during the last two or three years under extremely difficult circumstances. There is one other

matter I desire to refer to. I think women should be given a greater amount of consideration when it comes to the forming of boards, committees and so on in connection with operations affecting homes. Most of us will agree that the average woman knows a great deal more of housing matters than the majority of us do.

The Premier: This is not the housing Bill.

Mr. DONEY: I realise that what the Premier says is correct and I am relying upon the Deputy Speaker, who knows his business rather better than the Premier, to check me if I go astray! It would be an obvious improvement in our methods, when it comes to the formation of committees or boards such as we have been discussing, if a woman were appointed on every occasion to a board. We would make no mistake in doing that. Women would be worth their place; they have a great knowledge of labour-saving gadgets which can be woven into the structure of a house or can be added at a small cost. I do not mind admitting that yesterday my wife—who knows a great deal more about housing matters than I do—urged me to try to get a lady member upon the board that it is proposed to set up under a Bill which was introduced by the Premier and which is now the subject of a message from another place. I imagine it will be considered in this Chamber in the course of a few days. I commend my views—particularly those regarding the presence of women on boards—to the consideration of the House when the appropriate time arrives.

MR. KELLY (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [8.16]: This Bill must be considered as a most remarkable one, mainly because of the vast amount of discussion which it has provoked. It is one of the shortest measures that has come before the House during the period I have been a member; yet it seems to have brought out information dealing with many and varied types of houses. The Bill has been introduced merely for the purpose of controlling for another year the distribution of timber and other building materials. The member for Williams-Narrogin is usually fair in his criticism; but on this occasion, when he said that no noticeable action could be observed in regard to building in almost any centre of the State, I think he was rather unfair. One can certainly go to any suburb within

a radius of 20 miles of Perth and see a wonderful improvement. Small communities are springing up in almost every centre, and in many places where in the past only bush has been present to the eye. Complaints have been made regarding the control exercised by the Workers' Homes Board. Another statement made by the hon. member was that it was almost impossible to obtain accommodation unless a person paid for the key. That might be so. I am not saying for a moment that it is not, but it is quite unfair for any member, on hearsay, to make a statement of that kind to the House.

Several members interjected.

Mr. Mann: You are very virtuous!

Mr. KELLY: The statement has no value so far as I am concerned. Under normal conditions, I would be opposed to any further control, but in the present circumstances I consider the measure highly desirable. It would be almost impossible to carry on building operations, and it would certainly create chaotic conditions, were this measure not passed. I desire to extend to the officials of the Workers' Homes Board my appreciation of the very good work they have done under most trying conditions. We know that for a period of 12 or 15 months the supply has been far below the demand and in consequence it has been necessary to create a priority system, in order to make sure, under the closest scrutiny, that available materials are distributed in the best and fairest way. No doubt some people have suffered hardship. We know that complaints have been made about the Workers' Homes Board, but I can safely say that in every instance in which the complaints have been investigated they have been found to be unwarranted. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.21]: To hear the observations of some of the members who have addressed themselves to this Bill, one would imagine that its purpose was to condemn or approve of the Workers' Homes Board. But that has nothing whatever to do with the Bill as far as I can see, except very indirectly. The officers of the Workers' Homes Board are called upon to administer the Act. So far as their ad-

ministration is concerned, I believe it has been as nearly perfect as it is likely to be if it were carried out by any collection of ordinary individuals.

The Premier: Women or men!

Mr. WATTS: Yes. The question is one of control, the continuance of the labours which the board has been carrying out for the last 12 months, whether that is desirable or no. That is the question before us, not to quarrel with the administration of the Workers' Homes Board. We have no quarrel with it; we are seeking merely to decide whether the principle of control is desirable for the future. I do not derive any satisfaction in having to come to the conclusion that this measure must be passed, that it is necessary to extend the existing controls for a further period, whether it be 12 months or less I do not mind. The control has to be extended for such time as is necessary to make the position better than it is now, because I am convinced that, if we were to discontinue control, as the Commonwealth Government did for a short period in 1945, we would experience at least as much difficulty, and probably more, than we have at the present time. What I do regret, however, is that we have to consider that matter, that we have to agree that, after this long lapse of time since the cessation of hostilities and after the lapse of 12 months since the passage of the parent Act, the position has not improved sufficiently to enable us to relax the control, if only partially.

I did hope that by the time 1946 had been reached, at least some relaxation of the provisions of the parent Act could be made. At least, there might have been some anticipation in the minds of the people that, within a very short time, renovations, additions, and repairs, and so forth of a greater value than £50 to a dwelling and £100 to business premises could be dealt with without having to invoke the provisions of the parent Act. But there it is! For one cause or another, so far as I can gather from the current state of affairs and the Premier's remarks, virtually no improvement has taken place in the position. At least, it has been insufficient to enable any relaxation at all to be made in the existing position, in the opinion of the Government. That is not a state of affairs which I think can give pleasure to anyone. It certainly does not



give pleasure to me. I remember the Premier's remarks when he introduced the Bill of last year. He said—

I trust that with the return of normal manpower to our manufacturing industries, in connection with which injustices associated with timber and the working of timber and also in the coal production field have appeared, will mean that we shall quickly—perhaps at the end of next year which this Bill provides as the duration of control—arrive at a happier state . . . I repeat, that while it is difficult and unpleasant legislation, and it is a difficult and unpleasant task administratively, I hope it will be received with the recognition that the need is indeed a vital one.

Twelve months have passed and, as I said, there can be no relaxation, it appears, of any controls that were imposed at that particular time. So we have to face up to the position whether we shall accept the principle of further control or whether we shall not. From all the evidence before me and from all the inquiries I have been able to make, and from all I can see round about, we would be in a worse position without the controls than we would be with them. In consequence, I propose to support the second reading of the measure. I would like to say a few words on one or two of the great variety of subjects that have been discussed under this measure. I shall endeavour to the best of my ability to pick out one or two that have some direct relationship to it, unlike some members, particularly the member for Guildford-Midland, who travelled all over the world.

The question of supply of materials for homes in the rural districts and the question of the provision of houses under what is known as the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, present, to my way of thinking, some peculiar difficulties. As the member for York observed, in some of the smaller country towns in particular there are many people who do not want houses at 25s. or 27s. 6d. a week. They are therefore disinclined, although in difficult circumstances, to make application for rental homes, although they are in receipt of a reasonable income, and one-fifth of the family income would probably be up to the normal figure of the economic rent of the house in which they wish to live. The rental of their present houses would not be more than 15s. or 17s. 6d. a week, and the tenants do not want any better accommodation. A number of people without homes would be quite satisfied with

the types of homes in which those people live.

It has occurred to me that a great saving of materials could be effected and two houses could be built where one is now built, if a scheme could be evolved for building homes in respect of which the economic rent would not be more than 17s. 6d. or £1 a week. I am certain that if publicity were given to the fact that such homes could be made available, there would be a demand for them which does not exist at present to the extent that it ought to exist.

The Premier: You will have to convince local authorities on that point, too.

Mr. WATTS: I am thinking now more particularly of the townsite of Gnowangerup. I have submitted the matter to the Workers' Homes Board, but no progress has yet been made, because some applicants do not desire homes at a substantial rental. They accordingly withdraw their applications or do not proceed with them. I know a number of small country centres of the same type where similar circumstances exist, and I consider the proposition is worth investigation. I am not making these remarks with a view to criticising the present position. I am merely making them in the belief that it is an idea which may contribute to a satisfactory negotiation with some of the local authorities who at present want homes for some of their people, but do not seem to be able to get up any enthusiasm for the system operating under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement.

I now want to deal with the question of supply of materials for the erection of small homes by persons in country areas at their own expense. We heard a great deal the other night, when discussing the Timber Industry (Housing of Employees) Bill, about houses that could be built for approximately £450 on the timber areas. I know that that amount took into consideration a very reduced cost of timber. Nevertheless, it appears to me that the dwellings discussed in the Royal Commission's report could be made suitable and provide far better accommodation than that which exists in some of the country towns today, but in the smaller ones in particular. The cost would not exceed £600. And there is no home of any kind being built under any of the Commonwealth-State Hous-

ing Agreement plans at anything like that figure. We should not always hold to the idea that we must, in these cases, have dwellings suitable for the metropolitan area. While the standard of the homes is not bad—they are comfortable enough but not architecturally beautiful—there does not seem to be a demand for the improved appearance that is apparently so necessary in the metropolitan district. I am suggesting this because I think that the materials we have could be made to relieve the housing shortage to a greater extent than is the case now. That would be so if three houses were built where two are built at present without using greater quantities of many items of material. So I throw out that suggestion for consideration by the Premier.

A little while ago I asked some questions that had particular reference to certain observations made by the member for Guildford-Midland. He seemed to me to be endeavouring to establish, to his own satisfaction, that the operations of building schemes in Western Australia were definitely favourable to the metropolitan district, and that the country areas were under-supplied. While I did have the same impression at one time, I was curious to know just what the position was, and I asked certain questions, and the answers to them were postponed for some time so that investigations might be made. I ultimately found that the number of applications received under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement from persons in the metropolitan area was 3,502, and from persons outside the metropolitan area 1,055. The number of houses approved was 1,356, of which 369 had been completed and 372 were under construction as at the 31st August. Of those, 583 were in the metropolitan area and 158 in the country. In that instance, the proportions were almost identical as the proportion that 583 bears to 4,000 is nearly the same as that of 158 to 1,000.

I asked to be told the number of applications for permits to build from persons in the metropolitan area and from those outside. The figures were not readily available, but the applications for permits to the 30th June, totalled 3,502, and of that number 863 applications were for the metropolitan area and 614 outside. The population of the State is almost equally divided between the metropolitan area and the outer

districts. There might be some small justification for saying that, because 863 applications have been approved for the city and only 614 in the country, there has been an over-balance in favour of the metropolitan area on a population basis. But as there are no figures—or none were available at that time—to disclose just what number of permits have been asked for in each of the respective areas, one is forced back to the figures in connection with the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, as they seem to give some indication of the respective demands for housing, although I admit that the country applications are less than they ought to be for the various reasons mentioned by members who have discussed the matter this evening. But, supposing the country applications were three times what they were, they would still be 700 less in total than those from the metropolitan area.

While I am most anxious to see more dwellings built in the country, and while in certain country towns there is ample scope for additional building, I do not think the implications contained in the remarks of the member for Guildford-Midland are proved by the figures to the 30th September last. He may know that there has been some violent change since then, and if so I shall be only too glad to support him in a move to have the position corrected. But at present there is no evidence that that state of affairs exists. If it did, I would be inclined to take strong exception to it. I have no doubt there is ample scope for the erection of further dwellings in country towns, in respect of some of which I know there are four times as many applications as there are approvals granted. I take it that the Workers' Homes Board will give attention to that aspect when it can.

We hear alarming statements as to the result of the recent strike in connection with the supply of materials. We have been told through the daily Press—and I do not think the statements have been corrected—that the State Brickworks will not start making bricks until early in January. There will obviously be a serious lag in the erection of brick dwellings if that is so, and the position seems to require more explanation than a mere statement in the Press. That a 14 days' strike is going to cause a stoppage of brickmaking for nine

weeks, in an institution that has been producing bricks in such large quantities for such a long time, seems extraordinary. I assume that the problem of the controllers under this Bill will be more involved than ever in the supplying of cement. There has been a reduction or cessation of output of cement because of the recent strike and that lag will take some catching up. We will need to overcome the arrears brought about during the strike, and also the amount that should have been available in the period then next following.

There is going to be a considerable demand for cement. Various proposals involving the use of thousands of tons of cement have been brought before this House in the last few weeks. In addition, large quantities will be required for housing schemes and the demand from private enterprise for the erection of dwellings will have to be met, quite apart from any business enterprise that might be indulged in. The problems associated with the supply of this material are going to be very grave for a considerable time, and we must all take every possible step to ensure that some improvement is quickly effected. I heartily agree with the member for Williams-Narrogin when he referred to the state of some of the young married couples as being absolutely tragic. There is no question about it; it is so. I have complained and asked questions in the House as to the decision of the Workers' Homes Board, as controller of this measure, not to issue permits where only two people are to be housed. I have stated that I do not think it is one of the wise things that it has done. That decision ought to be reviewed.

Up to the present I do not think the board has been able to change its outlook. It may be all very well to say that where there are only two people to be housed there is not, by comparison with cases where more people are to be housed, a case of sufficient hardship to warrant consideration. I am not too sure that there is not a type of hardship—a sort of constructive cruelty—that could easily arise out of these circumstances, that would be far worse than the actual hardship involved in a greater number of people, in different circumstances, being somewhat overcrowded. Any member who looks back over the early days of his married life will, without any

further argument from me, realise what I mean. The disability to which I refer is the inability to obtain a place which one can call one's own, and in which one may have that privacy that one desires. That is the constructive cruelty that I have mentioned.

Mr. North: Are there any such cases?

Mr. WATTS: Yes, any number of them. I have received half a dozen refusals from the Workers' Homes Board because only two persons were to be housed in each case. I do not doubt for a moment that the reason that actuated the board seemed very sound to it. Therefore I do not strongly criticise the board, but I do ask for a reconsideration of the matter along the lines that I have mentioned, because the longer this continues the worse must become the lot of the people concerned. I asked the Premier how many applications for permits to build their own dwellings had been made to the Workers' Homes Board in the last 12 months by married couples without children. The Premier was unable to give me the figures as no classification had been kept. But he went on to say—

The decision against the granting of permits in cases where only two people are to be housed was instituted to assist in overcoming the lag in homes for families and was made at the inception of the permit system. The same policy was adopted by the Department of War Organisation of Industry.

All permits are issued on the basis of hardship, and it is considered that persons with families and without proper housing facilities are suffering greater hardship than those without families.

The last few words that I have quoted deal with the point that I was referring to. I do not doubt that there are cases where greater hardship is inflicted on young married couples than is suffered where more than two people are to be housed. Without labouring the question I hope that the Workers' Homes Board will give consideration to that aspect in view of the fact that we are all agreeable that this power, in the matter of control, will have to be extended.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

**BILLS (2)—RETURNED.**

- 1, Vermin Act Amendment.  
With amendments.
- 2, Land Act Amendment.  
Without amendment.

**BILL—COAL MINES REGULATION.***Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 22nd November.

**MR. SEWARD** (Pingelly) [8.47]: This Bill, as the Minister said when moving the second reading, seems to be rather a large one in view of the fact that it contains 60 odd clauses, but he also explained that it was mainly a consolidating measure and that, with the exception of a few clauses, most of the provisions are already in existence. Consequently it is not necessary to enter upon an exhaustive examination of the sections that have been in operation for many years. Rather may we confine our attention to the new provisions proposed.

The Minister said the measure had been introduced in the interests of the health and safety of the men working in the mines. I can assure him that members on this side of the House readily join with him in furthering any legislation that will make for the benefit of the men working in the mines. I have been down a coalmine on only one occasion and that was in Wales many years ago, but from time to time we have had various reports of the conditions existing in our coalmines and we know something of the state of unrest that exists at present all over the world in that particular industry. Consequently, it is only right that we should make a careful examination of the conditions under which these miners have to work in order to ensure that they enjoy conditions as nearly as possible resembling those available to people in avocations above ground so that they will not have any cause to feel discontented with the conditions governing their employment.

The first clause mentioned by the Minister is one designed to bring open cuts under the definition of a mine. This seems to be a desirable innovation. The more open cuts we can have, the better for the industry because they should lead to the recovery of more coal than can be obtained when it has to be taken out of a shaft. So there can be no objection to that clause. The Bill pro-

vides for inspectors, and I should like the Minister to give us some information as to why it is necessary to have so many inspectors. On looking at the Bill, I began to wonder whether we shall have more inspectors than we have workers underground. We have the Inspector of Mines, the State Mining Engineer, departmental inspectors and workmen's inspectors, and the Minister now wants special inspectors. Later on in the Bill provision is made for deputies, who are not exactly inspectors, and then there is to be an inspector under the Weights and Measures Act.

However, the five types of inspectors are the ones about whom I am concerned at the moment. We can exclude the Inspector of Mines and the State Mining Engineer, as well as the departmental inspectors. The workmen's inspector is elected by the workmen and is there to watch the interests of the workmen. It is quite right that he should be provided for. It is understandable that we should have departmental inspectors. The Minister may require some investigation to be made, and he would be able to call on a departmental inspector. But why on earth do we need special inspectors? Unless the Minister can give some good reason for their appointment, I shall have to move in Committee for the deletion of that clause. The Minister said that not often would he require an inspection to be made, though occasionally it would be necessary on some particular matter, but surely the Inspector of Mines or the departmental inspectors could make that investigation without appointing a special type of inspector.

Regarding the workmen's inspector, there is a certain vagueness about the wording of the Bill which I would like the Minister to explain. He told us that the workmen's inspector is elected by the workmen to act in their interests. One clause refers to the terms and conditions of the appointment of workmen's inspectors in the mines in which they may exercise their powers and another clause refers to the mines to which they are appointed. I have not much knowledge of coalmining affairs and I should like to be assured that the workmen's inspector, when appointed to a mine, acts in the interests of the men who have elected him. I want to be sure that such an inspector would not be moved to another mine where he had not been elected by the miners. I am not certain whether each mine at Collie elects a

workmen's inspector or whether this inspector is elected for the whole field.

The Minister for Mines: Now you are getting somewhere.

Mr. SEWARD: I wanted to make sure that a workmen's inspector would not be elected by the men in one mine and then appointed to another mine. That matter was agitating my mind and I am pleased that the Minister has cleared it up. Workmen's inspectors have been elected for two years and the Minister proposes to make the term three years. When I asked him the reason for the longer term, he indicated that it was in the interests of economy. I have no objection to the term being made three years, provided there is no risk of the inspector's becoming less vigilant than he might be if he were elected for the shorter period. If it were merely a matter of saving the expense of an election, I would not feel inclined to approve of the extended term. These men are holding responsible positions and must be on the qui vive all the time.

The Minister for Mines: This is proposed at the request of both parties.

Mr. SEWARD: Then I see no objection to the extended period being adopted. There seems to be a slight clash between two of the clauses of the Bill. The Minister spoke of the necessity for a workmen's inspector having to pass an examination in order to qualify for a third-class certificate. With that we all agree, but subsequently the clause provides that the board of examiners may grant a certificate of competency without examination. Considering that these regulations have been in operation for so long, there should be no necessity for the clause to cover such a man.

The Minister for Mines: You have not quite gripped it.

Mr. SEWARD: I admit that my knowledge of coalmining is not great, as the Minister will realise, but there seems to be a clash in providing for a certificate by examination in one case and subsequently providing that the board of examiners may grant a certificate without examination. I hope that, when the Minister replies, he will make that point clear.

There is another clause regarding the employment of boys to which I wish to refer.

The Minister explained that there was a difficulty regarding the certificate of birth and that a guarantee was accepted from the parent or guardian, but that in future a boy seeking employment on a mine must produce a birth certificate or a certified copy of the entry of his birth registration. I point out that it may not always be possible to do this, particularly as we are supposed to be about to adopt a policy of encouraging immigration. A boy born outside of Australia might seek employment on a mine, and if we insist upon his producing a certificate of birth, it might be impossible for him to do so. We should provide that if a boy born outside Australia cannot produce a certificate of birth, a statutory declaration by his parent or guardian should be sufficient. Of course, those who could produce a birth certificate should be required to do so.

The next amendment is one to which the Minister hopes every member will agree. It deals with the 7-hour working day. There seems to be a move at present to cut down working hours to an irreducible minimum. Hours have been reduced from nine to eight and now it is desired to reduce them to seven. Presently there will be a move to reduce them to six, and one cannot help wondering what will be the state of affairs a few years hence and whether any work at all will be done.

Mr. Abbott: It will then be like the Garden of Eden.

Mr. SEWARD: We all appreciate that work in a coalmine is strenuous, but when advocating this right to a 7-hour day, the Minister stated that in many instances the men had to walk from one to 1¼ miles after getting to the mine in order to reach the working place. There should be some provision whereby mining companies might be encouraged to provide transport facilities in the mines so that the men will not have to walk such distances. This would be better not only for the men but also for all concerned. If the 7-hour day is sufficiently long for men to work underground, as much of the time as possible should be spent in working, and it is not right that the men should have to walk one mile underground in order to reach their work. If we can do something to encourage the mines to instal transport facilities for the men, we should

do so in the interests of all concerned. The only other matter in connection with which there is any great alteration is that of the general rules. Additions have been made to them, and I suppose it would be possible to take exception to them if we thought the people administering them would not do so with commonsense. But they have been recommended by the Royal Commission.

The Minister for Mines: They have to come here for endorsement.

Mr. SEWARD: That is so. There is provision for ambulance rooms and attendants and change-rooms and baths and so on to be made available. It would be possible to stipulate conditions that would be too expensive to observe, but I do not think that is likely to be done. I think we can leave such matters to the commonsense of those in charge. There is an all-embracing concluding paragraph, like that in the military regulations, providing for anything to be done that might not be expressly provided for.

The Minister for Mines: It is not always possible to tell what may be needed.

Mr. SEWARD: That is so. Conditions are rapidly changing, and we do not know what they will be like in a year's time or even in a month's time. We must have something like that in the Bill. I see nothing to take exception to in the measure except the provision for the appointment of a special inspector, which I do not think is necessary, and also the provision relating to anybody born outside Australia being able to produce a statutory declaration instead of a birth certificate in order to secure employment in the mines. I support the second reading.

**MR. McDONALD** (West Perth) [9.2]: I propose to support the second reading. The Bill consists of 69 clauses of which all except 10 or 11 represent consolidations of the existing law which dates back to 1902 and which appears to have been tried and, on the whole, in the light of experience, to have been found worthy of being retained as the law governing the safety and health of those working in our coalmines. With regard to the amendments, I think most of us, with the exception of the member for Collie, have to take the Minister's word that they are desirable. We have no expert or personal knowledge of the coalmining industry

which would justify most of us—and in any case myself—in expressing any opinion. But I wish to say that I have had no representations from anybody who has taken any exception to the Bill; and as to those quarters from which I sought a comment, in case they had any criticism, I have received no reply. So I am without any opinion from people interested or concerned; and I therefore propose to accept the position that the amendments of the Minister are approved or, at all events, that no exception is taken to them. If any matter should come to my knowledge that requires to be discussed, I will take the opportunity to refer to it during the Committee stage.

I have looked at the amendments carefully, and as far as I can see they appear to be worthy of acceptance by the House. There is one particular provision as to which an amendment of the existing law has been made, by which there is power to have an inquiry into the competency of any mine manager, over-man, or deputy. The over-man and the deputy are, I understand, subordinates of the mine manager, and all three officials are required by this legislation to hold certificates of competency, and very properly so. I take no exception to an inquiry being made to ascertain whether there is any incapacity on the part of these people, even though they should previously have gained certificates of competency in their jobs from the proper prescribed authorities. But I notice that no provision is made for any inquiry into the competency of the workmen's inspector. He also has to obtain a second or third-class certificate of competency before he can be appointed; and although his responsibilities may not be so great or his powers so wide, as those of the manager, the over-man, and the deputy, at the same time his efficiency is a matter of some importance; and I would ask the Minister to tell us for what reason there should be an inquiry into the competency of these other people but no inquiry into the capacity of the workmen's inspector.

By this Bill the inspector's term of office is to be increased from two years to three; and it may well be that from ill-health or age or other circumstances, although he was competent in the early stages of his appointment, he might not be capable in the later stages. The original Act made a limitation of 48 hours in the case of men regarding the time they could be employed in a coal-

mine; and other limitations were made in the case of boys and prohibition of employment in the case of women. As a general rule I hold that in matters of hours, wages and industrial conditions, Parliament has appointed the Court of Arbitration as a subordinate law-making body, and we should leave those matters to that court. However, in this instance, it seems to me that Parliament would be justified in making an exception. Coalmining is a peculiarly arduous employment and one attended with some danger; and it may well be proper that in such a case the legislature should ensure minimum hours for men and for boys to avoid any possibly unfair conditions under which those engaged in the industry are employed.

So while I affirm the general principle, I believe to be right regarding the province of Parliament as against the province of the Arbitration Court, in this particular case I would say to the Minister that I do not propose to take any exception to the inclusion of hours in the measure because this is perhaps an industry in which such a provision is peculiarly justified. There is a provision for regulations—they are called rules, but they are the same as regulations and liable to review by Parliament—dealing with a wider compass of matters than is contained in the existing legislation. This added range for regulations appears to be justified, and the new subjects are ones that should be a matter of provision in the coalmines of any progressive industrial community. Therefore I am prepared to support them on the whole. With the limitations as to my knowledge which I mentioned just now, the Bill appears to me to be one that deserves the support of the House.

**MR. WILSON (Collie)** [9.11]: I do not intend to say very much about the Bill, because I know it off by heart. I suggest that the House would be wise to pass it as it stands without any alteration. I have looked through the measure carefully and can assure members that to get it to its present stage has been the work of 40 years. The coalminers of Collie are working practically under the conditions provided in the Bill. As a result of my long connection with coalmines—over a period of nearly 70 years—I have come to the conclusion that this is one of the best Bills I have seen. I support the measure.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. W. M. Marshall—Murchison—in reply)** [9.12]: I will endeavour to clarify the position for the benefit of the member for Pingelly and to some degree of the member for West Perth. The member for Pingelly seemed to be under the impression that there is a multiplicity of inspectors. That is not so. Our departmental officers, such as the State Mining Engineer and the Assistant State Mining Engineer are to a degree general supervisors of mining and do not play the part of inspectors except under very special circumstances. When the Minister desires to have some information, he must direct one of his departmental officers to secure it, and unless that officer were appointed an inspector under the Act he would not be entitled to descend a mine. Notwithstanding that a man is the State Mining Engineer, he must be an inspector before he can go down a mine. That is to say, if there were any hostility concerning his right to enter a mine, then unless he were an inspector or declared to be an inspector under this measure, he would not have a right to do so.

There is a provision in the Bill for special inspectors. They are men like Mr. Donne who was here recently. We must have power to appoint such men as inspectors or they would have no authority to descend a mine. Mr. Donne and Mr. Jack, and other experts from the Eastern States have been appointed to do a special job requiring special knowledge of a technical and scientific character. For instance, Mr. Jack is an expert on pillar extraction; for in mining, as in other professions, there are men who are specially skilled in a certain class of work. If we did not have the power to appoint special inspectors, and wanted Mr. Jack's advice as to whether the pillar extraction process in operation at Collie was being done in a scientific way, and in a manner conducive to the safety of the men, we could not send him to investigate. So we must take the power in order that we may have the legal right to direct a man to descend a mine, even though I know of no occasion where a company has raised objection.

These two inspectors have nothing to do with the general daily supervision of the working of the mines. The two men that cover all the mines between them are the Government appointees known as the district inspector and the workmen's inspector. They are constantly on the field and supervise the

daily operations of all mines. It will be realised that two men are kept fairly busy in making a thorough investigation of the daily progress of every mine and in seeing that the mines are free from dust and danger, and that the machinery is in the best of order. It is their daily obligation to watch closely all developments in order to safeguard the health and lives of those engaged in the industry. Either the member for Pingelly or the member for West Perth raised the point that a deputy may be appointed although he has not a certificate of competency.

The position is that in the mines today there is a number of deputies, men who have been there for 10 or even 20 years, who have had the responsibility every day of doing that class of work. Although over the years they have proved themselves to be capable and practical men, in many cases they could not pass the examination. This provision is included to take care of such men. They can make application and can get their certificates. We must give them opportunity of continuing in the jobs that they have held for so many years, even though they might not be successful in passing the examinations that are to be set up by regulation. If the Bill becomes law, all those in future wishing to become deputies will be required to pass the examinations and hold the necessary certificates.

I do not agree with the member for Pingelly, who said that an imported boy might not be able to prove his age. There is no provision in the Bill to overcome that anomaly, but it is felt that the point is never likely to be encountered in our coalmines. There are not many such families here these days, though Cornishmen and Welshmen are coalminers by heredity. We do not get many of them in Australia today, although they are most competent men. I do not think any young man will suffer through this provision.

Mr. Styants: He could get a copy of his birth certificate from England in about three weeks, in any case.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** The member for West Perth said he could find nothing in the Bill as to the competency of the workmen's inspector, and no inquiry as to his competency or behaviour. From the day of his appointment he is under the direct jurisdiction of the Minister, just as is the

district inspector, and any misdemeanour or indication of incompetency on his part or that of the district inspector, can be dealt with immediately by the Minister, who has power to dismiss. He comes directly under ministerial control, whereas the overman and manager do not.

The only other point was as to the hours, and, as members are agreed, there is little use my wasting time in trying to support an argument that has already been supported by everyone else. Very few people have seriously considered what is involved in mining. It is easy for those lacking experience to be critical of the hours involved in a day's labour in the mines. It must be realised that practically one-third of our lives is spent in sunlight, and that those who enjoy it are fortunate. In Collie, in winter, the coalminer seldom sees the sun. He is down in the bowels of the earth when it rises, and it is down behind the hills when he comes up at night. That goes on practically all his life, and in that way he makes a great sacrifice, as compared with most other workers. That applies to both goldminers and coalminers. I do not know that it was ever meant that men should go down to the bowels of the earth and sacrifice the glories of the sunshine.

Where men work all day in the coalmines, as they do in Collie, apart from week-ends or holidays they seldom enjoy a full day's happiness with their wives and families in the sunshine. In this Bill nothing is proposed to regulate the hours. We are not interfering with the Arbitration Court, or with the existing law. This was the established practice many years ago and the Arbitration Court decided that the hours of work were fair and reasonable. That has been the position for over 20 years, and we are merely ratifying by legislation the principle already established. I am pleased at the reception given to the Bill, and I feel that it will be an inspiration to the coalminers to carry on the good work that they have done of late. The production of coal is up 50 per cent. on what it was 12 months ago. That is an indication that the men and the companies are working in harmony, and that we can look forward to the stepping up of coal production in order to satisfy the industries of Western Australia. That will bring about more prosperity and will provide work and



happiness for many engaged in other industries.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Mines in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Classification of inspectors:

Mr. SEWARD: I wish to express my thanks to the Minister for clarifying the meaning of this clause with reference to special inspectors. I now see the need for them, and therefore will not move an amendment.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 9 to 26—agreed to.

Clause 27—Persons not to be employed below ground more than seven hours on any day:

Mr. McDONALD: The Bill provides that no man shall be employed below ground more than 42 hours in any week except in case of emergency. Does this mean that no overtime would be worked except in case of emergency, that there must be emergency conditions, otherwise overtime would be illegal?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Forty-two hours will constitute the week's work. No longer period may be worked underground except in accordance with the special provisions to meet an emergency.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 28 to 69, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

## **BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE** (Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna) [9.38] in moving the second reading said: This is a very small Bill, consisting as it does of only three clauses. Members will recall having put a deal of work into the new Companies Act which was passed in 1943. Owing to the far-sightedness of the Leader of the Liberal Party, a provision was inserted stipulating that the Act was not to be brought into operation until six months after the cessa-

tion of hostilities. The object of the Bill is to delete the words 'but not until six months after the cessation of hostilities in the present war.' The publicity that will be given to this Bill should be sufficient notification to all concerned of the coming into operation of the Act, especially the commercial people, the accountants and others who are directly concerned with the Companies Act. I have no doubt that all these people are aware of the existence of the 1943 Act.

It was proposed that the Act should not be brought into operation for six or nine months; but we have decided that it shall come into operation on the 1st October, 1947. That should give the public ample time to study the measure and to become acquainted with its contents. It will also afford the Registrar of Companies an opportunity to secure additional accommodation and increase his staff. I do not intend to go into the details of the measure. The Companies Act has been modernised. It is now uniform with the various Companies Acts of the States of Australia, New Zealand and England. If this Bill is passed, it will be proclaimed on the 1st October, 1947. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. McDonald, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—STIPENDIARY MAGISTRATES ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE** (Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna) [9.44] in moving the second reading said: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have here another little Bill. It provides for a coroner, who is to be appointed to act as a magistrate during such time as he will not be occupied with his duties as coroner. Recently the position of coroner was created under the Public Service Act. It has always been considered desirable that magistrates should conduct inquests; but, owing to pressure of other duties, it has not always been possible for them to do so. Of late years, the work of magistrates has considerably increased; they have acted as chairmen of various boards and consequently have been unable to carry out coroner's work, as the Government would have liked them to do. I do not wish to refer in any derogatory way to

our justices of the peace, who I consider have done wonderfully good work. But many persons have many minds and make many decisions. It is the desire of the Government to get consistency, and for that reason we have decided to appoint a coroner. Applications for the position were called and are now in the hands of the Public Service Commissioner.

As I have pointed out, the coroner is being appointed under the Public Service Act, and Section 9 of the Stipendiary Magistrates Act provides that no person appointed to act as a coroner may act as a magistrate. The coroner to be appointed will be a qualified legal practitioner and will therefore be competent and qualified to discharge the duties of a stipendiary magistrate. We are, therefore, seeking by this measure to strike Section 9 out of the parent Act. The striking out of the section will not in any way affect the stipendiary magistrates. From the 30th June, 1945, to the 30th June, 1946, 47 inquests were held and, owing to pressure of work, only three were presided over by magistrates. Members will therefore see the necessity for passing this Bill. The main object is to secure uniformity.

Hon. N. Keenan: Will he do all the travelling?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, only within the metropolitan area; otherwise it would be too costly.

The Premier: He will cover some of the near country districts, perhaps.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. It is intended mostly for the metropolitan area and by this means we will secure uniformity, and not only that, but efficiency, because we will have a legally qualified man. Although justices have done a wonderful job and the Government has been very appreciative of the services they have rendered, there cannot be uniformity when there are many persons engaged; because with many persons we have many minds, and therefore many decisions. With one man doing the work, I would say that the decisions will be fairly uniform. I hope the Bill will receive favourable consideration. Perhaps some members will take exception to the deletion of Section 9, but I think that when they go into the matter they will find that there will not be an ad-

verse effect upon stipendiary magistrates who have been appointed and nobody will be affected in the future except the coroner. The measure will give the Government power to say to him, "When you have finished your coronial work you can go on to one of the benches and render service as a magistrate." I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Seward, debate adjourned.

*[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]*

## BILL—MINES REGULATION.

### *Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES** (Hon. W. M. Marshall—Murchison) [9.53] in moving the second reading said: This is a consolidating measure and it contains mainly the provisions of the existing law. As in the case of a similar measure which I introduced and which dealt with the coalmining industry, opportunity has been taken to submit some amendments. This measure differs from the Bill which we dealt with earlier inasmuch as it applies to all metalliferous mines, including goldmines; but it does not conflict with nor is it connected in any way with the coal industry Bill. As the Bill chiefly consists of existing law, which will remain irrespective of what may happen to this measure, it will be sufficient for me to refer to the amendments which are incorporated in the Bill and which are apart altogether from the provisions of what I will call the parent Act. When I use that expression members will realise that I mean the existing law which is here being consolidated.

The Bill is divided into parts for the sake of simplicity. The first amendment relates to the definition of "mine." A slight addition to that definition is made, these words being added, "or where explosives are being used." This was agreed to by both the Chamber of Mines and the industrial organisation concerned in order to make sure that no form of mining could take place in which explosives were used without its coming within the provisions of the Act. An entirely new definition of the word "rise" is contained in the Bill. The existing law does not define a rise, and from time to time there has been a difference of opinion between the companies and the union as to what

actually constitutes one. Much dissatisfaction has existed in this matter when certain rates of pay and other conditions were made to apply.

The definition of "rise" in the Bill is "any tunnel having an inclination above the horizontal of 15 degrees or over and not included in the definition of a shaft." With this definition all parties were in accord. Neither the companies nor the union found occasion to disapprove of it. The definition of "shaft" in the parent Act is particularly brief and practically indicates nothing. The matter is left more or less to the discretion of the inspector. It is defined as any winze which in the opinion of the inspector is really a shaft. If members will consult the Bill, they will find that a shaft is specifically defined. Here again the Chamber of Mines and the industrial organisation agreed entirely with the definition, and I suppose that when we get all parties to agree there is little left to argue about.

There is a definition of "winze" in the Bill. It will be found to be just the opposite of the definition of "rise." Members will note that in one case it is a tunnel going up and in the other a tunnel going down. So the definition of winze is "any tunnel having an inclination below the horizontal of 15 degrees or over and not included in the definition of a shaft." There have been arguments and differences of opinion in the mines because where a rise or a winze was particularly flat some companies or managers were apt to argue that it was an inclined shaft, either going up or down, rather than admit that it was actually a rise or a winze as the case might be. All parties have agreed to these definitions, and if the Bill becomes law there should, in the future, be no differences of opinion. The measure also provides that the workmen's inspector shall hold a laboratory certificate and an underground supervisor's certificate. The supervisor's certificate is equivalent to a deputy's certificate of competency. These certificates have been in existence on the Goldfields for many years. It was found essential to make this provision when the goldmines experienced a revival some years ago.

Those of us who have been members for any lengthy period will recall that several changes were made to our goldmining laws. One such change was known as the Miner's

Phthisis Act, which excluded from the goldmines men who were suffering from contagious diseases. It all meant that most of the experienced men had to be taken out of the industry at about the time that a revival was being experienced. That, in turn, meant that a number of young, new men went into the industry. The development of mining was rapid at that time and some big mines, such as the Wiluna mine, were opened. Men were being appointed as shift bosses or underground supervisors and they did not have sufficient experience to be in charge of the lives of the men employed in those mines. So, a regulation was passed to make it a legal obligation for them to pass an examination and hold the certificate before they could be appointed to these responsible positions.

It is only proper that the workmen's inspector should be asked to hold these certificates because he is the one who is directing the operations underground, and the underground supervisors are under his supervision. In consequence it is considered that he should be qualified to hold the certificate, at least. We find in this Bill a provision similar to that which appeared in the Coal Mines Regulation Bill, namely, that the period for which a workmen's inspector shall be elected, is to be extended from two to three years, for no reason other than that which was given when dealing with the previous measure. The union that elects these men is well satisfied that the period should be extended, and no objection has been raised by any of the companies concerned. Section 12 of the existing law provides that a workmen's inspector has all the powers and authority of a district inspector, but before he can prosecute for a breach of the Act he has to refer the matter to the district inspector for sanction and concurrence. It was found to be appropriate for a change to be made. As a result the Bill provides that instead of seeking the concurrence of the inspector he will seek the sanction and concurrence of the State Mining Engineer.

That is the only change and it has very little effect because when the district inspector was consulted the final decision was usually given by the State Mining Engineer. There are occasions too, when legal opinion has to be solicited before prosecutions can

be proceeded with. All these cases used to find their way to the State Mining Engineer, so the change is only a minor one. Under the existing law no inspector is permitted to report other than to the Minister. But the usual practice has been for the workmen's inspector, who is elected by the unionists, to make a report on the position in the various parts of the mines; more particularly when complaints are brought forward at union meetings. That has always been the practice although, on the strict interpretation of the law, he would not be permitted to do it. As a result a provision is now inserted giving the workmen's inspector the right to report on any given subject and the conditions of any particular mine which come under his jurisdiction.

The present practice on the Goldfields is for a record book to be kept, in which all occurrences are written up by both the district and workmen's inspectors. Some of the companies, however, have been rather dilatory as to the type of book kept for these important reports, and as to the manner in which they are kept and cared for. So we are making provision to ensure that the record book shall be of the standard required by the Minister. The Act gives the Government Geologist the right to visit and inspect any particular mine. That is advantageous to the companies as well as to the records of the Mines Department. Members might be aware that the law is particularly strict in demanding that returns, of the plans of development and the progress of development of the underground workings of every mine must be submitted.

On occasions the Government Geologist has to make observations for the purpose of adding to these reports and checking up on the information sent. So, in the Bill, it is provided that where he has to make a visit he shall notify some responsible officer of the mining company concerned. Under the existing law that has not been necessary and I expect that at times some little inconvenience might have been occasioned to the company. In order that the manager shall be aware of any such visit the Mines Department has to give notification that a geologist will be making a visit for the purpose of carrying out an inspection. There is provision for the protection of the lives of animals. There is one mine that employs animals below

ground and therefore provision is made for the protection of horses and their welfare underground. I do not say that they are neglected now, but it was considered advisable to insert provision in case neglect should occur. In modern mines the electric horse now does most of the work formerly done by animals.

The Minister for Justice: There are a few horses in the coalmines.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, but they are taken down each day and are brought up again at night. Those in the goldmines seldom come up to the surface.

Hon. N. Keenan: In what mines are horses worked now?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: At the Sons of Gwalia mine. That is the only one employing them. Under the existing law it is necessary for an owner or company, when notified, to appoint a manager. The only alteration there is that immediately the manager is nominated he is registered in the Mines Department as the registered manager of that mine. At present a manager cannot absent himself from the mine under his control for a period longer than three days. That period is now extended to five days as some of our mines are isolated and it is thought that five days is a sufficiently short period. Provision is also contained in the Bill that where a mine employs more than 25 men underground the underground manager shall hold a certificate of competency. That is an endeavour to get highly qualified men in charge of mines where large numbers of men are working underground.

We all desire to see thoroughly competent men in charge in mines, particularly owing to the dangerous nature of gold-mining. Where there are less than 25 men engaged underground the Bill provides that the supervisor or underground manager shall hold at least a supervisor's certificate of competency, that which is now provided by law for what are known as shift bosses. Provision is made for the absence of a manager in the case of emergency or illness, so that he can appoint a deputy for a period, and in such circumstances it is not essential for the deputy to hold a certificate of competency. The manager may be absent for a fortnight without sanction, but if it is for a longer period, or for a fortnight up to one month, the manager must get the sanc-

tion of the Inspector of Mines. If the period is for longer than one month the sanction of the Minister must be obtained.

Consequential amendments will be found to the provisions of the existing law regulating the number of mines a manager may control at one and the same time. The amendment is that the word "registered" is included in order to conform to the previous alteration. There are consequential amendments providing penalties for companies or owners employing managers or underground managers—in the case of the manager not being registered or the underground manager not being certificated. That is necessary to ensure that the law is not broken. At present provision is made that where a company abandons a mine—where such a company or owner is under an obligation to provide plans and specifications of the workings—within one month after the abandonment it must notify the inspector, who will report to the Minister. In some cases that provision has not been respected and mines have been abandoned so that the water rose in them before the department was notified or had opportunity to check up on the plans that had been sent in.

Plans of a mine are essential as records, so that any syndicate or company desiring to re-open it will know where the workings are, the quantity of work done, and the values secured. Provision is now made that before a mine is abandoned notice of that intention must be given to the district inspector, who will then have time to make any necessary examinations and ascertain the accuracy of the plans and so on before the water rises in the mine. There is also a slight amendment as to notifying the inspector in case of accidents. The old provision is somewhat vague and a vital amendment is made in this Bill. The provision is that any period of unconsciousness experienced by a miner through the effects of gases, foul air or fumes, shall be reported, just as though it were an accident in the ordinary sense of the word. It is essential that the department should know all that happens in the case of such accidents, so that the inspector may ascertain the cause and, where possible, remedy it immediately.

Of course, there can be other forms of gasses from which a miner may suffer, so it is necessary that all should be carefully classified. Provision is made for a record

book of the type approved by the Minister, in which all accidents shall be recorded, and the book shall be open for inspection by inspectors and by a representative of the industrial organisation of the miners. The provision in the Act relating to the reporting of accidents stipulates that the inspector shall be informed immediately, but there are times when no inspector is available. We are providing that whenever an inspector is absent, the man who will inspect the scene of the accident will be an experienced miner if the services of such a man are obtainable. This is a wise provision because it is of little use a man's inspecting the scene of an accident if he knows nothing about practical mining. In the isolated areas, inexperienced men may be the only ones obtainable and, in case of an accident in those circumstances, their services would be availed of, but the Bill provides that wherever it is possible to get an experienced man he shall make an inspection in the absence of the inspector.

A minor amendment is proposed in relation to the inspection of places where accidents have occurred. When a serious accident is reported underground, the inspector immediately goes to the scene. The Act provides that a representative of an industrial organisation shall also be permitted to attend and make investigation and examination. So far as I am aware, the representative has always been a member of the union to which the miners belong, but the law says "any industrial organisation," which might mean a member of the Shop Assistants' Union could go along and make the examination. The Bill stipulates that the examination shall be made by a representative of the industrial organisation to which the miners belong.

The Bill provides for the same reform as was contained in the Coal Mines Regulation Bill dealing with the hours of labour. I need not reiterate the arguments I advanced in support of the provision in this measure. The Act provides that the hours of labour shall be eight per day and 48 per week. This has been in the Act ever since the law was passed approximately 40 years ago. We are not outstripping any decision of the Arbitration Court or interfering with any other law. All we are doing is asking Parliament to sanction the existing practice in the industry. The Arbitration Court set down the hours which have been worked for

many years, and the provision in the Bill merely endorses that practice.

The Act contains a provision to prevent mining companies from employing labour on Sundays, but certain exemptions are granted that are essential in a continuous-process industry. The Bill provides for other exemptions following the introduction of more up-to-date methods in regard to power plants and water supplies. The Wiluna company has its own water supply. In order to assist these people who are working constantly to keep the mine going, we are including men working on power plants and water supplies so that in future they may be exempt from the provision in the existing law.

The Act prohibits Sunday work, but on occasions it is urgently necessary that certain men should be employed. There is a provision for the Inspector of Mines to issue a permit to any company to employ a certain number of men on particular work. This work would be of an urgent character to take advantage of the cessation of operations on Sunday so that the mine may be put in fit and proper and effective condition for the men to resume work on the following day. Some discontent has occurred because all that is necessary under the existing law is for the inspector to notify the manager that he may employ a given number of men on a given job and the permit is posted in a conspicuous place on the mine. The complaint is that, although a number of men have been so employed, the union concerned knew nothing about it. Consequently, we are providing for the inspector to notify the union when permits are issued to employ men for emergency work on Sunday.

There is another provision differing from the existing law in regard to qualifications of enginedrivers. In 1922 the Inspection of Machinery Act was amended to provide for a higher qualification for enginedrivers. Up to that time, a first-class enginedriver was permitted to take charge of winding engines for raising and lowering men. It is now provided that an enginedriver must have what is known as a winding-engine certificate before he can take charge of a winding-engine where men are raised or lowered. In order to get over a difficulty in 1922, provision was made that the holder of an unrestricted first-class enginedriver's certificate in force at the time of the Act would be permitted to take charge of any

engine, except a traction engine. That was only fair at the time to those who had been driving winding-engines; but those who took up the work later were required to hold a higher class certificate, known as a winding enginedriver's certificate. This Bill provides that a driver holding a winding enginedriver's certificate will be the only person who will be permitted to take charge of a winding-engine where men are either raised or lowered. A driver holding the first-class certificate will be permitted to take charge of a winding-engine where materials only are raised or lowered. These particular qualifications are provided for in the Bill in order to conform to the provisions of the Inspection of Machinery Act.

Members may also recall that certain exemptions were granted for handling hoists and similar contrivances. The latter are used mainly underground and are known as hoists. There are many differences of opinion upon the law, and in order to clear them up this Bill provides that exemptions shall be granted from this provision for men working hoists not exceeding 12 h.p. and not hauling from a depth lower than 250 feet. This vexed problem is therefore now solved. Under the existing law, it is necessary to obtain a permit from the Minister before any person may remove timber or ladders from an abandoned shaft or old mine workings. As far as possible, the department endeavours to maintain a shaft in the condition in which it was left when the mine was abandoned, in order that it might be easily accessible to anyone who considers that he will meet with success by working the mine again. We are altering this provision by striking out the word "Minister" and inserting in lieu "inspector." It has been found rather cumbersome to approach the Minister on this matter.

A prospector, if the Bill passes, may now approach an inspector, who will be able to watch what is being done after he has given permission. Under the existing law general rules are provided for. It is proposed that these shall be not included in this Bill, but dealt with by way of regulation. Greater progress has been made on goldmines and metalliferous mines than has been made in the coalmining industry. Systems are constantly changing, as are methods of treatment. It has been found difficult, as the general rules form part of the Act itself, to deal with emergencies that arise from

time to time. Parliament may not be sitting; even if it is, it is often difficult and takes a long time to procure an amendment to the Act. It has been thought to be more prudent, therefore, to deal with the general rules by way of regulation, so that in the event of an emergency arising it can be dealt with promptly and rectified. This procedure is considered advisable in view of the experience of the Mines Department over a long number of years. The department has always been watchful of any change in methods adopted in the gold-mining industry.

I have dealt with the main amendments of the existing law—indeed, I think I can safely say that I have dealt with all the amendments. Some are new provisions, others merely amendments of existing provisions, with one exception. Members will recall that last session Parliament passed a small Bill providing for the treatment of miners for the prevention of silicosis by what is known as aluminium therapy. Unfortunately, the draftsman overlooked that measure and so its provisions do not appear in the Bill. I propose, however, to have them included when the Bill reaches the Legislative Council. This will avoid re-printing the Bill; as members know, the Government Printing Office is congested at the moment. None of the provisions of the Bill can be said to be ambitious or not strictly warranted. It is hoped that the measure will bring about contentment and satisfaction to those working in the mines. If the companies have contented men working under conditions which they feel are satisfactory so far as their health and life are concerned, then they, too, should benefit equally. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. N. Keenan, debate adjourned.

### ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascogne): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 10.42 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

Friday, 29th November, 1946.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2 p.m., and read prayers.

### QUESTION.

#### RAILWAY STRIKE.

*As to Remission of Arbitration Court Fines.*

Mr. McDONALD asked the Premier: Referring to paragraph 2 of the terms of settlement between the Government and the Locomotive Enginedrivers, Firemen and Cleaners' Union—

1, Will the "annulment of all current proceedings" involve the cancellation or remission of the fines imposed by the Court of Arbitration on the Union and certain of its members?

2, By whom and under what authority is it proposed that such "annulment" shall be effected?

The PREMIER replied:

1 and 2, These aspects have not received consideration.

#### BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Labour.

2, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.

3, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

#### BILL—MARKETING OF POTATOES (No. 2).

Reports of Committee adopted.