

with some of the provisions it contained or the method by which the regulations were to be invoked when the legislation was passed. However the Minister in another place did give a fairly reasonable explanation as to how this would be done.

Although I am not entirely 100 per cent behind the provisions of the Bill or the method by which the regulations are to be implemented, I see no reason to delay the passage of the measure and I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

House adjourned at 8.58 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, the 18th May, 1976

The SPEAKER (Mr Hutchinson) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

CONDOLENCE

*Clerk Assistant of the Assembly
(the late Mr P. N. Thornber)*

THE SPEAKER (Mr Hutchinson): It is with deep regret that I record the death on Friday last of Mr Philip Norman Thornber, Clerk Assistant of the Legislative Assembly.

I have conveyed the sincere sympathy of the members, officers and staff of this House to the bereaved family and now would like all to rise for a few moments' silence as a mark of respect and tribute.

Gentlemen, will you please rise.

Members rose in their places, standing in silence.

CLERK ASSISTANT OF THE ASSEMBLY

Acting Appointment

THE SPEAKER (Mr Hutchinson): I have to announce that I have temporarily appointed Mr L. A. Hoff, officer of the Legislative Council, to be Acting Clerk Assistant for the next four weeks.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Acknowledgment of Presentation to Governor

THE SPEAKER (Mr Hutchinson): I have to announce that, accompanied by the member for Greenough (Mr Tubby), the member for Moore, (Mr Crane), and the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr T. D. Evans), I attended upon His Excellency the

Governor and presented the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's Speech in opening Parliament. His Excellency has been pleased to reply in the following terms—

Mr Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly: I thank you for your expressions of loyalty to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, and for your Address-in-Reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament.

QUESTIONS (16): ON NOTICE

1. EAST VICTORIA PARK SCHOOL

Resiting

Mr DAVIES, to the Minister representing the Minister for Education:

(1) Referring to question 30 of 7th October, 1975 regarding the future of East Victoria Park Primary School, as a repair and renovation is now being carried out, can it be assumed that the proposed development will not now proceed?

(2) If not, can the Minister advise the present position please, including the options held by the developers?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

(1) and (2) Negotiations are still proceeding and no firm decisions have yet been made. As this has been the position for some time, the Education Department requested that the repair and renovation should be continued.

2. DOG BILL AND ALSATIAN DOG ACT REPEAL BILL

Objections

Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Does the Agriculture Protection Board have any objections to the Dog Bill or the Alsatian Dog Act Repeal Bill which are currently before the House?

(2) If "Yes" what are the reasons for such objections?

(3) Does the Pastoralists and Graziers Association agree with the Bills referred to in (1), and if so, on what grounds?

Mr OLD replied:

(1) and (2) I understand the Agriculture Protection Board has not formally discussed the Dog Bill now before the House including the replacement of the Alsatian Dog Act by the provisions of clause 53 of the Bill.

The board has, however, discussed the proposal of the German Shepherd Association to allow restricted breeding and has indicated its preference for control under the Dog Act, rather than embarking on a restricted breeding programme.

- (3) Although the Pastoralists and Graziers Association has previously indicated its support for restricted breeding of Alsations and other large breeds, the opinion of the association on these Bills is not yet known.

3. SCHOOL DENTAL SCHEME

State Contribution

Mr DAVIES, to the Minister representing the Minister for Health:

- (1) Referring to question 20 of 12th May, 1976 relating to the school dental scheme, what increase to this State's contributions is proposed from 1st July, 1976?
- (2) What amount, in terms of money, will this amount to so far as this State is concerned?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) 10% has been proposed.
- (2) This would amount to \$512 000 approximately based on preliminary estimates.

4. PRE-SCHOOL CENTRE

Jurien Bay

Mr CRANE, to the Minister representing the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is the Education Department contemplating building a pre-school centre at Jurien Bay?
- (2) If so, when will building be—
 - (a) commenced;
 - (b) completed?
- (3) Does the Education Department allow the use of such centres for existing kindergarten committees when not being used on certain days for Education Department pre-school classes?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) It is anticipated that a transportable pre-primary unit will be erected on the school site in early August, 1976.
- (3) When a parent committee is constituted it will have authority to allocate use of the pre-primary centre for related childhood purposes.

5. UNDERGROUND WATER RESERVE AREA

Jandakot: Bores

Mr TAYLOR, to the Minister for Water Supplies:

- (1) With respect to the Jandakot groundwater scheme area, how many test bores have been put down?
- (2) How many of such bores indicate potential sufficient to warrant harnessing to MWS systems?
- (3) Which of these bores could be in production within—
 - (a) two years;
 - (b) four years;
 - (c) six years;
 - (d) ten years?
- (4) What is the hoped for annual yield from each such bore?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) 82.
- (2) In total these bores indicate potential sufficient to warrant harnessing to the Metropolitan Water Supply system.
- (3) All of the wells drilled to date have been exploratory, not production wells. The scheme could be operable within four years subject to statutory requirements.
- (4) The estimated yield to the Metropolitan Water Supply system from the well field is 5 500 000 cubic metres per annum.

6. AUSTRALIAN POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION

Compulsory Membership

Mr BERTRAM, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

Bearing in mind the great public interest in the wide coverage given by the media, the widespread impact of the events, and the fact that even this Parliament discussed it, will he state each of the steps which were taken by his Government to resolve the Dracup affair, the results derived therefrom and each of the steps (if any) which have been taken to ensure that there will be no recurrence of the Dracup type trouble affecting the services of this State?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

Despite the fact that the Australian Postal Workers Union award is a Federal award and under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, I arranged for very close

liaison to be maintained so that the interests of Busselton would be watched.

Under State awards provision exists under section 61B of the WA Industrial Arbitration Act for a person who is employed under the State award or agreement to apply for exemption from union membership on the grounds of conscientious belief.

However, under section 47 of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act similar exemption provisions apply only if a preference clause to unionists is inserted in the particular Commonwealth award. The Australian Postal Workers Union Award does not include such preference clause, therefore Mr Dracup did not have the same rights as he would have had under a State award or agreement.

It normally would be the responsibility of a Federal union to seek insertion of the preference clause into their award.

7. ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES

Point Samson

Mr JAMIESON, to the Minister for the North-West:

- (1) Is he aware that there are approximately 40 homes in Point Samson that have not yet access to electricity supply?
- (2) Is he also aware that the Harbour and Light Department have three 36 kva power generating machines at Point Samson with only two being in use at the most at any one time?
- (3) As there is also a V8 Lister generator of 50 kva not being used, would it not be possible to provide the 40 homes with electricity from the Harbour and Light plant?
- (4) What investigation has been carried out to supply electricity to the Point Samson area from the Robe River establishment and have they indicated their agreement to supply electricity for this area?
- (5) If no action has been taken in regard to providing electricity to the 40 homes now without supply, could he indicate the Government's future intention to make provision for such a service to this area?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) Yes.

- (2) The power plant under the control of the Harbour and Light Department at Point Samson consists of three 50 KVA units of which two are running at any time. The capacity of two machines is required to meet the steady departmental load and the starting load imposed by the freezer and chiller rooms.

Having a third machine in reserve is standard engineering practice since the load must be carried when one unit is out of service for periodical maintenance or overhaul.

- (3) There are no Government owned sets at Point Samson other than the three in the power station. Whilst there have been several portable units in the area on occasions, a check on 14th May shows that these are all at construction sites.
- (4) Supply of power to Point Samson is at present actively under investigation by the State Energy Commission. Cliffs Robe River have agreed to make a limited supply available for this purpose and negotiations are proceeding. Local Parliamentary members, consistent with their representations, will be consulted.
- (5) A statement will be made when the current investigations are concluded.

8. UNDERGROUND WATER RESERVE AREA

Jandakot: Right of Entry

Mr TAYLOR, to the Minister for Water Supplies:

- (1) With respect to the Jandakot underground water scheme, does his reply to my question 27 of Wednesday, 12th May, mean that—
 - (a) once a notice of entry has been given to an owner any person employed by either the board, a contractor or a sub-contractor can enter upon such property for any purpose covered by the relevant Act and/or its regulations without producing identification;
 - (b) such entry can continue by any such persons for an indefinite period without the issue of further notice;
 - (c) no person employed by the board other than a salaried officer is issued with any form of identification?
- (2) Once he has been issued with a notice of entry, how is any owner of property able to know whether a person seen on his property has or has not a legal right of entry?

- (3) If an owner orders persons employed by the board either as direct workforce or employed as or by contractors or sub-contractors but not being one of those officers holding written identification from his property what penalties is he likely to incur?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

- (1) (a) and (b) No. The procedure followed is that authorised and prescribed by section 83A of the Public Works Act and pursuant to only those purposes for which the notice of entry has been issued.

(c) No.

- (2) The person in charge of the field work, the authorised person, makes mutual arrangements with the owner for the temporary occupation of the worksite by the persons in his charge.
- (3) Such penalties as laid down in section 83B of the Public Works Act.

9.

COMPANIES (CO-OPERATIVE) ACT

Registrations

Mr BERTRAM, to the Minister representing the Attorney-General:

How many companies are registered under the Companies (Co-operative) Act?

Mr O'NEIL replied:

There are 77 companies registered under the Companies (Co-operative) Act.

10. *This question was postponed.*

11.

ORCHARDS

Tree-pull Scheme

Mr H. D. EVANS, to the Minister for Agriculture:

- (1) Are funds available under the tree-pull scheme for orchardists desiring to leave the industry?
- (2) If "Yes" how much is available for the purpose indicated and for how long will applications be received?

Mr OLD replied:

- (1) No. Funds for the scheme were available for applications lodged prior to 31st December, 1975, and the trees are to be removed by 30th June, 1976.

Federal Cabinet is at present considering further action in relation to the IAC report on the fruit growing scheme which includes tree-pull aspects.

- (2) Not applicable.

12. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Zone Development Committees

Mr CARR, to the Minister for Industrial Development:

- (1) Will he outline the operation, function and composition of zone development committees?
- (2) How many such committees are in operation and where are they located?
- (3) Has consideration been given to establishing one in the Geraldton region?
- (4) If "Yes" to (3), will he please provide details?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) Zone development committees have recently changed their name to regional development committees. Their operations, functions and compositions are set out in the attached terms of reference and constitution, which I ask your permission, Mr Speaker, to table.
- (2) Seven regional development committees exist, namely, Kimberley, Pilbara, Lower North, Eastern Goldfields - Esperance, Central South, South West, and Albany.
- (3) and (4) Some consideration has been given to establishing such a committee for the Geraldton region, and the matter is to be discussed at the 28th May meeting of the Mid-West Regional Liaison Group at Geraldton. Whether or not a committee is to be formed will be the decision of the region not the Government, which is looking for local initiative and willing participation instead of foisting anything on the region.

The paper was tabled (see paper No. 235).

13.

HOUSING

Metropolitan Area: Shortage

Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister for Housing:

In view of the shortage of State Housing Commission accommodation generally in the metropolitan area, plus the fact there are thousands of acres of land owned by the commission on which homes could be built immediately, will he give full and complete reasons why such a shortage of SHC accommodation exists?

Mr Old (for Mr P. V. JONES) replied:

It is not correct to say the State Housing Commission owns thousands of acres of land on which homes could be built immediately. The great proportion of these holdings are not serviced neither

have they been the subject of detailed studies for planning and development approval.

The State Housing Commission is mounting construction programmes to the limit of its financial capacity. The new construction is being located consistent with the State-wide obligations of the Commission and the relative needs in various parts of the State.

14.

HOUSING

Langford: Shopping Centre

Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister for Housing:

- (1) Have tenders been called to construct a shopping centre in the Langford area?
- (2) If "Yes" what response has he had regarding interested tenderers?
- (3) When can it be expected construction will begin?
- (4) If "No" to (1) what is the reason for such delay?

Mr Old (for Mr P. V. JONES) replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) One tender was submitted.
- (3) The one tender received was not acceptable to the commissioners, who have requested negotiation on several aspects of the proposal. Until those negotiations are complete, it is not possible to say when, or if, construction will commence.
- (4) Not applicable.

15.

TOWN PLANNING

Canning Vale Light Industrial Complex: Tenants

Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister for Industrial Development:

- (1) For what period of time can tenants living in and renting from the Industrial Lands Development Authority in the proposed Canning Vale light industrial complex expect a continuity of rental accommodation?
- (2) What arrangements are made to advise these tenants when the accommodation will be required by his authority for industrial development?

Mr MENSAROS replied:

- (1) As the 600 hectare complex will be developed in at least five stages this will depend upon the location of the tenants in question.
- (2) The tenants are advised in writing of the necessary vacation dates by the Authority's renting agents. At least one month's notice is given.

16.

TOWN PLANNING

Canning Vale Improvement Plan No. 7

Mr BATEMAN, to the Minister for Urban Development and Town Planning:

- (1) When were the amendments to the Town Planning Act Canning Vale improvement plan No. 7 tabled in the House?
- (2) On what day and date were they gazetted in the *Government Gazette*?
- (3) On what date and in what newspapers were the amendments advertised?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (1) to (3) There have been no amendments to the Canning Vale improvement plan No. 7.

QUESTIONS (5): WITHOUT NOTICE

1.

TRADE UNIONS

Ballots: Departmental Control

Mr HARMAN, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

In the event that the Australian Government abandons its proposed legislation for court controlled union ballots will he also consider abandoning proposals he has for union ballots in this State to be controlled by the Electoral Department?

The SPEAKER: I wish to indicate that the phraseology used by the honourable member made the first portion of his question hypothetical. Perhaps the Minister might answer the same, having regard for the fact that information is required.

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

I ask the honourable member to place the question on the notice paper.

2.

AUSTRALIAN POSTAL AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS UNION

Compulsory Membership

Mr BERTRAM, to the Minister for Labour and Industry:

Further to his answer to question 6 on the notice paper, and particularly in respect of the first paragraph—

- (1) With whom did he arrange for a close liaison to be maintained?
- (2) Who were the parties involved in the liaison?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) and (2) The Department of Labour and the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission.

3. TEACHERS

Salary Reductions: Regulation 109

Mr BRYCE, to the Minister representing the Minister for Education:

- (1) How many temporary, part-time, relief, or supply teachers will be affected by the Education Department's decision to amend Regulation 109?
- (2) With this decision to reduce drastically the salaries of temporary and relief teachers, how much money will the Education Department save?
- (3) Was the new regulation, in fact, gazetted before discussions between the Teachers' Union and the Education Department were completed?
- (4) In view of the grave injustice to the teachers concerned, will the Minister reconsider the decision of his department on this matter?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

On behalf of the Minister for Education, I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question, the answer to which is as follows—

- (1) No estimate can be attempted because the number of relief teachers employed in any period varies with the incidence of sickness, accidents, and leave for special purposes.
- (2) The salaries of temporary and part-time teachers have not changed. Any teacher employed for one month or longer is unaffected by the amendment. There has been a change in the method of payment of salary to casual, short-term relief teachers. These are teachers employed for from one day to less than 20 days at any time. It is not possible to estimate the saving that may result here for the reasons given in (1).
- (3) Yes.
- (4) While it has not been demonstrated that injustice exists, the Minister has already shown a willingness to receive overtures from the Teachers' Union on this matter.

4. TOWN PLANNING

Rockingham Subdivision: Effect on Culs-de-sac

Mr BARNETT, to the Minister for Town Planning:

In relation to the proposed subdivision in Rockingham Park between Quanby Place, Turana Place, and Rae Road—

- (a) Is the Minister aware of the extreme distress caused to home owners in the two culs-de-sac in view of the proposal to open them both and make them feeder roads for the new subdivision?
- (b) Is the Minister aware that if the proposal is proceeded with, at least seven turns will have to be made by vehicles from that subdivision before they can get out of the Rockingham Park subdivision?
- (c) Are any alternative access routes possible to the subdivision?
- (d) If so, what are they?
- (e) Is the Minister aware that work has already begun to open the two culs-de-sac to the proposed subdivision?
- (f) Is the Minister aware of the petition signed by all residents of Quanby Place and Turana Place objecting to their culs-de-sac becoming feeder roads?
- (g) Will the Minister have work stopped on the subdivision at least until such time as all alternative access ways have been thoroughly investigated?

Mr RUSHTON replied:

- (a) No.
- (b) Yes, but this could probably be improved when subdivision to the west proceeds.
- (c) and (d) It does not appear so but additional access routes could probably be provided when subdivision to the west proceeds.
- (e) No.
- (f) I understand the honourable member is to present a copy of the petition to me.
- (g) I have no power to stop subdivision which has been approved by the Town Planning Board.

5. BELMONT HIGH SCHOOL

White Ant Infestation

Mr BRYCE, to the Minister representing the Minister for Education:

- (1) Is the Minister aware of the serious nature of the white ant problem at Belmont Senior High School?

- (2) What is the annual cost of maintenance at Belmont Senior High School; is this figure exceeded by the amount spent on annual maintenance for any other high school in Western Australia?
- (3) When were white ants first detected and treated in the school?
- (4) Is it a fact that the recently discovered infestation of white ants is much more serious than that discovered in previous years?
- (5) In view of the fact that whole sections of roofing timbers have disappeared as a result of white ant activity, will the Minister guarantee that a complete inspection of all roofing timbers will be made before classes are resumed following the May vacation?

- (6) In view of the fact—
 - (a) that the Belmont Senior High School is one of the very few timber high schools in the State;
 - (b) that the school was erected on a temporary basis in 1956;
 - (c) that the white ants have gained the upper hand in their fight for the karri timber in the building;

will the Minister provide details of plans which his department has for the replacement of the school?

Mr GRAYDEN replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) On the normal five to six year cycle general external and internal repairs and renovations to an estimated value of \$70 000 are programmed for the 1976-77 financial year. So far as white ant treatment is concerned approximately \$9 500 has been spent since 1957. General external and internal repairs and renovations cost to this high school would exceed maintenance costs to other high schools by approximately 5 per cent.
- (3) 1957.
- (4) Yes.
- (5) Whole sections of roofing timbers have not disappeared. One verandah beam which had been badly attacked is being replaced. All roofing timbers are already being inspected. All infestation so far discovered has been restricted to verandahs only. No classrooms have been affected. A complete inspection of all roofing timbers is being made and any necessary repairs due to white ant attack will be completed prior to commencement of the second term.

- (6) The school was not erected on a temporary basis and there is no intention to replace the buildings. The school was designed and built when the Hon. W. Hegney was Minister for Education, in the Government led by the Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, as a suitable high school for Belmont.

INDUSTRIAL LANDS (CSBP & FARMERS LTD.) AGREEMENT BILL

Introduction and First Reading

Bill introduced, on motion by Mr Mensaros (Minister for Industrial Development), and read a first time.

BILLS (2): THIRD READING

1. Road Traffic Act Amendment Bill.

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr O'Connor (Minister for Traffic), and transmitted to the Council.

2. Government Railways Act Amendment Bill.

Bill read a third time, on motion by Mr O'Connor (Minister for Transport), and transmitted to the Council.

FREMANTLE PORT AUTHORITY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

MR O'NEIL (East Melville—Minister for Works) [4.56 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill provides greater flexibility for the port authority in obtaining satisfactory security from officers handling cash. The amendment proposed follows similar provisions in the Esperance, Geraldton and Port Hedland Port Authority Acts which were placed on the Statute book in recent years and reflect present-day thinking on this problem.

The Fremantle Port Authority Act provides that the Minister may approve of the leasing of land for specified purposes. There is no provision for the granting of a lesser interest such as a licence. The Bill permits a licence to be granted with the approval of the Minister for any purpose, and in addition provides that licences for periods up to 60 days may be granted by the authority without ministerial approval.

Authority is sought for the granting of licences to enable the construction of pipelines over port authority land.

The Bill contains provisions designed to give the port authority protection against any claim arising out of a ship being navigated within the port without a pilot, and to grant to the port authority similar protection to that provided under the Shipping and Pilotage Act to other ports in the State in regard to the removal of wrecks.

The Act at present provides that the tonnage of vessels on which tonnage dues are chargeable shall be the tonnage specified in the certificate of registration. Pilotage dues are also payable on a sliding scale depending on the registered tonnage of vessels. Experience has shown that some vessels have two load marks, both of which are registered, but the master produces the certificate for the lower mark only if his ship calls at Fremantle in light draught.

There is also the anomaly of special purpose vehicles such as ro-ro, where the gross registered ton calculation has regard only for the cargo space up to the vehicle deck. Some ro-ro vessels have two or even three decks of cargo space above this, and one ship of this type regularly calling at Australian ports pays tonnage on 9 000 tons. If the two cargo decks above the vehicle deck were included, the vessel would be rated at 17 000 tons.

The proposed new section will grant to the port authority the right to make its own calculations as to the registered tonnage of a vessel and not be bound by a tonnage calculation made in an overseas country which, in many instances, is in no way related to the length, draught, and beam of the vessel, which are the criteria which count if it is acknowledged that the port is entitled to revenue for the facilities it provides, such as pilotage service, depth of water, wharf area, etc., in direct proportion to the use made of such facilities.

Mr Davies: Do you know which are the offending countries?

Mr O'NEIL: They are not offending countries. It is simply that they have a different method of determining it. This particular provision has been before the Australian port and marine authorities on a number of occasions and States which have not already moved to permit their port authorities to make this calculation are in the process of doing so, anyway.

Mr Davies: Isn't there any dimensional calculation?

Mr O'NEIL: Yes, as I mentioned previously, many ships carry two load lines, one when they have a light draught, and one when they have not. Naturally enough masters and owners of ships will quote the appropriate draught line in order to pay as little as possible in respect of the tonnage due. I might say there is not a great deal of abuse of this particular provision, but in order to establish some uniformity within all the States and to ensure that the ports receive appropriate fees, it has been decided that all States will introduce similar legislation.

The Bill proposes to include the owner of the ship among those liable to pay dues on goods. This is to enable the port authority to claim against the owner when goods are taken off a ship on the orders of either the owner or the ship's captain.

The Bill authorises the drafting of regulations limiting or exempting the port authority from liability for damage or loss suffered by any person in consequence of acts of sabotage or terrorism. Although we in Western Australia have been spared from deliberate acts of terrorism, we may not always be in this happy position, and it makes good sense to ensure that the port authority is not involved in claims should something of this nature occur in the future.

A provision is contained in this Bill to provide that the harbour master may control the entry and departure of vessels. This authority is not presently contained in the parent Act. Although all the other harbour masters of ports in Western Australia have this power vested in them under the Shipping and Pilotage Act.

There are a number of minor amendments updating the parent Act concerning definitions and the like which in no way amount to changes in the principles of the legislation. These would be better dealt with in Committee should members desire further explanation.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr McIver.

EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 5th May.

MR A. R. TONKIN (Morley) [5.02 p.m.]: Mr Speaker, I would like to indicate that the Opposition spokesman for this matter is the member for Ascot.

MR BRYCE (Ascot) [5.03 p.m.]: Mr Speaker, the member for Ascot apologises for his noisy entry into the Chamber, and wishes to indicate that the Opposition has a great deal of pleasure in supporting this Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 6th May.

MR SKIDMORE (Swan) [5.06 p.m.]: This Bill is to amend the Factories and Shops Act, 1963-1975, and we on this side of the House agree with it in principle. However, there are some matters that possibly require tidying up, and whilst it is not my desire to delve deeply into the

clauses in the Committee stage we do feel these require some attention. I leave further remarks from this side until then.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

AGRICULTURE AND RELATED RESOURCES PROTECTION BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 4th May.

MR. H. D. EVANS (Warren—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.10 p.m.): This is a Bill of some consequence, even though it has been introduced and viewed on a low key level, as indeed it should be. It deals with the Agriculture Protection Board and its reorganisation. It is essentially an administration Bill, and it purports to do quite a number of things, most of which can be agreed to. However, there are several matters that should be questioned in some depth and alternatives examined; and the rationale behind the decisions taken by the Government should be fully understood.

The history of the Agriculture Protection Board dates back to the late 1940s when the problem of noxious weeds and vermin became acute. One of the reasons for this was the neglect which was occasioned during the Second World War. The shortage of manpower at that time was manifested in the agricultural field as much as it was in any other aspect of our life. As a consequence, the number of rabbits increased and weeds such as Cape tulip and Paterson's curse became widespread; and in pastoral areas wild dogs were found in extraordinarily large numbers. Indeed, in 1950, almost 15 000 scalp bonuses were paid. That was roughly the situation which led to the formation of the APB in 1951.

The basic responsibility for the control of vermin and noxious weeds on a farming property belongs to the farmer. That was the concept under which the APB came into existence, and it is being perpetuated in the measure now before the House. I do not think there is any way that we can get away from this precept that the vermin on a farmer's property belongs to him, because if vermin were made the responsibility of some Government organisation, such as the APB, it would be only human nature on the part of the farmer to regard it in that manner and, naturally enough, farmers would be loud in their criticism and lamentation if the responsibility belonged to someone else. This would create an intolerable position, and it would be impossible for a Government or semi-Government instrumentality to operate in those circumstances.

At the time of its initiation the APB saw the need to co-ordinate the efforts of landholders and local authorities. A number of co-operative schemes were set up in conjunction with shire councils, with the board and the councils sharing the cost of the employment of staff. The scheme was adopted progressively throughout the agricultural areas on that basis, and there are now something like 100 vermin control and noxious weeds boards. The APB still has an involvement in the same way.

The history of the APB and its level of successes were, and still are, worthy of note to give an indication of the extent of the achievements made. The first breakthrough in respect of vermin came in 1952 with the introduction of myxomatosis, and then in 1954 came the use of the poison 1080, for the destruction of rabbits. Once established, myxomatosis quickly spread throughout the entire State, and rabbits were eradicated in large numbers. With the follow-up of 1080 a great level of success was achieved, and today the rabbit population is probably at its lowest level for many, many years.

The board obtained approval to import 1080 and to commence using it in the group vermin control scheme. The APB also evolved the one-shot method of rabbit baiting, thus eliminating the pre-feeding technique which had been necessary with the previous types of poisoning. Research currently is proceeding at Forrestfield and it is hoped that, ultimately, poisoning techniques will be evolved which do away with the requirement for stock to be removed from the paddocks to be treated.

I draw attention to this aspect of vermin eradication because the whole pattern has changed over the last two decades. Initially, the APB directed its principal attention to the destruction of vermin, rabbits in particular and to a lesser degree wild dogs and emus. Perhaps I could consider the problem of kangaroos in a separate category later in my remarks.

With the success achieved in controlling animal vermin, the emphasis must be directed towards the eradication of noxious weeds, the most important of which is skeleton weed, which represents a great danger to the grain-growing areas of our State. The importance of controlling skeleton weed should not be underestimated because if it becomes established, it will necessitate the evolution of grain-growing techniques about which hitherto Western Australia has not had to worry.

In some areas of the Eastern States, spraying techniques are part and parcel of normal crop husbandry, and cost at least \$10 an acre, so the importance of eradicating existing skeleton weed and preventing further infestations cannot be overemphasised.

The pastoral areas also were involved in the eradication of wild dogs, but this still remains a major problem in the sheep

industry in the north of the State; it presents an extensive problem due to the nature of the industry, the difficulties of the terrain and the breeding habits of the dogs. Considerable research has been undertaken in this area, and it is important that an economical method of eradication be developed.

Although it is difficult to generalise, the pastoralists have a reasonable record in regard to the eradication of wild dogs. Of course, performances vary quite drastically from individual to individual, and between the various vermin eradication boards.

However, from replies to questions I directed recently to the Minister for Agriculture, it can be seen that the annual cost of eradicating wild dogs is considerable, and, more importantly, is not likely to be reduced drastically, allowing for increased costs due to inflation. It is anticipated that control will be maintained at its present level, but that is not to say that the ultimate has been reached in the field of wild dog control.

Most pastoralists would acknowledge the truth of this statement; they must weigh the cost of establishing dog fences over great distances against the benefits gained by such fences. In this way, the whole future of the industry becomes involved.

The question of the cost of vermin control incurred by individual pastoralists throughout the Murchison-Gascoyne area must be taken into consideration. If pastoralists are forced to leave the industry for economic reasons—this trend has been halted to some extent by the improvement in wool prices—the increased burden of vermin control placed on the other pastoralists could be almost impossible for them to bear.

One of the techniques evolved was that of aerial baiting. The merits of the different methods of eradication will be debated and contested very strongly in the various districts where the matter is raised.

The entire issue has a very wide application. Skeleton weed is a comparative newcomer, and has superimposed itself over the existing problems; the dangers accruing from vermin are never far away.

Another problem which cannot be disregarded is the prospective introduction of starlings. The APB has a commendable record in preventing the passage of starlings across the Nullabor into Western Australia. Any of these major pests—be they feathered, furred or vegetable—could cost this State many millions of dollars. Skeleton weed alone could burden this State with a colossal sum, both to individual growers and the Government.

In his second reading speech, the Minister stated as follows—

The Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Bill establishes a new system of management and

provides for amalgamation of the control, prevention and eradication of vermin and noxious weeds.

In the main, this stems from the change of emphasis of the board's resources, and the need to direct them to the area of greatest urgency; namely, the control of noxious weeds. This provision will allow the board flexibility in transferring personnel from one area to another, and must represent a more satisfactory method of operation than previously has been the case. The Minister went on to say—

The existing Vermin Act was designed on a system of separate local vermin authorities with responsibility for the control, prevention, and eradication of vermin. The vermin authorities were empowered to raise funds by rating and to employ administrative, inspectoral, and operative staff to carry out their responsibilities.

Over 100 of these separate local vermin authorities still exist. The Minister went on to say—

In the past 40 years no vermin authority has carried out the total functions and duties clearly specified in the Vermin Act.

That is an indictment of the system which has been evolved, and probably was one of the major factors in deciding to alter the system of administration which has operated for the last four decades. The Minister went on to make the following qualification—

Some have been keen and active in carrying out some of the duties and fallen short on others, and many other local authorities have done little or nothing.

This is a sad reflection on people who have a clear, grassroots responsibility to control such vermin. The Minister went on to say—

The shire councils have taken little action to enforce weed legislation and the prime responsibility, as with vermin, has passed back to the Agriculture Protection Board.

This resulted in the passing of effective responsibility to the board, and, as the Minister pointed out, created an undesirable degree of centralisation of decision making.

This legislation provides for the establishment of 10 zone control authorities, although this number will be subject to the final decision of the APB. It is anticipated that the South-West Land Division will contain five such authorities encompassing the northern agricultural area, the eastern wheatbelt, the southwest, the great southern and the south-eastern areas.

Of course, each of these authorities will be contiguous to the extent that they will handle problems of a similar nature.

It would seem that this would be the main consideration, although geographical and population factors also would have to be taken into account. However, the proposal contained in the legislation is quite acceptable.

It is understood that the outer metropolitan area will encompass a zone authority, while the eastern goldfields, the Murchison-Gascoyne, the Pilbara and the Kimberley will make up the remainder of the proposed authorities. It will remain to be seen whether substantial changes will be effected to the zoning system.

I take it that within each of the zones there will be a number of regional committees which will be dictated by the circumstances which evolve; several such regional committees would form one zone, and liaison would be provided by the APB. I believe it is impossible to be more precise until the APB has examined in some detail the entire question. No doubt there will be half a dozen regional committees in some zones, and perhaps two or three in other zones.

The question of finance necessarily intrudes into all matters; and it does so in this case. The previous vermin and noxious weeds rate was not a very popular provision. Great relief was expressed when it was finally abolished prior to the 1971 election. I have heard it suggested that the abolition of this rate came about at the instigation of the then Country Party, as compensation for the retention of the road maintenance tax. However, I shall not be sidetracked by entering into an argument on that aspect at the present time.

The question of finance cannot be disregarded; and indeed in discussions with two of the shires I came upon a view which is contrary to the one that has been explained and adopted in the Bill. In the agricultural areas the precept and the overriding principle will be virtually one under which the user pays. The Agriculture Protection Board will provide the administration costs, the direction, the research, and other requirements of that kind. It will provide the inspectorial system, the supervision, and the means of eradication where the eradication of a particular declared plant or animal is required.

The farmer has alternative methods to adopt in respect of eradication. Once it has been indicated that a farmer has a problem, he will be involved in a cost of \$15 per hour if he uses the facilities of the APB. Previously there was a daily charge of \$60, but I understand that it has since been waived. So, a flat rate of \$15 per hour will be charged against the individual farmer if he avails himself of the APB operating facilities.

At the same time the farmer has recourse to the use of satisfactory methods of his own, or to carrying out eradication through some contractor. In this respect an alternative does exist.

I come back to the principle that is entailed: whether an overall rate should be struck, or whether the principle of the user pays should be adopted. I have no doubt this question has been debated at every level. I believe that ultimately the decision favouring the present method resulted from seven votes in favour and six votes against.

The Bridgetown-Greenbushes Shire Council, in conjunction with the Manjimup and Nannup Shire Councils, has had a committee for some time which is charged with the eradication of blackberry. To carry out this work the shires levied a rate, and that occurred in 1975. Today no longer is the blackberry eradication rate struck in those shires, and for the last year they have operated on the principle of the user pays.

When the inspectors were called in to discuss with the shire clerks this question of blackberry eradication, they were unanimous in their view that the shires should revert to the rating system. They put forward some rather convincing arguments in support of their view. I appreciate that this touches only on a small aspect of the whole matter; however, it deals with human nature which ultimately determines the implementation of all schemes of this kind.

In the first instance, there was the problem of the small town blocks. Where previously a small problem was created, through the introduction of the rate, when the charge of \$15 per hour came into operation the inspectors were loath to draw attention to the fact that there were a few declared plants on a small town block. If they reported the infestation they would involve the owners of the blocks in a cost of \$15 per hour. If the inspectors had made an issue of this, straightaway the good public relations and the harmony that existed would be disturbed. Consequently they considered that it was hardly worth while to report such infestations.

The inspectors pointed out that a landowner who was required to report a declared weed on his property would be very loath and tardy to do so, knowing that he would be responsible for the cost of eradication; whereas previously when a rate was struck he knew he would not be involved in any cost of eradication, and he made a report straightaway. Of course, under the rating method blackberry infestations diminished considerably.

Whether the declared plant be skeleton weed or blackberry—which has affected only three shires—the principle will be much the same. The farmer who is aware that he has a declared weed on his property, and who realises that he will be

involved in some stringent control measures and possible quarantine of his property will not report the infestation as readily as he might have done if he knew that everyone engaged in the industry would be helping to foot the bill—as was done under the rating method.

That principle has been espoused by many, and probably it is best summed up by the Chairman of the Country Shire Councils' Association who said that it was far better to meet a bushfire on somebody else's property than on one's own. I refer mainly to the grain-growing industry, because this is where the costs are the highest and the potential dangers the greatest, especially from skeleton weed infestation.

Although it might not be possible to prove this, the infestations we have evidenced in the wheatgrowing areas were present for more than one harvest; and extending to what number of harvests is a matter of conjecture. It is almost certain the infestations were present, probably with the farmers' knowledge, for more than one harvest. This is a sad reflection on human nature, but it is a fact of life. It is one with which we have to live and for which we have to make provision.

The argument in favour of the rating method is that if a danger arises in the industry the industry as a whole will counter it. The rate is being levied on all land for the purpose of controlling declared plants, no matter where an infestation might break out. This is a form of insurance which overcomes the danger of a farmer—even one located at a distance—having to confront a similar infestation on his property and possibly to accept quarantine enforcement.

When we consider the rating problem, one other aspect arises. Because there is such a wide variation among the farmers, anomalies do arise. We could have one farmer who is very assiduous in taking steps to control any declared weed on his property; but we could have a neighbouring farmer who does not show the same interest or exercise the same care. As a consequence the latter could be responsible for infestation of the property of the conscientious farmer. The system of rating could be said to be unfair to the first-mentioned farmer, who has accepted his responsibility and taken steps to control declared weeds; yet he is subject to the adverse circumstances that could be created by his less diligent neighbour.

That probably is the greatest argument against the rating system. If a rate on the unimproved capital value of property is adopted again we would have the anomalies that this system produced previously, apart from problems created by the individual application of the scheme.

I am not in a position to say how we could determine an equitable form of rating, and I hasten to say that neither was

the committee, which investigated the anomalies in local government rating, able to do this. This committee has presented a fairly extensive report, but it has not been able to come up with a satisfactory answer. That is a further difficulty to be encountered when we look at the rating problem.

This aspect should not be passed over lightly: the system of finance under the current method of administration is clearly defined and universally accepted. I understand that the result of the voting was seven in favour of and six against the proposal in the Bill, or a majority of one. In view of that result which was arrived at by members of the committee who discussed this matter at length, naturally a diversity of opinion can be expected. Whether or not the passage of time will reveal more equitable ways in which the charges can be levied remains to be seen. It is only the experience gained in the course of time that will reveal this.

The Farmers' Union was quite happy with the proposal; and it has two members on the Agriculture Protection Board. The Farmers' Union nominates these members, who are appointed by the Minister. The two members representing the Farmers' Union have not raised any strong objections or any points of alarm and concern affecting the Farmers' Union.

Several aspects need clarification. I believe the question of Crown land has not been determined fully. I can see some problems arising in relation to road verges, parks, reserves, and State forests. To some extent these are catered for, but I think the Minister should give us more details about some of the problems that will arise.

Regarding Crown land and reserves, looking firstly at the problem of vermin to be found on road verges we see that local authorities become involved. Roads under the control of a particular local shire become its responsibility, but the question of main roads is one which requires some elaboration. Just how will control of those areas be effected? On the question of Crown land and State forests, to what extent will the Crown be involved and will the APB accept responsibility for vermin—declared animals—and declared plants on Crown land and in State forests? Will that be the responsibility of the APB or will it not?

Mr Old: It will be the responsibility of the Government.

Mr H. D. EVANS: The Government is to accept responsibility in those cases?

Mr Old: Yes.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Crown land reserves, State forests, and mining tenements?

Mr Old: Any land vested in the Government. Shire council land will be the responsibility of the local authority concerned.

Mr H. D. EVANS: So the concept of the user having responsibility permeates right through the classification of "land"?

Mr Old: That is correct.

Mr H. D. EVANS: That point was not clear in my mind when I examined the measure.

Pastoral areas will be subject to rating and, of course, that is a totally different situation. There is the agreement and the concurrence of those who are directly involved. It is proposed that the rate will be to a maximum of 4.5c in the dollar, and it will be imposed with the actual rating. As it will be a rate based on unimproved capital value of a pastoral property, it is more definable. Also, the pastoral rental is involved. In this regard, rating on unimproved capital value is not likely to produce the anomalies which will be found in the agricultural areas with the terrific differences in land values. The unimproved capital values of pastoral areas, varying as they do from the pastures in the south-east to the more remote marginal regions, do not offer very great opportunity for anomalies.

The actual rating is stipulated in the Bill which, I feel, is desirable, and it will be to a maximum of 4.5c in the dollar. It will be included with the actual rates. During the first two financial years the rate will be limited to 3c in the dollar and that will involve a Government contribution in the first year of \$345 000, and a higher contribution during the second year to meet rises caused by inflation. In subsequent years the amount raised from pastoralists will be matched by the Government and that will involve a Government contribution of \$300 000 per annum on the maximum rate of 4.5c in the dollar.

Any additional sums required will be raised at the decision of the zone control authority by means of a zonal rate. That is a wise provision. However, if there is a reduction in the amount contributed by the pastoralists, as a result of properties becoming vacant, the problem will become much more manifest and much more difficult to control by those who remain in the area and I am wondering whether the Government will give an assurance that it will step in and take up the responsibility for the problem as it presents itself.

I would like it recorded that although wild dogs are the primary cause of the difficulties, regard also should be had for goats and wild donkeys. There is not only the question of the protection of the industry—the prevention of ravaging of sheep—but also the control of soil erosion, especially in the Gascoyne area. Soil erosion occurs right throughout the pastoral districts to a greater or lesser degree.

The reorganisation of the staff is to be centred around the development of a separate inspection and operational work force. The Minister emphasised that the objective of the Government is to have

the most efficient arrangement, and it is possible that additional staff organisational arrangements will prove better in some cases and, perhaps, in a majority of cases. The Government acknowledges that there should not be a prescriptive hard and fast rule, but that there will be a need for continued examination of the situation after a trial period.

The framework of the organisation will be established under the provisions of the Bill, and the precise arrangements will be dictated by the efficient use of available staff resources, having regard to the need to divert staff where they are most urgently required. That provision, of course, echoes back to the change in emphasis from the vermin side to the noxious weeds side which has given the APB some very real problems during recent years.

It has been suggested also that it is important for Government officers not to become so involved in operational work on farms as to neglect their inspection responsibilities. That was a situation which was developing under the arrangements which existed before the reorganisation of staff. From my experience with the department, that was one of the most significant points made by the Minister.

The Minister gave a detailed account of what was involved in each of the major clauses of the Bill, and his comments will merit further discussion during the Committee stage. The pastoralists and graziers have expressed to me some fears of the new scheme. It is probable that some of those fears emanated from the fact that a number of pastoralists feel the most effective control of dogs is through trapping. A number of illustrations have been drawn to my attention where that point can be substantiated. The remedies suggested to me were to recommence trapping and carcass baiting, increase bonus payments, readjust the dogger staff and be more selective in the appointment of new doggers, and to investigate vermin fencing. A comparison was made with the situation which pertains in South Australia.

It was suggested also that some 20 to 30 stations had gone out of business during the last five years or so purely because of the activities of wild dogs.

Mr Coyne: Primarily.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Primarily because of the actions of wild dogs. The figures were presented to me by a fairly responsible person but I am not quite sure whether he had access to precise details. The matters I have mentioned will have to be faced by the APB during its day-to-day administration of the Act, and probably they do not involve us at this stage. We are more concerned with the overall framework of the organisation rather than a close examination of the methods which will be used in the particular areas of operation.

I understand a number of shire councils are anxious to see this measure come into operation. At the same time, the shire

councils have expressed concern with regard to the roads which pass through State forests. A main road which passes through a State forest will become the responsibility of the APB. That may entail a problem with regard to a road which runs through a State forest and is under the control of a local shire. I would like a categorical clarification from the Minister on this point: that the APB will be responsible for declared animals and declared weeds on that section of road. Although the State forestry officers will be the users of such a road, will the local authority have control over noxious weeds and vermin by means of some arrangement with the APB?

Mr Old: That is covered by clause 46 of the Bill. The APB will be able to enter into arrangements with local authorities. The clause is designed to cover that particular aspect.

Mr H. D. EVANS: I desire to have that point clarified, specifically in order to answer a question levelled at me.

I do not feel the need to go into further detail at this stage, but will leave that to the Committee stage. The overall proposition is acceptable. Because the shire councils' vote with regard to the method of financing was so close, I think it would be as well for the Minister to enlarge on that point. I do not suppose that all the fears expressed will be allayed, but at least the Minister can reinforce his statement regarding the decision taken by listing the grounds on which it was taken, and setting out how the final determination was arrived at, because it is a matter of considerable importance. The decision can be defended, certainly, but it is one where the degree of diversification of opinion is most noticeable. I will be particularly interested to hear the Minister's reply on this point.

I would like to place on record my recognition of the work of the Agriculture Protection Board, not only in the field but also in research and its overall conduct. The board must have saved this State many millions of dollars. Frequently, we do not fully appreciate it, but nevertheless it plays a very significant role in safeguarding our rural production.

The centre at Forrestfield has the facilities for research, the capacity to manufacture baits and poisonings—incidentally I am happy to see that the Bill provides for the APB to do just this and to enter into arrangements of that kind—and it undertakes a fairly extensive training programme for its officers. It has excellent facilities to train officers, and the facilities have been used extensively in the past as obviously they will be used in the future. The officers who have controlled the APB over the years have made very worth-while contributions to our well-being. The citizens of this State—not only those engaged in the rural industry

but people generally—owe a debt to the officers of the board because its operation affects all of us. With those remarks I support the Bill.

MR. COYNE (Murchison-Eyre) [6.01 p.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to support the Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Bill as I believe it is a step in the right direction. I intend to direct my remarks to the pastoral regions of Murchison-Eyre and also the north-eastern goldfields, and particularly in regard to vermin control. In the area north of Meekatharra vermin control is of great concern to the pastoralists.

I support the measure because I believe it is an improvement on the present system. However, I am by no means convinced that it is completely satisfactory. Once the new system comes into effect, we will be able to estimate the degree of improvement. It appears that pastoralists and other interested people are generally satisfied with the Bill, and from my inquiries I found only a small core of pastoralists who are concerned that the measure does not provide all the safeguards they would wish, and their particular concern is wild dog control. Some of these people have hotly contested the issue at various meetings that have been held around the area. The Agriculture Protection Board went to a great deal of trouble to convene meetings throughout the whole area of the Gascoyne, the Murchison, and the Pilbara, to explain the new provisions, and to encourage the pastoralists to accept them.

I have a great deal of respect for the people in the pastoral industry, and I have had a long association with them. I grew up in a pastoral area, and during the last 13 or 14 years I have been closely associated with pastoral people. On numerous occasions I have enjoyed their hospitality. I worked in this area in my previous occupation before coming to Parliament. I was able to form many friendships, and these have been strengthened and consolidated since I have been a member of Parliament. It is for this reason that I wish to speak to the Bill and to bring to the attention of members the conditions in the pastoral industry today.

During a speech I made in this House some months ago I said I felt I had an affinity with pastoral people and I wish to reiterate my comments. I do not know how this affinity came about because at no time was my family involved in pastoral pursuits. My father was a country storekeeper, although perhaps that description downgrades him a little. He was a merchant in a small town called Yalgoo which at that time was the centre of a large pastoral region. My father was a fairly important person in the town because not only did he run this provisions store, but also he supplied fodder, chaff,

grain, timber and iron, and skins. He became involved in sandalwood contracts, as well as a few other pursuits.

In the early 1920s he became so prosperous that he took the whole family—at that time it consisted of seven members and later 10—for a trip back to the old country from which he and my mother originated; that is, Ireland. We remained there for over 12 months. Subsequently his business deteriorated over the depression years. One of the things I remember from those days is that as very small boys we would go out on the road and scale up the great wagon loads of wool. We would clamber up the bales of wool, sometimes as high as 30 feet, so that we could ride back the last few miles into town. The wagons were usually drawn by teams of up to 20 or 30 donkeys and it was a great thrill to us to have a free ride to the railway loading ramp.

Members have probably heard it said that this country has ridden on the sheep's back, and I think we would all agree that is so. It is only in recent years, since the advent of the iron ore industry, that wool has had to take second place in the export income of this nation. I am sure we owe the wool industry a great debt.

Many large sheep properties in the Murchison region have fallen on hard times and are in a rather distressed situation at the present time. I hope I can elaborate on that to a greater extent later in my speech. The men and women who work in this industry at the moment are in straitened circumstances for many reasons and, apart from the bushfires, floods, and droughts which have occurred in recent years, one of the most serious menaces has been wild dogs, which have reached great proportions in the last 10 or 12 years. As the member for Warren mentioned, 20 or 30 stations have gone out of business, and I will be able to enumerate the stations and the areas in which they are situated.

The Agriculture and Related Resources Protection Bill is wide-ranging legislation which is designed to restructure the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Acts. Its progress to this Chamber has been long and tortuous. It was something like two years ago that we began to examine this legislation. As a result of the concern of people throughout the region and the work of the committees which were set up, the Bill has now reached the stage of being debated. I am pleased to note the attitude of the member for Warren, which augurs well for the legislation. I have taken a special interest in the Bill because of the wool industry's concern with wild dogs. I feel I understand this problem because of special knowledge I have gained from people engaged in the industry.

I first started moving around the Murchison in 1963, and over a period of years one naturally comes up against people

whom one can trust, people whom one cannot trust, and those of whom one takes notice. For that reason I feel I can contribute to this debate something which is realistic in terms of what can be done and what must be taken into account in the machinery which will deal with the wild dog situation. I do not think enough people appreciate the damage which results from wild dogs—not only the physical damage but also the damage they cause to the morale of people when they see all their efforts being overturned by incursions from these savage marauders.

The people who have been most critical of the Agriculture Protection Board administration are the group of pastoralists in the region slightly north-east of Meekatharra. They are fairly solid characters and what one might call professional dingo hunters. They have had to become that way because they have had continuous confrontation with the dingoes, and we must take notice of what they say. I have come under their influence to some extent and I do not apologise for it because I think the professionals are the people to whom we should listen.

If one were to run an axis through Meekatharra and Wiluna, the people north of the line are those who experience this problem. Although some people on the south are concerned about it, the further south one goes the less concerned the people are with the problem. So a small group are fighting a losing battle to sustain their arguments as far as positive action to eradicate this pest is concerned.

To illustrate the loss of export income to this State and the nation, I will describe the situation in sheep areas where stations have gone out of business in the last 12 years. The member for Warren mentioned some of the stations but I have here a list of the sheep numbers which those stations used to run about 12 years ago. The list has not been analysed but has been compiled merely to demonstrate the losses of income and wool production which have been sustained as a result of those stations going out of business.

It has been generally accepted in the pastoral regions in the north that the uprooting of the No. 1 rabbit proof fence was perhaps a mistake because, while that fence existed, it created a diversionary path for the wild dogs. The Cardawan and Collier Ranges in that vicinity are great breeding places for dogs, and now that the northern extension of the No. 1 rabbit proof fence has been removed they have drifted in from the desert to their breeding areas and their range country habitats from whence they can cause untold damage on nearby flocks.

The numbers of sheep run on the affected stations about 12 years ago were—

Sylvania	.....	.....	10 000
Weelarranna	.....	.....	3 000
Woodlands	.....	.....	7 000
Mulgul	.....	.....	12 000

Narracoota	12 000
Walgun	6 000
Billanooka	3 000
Mt. Augustus	14 000
Yeelirrie	3 000
Ashburton Downs	15 000
Bonnie Downs	4 000
Edmund	3 500
Yinnietharra	3 500
Cobra	4 000
Mulgum	20 000
Lakeway	10 000
Cunyu	10 000
Mingah Springs	7 000
New Springs	7 000
Briar	8 000
Bamboo Springs	12 000
Marillana	15 000
Waldberg	4 000
Yandil	7 000
Roy Hill	30 000

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr COYNE: Prior to the tea suspension I was engaged in an arithmetical exercise to try to portray the loss in export income that has been attributable in some way to the dog menace in the areas of the East Pilbara and the northern areas of the Shire of Meekatharra.

I got to the stage where I had named a number of stations that had been either completely abandoned so far as sheep production was concerned or whose activities were very seriously curtailed.

Following the total number of sheep calculated in that exercise we have worked out a figure which on the present estimation of the numbers on some of the stations in the area show a sheep loss of something like 250 000.

If we project the 250 000 sheep into numbers of bales of wool we will find it is roughly 30 fleeces to the bale. Accordingly from those 250 000 sheep we would expect something like 80 000 bales of wool to be produced and the proceeds from the 80 000 bales would be on average about \$150 a bale. So there would be a direct loss of export income of \$120 000 per annum if we add to the figure the ordinary 30 per cent culling rate that usually takes place in pastoral areas. We could expect another 80 000 to be exported out live, and a further loss of \$200 000 in export income from that source.

I now refer to the decision to pull down the No. 1 fence north of Lake Nabberu, because it was removal of the northern leg of the No. 1 fence that exacerbated the position and allowed the deteriorating situation to develop. The matter does not stop there. The loss of the sheep, the abandonment of the stations, the restructuring of some stations, have all caused losses which have magnified the problem. Inasmuch as there has been a considerable lessening in the number of personnel who normally inhabit that area. This has thrown onto fewer people a great amount of work in relation to dog control

in the area. This is one of the reasons that the burden of coping with the dogs has got to the stage where it has not been possible to control the flow of wild dogs into and through that area. This is what is causing concern to the pastoralists in that region.

The people who own the stations which are in the path of these dogs are most concerned about the situation. Some of these stations are Doolgunna, which is owned by Dean Davies; Cunyu Station owned by Bill Green; Diamond Well owned by Robin Davies; and Three Rivers which is managed by Bill Clinch. The owners and managers of these stations are most concerned.

There seems to be some conflict between the APB in the Meekatharra area and the local vermin board. The difference in the two set-ups is that a local dogger is employed by the local vermin board and he is under the direct control of the pastoralists in that region.

This man's performance seems to be much better in trapping dogs and accounting for dogs than that of the people in the APB organisation itself. There is a reason for this. First of all, as I explained earlier, there are people directly concerned—like Dean Davies, for example, who is a professional when it comes to catching dogs. He knows what to do as do the others in that area. The dogger is Dempsey Scott who works on a basis of six weeks work and 10 days off, which is the pattern of the old doggers' activities.

Since the impact of union rules on the pastoral industry, particularly as they apply to doggers, we find they now work for 10 days and then have four days off. It is impossible to service trapping operations on such a basis, because a dog trap must be serviced every three or four days; particularly if a dingo is caught early in the piece, because it might be four or five weeks before the dogger gets back to inspect his trap and, in the meantime, three or four hundred dogs could have passed the trap which had already been sprung.

So to have an effective trapping operation the traps must be serviced continuously. I point this out so that when the new system comes into operation we will be able to devise a scheme that will work. From my observations I feel that the type of system which will work is a bonus system. This, of course, is not approved by the APB. However, there is evidence that the system will have definite advantages.

In a publication put out by the APB two years ago in relation to this legislation it was calculated that the cost of a dog scalp was \$87. This is completely wrong. The calculation that I made about the same time shows that it costs \$180 to catch a dog. So by using the bonus system there is an incentive for people

to get out in the bush, to work in arduous conditions, and to make a buck. The old-time dogger would do this for five or six weeks, while living in rough conditions, but at least he was able to make some money. This is the only system which will work effectively in the area, though I do not think the APB will approve. However, I feel it will gain such momentum that the APB will find it difficult to resist.

I was talking to an owner named John James of Roy Hill Station who said that by using a 1c rating in his shire—East Pilbara—in relation to wild dogs it has been possible to pay a bonus of \$20 a dog. Apart from this the pastoralists themselves pay \$10, so anyone who catches a dog has the ability to earn \$30 a dog. Subsequently, 900 scalps have been handed in.

Mr Davies: Who is winning, the dogs or the farmers?

Mr COYNE: The dogs are winning at the moment. It is a very serious problem and we should figure out some way to assist the pastoralists in that region and help them stop the dogs at this point; not to allow them to gain any further ground.

Mr Davies: You are preparing a counter-attack?

Mr COYNE: The only system that can be used effectively is fencing which should have No. 1 priority. But the present cost of fencing would be something like \$2 000 a mile, which is prohibitive. The financing of even a screen fence is probably beyond the resources of this State at the moment. However, we must employ a combination of a bonus system, a fencing system, and a trapping system. The old timers do not have much time for the poisoning system. There is not much proof that poisoning has achieved the desired objective.

A tremendous amount of money has been spent on this poison method. As recently as last October something like 200 000 baits of 1080 were distributed over the areas above Meekatharra and towards the north-eastern goldfields. With all the action that has been taken one would think the number of dogs would diminish. But the problem seems to be getting worse. There may be a reason for this. One can only imagine what would have happened had the baits not been laid. We would probably have had a stampede of dogs through the area. It is hard to estimate or guesstimate, what effect poison baits are having.

I think I have covered the point reasonably well. If I may recapitulate I would indicate that the loss of export income is a factor. The cost of retaining the fence extension possibly would have been compensated for by the greater export income out of the area. The loss of workers from the area has thrown additional work onto those few who remain. The trapping method is one that must be

attended to regularly, and it does not seem to be effective under the present system, under which the APB or Government doggers are working; at least not as far as servicing the traps quickly enough and often enough is concerned.

One means of overcoming this problem is to return to the private enterprise system; to give a flip to accredited doggers, as is done to kangaroo shooters; to finance doggers so that they may own their own vehicles and also to pay them a bonus. This will enable them to work for themselves in the sense that they would not be subject to the union system. They could go out and work 20 or 30 days straight and earn as much money as they wanted. The overall effect of this would be a huge reduction in the cost of obtaining dog scalps. There seems to be a shortage of steel traps which are a necessary part of the dogger's equipment at the moment. I do not know whether this problem is being overcome.

In the near future when this system is implemented these points will receive some attention. I think those matters are relatively important as far as the dogging situation is concerned.

As I mentioned earlier, there seems to have been some conflict between the regional officer in Meekatharra, the local vermin board, and the people associated with them. I think the APB generally has done a fairly good job because I imagine that when dealing with a group of pastoralists one would need to be a very good public relations man as well as a very effective person because they all have different ideas and it would be hard to have any sort of rapport with them all.

Another factor which I have not mentioned yet is that by an APB edict—it is a valid one—the owner of a property is responsible for the reduction in the number of pests on his property. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned this matter briefly. It is a reasonable requirement but I really believe that with the depletion of staff on these properties it is impracticable at the moment to try to force station owners to do work with which they obviously cannot cope. Therefore, I believe in the early stages or even at the present stage some additional assistance should be given to get rid of particularly the experienced dogs which are very hard to catch. I think there should be a deliberate attempt to muster all the experienced doggers to cope with these dogs and to clean them out to allow the owners to get back to a normal situation.

I do not think that I can describe effectively to members the terrific amount of damage that a dingo can do to a pack of sheep. I spoke recently to the manager of the Three Rivers Station. He had to put his sheep into paddocks in the most

eastern part of his land. He deliberately exposed them to the ravages of the dogs knowing full well that he was going to lose 500 sheep. That is the calculated risk he must take. He is experienced enough to know when a dog is in his area. If one comes through the gate he can sense it because the ewes stand around puzzled. One can see little bits of wool taken off them. The dogs actually do more damage to the wethers than to the ewes because the ewes split up into small groups whereas the wethers slope off and do more damage to themselves than is done to the ewes.

One dog can rip 70 or 80 freshly born lambs just for the fun of it. It crushes the lamb's skull. If a dog gets amongst the sheep it will take only one portion of a sheep. It will take the sheep's cheek or tongue and will leave the rest of it, or it will just inflict a bite on the sheep's leg which will become infected by blowflies. The sheep will subsequently die because of the infusion of blowflies into the wound. This serious problem demands specific action.

It is hard enough for owners to get pressure exerted. They can do it only in this way. We can explain the problem to people and hope that some notice will be taken of what we say. For this reason I want to stress this matter so much at this time when we are about to undertake a new system.

There is a feeling amongst the pastoral people in the area, particularly those who can take an interest in the vermin council, that they will lose their voice in the running of their regions. I do not really believe that is so; I think it will operate in a similar way. The zones and the regions should attract the same kind of people as the vermin board attracts now. I understand that in the Meekatharra region the shire council will not participate, which I think will be a disadvantage. I am not absolutely certain of that but it will be a shame if the good offices of the shire and the people associated with it cannot be used to build this new system into a viable operation.

Since I was speaking earlier I have found out that the No. 1 rabbit proof fence was discontinued only comparatively recently. In 1948 those responsible took up 501 miles, in 1963 they took up 364 miles, and in March, 1966, they took up a further stretch. I understand that the finishing point on the northern run which is now effectively serviced or controlled is somewhere on the Murchison Downs. The rest of the fence has been purchased by the stations in the area which do their own servicing. So the fence is fairly effective as far as Lake Naberu, although only the latter portion of it is serviced.

I think I have covered as much ground on this subject of wild dogs as I can reasonably be expected to cover. I hope that

the powers that be will give some consideration to the matters about which I have spoken. I am not fully convinced that all the mechanics will fall into place. Once the legislation is introduced and we get the system moving I feel there will be many ways in which we can streamline the whole procedure. However, something will have to be done about the bonus system, the accreditation of doggers and possibly the financing of these doggers into their own vehicles. I think that will be the only effective way we will be able to contain any creditable control of the dogs. With those few comments I support the Bill.

MR McPHARLIN (Mt. Marshall) [7.53 p.m.] : In speaking to a Bill of this nature one could easily fall into tedious repetition. I do not intend to offend in that regard except to make comments on a few of the points that were raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition when he was speaking to the Bill. I listened with interest to the member for Murchison-Eyre because while I was the responsible Minister I was involved in quite a number of discussions with people from the area mentioned by the member. The points that he has made in respect of vicious and constant attacks by dingoes were brought to my notice; and it was always evident that the people representing that area were willing to participate in a system of rating or finance raising which would help them to offer some sort of control of the very serious problem which they have.

One point that has been made is that by this Bill the basic responsibility is on the owner of the area of land involved. Whether that owner be a farmer, the local authority, or whoever, the owner of the land must face the responsibility for the control of vermin and noxious weeds.

The Government has accepted the responsibility for financing the administration, inspection, research, and extension. I think that is commendable. This is one of the matters on which I had discussions with various committees, and it was agreed that that would be a responsibility of Government. That matter is now incorporated in the Bill before us and I think it would be accepted as a responsibility that would be agreed to, particularly by shire councils.

As was envisaged in the first place, the aim of the legislation is that zone councils would control the administration of the new legislation. The State would be divided into 10 zones and the representatives of various organisations in a particular zone would be appointed to the local council to administer the proposed Act, the purpose being to remove control from a centralised administration and to make it more localised to give people a direct say in how the whole system would work in their own areas. Only experience will show how effective this will be, but I think it desirable that this attitude be adopted. I

believe most shire councils would endorse the proposal for them to have a direct say in the operation of the proposed Act.

Clause 26 refers to the powers of the zone control authorities, and reference has been made to this being perhaps the most important clause in the Bill. It outlines the powers of the zone control authorities. In broad terms these will be to give a direction to the authority so that it will have guidelines under which it can work. Of course only after experience of the actions of these zone control authorities will one be able to judge whether they are effective and whether there is need for further consideration to be given to amendments to the legislation. I think it is well worth trying to see just how the system will work, and whether it will be as effective as we hope it will be, and then to wait for the local bodies to make recommendations. One of the recommendations which we would expect to come back from these local bodies is a system whereby the scheme would be financed. One of the most controversial issues discussed in the early committee meetings which I held, and which no doubt continued, was the system that should be applied to raise the finance necessary to meet the costs of the scheme.

One of the matters which was raised was the system that applied some years ago; that is, the assessing of rates on the unimproved capital value, which in most cases is used by the shire councils in their assessment for rates. This was not agreed to because it can be an inequitable system. It was so inequitable in 1970 that the Government of the day abolished the tax.

Another system that was suggested and examined by board officers was a system of assessing a rate on site valuations. Of course this involves areas, but it was not proceeded with because it was again considered that this can be inequitable. It was most difficult for the officers to come up with a scheme which would apply equitably to the landholders in all areas in which it would operate.

After the committee had discussed rating systems we asked the APB to consider a third scheme which involved not only area valuations but also rainfall gradients to see whether an equitable system could be applied which would have some relativity to the production of a particular area.

After some lengthy investigation this scheme appeared to be the most equitable of all, but the Government decided—I think wisely—not to apply the rate in the South-West Land Division, but to use the system to which the shire councils, farmers, and landholders generally have become accustomed to pay for services provided. It is just as well to go ahead with that system at the present time to see how it works out.

Although there has been some criticism about the changing of the term "vermin" and "noxious weeds" to "declared animals" and "declared plants", I believe it is advisable because at present the kangaroo is considered to be vermin and yet in the coat of arms of Parliament House is incorporated the kangaroo, so we have vermin in our coat of arms. It is advisable that this situation be changed. If we call kangaroos declared animals the stigma associated with vermin will be removed. This aspect has been discussed with me on many occasions and most people find it acceptable.

Clause 36 contains lists of declared plants and declared animals. Again this is more specific as the lists separate the declared plants and animals into various categories and make the situation much easier to follow. Of course in the light of experience we will ascertain whether the lists are sufficient.

I endeavoured to ascertain whether any comment had been made in regard to vermin tax and noxious weeds tax in the report of the committee appointed to inquire into the rates and taxes attached to land valuations. This subject was not dealt with in the terms of reference of that committee, but as rates and taxes relating to shire councils were involved, I thought it might have been covered. However, I have not been able to locate any reference to it.

It is evident from the report that the committee was unable to arrive at any improved method by which the Government could raise revenue. This matter of raising revenue, which is vital to the success of any scheme of this nature is not easy, and only time will tell whether the legislation will be successful. Those of us who are vitally concerned with the subject will be watching the situation very closely to ascertain from the shire councils and the zone authority what system will be best.

With those remarks I support the Bill.

MR LAURANCE (Gascoyne) [8.04 p.m.]: I also support the Bill and wish to take the opportunity to say a few words regarding it. It is important legislation for all those involved in agricultural and pastoral pursuits. There has been growing dissatisfaction, particularly in pastoral regions like the one I represent, with the existing system for the control of vermin and noxious weeds. Individual pastoralists in my electorate—and their official organisation, the Pastoralists and Graziers Association—have indicated that the vermin problem is probably worse now than it has ever been. Several reasons exist for this, including excellent seasons in the last few years during which stock have flourished, but so have the vermin, and rising costs, which has meant a decrease—

Mr May: The Government was changed a couple of years ago, too.

Mr LAURANCE: —in the amount of funds and labour available to handle such things as vermin on pastoral properties. There has been reduced profitability which has also made the situation difficult for pastoralists to do all those things they need to do, including vermin control. For a variety of reasons, a number of properties have been converted from sheep to cattle and are run solely on cattle. Consequently the pastoralists tend to ignore the problem of vermin, particularly dingoes, if they are concentrating on cattle, as the dingoes do not worry cattle anywhere near as much as they worry sheep.

In the Gascoyne catchment area the question is even more complex. On the one hand we have the rangeland management programme which was commenced to overcome an erosion problem and this has entailed such things as "destocking" and the closure of pastures to sheep. While most pastoralists accept these measures as being in their own long-term interest, on the other hand they also require effective control of vermin, so that they will not have the crazy situation of the sheep out and the kangaroos in.

As previously mentioned by the Minister, for the past 40 years vermin boards have had the responsibility to administer the Vermin Act. Similarly, local authorities have administered the Noxious Weeds Act. This situation has been most unsatisfactory and in previous years it has led to the birth of the Agriculture Protection Board which has assumed more and more responsibility either because it sought it or by default.

Generally speaking, local authorities have found noxious weeds obnoxious. They have not been anxious to enforce the weed legislation. At the same time vermin boards have contributed less and less as a proportion of the cost of overall vermin control. They were loath to reverse this trend owing to reduced profitability in the pastoral and agricultural industries. Members of the individual boards would have become unpopular in their own areas if they had increased the vermin rating to keep pace with the rising costs of vermin control.

So the present system has been dead for a long time and, with the passage of this Bill, we are attending the funeral. By that I mean that the Noxious Weeds Act, the Vermin Act, and the Destructive Birds and Animals Act are all to be repealed under the Bill. The important point is that they be replaced with something better. I believe that the Bill can provide a system which will be suitable and acceptable. I repeat that it can. I do not necessarily say that it must or it will.

The intention of the Bill is a successful marriage of the APB as the State-wide organisation and the local organisations

to give local expertise in decision making. I certainly trust this marriage will be successful and to ensure this, as in all good marriages, all parties will have to work at it and its success will be measured by the effectiveness of the new system. In my area that means simply that more dogs will have to be caught.

Landholders will be looking to the APB for increased efficiency and the success of the local involvement will depend upon the regional advisory committees and the zone control authorities, and I would like to speak on those for a moment.

A regional advisory committee will represent an area which now has several vermin boards and representatives on each committee will have to make a unified approach and be able to reconcile the different problems affecting their respective areas if those regional committees are to be successful. Likewise the zone authorities will have to reconcile the views from several regional committees and the APB will be charged with the responsibility of collating and implementing the ideas submitted by the zone authorities without—and I repeat the word "without"—overriding the local influence.

Having carefully studied the proposal, I believe it can be the answer and I urge those affected by the measure—that is, those in agricultural and pastoral areas—to view it with an open mind and to accept it as a fresh approach to an old problem. I hope that old prejudices against the APB will not be allowed to cloud the issue.

I wish now to deal with several specific points, and the first concerns rating. The previous speaker, the member for Mt. Marshall, has indicated the difficulties and the unsuccessful amount of effort which went into trying to find an acceptable system of rating in agricultural areas.

There is no doubt that in the pastoral areas the rating system was the only equitable method and I am pleased to be able to commend the Government for the fact that in the first year it will be involved in a cost of \$345 000.

As has been pointed out, the Government previously accepted the responsibility for financing the cost of administration, inspection, research and extension. Now it will assist towards the cost of operational work. Because of the difficulties and problems in pastoral areas at the moment, the imposition of a suitable rate to cover the present cost of vermin control in pastoral areas would be absolutely prohibitive, and I commend the Government for coming to the party, particularly in the early stages of the enactment of the legislation. The Government will meet the pastoralists more than half way in the costs of the operational work on pastoral leases. The cost

of operation in pastoral areas will be financed by a rate on the unimproved capital value of leases. I was very pleased to find that under the Bill the rate will be 3c in the dollar for the first two years. I thank the Minister for showing this consideration to the pastoral industry.

The parliamentary committee—of which I was a member—which investigated this proposal over many months, was particularly anxious for the Minister to include such a rate for at least the first year and I know that the pastoralists in my area are very thankful that this has been extended to the first two years. Consequently the rate will be 3c on the unimproved capital value for the first two years and then it can be increased. The maximum under the Act will be 4.5c, which is a further safeguard for which the pastoral industry is thankful.

If it is necessary for the rate to be increased to the maximum in the third year, the opportunity will be given at that stage for the situation to be reviewed to ascertain whether the legislation has achieved that which is possible under it.

Some concern was expressed in my area about the ability of zone authorities to raise a separate zonal rate, allowed for in clause 61. Individuals will be concerned about the total rate to be paid, but not so much about how that particular total is made up. They are not concerned about the make-up, but they are concerned about the total amount they will have to pay if they must pay a basic rate of 3c and then a zonal rate as well. I hope for some assurance from the Minister that no zonal rate will be struck by any zone authority in the first year of operation of the legislation. Presumably, the safeguard for individual pastoralists following that will be that the zone authority must set the zonal rate and as the authority comprises a majority of pastoralists, those pastoralists will have control of these rates.

Another concern is that areas covered by the regional structure seem to be large. In most areas they seem to be compatible although that will be proven only with the effluxion of time. In order to make the whole system work individuals will be involved in considerable time and effort in getting to meetings to represent their particular areas. Under clause 18 members will be paid remuneration and allowances. I would like to stress to the Minister that it is important that although people have gone along willingly and voluntarily to the local vermin boards for 40 years, it could be a different matter under this legislation. They will have to go longer distances and be away from their properties for longer periods than is required at present. So representatives of both the regional committees and the zone authorities will be involved in considerable time and expense. I am pleased to see the

Bill provides for these people to be recompensed for that, because it is on their efforts that the success of the measure will depend.

I would also like to comment on clause 31, which provides that members of a regional advisory committee may elect one of their number as chairman. It has been brought to my attention by pastoralists, generally, that while an executive officer of the APB would chair the meetings of the zone authorities, pastoralists did not want the APB officer also to chair the meetings of the regional advisory committees. I see that clause 31 allows regional advisory committees to elect a chairman from one of their number. In that case the APB officer would become the liaison officer to the committee.

The Pastoralists and Graziers Association has studied the measure over the last few days and has communicated with the Minister and given me a copy of its vermin committee's submission on the Bill. I would like to cover some of the points raised.

Firstly, the association agrees with the Minister that in the past 40 years no vermin authority has carried out the total functions and duties specified in the Vermin Act. However, the association is concerned that unless positive action is taken the same situation will prevail in the future, and it is a concern which I share.

Secondly, the association points out that the responsibility for controlling vermin rests fairly and squarely with the landholder. This was previously the case and is still the case under the new Bill; it must always be the case. The association points out it is equally important that the APB ensure that the landholder carries out his responsibilities, and the association has said it will support the Minister and the APB in this direction.

Thirdly, the association raises the matter of the control of vermin on Crown land and abandoned properties, which is of concern to pastoralists, and urges the Minister to ensure the board takes positive action to maintain adequate control over those areas.

The submission also contends that animal pests should continue to be termed "vermin" rather than "declared animals", as proposed in the new legislation. They disagree with the member for Mt. Marshall that there are several reasons that the term "vermin" should be discontinued and why it is far more acceptable to call animal pests "declared animals". However, the association and many of my constituents point out that no matter what they are called they are still a problem which must be dealt with by efficiently managing or cropping in order that pastoral enterprises may remain viable. The association obviously does not go along with the change of term; it will

still see the animal pests as vermin. Many will have the same attitude in regard to noxious weeds which are now to be termed "declared plants".

Finally, the association considers that kangaroos, which will become declared animals, should be classified in category A5 rather than category A7 under the terms of the Bill. This matter also greatly concerns me because clause 66 of the Bill, in division 7 dealing with management programmes, states that the protection board may—I emphasise "may"—approve a management programme with respect to declared animals assigned to category A7, and kangaroos are classified under category A7 in the Bill. My concern is that the board "may" approve a management programme.

It is well known that the Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife has some interest in the matter of management programmes for declared animals, and I have seen in the last few months correspondence from that Minister to his Federal counterpart wherein the State Minister indicated that "the kangaroo management programme for the various species will be determined by the Hon. Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife and will be administered by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife".

My concern, and the concern of many pastoralists whom I represent, is that the APB has lost all control of kangaroo management programmes. It is felt that this is a situation which is detrimental to the interests of pastoralists. As clause 66 states that the board "may" approve a management programme, I assume the reverse can apply and the board may not approve a management programme. I seek an assurance from the Minister that that is the situation, despite what the Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife has told the Federal Minister, who was then Mr Berinson; but fortunately he has passed into political oblivion and I hope the correspondence to him will meet the same fate because it is important for the Agriculture Protection Board to be vitally involved in the management programmes, particularly in relation to the control of kangaroos. The people I represent in the pastoral industry are most anxious that absolute control should not pass into the hands of the Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife and his department; so I seek an assurance from the Minister in regard to the interpretation of clause 66.

In conclusion, may I say that the people who will be affected by this measure are looking to the Agriculture Protection Board to perform perhaps more efficiently than it ever has in the past. The success of the measure will depend upon the fact that the landholder still has the basic responsibility to control vermin and noxious weeds on his own property; and that must be the case if we are to achieve the results we desire. In so saying, I support the Bill.

MR COWAN (Merredin-Yilgarn) [8.22 p.m.]: Like other members who have spoken to it, I also support the Bill. It is quite obvious that the Agriculture Protection Board itself supports the Bill because since July last year the vermin and noxious weeds sections of the board have virtually been working as an amalgamated body. Some restructuring has been taking place and the board has drawn a very clear distinction between its inspectors and operators. This has caused some problems.

One provision of the Bill which has not yet been implemented is the establishment of zone authorities and regional advisory committees. I will be interested to see how much local content can be retained in the way of recommendations to the APB because to my way of thinking regional control is a very essential part of this type of legislation.

In his second reading speech the Minister said that the group vermin schemes which were set up in the past did not work particularly well. I dispute that to some degree because I think most of them worked quite well, and the local authorities taking part in group schemes which did work well have expressed some concern about the operation of the APB under its present structure, particularly the distinction which is being drawn between operators and inspectors. They find there is some inefficiency in having an inspector stationed in an area and his being required to call for an operator stationed some 40 or 50 miles away to do a job the inspector could possibly do in the space of half an hour if he wished; but because he is an inspector he is not prepared to do any operational work.

One of the contentious points, as other members have said, relates to payment for services rendered on an owner's property. There was a great deal of speculation about a rating or prepayment system, and I believe the APB was very much in favour of a prepayment system which would enable it to budget fairly accurately with the amount of money that would be returned to it. However, I personally feel the advantages of a prepayment system do not compensate for the inequalities of a rating system based on UCV. I am pleased to see there is no scope within the Bill for the Minister to bring in a vermin rate by regulation.

I believe the present pay-as-you-use system has been operating quite well ever since the old vermin tax was abolished. When one pays under a rating system one demands good service, but I think at least 99 per cent of landowners would be quite prepared to ensure that any declared plant or animal was removed from his property.

I am not in favour of that portion of the new legislation in clauses 50 and 51, under which an officer of the protection board is

allowed to direct a landowner to remove a declared plant or animal from his property. A landowner may decide the direction is wrong and he will get rid of the declared plant or animal by other means. If, for argument's sake, a landowner was told by an officer to remove rabbits from his property by poisoning them, and he refused to do so but said he would rip the warrens instead, he could be prosecuted for not complying with the direction of an officer of the board. Clause 51 then states, as I interpret it, that if a person removed the declared animal from his property by other means, he could not defend himself by saying he had removed the declared animal because he had not complied with the direction of the officer. Even though he had got rid of the offending animal from his property, he would still be guilty of the offence of not complying with a direction of a protection board officer.

I would like an assurance from the Minister that officers of the protection board will use common sense in relation to their powers to direct farmers or landowners to get rid of declared plants or animals from their properties.

I support the Bill.

MR OLD (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [8.29 p.m.]: I thank members who have spoken in support of the Bill. It is pleasing to know the legislation meets with general approval.

I will endeavour to answer a few points which were brought up during the debate. By interjection I replied to some of the queries raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, but he made other points on which I will endeavour to satisfy him now.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition made the point that moving responsibility for the control of declared plants and animals from the APB to regional and zonal authorities is a decentralisation move, and this is something of which we can be justly proud; that is, that we are giving the authority to that part of the State in which the problem actually exists, rather than having a centralised body directing that certain actions be taken, sometimes in remote areas.

The matter of the user pays system is something which took up some time in the debate. I agree there are some problems in various areas. Fortunately these areas are not numerous. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to blackberries in Bridgetown, and other areas have come to my notice which have problems such as Paterson's curse. It was with this in mind that the Bill was framed. In an endeavour to give some relief where necessary the Bill provides that local authorities may strike a rate or may assist where there are particular problems. This would give the Shire of

Bridgetown-Greenbushes the opportunity to strike a rate and ensure that the small jobs referred to by the honourable member could actually be carried out either at the expense of the shire or on a subsidised basis. I think this would overcome the problem.

The matter of road verges in State forests has been brought to my notice previously. I give the honourable member an assurance that clause 46 provides for circumstances such as these and allows the APB to enter into arrangements with other bodies in order to relieve a situation such as that which has been demonstrated in this respect. It would be unfair to expect local authorities to assume the responsibility of controlling declared plants and animals on roads through what is virtually Crown land.

Mr H. D. Evans: There can be no compulsion on the Forests Department or the PWD; they could not be sued in the same way as a private property owner may be sued.

Mr OLD: No, one can hardly sue oneself. However, zonal authorities will have the power to control; and certainly if the department concerned did not undertake the control of the declared plants or animals, it would be a matter for the APB to take up with the department.

Mr H. D. Evans: Yes, but the APB would have no power of enforcement.

Mr OLD: No, it would be a matter of negotiation between the department and the APB. This is where liaison between zones and the APB will come into effect. I am confident that, although there will be problems, they will not in any way be insurmountable, and certainly not in this particular instance.

Another point referred to by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and also brought up by the member for Murchison-Eyre is the payment of bonuses for dogs. I would point out that the zonal authorities are to be almost autonomous. They will be answerable to the APB in respect of general policy and direction, but in regard to the method of control they will be given virtually an open hand, provided control is effected. This is provided for in clause 26 (c) which says that the duties of the authority of the zone include formulating policies and schemes for efficiently carrying the provisions of the Act into effect in that zone, communicating those policies and schemes to the APB, and advising and making recommendations to the APB on their implementation. So it gives the zone authority very wide powers, and I am sure the authority will be able to embark upon a system of bonuses if that becomes necessary.

Financing was a subject that took up some time in the debate, mostly in respect of the fact that we have no rating in the areas outside the pastoral area. This

was done deliberately, and the member for Mt. Marshall, who was very much involved in the investigation into systems of rating, covered this matter very well and left little for me to say. In the order of three different types of rating were evolved by the committee in conjunction with the Commissioner of State Taxation, but in all cases there appeared to be anomalies whereby certain sections of the rural community would be called upon to pay disproportionately compared with other areas. As a result dissension arose in each case. Whilst I agree that the final voting was very close, the fact is that a majority decided in favour of no rating and, therefore, the Bill contains no provision for it.

However, if there is a change of heart and rating is required at a future date, the Act will have to be amended. Therefore the matter will have to come before Parliament for full debate; it certainly cannot be done by regulation.

I would like to thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for his tribute to the APB. He was closely associated with the board for some time, and I was very pleased to hear him pay tribute to it and point out what a fine job has been done under most difficult conditions.

The member for Murchison-Eyre gave us a very good run-down on conditions in the pastoral areas. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend a meeting of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association in Meekatharra. My colleague, the member for Mt. Marshall, was very much involved with the investigation into the pastoral areas, and I think we reached a fairly good relationship and achieved accord with the members of the pastoral industry, especially through the Pastoralists and Graziers Association.

The member for Gascoyne, who headed the committee inquiring into and recommending to the Minister the best course of action to take, was very actively engaged in pastoral areas, and especially in his own electorate. He accompanied the Minister for Fisheries and Wildlife and myself to Meekatharra to discuss the matter, and we cleared up quite a few areas of doubt, especially in regard to the management of declared animals—to wit, kangaroos.

As I said, the member for Murchison-Eyre gave a very interesting dissertation on the pastoral areas and the conditions that apply there. It is interesting to note that research is going on at all times into the movement of dogs in those areas. The APB is using some unique methods of trapping dogs, such as radio transmitters.

The member for Gascoyne spoke about a zonal rate and hoped it would not be struck for the first couple of years of operation. All I can say here is that, when all is said and done, the zonal committee will in the main be made up of the pastoralists themselves, and I am sure they

would not be very pleased about imposing a handicap upon their fellow pastoralists and themselves at the same time.

I feel with the assistance being offered by the Government, especially in the first couple of years because we realise there will be difficulties, it should not be necessary to impose a zonal rate in order to maintain an equivalent standard of control, bearing in mind there is an over-matching of money especially in the first year. Perhaps in later years when peculiar problems are encountered in various zones or regions, that will be the time to consider the possibility of zonal rating. Of course, this would depend upon economic circumstances.

The member also referred to the matter of remuneration. I agree that long distances are involved, and that pastoralists must travel a great deal to attend meetings; in those circumstances some remuneration and certainly some allowances for travelling should be available. These are provided for.

The member for Gascoyne hoped the new-look APB would show some action, and I assure him this will be up to the zone authorities; because, as I mentioned earlier, they are to be almost autonomous. The amount of action will depend upon the enthusiasm exhibited by the zones and regions.

With regard to the change in term from "vermin" to "declared animals", I think the problem was best summed up by Shakespeare when he said, "What's in a name?" When all is said and done, a kangaroo when known as a declared animal may have a little more dignity than when it is known as vermin. I do not think this change will impede the enthusiasm of those who are to exercise control.

Mr H. D. Evans: When do you expect zones to be set up?

Mr OLD: Almost immediately. As soon as the Bill is proclaimed we will commence setting up the zones.

The management of declared animals is a matter which I know is of concern to the Pastoralists and Graziers Association which insists on calling them vermin, which is quite an obnoxious term now! Seriously, the management of declared animals will be a co-operative effort between the APB and the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. The APB will decide when a management programme should be effected and then, in consultation with the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, it will evolve a system of management which I can assure the member will be carried out efficiently. I feel categories are not very important; A7 was put there specifically for management, and I think all members are aware of the reason for this.

Finally, the member for Merredin-Yilgarn raised a couple of points which I will answer briefly. Inspector-operators have been talked about for some time, and I can assure him that now that the system is under way the APB has instructed inspectors at least to carry minimal equipment so that if they come across a small job they can actually undertake the operation. I would point out that until zones and regions are set up it will be difficult to oversee this particular function. I think we will meet with greater success in this respect when the regional and zonal authorities are set up.

The member for Merredin-Yilgarn raised a final query regarding directions given by an officer. I have discussed the matter with the Chief Executive Officer of the APB and I have been assured that provided the animals or plants are controlled to the satisfaction of the APB, the board will certainly not be very interested in how they are controlled, and certainly would not take action if a landholder took certain measures which were not recommended but were effective.

In conclusion, I once again thank members who have taken part in this debate and suggest that once the control body is established and has been working for a few months, we will start to see results. I have confidence in the fact that this Bill has been born of a lot of research by many people, some of whom I have mentioned tonight and many of whom I am unable to mention because they have worked on committees. I thank them all for the effort they have put into the creation of this legislation.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Mr Blaikie) in the Chair; Mr Old (Minister for Agriculture) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 35 put and passed.

Clause 36: Categories of declared plants and animals—

Mr H. D. EVANS: The member for Gascoyne raised the issue of kangaroos now to be "declared animals" where previously they were vermin; this terminology is not to the satisfaction of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. A letter from the secretary of that body states as follows—

Although in the new legislation the term will be "declared animals" the association will continue to contend that many animals should be termed "vermin". We believe the term should continue to apply to kangaroos.

I appreciate that attitude, and the frustration pastoralists must feel at the lack of understanding of their problem. The problem has been created by improved conditions in pastoral areas. The normal

depredations of the numbers of kangaroos during times of drought have been obviated by increased water points and improved feed, and at such times the kangaroos have continued to breed.

To go to the other extreme, America has classified kangaroos as an endangered species and in fact it was rather ironical that a lady from Washington, using funds made available for this purpose, lectured in South Australia and campaigned on behalf of kangaroos.

The question of kangaroo numbers is rather a subjective one. This problem has occurred in the south-west where, as the member for Stirling would know, the numbers of kangaroos appear to have increased on the western fringe. There is some controversy as to what should constitute a kangaroo management programme, as the question involves three departments, the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, the Department of Environmental Protection and the APB. The Minister indicated it would be a matter of consultation and co-operation between the departments, but I should like him to spell out in more precise terms the form this will take.

Very little research has been carried out into this matter, and the estimations made by the various departments have no real scientific basis. Local residents are adamant that the numbers of kangaroos have increased, but nobody knows precisely what is the situation. There is no room for conjecture in this area; there must be a scientific study of the matter.

I should appreciate a reply from the Minister in clarification of the problem as it relates to the south-west, rather than the pastoral areas. How is such a programme to be established initially? Who determines if there is a need for such a programme? Are the reports provided to the APB sufficient justification to establish a control programme? What authority will determine the actual numbers of kangaroos, and the damage which they can occasion?

Mr OLD: As the honourable member knows, we have a grey kangaroo management programme, and assessments are provided by the APB. In addition, continuing research is undertaken by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife into the actual numbers of kangaroos.

As members would know, property owners can destroy kangaroos on their own farms without the use of tags, provided they do not market the carcasses, but leave them on the properties. However, this is repugnant to many landholders and it is my understanding that if there is a genuine problem on a property, these tags are reasonably simple to get. In fact, recently one of my constituents picked up some tags and was negotiating the sale of the carcasses prior to shooting the kangaroos.

The matter has been discussed at length of recent times; meetings were held at Manjimup and Kojonup in the last month or six weeks. I feel sure that with proper co-operation from the landholders, any management programme can be successful. If the farmers feel they need to shoot kangaroos in excess of the number of tags which have been issued, they have only to inform the warden they intend to destroy kangaroos on their properties, but that they do not wish to sell the carcasses.

This provision was placed in the legislation because we were running into problems with the export of kangaroo skins, and the sale of kangaroo carcasses as pet meat. Any management programme will be conducted in conjunction with the APB and the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 37 to 40 put and passed.

Clause 41: Agreements—

Mr H. D. EVANS: Clause 41 (1) states—

The Protection Board and a Government department may enter into agreements for the supply by the Protection Board to the Government department of materials, appliances and services for the control of declared plants and declared animals at such costs as shall be agreed.

I know the APB used to provide sprays such as 2, 4-D when they were difficult to obtain, and at concessional rates. Will this provision still apply, and to what extent?

Mr OLD: This clause provides the board with power to do just that, but whether or not it enters into such contracts is its own prerogative, and would depend upon the circumstances pertaining at the time. If there were a severe and widespread outbreak of a declared plant, which required spraying with 2, 4-D, or some other hormone spray, I feel sure the APB would exercise these powers by making available chemical sprays at rates tendered to the Government.

However, on the one hand we have the necessity to assist the landholders and on the other we must consider the welfare of the organisations providing the sprays; in normal circumstances, the latter consideration must be taken into account. So, it would be a matter of judgment on the part of the Agriculture Protection Board. It has happened in the past, and to a limited degree it is still happening; I refer to the exercise of its powers. I can assure the honourable member that if the situation arises where assistance is required in the form of cheap chemicals to overcome particular problems every consideration will be given to the need.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 42 to 49 put and passed.

Clause 50: Notice to owner and occupier to control declared plants and animals—

Mr STEPHENS: In the second reading debate the member for Merredin-Yilgarn raised a query in relation to clauses 50 and 51. The Minister, after having discussed this matter with Mr Tomlinson, indicated that they were not unduly concerned with the way in which declared animals were eradicated. I am a little concerned about this. I understand that the provisions in clauses 50 and 51 are similar to the provisions in sections 98 and 99 of the old Vermin Act.

Those provisions precluded a landowner or farmer from arguing his case in court as to why he should not comply with specific directions in an order that is issued. I think any legislation which contains a provision to deny an individual the right to argue his case before a magistrate is a travesty of British justice.

To contradict the claim made by the Minister I can relate an instance which occurred many years ago where under sections 98 and 99 of the Vermin Act a farmer was served with a notice requiring him to destroy the rabbits on his property with poisoned oats. The farmer declined to carry out that order, using the argument that as myxomatosis was particularly virulent and was eradicating the pest satisfactorily, it was not necessary to use poison.

An argument developed, as a result of which the APB took the farmer to court. When that farmer sought advice from his lawyer, the latter pointed out that under the provisions of the Act all that the APB had to prove was that it had served a piece of paper on the farmer, and that it did not have to prove any justification for issuing that order. The officer of the APB became the accuser and the judge in the one operation.

Not daunted the farmer went to court and defended the action himself. Subsequently he was fined. However, the magistrate was very wise, and fined the farmer the minimum amount. In this respect the magistrate is not given discretionary power, because under the Vermin Act and clause 101 of the legislation before us the penalties are irreducible in mitigation. So, we are denying the magistrates any discretion in the imposition of fines.

In that case the farmer was fined. However, a month later, the farmer, not having done any of the work specified in the order, had a visit from an inspector of the department. This inspector found there were insufficient rabbits on his property to justify the use of the poison.

I think the stand of that farmer was vindicated. He refused to comply with the order and was fined; yet a month later an inspector of the department found there were insufficient rabbits on his farm to

justify the use of poison. I know this to be correct, because I was the farmer concerned, so there is no disputing the facts I have outlined.

Perhaps I have been remiss in not mentioning the provision in this clause earlier and in not drawing up an appropriate amendment. At this late stage in the debate I do not propose to move an amendment to the clause. However, I feel it is better to bring this matter up at a late stage than not at all.

I would request the Minister to reconsider the provision in this clause and to effect an amendment when the Bill is dealt with in another place, so that a farmer with reasonable cause will be given an opportunity to argue his case before a magistrate.

In the case I mentioned, the then President of the Shire of Albany who was a successful farmer, and the secretary of the Albany Zone Council of the Farmers' Union, both agreed that the action I contemplated taking was good, sound, and practical. I had both of these gentlemen in court to give evidence, but the magistrate refused my request to call these people to give evidence because he considered it was irrelevant to the charge. The charge was that I had failed to comply with the instructions issued on a piece of paper under section 98 of the Vermin Act. All that the APB had to prove was that I had been served with the piece of paper. I consider that to be a travesty of justice.

I will ask the Minister to reconsider the provision in this clause, and to effect an amendment to enable provision to be made so that a person may be able to argue his case in court. If the Minister wishes me to give an example of the type of provision I seek to have included I would refer him to section 98 of the old Vermin Act which states—

Provided that, upon a complaint being made against an owner or occupier of a holding under this section, the Court hearing the complaint shall have discretion to inquire whether there is any reasonable justification or excuse for such owner or occupier failing to destroy . . .

That is fundamental.

I do not expect the Minister to be aware of circumstances which took place years ago and which were contrary to the assurance he has given. I know he was given it on the advice of one of his officers. For the reasons I have given I suggest that an amendment to this clause be made at a later stage.

Mrs CRAIG: I would like to raise one point with the Minister. What will happen when a notice is served on a landholder, and he finds it impossible to comply with the instructions given? To illustrate what I mean, there was a case in

my electorate concerning a landholder who received a visit from an inspector of the department. The inspector requested him to carry out a small amount of work on some cotton bush. He complied with the instruction and the inspector left the area.

Some time later another inspector called on this farmer and instructed him virtually to bag and burn all the cotton bush in a half-acre paddock. This was a completely impractical instruction. A written notice was served on this farmer to carry out this work within two days.

I should point out that the cotton bush stood six feet high and there was no way in which the farmer could bag each plant. Furthermore, this was during a prohibited burning season, and the land adjoined a forestry area. Consequently the farmer could not burn the bush.

This clause does not enable a landholder to lodge an appeal with any authority. When an instruction, which is clearly impractical of compliance, is issued there should be some person or authority to whom a landholder can appeal to have that instruction either rescinded or deferred.

Mr OLD: One can hardly fail to take note of what the member for Stirling has said in relation to the instance in which he was personally involved. I can only repeat the assurance that has been given to me: I give the Committee an assurance that I will discuss this matter with the Crown Law Department, and if the advice is that this provision is unreasonable I will undertake to have an amendment inserted when the Bill is dealt with in another place.

These remarks apply also to the complaint made by the member for Wellington.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 51 to 59 put and passed.

Clause 60: General rates on pastoral leases—

Mr H. D. EVANS: The Pastoralists and Graziers Association took exception to clause 60 (3) (b). The association specified that the legislation should provide for a maximum rating of 4.5c in the dollar and after the first two years 3c in the dollar. However, the subclause would make it mandatory for the rating to increase from 3c to 4.5c. The association felt that the clause should be amended to enable the rate after the first day of July, 1978, to be set at any amount considered necessary up to a maximum of 4.5c. It felt that in the event of it not being required to be at the level of 4.5c, in line 28 there should be inserted the words "no more than four and one-half cents".

I do not know whether it is a terribly serious situation. If I were a pastoralist who would be called upon to pay the maximum which was made mandatory,

I might have strong views. As the Minister was made aware of this attitude of the Pastoralists and Graziers Association I wondered whether there was any good reason for not inserting such a provision or whether it was an oversight.

Mr OLD: I discussed this matter with the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. I think it is perfectly clear that this is the maximum because subclause (3) says—

... the rate imposed under subsection (2) shall not exceed the following amount in the dollar ...

It then goes on to state in paragraph (b)—
... in respect of the financial year commencing on the first day of July, 1978, and each financial year thereafter—four and one-half cents.

The association was quite happy that that is the way it should be written.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 61 to 119 put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILLS (5): RECEIPT AND FIRST READING

1. University of Western Australia Act Amendment Bill.
2. Murdoch University Act Amendment Bill.

Bills received from the Council; and, on motions by Mr Grayden (Minister for Labour and Industry), read a first time.

3. Criminal Code Amendment Bill.
4. Child Welfare Act Amendment Bill.
5. Family Court Act Amendment Bill.

Bills received from the Council; and, on motions by Mr O'Neil (Minister for Works), read a first time.

BILLS (5): RETURNED

1. Employment Agents Bill.
2. Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment Bill.
3. Land Tax Bill.
4. Metropolitan Region Town Planning Scheme Act Amendment Bill.
5. Metropolitan Region Improvement Tax Act Amendment Bill.

Bills returned from the Council without amendment.

AGRICULTURE PROTECTION BOARD ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 4th May.

MR H. D. EVANS (Warren—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [9.20 p.m.]: This Bill is very closely associated with the Bill before us a little earlier. The Act provides for the establishment of an

Emu and Grasshopper Advisory Committee, the purpose of which was to advise the board on control policy relating to those particular creatures. Although in its initial stages it was of some use, not having met since 1959 the committee could possibly be considered to be redundant!

The second portion of the Bill gives powers to the APB to resell equipment purchased and materials manufactured or purchased at a price to cover administration charges. It will be appreciated that in instances like this, vehicles and materials of that nature do require to be resold.

In its Forrestfield facility, the board has manufactured baits and undertaken research, and when dealing with a poison such as 1080 and in view of the stringency with which it must be handled an authority in which one can have confidence must be involved, and the APB produces an admirable vehicle of this kind.

The third point involves the borrowing capacity of the board which at present is limited to \$200 000. In keeping with modern trends, the upper limit must be raised to \$500 000, and there can be no objection to this.

The Act allows the board to make advances of money to vermin boards and local authorities. As a procedural measure the vermin boards are to be deleted as they will no longer exist under the Statute with which we dealt a little earlier.

The Bill provides for the APB to determine conditions of employment subject to Public Service approval. The employment of staff and creation of positions also will be subject to the Public Service Board. This is a desirable feature because it gives some surety to the board's staff and enables them to participate in a superannuation scheme and other benefits of that kind.

As the Bill is purely procedural and follows on to some extent from the previous measure and makes adjustments to which I have referred, I do not think anyone could take exception to it, and it is supported.

MR OLD (Katanning—Minister for Agriculture) [9.25 p.m.]: I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for his remarks and I am pleased to note he does not think we were hasty in abolishing the Emu and Grasshopper Advisory Committee, because that was something which was a great worry!

Mr H. D. Evans: It is in keeping with many other policies on that side.

Mr OLD: As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition states, it is purely a machinery Bill, associated with the measure which has just passed its second reading, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

BUILDING SOCIETIES BILL

Second Reading

MR P. V. JONES (Narrogin—Minister for Housing) [9.29 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Because of building societies' awareness of changing economic conditions and their willingness to adjust their activities accordingly, they have, over the last decade, developed into a significant force in the economy.

Permanent and terminating building societies with total assets exceeding \$900 million are now the major suppliers of home finance in this State. The permanents in 1975 approved of advances totalling \$289 million to assist 14 376 home buyers, and for the first four months of 1976, \$116 million to assist 5 600.

Terminating building societies formed to administer Commonwealth and State housing agreement welfare funds and financial institutional loans, made advances approximating \$24 million in 1975 to 1 430 families.

Building societies are not an innovation. In fact they were first set up in the United Kingdom in 1775 as mutual organisations, and the first building society in Western Australia was formed in 1862.

For many years building societies played a less significant role and the legislation first introduced in 1920 proved to be satisfactory. Substantial amendments introduced in 1962 mainly accommodated the advent of terminating societies, whereas further amendments in 1970 provided necessary additional safeguards as permanent societies were first recognised as a force in the home purchase field.

In 1968 the permanent societies substantially changed their form of investment for the small investor. The "no fixed term" type of investment introduced was a great attraction, and with mortgage insurance available, the societies were able to utilise the additional income that was forthcoming.

For some time now the need to update the basically 1920 legislation has been recognised, and the Western Australian Permanent Building Societies Association submitted its first plain language draft of new legislation in March, 1973.

With the full support of the societies in Western Australia and the co-operation of other associated organisations, and as a result of extensive research into building societies legislation in other parts of

Australia, the Bill repealing the present Act provides greater protection, and introduces modern-day practices adopted generally by financial institutions.

With ministerial approval, societies will be able to make loans by way of mortgage for land development purposes. Societies will also be permitted to make loans secured by debentures to local authorities implementing town planning schemes.

Mortgage insurance will apply on all loans for single residential units where the amount of the loan exceeds 75 per cent of the value of house and land. A lesser percentage may be prescribed for loans for other purposes such as rental flat units and land development schemes.

For the first time, provided the mortgage insurance requirement is met, or a guarantee given by the State as is proposed in the Rural Housing (Assistance) Bill, 1976, it will be lawful for a society to lend on second and subsequent mortgages irrespective of whether a prior mortgage or mortgages are held by the society.

Societies will be permitted to buy and sell mortgages to and from other societies in Western Australia, and this will enable the introduction of a mortgage market when required.

The savings on a *per capita* basis in the 10 Western Australian permanent building societies is far greater than that in all other States, and because of this the contribution by building societies to the home purchase market is far greater than in other States.

Building societies themselves act responsibly, being conversant with the operations of the volatile money market, and they are aware of the need to maintain a continuity of finance to match the demands of the building and real estate industries, and home purchasers' requirements.

Western Australia is the only State in which societies are compelled to advise purchasers, in writing, of details of various loan charges and particulars regarding the interest rate to be charged, prior to the execution of mortgage documents.

It will be unlawful for any person to receive or request a commission, fee, or reward of any kind as a consideration for obtaining a loan from any building society.

The liquidity requirement, presently 7.5 per cent of withdrawable funds, will be increased to 10 per cent, or such other percentage as prescribed, and liquid funds shall be invested only in defined securities that are due to mature within a period of two years.

Other funds, not required immediately for the objects or purposes of a society shall be invested also in defined securities,

and returns setting out details of liquid funds and other investments must be submitted to the registrar monthly.

A permanent society may purchase, build, or lease any building necessary for carrying on its business, but at no time shall the amount expended on such property exceed 5 per cent of its withdrawable funds.

With the registrar's approval, a society may invest funds with another building society inside or outside of Western Australia.

To ensure the retention of the primary object of a building society to make advances to owner-occupiers, a society will not be permitted in any one year to advance more than 10 per cent, or such other percentage as is prescribed of its total advances, on special advances.

Special advances as defined, include advances to corporate bodies, all advances exceeding \$50 000, advances over vacant land in excess of \$15 000, and advances for land development schemes and rental flat units.

Even though permanent building societies in this State have voluntarily accumulated reserves, the importance is so recognised by the Government that a provision has been included requiring them to maintain funds in a reserve account totalling 1 per cent of the aggregate liabilities—including shareholders' funds.

Officers appointed under the Public Service Act, 1904, may hold the position of Registrar of Building Societies, his deputy and assistants, and provision is made for the delegation of the powers of the registrar.

The registrar is empowered to inspect and make copies of any books of, or relating to the business of a society. His inspectorial duties are similar to those provided for in the Securities and Industries Act, 1975. The registrar and his officers will be subject to secrecy.

A reconstituted Building Societies Advisory Committee will consist of three persons experienced in the conduct and management of building societies, a person with extensive knowledge of financial matters, the Commissioner of Consumer Affairs or one of his officers, and the registrar.

The functions of the advisory committee will be to advise the Minister and the registrar on various matters pertaining to the effective operation of societies, the provision of funds for home finance, and to submit proposals with respect to regulations under the Act.

The accounting and auditing provisions in the present Act which, throughout Australia, have been acclaimed as being of a high standard, have been retained with minor adjustments.

However, the appointment provisions of auditors for a permanent society have been strengthened. Based on provisions of the Securities and Industries Act, 1975, the registrar will approve of registered company auditors. Such auditors will not be able to disqualify themselves as auditors of a society, nor will a society be able to dispense with an auditor of a society without the consent of the registrar.

An auditor will be required to report to the registrar any matters that, in his opinion, adversely affect the ability of a society to meet its obligations, and any material irregularities or material breaches of the Act or rules of a society.

The registrar, with ministerial approval, is empowered to prohibit forthwith the raising of funds by a society if he considers it expedient to do so in the public interest. Presently he is required to give two months' previous notice in writing.

The minimum formation requirement for registration of a permanent society of \$1 million of paid up share capital of which \$500 000 must be retained for 10 years is far more stringent than the present \$200 000 requirement. This new requirement provides a strong foundation of protection for the investing public.

As at present the management and control of each society is vested in a board of directors subject to regulations by a general meeting of members. The duties, responsibilities, eligibilities and appointment of directors are provided for.

It will not be possible for a director to be appointed for a longer term than for five years. He will, however, be eligible for reappointment. A dealing with a proprietary company, in which a director of a society is also a director, is deemed to have been done by the director.

Penalties for breaches of the Act will be increased in line with penalties prescribed in other recently proclaimed Acts.

The Bill strengthens monetary policies dealing with home purchase advances, liquidity and investments, and introduces statutory reserves. The registrar's inspectorial role and powers have been increased, and various additional proposals give added protection to the investing public and the borrower.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr Barnett.

Message: Appropriations

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriations for the purposes of the Bill.

RURAL HOUSING (ASSISTANCE)

BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 5th May.

MR H. D. EVANS (Warren—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) [9.40 p.m.]: The concept and intention of the Bill have some merit, and in principle the legislation can be supported as far as it goes. But unfortunately the Bill has shortcomings and it is clumsy to the extent that it is unlikely that the hopes which have been expressed for it will materialise. It illustrates the propensity this Government has for bungling. I could cite some other areas by way of further illustration.

Without any shadow of doubt, rural housing is a matter of great importance and considerable urgency in some areas. This issue has recently been raised by the Rural Finance Committee of the Farmers' Union and in the report of the Industries Assistance Commission on new land farms. No doubt it is the plight of the new land farmers which precipitated the legislation.

Mr Grewar: It was raised while you were in government and before that.

Mr H. D. EVANS: That is right. These are the factors which gave the impetus to the Press in its present treatment of the matter, and obviously the new land farmers are urgently in need of farm housing. This has clearly been demonstrated, and in his introductory speech the Minister indicated that was the predominant factor, because he said—

It is believed that the new ideas to be introduced will cover not only farmers who are operating in the new lands areas but also those in the older established areas where there are many dwellings requiring upgrading or replacement.

I can think of a number of such houses in the dairying areas, but the implication in the Minister's speech is that the urgent situation in the new land areas precipitated the legislation.

Mr Blaikle: It is essential to be fair. There was a need for rural housing particularly in new land areas but also in other areas.

Mr H. D. EVANS: There has been a need for rural housing since the days of Sir James Mitchell's group settlement scheme, and even prior to that; and it is still with us at the present time.

The urgency relates to the new land farm, and this has been brought out by the rural Press and the Farmers' Union. I refer to an article in *The Countryman* of the 25th March, 1976, in which it was claimed by Mr Tom Atterby, of Fitzgerald who has been involved in farming matters in rural organisations in that area for some time, that 400 to 500 homes were needed by farming families in the southern areas.

The article went on to say that he told several State Ministers visiting the area the number could be even higher. I do not know whether or not that is a fair assessment. The committee of the Farmers' Union places the number at 300 to 400.

The point I make is that housing cannot be dissociated from the overall problems of new land farmers. It cannot be regarded in isolation because it is part and parcel not only of their living conditions but also of their farm management, income considerations, and everything else. To isolate the housing problem and deal with it in an imperfect manner as in this Bill does not resolve the issue for new land farmers. The Bill may not have been intended to do so. Perhaps it is just an endeavour to give a bit of gloss to the question, knowing full well that the assistance it will render in the area where it is most needed will be absolutely minimal.

Mr Sibson: The farmers would not agree with you.

Mr H. D. EVANS: If the honourable member listens, he may come to understand the position, which the member sitting next to him knows full well.

Given that the new land farmer needs priority of Government action, let us look firstly at the problems confronting the new land farmer, housing being merely one portion of the overall situation. To what extent is housing considered as a priority in that problematical situation? And how will this legislation resolve the housing question as part of the total economic problem of the individuals concerned? Consideration of these matters involves the effects of the cost of farm housing on the individuals who will or may participate, and furthermore it involves the demands for repayment which will be made upon them.

Before I go any further into the matter of farm housing as it exists and the problems which arise, regard must be had for a number of aspects. Housing is an individual matter and it varies from farm to farm because it is the subject of certain decisions made by the individual farmers concerned. Some farmers have not been able to afford adequate housing at any stage in their farming career. Some have chosen to press ahead with development and forgo improved housing; and they have accepted this situation. They are probably not happy about it but they are prepared to accept it, having considered development to have a higher priority than housing; and of course consideration has been given to taxation advantages which accrue from expenditure on development. Development spending attracts a taxation concession which would not otherwise be available.

At the same time, the expenditure of capital on development gives rise to possible increases in income, and this may be the reason that a particular farmer has

chosen to go ahead and continue in his present occupation. It should be noted also that banks and financial houses, other than the Rural Reconstruction Authority and the Commonwealth Bank, are not interested in loans for housing unless the house is part of the total farm operation and subject to mortgage requirements on the total assets that the farm can produce, and hence sources of housing finance available to farmers have been limited. In some cases this legislation will be good, but it will not do good in the areas in which it is needed most. I will now turn to these deficiencies.

Mr Grewar: Have you read the Bill?

Mr H. D. EVANS: I have read the Bill, oh yes. If members will allow me to explain why the Bill will be a failure in the areas where it is needed most, I will proceed to do so. I will refer to the clauses of the Bill where the authority is able to make concessional advances and concessional loans available through its operations.

It can be seen that an immediate problem with the introduction of the concessions will be a mixing of the interest rate currently pertaining in the housing industry together with the finance to be obtained at a concessional rate from the Commonwealth. As I take it from reading the legislation, we do not have any assurance of these funds yet. However, if and when these funds are available to the State, they will be passed on as concessional loans, diluted to the extent of course, that the traditional interest capital will require. As indicated, this may drop the interest rate from 12 to 8 per cent, and as I understand it, this will be a form of concession available to farmers who will meet the criteria giving them eligibility for it.

Mr P. V. Jones: That could be one way. What did you mean by "meet the eligibility"? There is no welfare eligibility as in normal Commonwealth and State housing agreements.

Mr H. D. EVANS: There is eligibility in terms of the viability of the operation of the farm.

Mr P. V. Jones: That would be like any normal applicant for a loan?

Mr H. D. EVANS: Yes.

Mr P. V. Jones: That is not eligibility in the normal welfare housing sense.

Mr H. D. EVANS: There is eligibility for rural reconstruction loans. The Minister is talking in terms of the criteria on which this eligibility is based, and the two situations are reasonably parallel. We can talk in terms of eligibility in the sense of who will get these loans and how they are to be determined. All sorts of problems will arise here. I am not being critical of the Government or of the legislation in this regard, but problems must be faced. These

matters have caused some consternation to the farmers, and I expect also some resentment.

When he introduced the measure, the Minister suggested that all new land farmers would be eligible. Obviously they will not all be eligible and the Minister says there will need to be some repayment criteria. That is quite an interesting point.

If we look at those farmers who are able to participate in these loans, we find some tremendous variation in the individual approach to farm development. Some farmers have made very little effort towards improving their housing, and of course in some cases good reasons could be advanced for this attitude. The person who, of his own volition, has endeavoured to upgrade his home, could be penalised to some extent, while his neighbour can take advantage of the concessions offered. However, such circumstances necessarily arise when any scheme is implemented. Certainly, some farmers may not even deserve concessional aid.

Let us consider two farmers who set out to develop adjacent properties. Even if they commenced with a similar amount of capital and similar properties, at the end of 10 or 15 years, or any other period, we would find that one farmer would be in a superior position to the other. This would be due not only to luck but also to management decisions which gave one farmer an advantage. We would see a definite disparity between the development of the two properties. We come back I suppose to the philosophical question: Where do we apply such concessions and to what extent should aid be given?

While on this subject, I would like to emphasise the importance that can and should be attached to rural housing. This is a serious and real social problem. The first point is the financial status of such farmers. I asked the Minister a question in regard to the financing and the income of new land farmers, and he gave an interesting reply. I asked—

- (1) What is the average income of new land farmers in Western Australia?
- (2) What is the average farm indebtedness of these same farmers?

And the Minister replied as follows—

- (1) The Industries Assistance Commission survey of new land farmers in Western Australia in 1974 showed that net cash income in 1972-73 was an average of about \$6 000 per farm.
- (2) The same survey showed that average indebtedness on the same farms in 1974 was about \$32 000. A recent survey of new land farms in the Lake Grace and Ravenshorpe areas showed average debt level currently to be about \$38 200.

That was 1974. It is now 1976, and we have had a period of greatly increased costs. So the Minister's answer would not accurately reflect the present position.

While we are not able to obtain accurate details of the income or debt level of new land farmers in the present year, the debt level is somewhere above \$38 200. It has deteriorated in two years from an average of \$32 000. I know when one is talking in averages across the board this does not portray the true picture, but this still indicates how many of these farmers would be in a position to take advantage of any loans of this nature, and then pay an interest rate of, say, 8 per cent. It does not require a very astute mathematician to ascertain that if one takes a loan of \$25 000 at 8 per cent, one is looking at \$2 000 a year interest; and the levels of income of these farmers are still shrinking because of the structure of all farm inputs which are inflicting a burden. Farmers in this category will not be in the hunt to meet the interest, let alone the capital requirements.

Therefore, as I said, this is not a scheme that is intended to assist those farmers who can show the greatest need. In the reports brought out by the IAC and the Farmers' Union, the initial indication given was that the problem in one word was liquidity—the liquidity of new land farmers. The IAC report went on to itemise in order of priority the difficulties associated with this problem. The list was headed by farm housing; second was development of an area sufficient for the farm to be financially viable; thirdly, purchasing superphosphate and nitrogenous fertiliser; fourthly, insufficient funds for purchase of farm machinery to ensure operating efficiency; fifthly, problems in purchasing fencing material; and, sixthly, lack of funds for water and soil conservation.

That was the assessment of the committee that examined the problem; and it indicated there were some 300 to 400 new land farmers living in what it termed sub-standard accommodation. The term "sub-standard accommodation" was defined by the committee to include accommodation below the standard set for State housing authority homes. This accommodation varied in a very broad spectrum from houses that stood empty in goldfields areas and were transported to the new land farm regions and set up on a farm. That would be in the upper echelon of sub-standard housing.

In the lower echelon would be shed-type accommodation, converted buses, and caravans. So we can see there is a very real need, and the consequences attendant upon the situation are very great indeed. I notice there are now no interjections, even though you have taken the Chair, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Blaikie).

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blaikie): All interjections are disorderly, anyway.

Mr H. D. EVANS: It can be seen that this is an area that should be receiving urgent action on the part of the Government, but it is not receiving such action.

To refer back to the subject of farm incomes, the Bureau of Economics points to a fast-approaching crisis point, because Western Australian farm input costs rose by 37 per cent to December, 1974. On top of that, in the previous two years farm input costs rose by 11 per cent; that was in 1973 and 1972. Then we have 1975 on top of that.

Mr Laurance: They were bad years.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Although farm input increases were retained at 11 per cent in that two-year period, in 1974 the increase was 37 per cent, and there is no information yet on what occurred in 1975. Therefore, the incomes quoted in the answer I received from the Minister are probably way short of the mark.

These are the people whom we cannot possibly expect to be in a position to accept a loan; even if it were interest free I suggest they would have a repayment problem. For them the question of this Bill will not be a matter of great import.

I would also remind the House that this Government has more than a normal governmental responsibility in this matter. It has an undeniably strong moral obligation to do something about the situation it was largely instrumental in creating. I have referred to this on a previous occasion, but I would again like to refer to the IAC new land report of the 21st May, 1975. This report has only recently become an addition to the library, and its recommendations are of interest, as are the points it makes in its assessment of the position.

In establishing that there is an additional obligation and that it is time it was accepted, the commissioners found many of the present problems and hardships facing new land farmers could have been avoided at the time blocks were allocated. New land releases were widely advertised. It appears little attention was given to the applicants' prospects of success. The commission had no evidence that the State Government planned comprehensively for the financial needs of settlers, and land was released in some areas where development and farming alternatives were unproven.

This goes back to the time when a great splurge was made of the release of land, and the Government of the day made a deliberate endeavour to cover itself with glory by claiming to be the greatest developer of all time.

Mr Sibson: Warnings were given to the people entering the scheme about insufficient capital. It was spelt out very clearly at the time.

Mr Grewar: Which areas have not been proven?

Mr H. D. EVANS: In the honourable member's electorate, I could refer to the Jerdacuttup area; some very erroneous information was given to settlers there.

Mr Grewar: That is 20 years old—

Mr H. D. EVANS: The information was just not accurate. The isohyets that were prepared at the time just did not add up. It now can be shown that much of the area along the south coast has a regular drought factor, and in that context the areas can hardly be accepted as farming propositions with reliable diversifications. As members know, grain growing can be a hazardous gamble. The member for Bunbury's statement that farmers were fully warned was not correct; advice from the Department of Agriculture relating to the financial unsuitability of applicants was not heeded.

Mr Sibson: The warnings were spelt out by the Government of the day; they were loud and clear, and received a full Press.

Mr H. D. EVANS: At the same time, the Government was allocating land to PMG linesmen, schoolteachers and others. I have nothing against such people, but this merely gives an indication of the methods adopted by the Government of the day, and its lack of development capital. Is that an appropriate and ordered manner of land settlement?

The Government released the land at a price which was below market value, and waived a substantial amount of survey fees. In this way, it was offering inducements rather than warnings. Even its advertisements circulated throughout Australia were designed to attract settlers, not warn them. The IAC report states as follows—

The Commission has no evidence that the State Government planned comprehensively for the financial needs of settlers . . .

To support the point I made to the member for Bunbury, I read from the IAC report as follows—

Prices have been administratively determined. The Lands Department indicated that new land prices were low and that survey fees charged were below cost as the aim of the State Government was to encourage development of virgin land rather than to raise revenue. A large proportion of this land was priced between \$2.50 and \$5.00 per hectare.

The report then goes on to state the amount of land released.

Mr P. V. Jones: When are you coming back to the Bill?

Mr Sibson: That is irrelevant to the fact that warnings were issued.

Mr P. V. Jones: We are talking about a housing Bill.

Mr H. D. EVANS: We certainly are.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blaikie): Order! I ask the member to ignore the interjections and proceed with his remarks.

Mr H. D. EVANS: At least I have not left the parameters of the Bill, Mr Acting Speaker, otherwise you would have immediately drawn my attention to that fact. I am pointing out the deficiencies of this measure. Surely one of the essentials of debate should be to examine not only what is contained in a piece of legislation but also what is omitted; we should discuss the total implications of any legislation which comes before us.

The IAC report contains three recommendations which impinge upon the total problem of new land farmers. It does not try to deal with something in isolation, and gloss over the major problem, as this Government tried to do with the beef marketing legislation and the beef finance legislation. The Government reached a stage where it felt it had to do something, so it adopted those measures just as it intends to adopt the measure we are now discussing. It is picking at the fringe.

I am sure that you will strongly agree, Mr Acting Speaker (Mr Blaikie), that the Government adopted the same procedure in regard to the dairy industry; it took isolated and cherry-biting actions, when it should have considered the entire matter.

The ACTING SPEAKER: Order! I suggest the honourable member endeavour to relate the dairy industry legislation to the Bill now before the Chair.

Mr H. D. EVANS: I am pointing out the consistency of this Government in adopting measures of this type; its performance has been rather pathetic.

The recommendations of the IAC were aimed at the total problems faced by these people, not at just one isolated area. I intend to quote them so that they will be recorded in *Hansard*; in fact, they should be recorded on every member's writing pad. Recommendation (1) states as follows—

The Industries Assistance Commission recommends that the Australian Government:

1. initiate discussions with the Western Australian Government on terms, conditions and financing of re-establishment assistance to new land farmers who wish to leave their properties.

When I asked the Minister whether action had been taken on this matter, he said an approach had been made to the Commonwealth.

Mr Grewar: What did your counterparts in Canberra do? They had the IAC report in front of them.

Mr Nanovich: Not a thing!

Mr H. D. EVANS: The Federal Labor Government substantially increased the amount of rural reconstruction aid to this State. Recommendations (2) and (3) state as follows—

2. review with the Western Australian Government the administration by the Rural Reconstruction Authority of the States Grants (Rural Reconstruction) Act 1971 in order to provide adequate coverage of new land farms which are substantially undeveloped.
3. examine with the Western Australian Government, the Reserve Bank of Australia and the Commonwealth Development Bank the most appropriate method of restructuring the existing debt, and of structuring the future borrowings of new land farmers so as to correspond more closely with the term appropriate for farm development.

These recommendations get down to the essentials of the overall situation. This Government cannot escape its responsibilities.

I have indicated why it is improbable that many of these farmers will be in a position to avail themselves of what this Bill has to offer. I return to the point I was making before I was diverted by interjection: There is an essential need for rural housing. Inadequate housing brings with it a number of social problems, and this is manifest in the new land areas.

From discussions with the Minister and various people who have had considerable experience with the social problems of this area, it can be readily appreciated that the average farmer's household is in a poor state. During the busy periods, the farmer spends all day away from his home harvesting and clearing and by the time he returns home he is not very interested in the mundane problems around the home.

But, not so his wife! She has been subjected to substandard conditions all day. She may be living in a home with a dirt floor, where the problem of vermin arises. She is subjected to a great number of difficulties, which tax her throughout the day. In endeavouring to discuss this question of home living with her husband she gets very little response. Manifested day after day this problem will ultimately result in some type of friction and has caused broken homes. It has happened—the Minister can smile at that one.

Mr P. V. Jones: I was not smiling because of that.

Mr H. D. EVANS: A number of illustrations were given to me which showed this is very largely a contributing factor to that extreme situation. Many of these people cannot become involved in the social life of their area. They are not in a position to return invitations for visits. In addition, there is the problem of children who at the best are in a disadvantaged position with regard to schooling, especially when travelling long distances is involved. These matters gradually mount up to make a most unsatisfactory home situation. In the most extreme cases the cramped living conditions of a family certainly are not conducive to anybody's comfort and happiness.

These are problems which are associated with housing. When we talk of housing we are talking not only of keeping out the rain but also of the total fabric of the social life of the family. If a house is virtually a shed with very light partitions it cannot be described as a home, and problems that are so encountered should not be glossed over in the manner that may have been suggested.

To return to the specifics of the measure before us, I was surprised, in the first instance, that a further authority should be created. If we on this side of the House had set up an authority we would have attracted the most caustic comment from those opposite saying that we were adding to the proliferation of bureaucracy. In this case it is rather difficult to justify. It is almost impossible to justify as being anything but a ploy of the Government to draw Press comment that might be interpreted as an accolade for political purposes. That is about the strength of it.

Mr O'Neill: You know that I suggested to your Minister for Housing in the Tonkin Government that he do precisely what has been done.

Mr H. D. EVANS: I am staggered that the Deputy Premier suggested it.

Mr P. V. Jones: I am interested to know how you could suggest it could be done without it.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Let us have a look. In the first place, we have a full authority, another creation, operating as such. But we already have the State Housing Commission and the Rural Reconstruction Authority, and the R & I Bank has been involved with about seven specialised agencies—

Several Members interjected.

Mr H. D. EVANS: This is the present Government's measure.

Mr O'Neill: That is right, because you could not find an answer to the problem.

Mr Laurance: And a very good measure too!

Mr H. D. EVANS: To get back to the concept of an authority, there is a duplication here especially when we get down to

the analysis of the individual applicant. The composition of the proposed authority is oriented predominantly towards housing. Of the four members one shall be a person who has had comprehensive experience in the planning, production and management of housing throughout the State. One shall be a person who is or has been employed or engaged in a senior capacity by a lending institution in operations which involved the making of loans to persons engaged in primary production within the State. The third person shall be one who is or has engaged in rural industry within the State and whose experience in that industry fits him for appointment to the proposed authority.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blaikie): I ask the honourable member whether this matter is relevant to this debate or whether it is a matter that could be more appropriately considered at the Committee stage.

Mr H. D. EVANS: It is part of the debate at this stage, thank you, Mr Acting Speaker. The fourth person shall be an officer in the Treasury Department of the Public Service of the State. We have those four people and the main purpose of this proposed authority will be to assess applicants who are coming from the more disadvantaged section of the farming community. Into that assessment there must be taken most carefully the particular financial position, the viability, the personal factors which involve management, and other considerations. At present the Rural Reconstruction Authority is doing virtually that. This is not strictly a housing proposition; it is more of a farming proposition, because the housing question is only part of the overall farm problem. One cannot dissociate it as a political item and try to gild the tarnished reputation to some extent in that way; it is just not on.

The expertise that has been developed by the R & I Bank over the years has been acknowledged and, indeed, the Rural Reconstruction Authority has a member of the bank as its chairman.

Mr O'Neill: Has the R & I Bank lent any money for housing on farms?

Mr H. D. EVANS: It has not. We are talking about the method of dispersing funds. Incidentally, is the Government making available any funds for lending under this Bill?

Mr P. V. Jones: You would be surprised.

Mr O'Neill: You read the Bill.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Is the Government? I have read the Bill.

Mr P. V. Jones: You might be surprised.

Mr H. D. EVANS: I think the Deputy Premier had better keep out of this.

Mr P. V. Jones: I am wondering when you are going to get into it.

Mr O'Neill: You don't know what you are talking about.

Mr H. D. EVANS: The creation of a new authority for this purpose and the persons who are involved are purely a duplication of what exists already within the State and has operated effectively and probably—

Mr O'Neill: It has never lent any money for housing on farms.

Mr H. D. EVANS: Neither has this Government made money available to lend. Does it propose to do so under this Bill? Let us come back to the—

Mr O'Neill: You had better read it a bit more carefully.

Mr H. D. EVANS: While I am on the subject of the finance that is available I should like to raise a query. It is a question that I am unable to answer myself and so I turn to the Minister who would have detailed information by virtue of his association with housing. The matter concerns the availability of housing finance within the State and whether the funds that are currently available generally will meet an extension of this kind. It is purely an inquiry in regard to the amount of finance the Minister envisages will be involved and the sources from whence he sees it coming. In other words, I would like a full summation of the position regarding housing funds in total in Western Australia.

The principle that is entailed is that farmers are entitled to treatment equivalent to that received by any other section of the community. I trust that is implicit. I do not see farmers as being placed in the position where they are able to seek a disproportionately advantageous position, but they should receive equal treatment.

I would like to make a suggestion and this is apparent by its omission from the Minister's speech notes, but before doing that perhaps it would be as well for me to turn to the little gem which the Deputy Premier was sufficiently ill-advised to put forward by interjection.

When it comes to concessional rates to be made available to selected applicants I would draw attention to what the Minister said in his second reading speech. He said—

It is proposed that, where an application is received from a farmer deemed worthy of assistance but whose circumstances will preclude him from meeting the repayment of an advance at current mortgage interest rates, the authority may advance, if such funds are available, an amount of low-interest money to the approved lending institution which would add to this amount that amount necessary to bring the housing advance up to the

amount certified by the authority as being the ceiling of cost of the house for the approved farmer.

Mr O'Neill: Have you not heard of the home builders' account under the Commonwealth and State housing agreement? It is a pity your shadow Minister for Housing is not in the Chamber. He knows more about housing finance than you do.

Mr H. D. EVANS: I take it funds are available.

Mr P. V. Jones: I will give the source of all funds. Clause 17 covers that.

Mr H. D. EVANS: For a start, will the Minister give the amount that is available for the authority to advance if, as the Minister said in his second reading speech, such funds are available?

Mr P. V. Jones: I will tell you the source of the funds.

Mr H. D. EVANS: And the amounts?

Mr P. V. Jones: I did not mention the amounts.

Mr H. D. EVANS: To put the whole picture into perspective, the position is that the most urgent cases have not been met under the terms of the Bill, because if the people concerned accept any further debt they go down for the third time. Virtually that would be the situation.

I am surprised that in this day and age the question of transportable houses has not received more attention. If there is justification for the provision of welfare housing on farms, surely one way to meet the need is to provide transportable houses. Such houses could be provided under a contractual arrangement on a rental basis. I should point out that if these people left their farms the Government would be obliged to provide welfare housing for them—housing at rents comparable with the rents on houses occupied by people in equivalent financial circumstances.

A transportable home could be retained for a certain time, and some thought could be given to the purchase of the home by the person who rented it initially because his circumstances later permitted him to purchase it. We should bear in mind that many people, who at this stage have concessional houses which were provided under vastly different circumstances from those they now enjoy, will not be able to meet the eligibility requirement.

It could well be that after a period of time when a person has advanced and developed to a position in life where he no longer considers his present housing to be adequate for his purposes and proposes to acquire more substantial accommodation, the transportable house could be moved and set up elsewhere. There has been no suggestion of this proposition.

It seems to me this is only one of the approaches that can be made to relieve the people who are in the greatest need. I

am happy to see that funds can be made available to some farmers, because I know from my own experience that in the dairy-farming industry there are some dairy farmers who live in what can only be described as substandard housing, and they have lived in such accommodation for many years.

If they can avail themselves of this finance I am happy for them, and to that extent I go along with the legislation before us. However, the essential and inescapable point—as implied by the Minister in his comments—is that to the new land farmers, whose position is desperate, this piece of legislation is a mockery; and the Government knew that before it introduced the Bill.

These people are not able to meet the financial burden that will be placed on them. Very few of the 300 to 500 people who are in greatest need will reap any benefit from this legislation. While I am very happy to know that finance will be available, and I am pleased with the concept of finance for rural housing where that is required, I do not think the Bill goes far enough. To conclude, I would ask the Minister to look into the question of the provision of transportable houses on a rental basis in areas where they are most needed.

MR GREWAR (Roe) [10.38 p.m.]: I would be remiss if I did not preface my remarks with an expression of sincere appreciation to the Minister for Housing for the presentation of the Rural Housing (Assistance) Bill now before the House.

It is my hope that the Bill will be enacted without more protest or amendment during its passage through this Parliament. I do not share the pessimism of the member for Warren on the scope of the proposed authority under this legislation. It is my belief that the Bill has been designed primarily to meet the needs of the new land farmers. To the people I represent this legislation will mean very much, for we know that the lack of housing on farms is one of the most serious sociological problems of our time.

I would like to illustrate this point by way of a quotation taken from a submission presented to a ministerial party at Jerramungup several weeks ago. It was made by Mr Tom Atterby, a new land farmer of Fitzgerald, and ex-chairman of the New Land Farmers Committee of the Farmers' Union who himself occupies a humble dwelling on this farm. The quote he made was as follows—

In the new-land areas of the south-west of the State of Western Australia there is a need for approximately 400 to 500 houses to accommodate people living in substandard shacks and make-shift homes. Add to this substandard living conditions on many established old farms and the figure

could be doubled. The true number could well be higher, due to the understandable reticence of people of this calibre to admit their circumstances.

The circumstances are such, that if these substandard farm dwellings were congregated in a small area near Perth, the resulting ghetto would cause a stink both metaphorically and literally which would permeate through the community with such strength that no Government would ever live it down.

I would be failing in my duty to my contemporaries if I did not convey to you the state of mind these people are in and the terms in which they express to me. You would be failing in your duty if you do not do something about it.

This statement bears out what I said in my first speech in this House—in the Address-in-Reply debate in 1974—and in subsequent debates.

Adequate and comfortable housing for all people of Australia has been the aim of Governments of all political colours for all citizens. It has been provided to all members of the community with one exception—the farmer. This legislation now makes it possible for this disadvantaged group to obtain finance to build homes on their farming properties.

Mr H. D. Evans: Do you think they will be able to service their debts?

Mr GREWAR: A great number will be able to.

Mr H. D. Evans: And a greater number will not be able to. You know that.

Mr GREWAR: Does the honourable member want these people to continue living in housing accommodation they now occupy?

Mr H. D. Evans: Certainly not. That is why I suggest transportable houses as being a practical solution. You know full well these people will not be able to meet their commitments.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Blaikle): The honourable member will address the Chair.

Mr GREWAR: I would be lacking in integrity if I did not state that Governments previously have looked at this problem, but, unfortunately, no-one had been able to resolve the impasse which developed on the security required. Most of these farms are already highly committed with debts and are fully mortgaged.

Mr H. D. Evans: If you bung another \$30 000 on them where are they?

Mr Thompson: In a house.

Mr H. D. Evans: Not on that farm.

Mr GREWAR: This problem of security raised itself several years ago to the parliamentary committee proposing the establishment of this authority. At the commencement of our investigations it appeared that we could not break the impasse on security. At that stage lending institutions were most adamant that security should be on first mortgages or, in exceptional cases, on second mortgages. For 99 per cent of new land farmers, this was not possible because they were already fully committed.

We looked at the transportable dwellings, as a form of security, but this did not prove entirely satisfactory because the security was not considered sufficient even if the home could be removed from the farm. We also looked at the prospect of leasing demountable dwellings, but the terms of the loans were not acceptable. The terms were for only three to four years as for normal leasing conditions and the interest rates were high—sometimes as high as 20 per cent.

The only satisfactory solution appeared to be through mortgage insurance or State Government guarantees. Fortunately there was scope in both these areas to obtain security for the establishment of homes on farms. This was a major breakthrough and it has made this legislation possible.

It is appropriate, and certainly my wish, to pay tribute to the Minister for Housing for his interest in this project and for allowing the committee the services of the Housing Study Group, which we gratefully acknowledge. Without its help this legislation may not have been so capably arranged or might not even have come before the House at all.

It is not my intention to deal with the Bill in detail. This has been clearly spelt out by the Minister in his second reading speech, and his interpretation is easy to follow.

The legislation is broad and far ranging and by this means will enable many new land farmers to obtain finance. Lending institutions are in general agreement with the proposal. The conditions of the loans will be similar to those adopted to provide funds for urban home seekers.

At the present time, to my knowledge the only funds available are from the normal institutions which lend money for homes, but the Bill provides for low-interest Government funds to be attracted to help reduce interest and repayment terms. The minister is making approaches to the Federal Government to try to obtain this type of low-interest money under the Commonwealth and State housing agreement. However, under the legislation many people will avail themselves of this lending facility.

Farming is a long-term business. While farmers in new land areas may be suffering

adverse economic conditions at the moment, with an upturn in prices, in the future they will be able to repay the loan.

Many farmers are in fact borrowing money on shorter terms at much higher interest rates than would be available through commercial housing lending institutions. Stock farm finance is available at about 13 per cent and the hire-purchase interest rate is around 20 per cent. Those sources are short term. Commercial home finance funds are long term, being for 25 years or so.

Farmers who will be availing themselves of the loans provided under the Bill will be pleased to know that the housing funds will not affect their present mortgages hence they will be able to continue with their farm development projects. The size of the loan and repayment conditions will be drawn up after a study of a farmer's current economic situation and an assessment of his future position. The Bill provides for a periodic adjustment of these conditions should a farmer's position deteriorate through some misfortune during the course of his repayments.

Under the scheme the applicant will be able to express his individuality in the choice of design and specifications. We were rather fearful that we would finish up with a stereo type design as is evident on war service farms. Fortunately the Bill allows for an expression of individuality.

Initially the Bill will be catering for the resident-owner to enable him to provide himself with a new home or to upgrade his existing home. This will be on his land whether it be freehold, conditional purchase, or under pastoral lease conditions.

No doubt in the future it can be expected that there will be a call for assistance to provide farm employees' homes. A simple amendment to the Act should make this possible. However, the first priority of the legislation is to provide housing finance for the resident-owner living on his property.

Finally, but certainly by no means least, I wish to thank members of my committee, the members for the South Province, and the member for Gascoyne for their extreme dedication and tireless efforts over the two years this legislation has been in the course of preparation. Possibly one should not be emotional in this place, but this is a most memorable occasion for me because the enactment of the legislation will bring joy and happiness to a great number of disadvantaged but tremendous people who are pioneering farms under difficult economic circumstances by their own choice, but in Australia's national interest.

In conclusion, I wish to say that the legislation belies the belief that our Government does not care about humanitarian issues. Need I say I support the Bill?

MR McPHARLIN (Mt. Marshall) [10.46 p.m.]: When listening to the speech made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition I failed to follow his line of argument in condemning the measure before the House. He made certain criticisms, but they could not be substantiated to any great degree because most people who have knowledge of the measure applaud it as a move in the right direction and a sincere attempt to help people in need. I could not follow the adverse criticism he offered.

He believed that the concept and intention of the measure before the House were admirable, but he then went on to criticise the Bill without presenting any substantiating evidence.

Mr H. D. Evans: How many of the needy farmers will be able to handle an additional debt of \$30 000?

Mr McPHARLIN: Let me come to that in a few moments.

Mr H. D. Evans: Let us get on to that now.

Mr McPHARLIN: We must realise there is a need for this type of legislation to offer some assistance, and it has been required for a long time. The need has not occurred only in recent times. It has been a problem associated for many years with the development of new land, and not only new land. For 30 or 40 years, the same need has confronted farmers, but it has been only in recent years that the trend has been towards Government assistance for those in need.

This is not something new or something which has just arisen in the last few years. It has been desired for a long time. I have had personal experience of farmers living in sheds with earthen floors. They have lived under those conditions for a number of years, and they would not leave their properties because they were so attached to the way of life offered to them. They would stay there under any circumstances. Of course, we are all aware that the incomes of farmers are variable, to a great degree, as a result of seasonal conditions and also as a result of their dependence on international markets. Their incomes fluctuate according to prices obtained overseas for the commodities they produce.

The Government has had a very close look at the need to assist the farming community and is aware of all the points which have been made. It was also stated that a proportion of low-interest finance will be available, together with the finance which will be available from the societies or lending institutions. That again is a sincere effort to have interest rates reduced in order to assist those people who are able to borrow money to service loans allocated to them. It has been recognised that the farmer should have an opportunity to be able to have a source of

finance available similar to that available to other people—particularly for home purchase—and that he should be able to take advantage of the same lending or financial institutions as are available to those living in urban areas.

It has not been an easy exercise to come up with a Bill acceptable to everyone. The member for Warren—the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—made the point that he did not believe the measure would meet the requirements of a large number of people, particularly the new land farmers. If one looks at the Rural Reconstruction Authority criteria one will find that although it has been operating successfully over a period of time not all applicants are granted approval for debt reconstruction or farm build-up. So, in any scheme which is put forward and which envisages the lending of money to people in need of it, there always has to be some cut-off point. There has to be a screening, as referred to in the Minister's second reading speech, of applicants to make sure they do not incur debts which could be disadvantageous to them.

The purpose of a loan will be to establish or improve a home on a rural property. During 1974-75, a total of 241 applications were made to the Rural Reconstruction Authority for debt reconstruction, and 94 of them were approved. That is approximately 35 per cent. Applications for farm build-up, in the same period, totalled 122 and 66 of those were approved. In that instance there is a better percentage of about 58. So, it would be assumed—quite reasonably—that when applications are made for loans to assist those people who consider themselves eligible and in need the committee would have the responsibility, as was mentioned by the Minister, of screening the applicants to ascertain whether or not they would come under the criteria mentioned in the Bill.

It is the intention of the Government that low-interest Commonwealth money will be made available to assist in reducing interest rates. That is a commendable move and one which cannot be opposed by the Opposition. It will assist those people in need of better housing conditions.

It was also stated that when a farmer receives a certificate he should make every endeavour to obtain mortgage insurance to cover the proposed loan. If the lending institution is satisfied that the farmer has not been able to obtain mortgage insurance, and it is prepared to make an advance, the Government will indemnify the institution against loss incurred by the advance. Again, I think there has been a detailed study of the situation which has resulted in the Government accepting that responsibility.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition must look at that provision with some feelings of apprehension, or regret that his Government did not come up with a

similar proposition. At one stage the previous Government initiated housing legislation whereby employers in country towns could make application through the industrial and commercial employees' authority section of the Act. That was a move in the right direction, but the previous Government did not go further and institute or initiate a measure of this nature.

The Minister's second reading speech notes also set out that the Bill limits assistance to farmers who intend to use their dwellings as homes for themselves and their dependants. I ask the Minister whether he could supply some more details with regard to the screening of applicants and what measure of eligibility will be required. I also ask what limits will be imposed. The Minister stated that a farmer who requires assistance must be a person whose sole or principal activity is carrying on farming operations. I think that needs further clarification. It is important that funds should be allocated to genuine applicants, and not to those who are not as genuine as would be preferable.

The member for Roe mentioned that later, perhaps, consideration could be given to financing homes for farm employees, but that is something for the future. I indicate my support for the measure now before us. Its provisions have been desired for a long time.

It is not too late for the Bill to come forward and I think it should be readily agreed to by all members of the Legislature, in this House and in the other place, because it proposes to overcome the problem of the securities required by lending institutions. I give my support to the Bill and trust the Minister will further explain the points I have raised.

MR COWAN (Merredin-Yilgarn) [11.01 p.m.]: When this Bill was first introduced I was under the impression that it was not a welfare Bill designed to provide welfare housing for farmers such as the State Housing Commission provides for urban or town dwellers.

There is no question that the assistance provided for in the Bill will be available only to a select few people. It will be available to those who have to use their farm as security to raise an overdraft for the operating costs of their farming programme but can go further into debt to provide a house for their family. Under the present rules of lending institutions they cannot obtain a second mortgage or a form of security which will enable them to borrow funds. There is no question in my mind that the Bill was ever intended to be welfare legislation.

I would like the Minister to answer the questions which arise from this type of Bill. The legislation merely gives a broad outline of the machinery by which money can be lent to an applicant who is

an approved farmer. There is no mention anywhere in the Bill of the amount of funds he can borrow, the proportion of funds he has to provide, or any restrictions on the type of house he may build. I would like the Minister to give some indication of the total amount of loan which will be available, what contribution the approved farmer must make himself, and whether any restrictions will apply as to the type of dwelling he may erect on the property. I would also like to know if possible what the period of repayment will be.

There have been conflicting reports about the number of farmers who may be eligible for this type of assistance. I would like the Minister to give some indication of the total funds which will be available to the authority and perhaps where they will come from.

I understand this is a new type of legislation. The Commonwealth housing agreement does not cover the matter. Could the Minister state whether he has made approaches to the Commonwealth for funds for this venture?

Hopefully, the approved farmers who obtain assistance under the Bill will be able to build a home and become eligible for the Commonwealth Government's home savings grant. At the present time, because farmers cannot obtain funds for housing, they have been unable to apply for the home savings grant. Although it is not a great amount, it represents something.

The Minister mentioned in his second reading speech a review of the interest rate that the authority will charge an approved farmer. If an ordinary worker obtains a loan from a lending institution, I do not think his capacity to repay is ever reviewed or that he is asked to pay a higher interest rate if his financial position suddenly improves. I may be wrong but if that is the case I do not see why the interest rate on funds borrowed by a farmer by way of mortgage under this legislation should be reviewed and increased if he suddenly becomes a little more wealthy and his capacity to pay improves.

I support the Bill. I realise at best it will give assistance only to a select few farmers, but that is far better than nothing.

MR CRANE (Moore) [11.06 p.m.]: I rise to support the Bill but in doing so I would like to indicate my concern that perhaps it does not go far enough or spell out precisely what we want to know. One could almost liken it to the bikini: what it reveals is very interesting but what it does not reveal is vital. I agree with the member for Merredin-Yilgarn that some parts of the Bill have not been explained very well. I do not mean to be destructively critical but rather constructively critical.

Rural housing has always been a problem. It has always been difficult for a farmer to prove his viability. I know from practical experience just how difficult it can be. Many people in my electorate are still living in very substandard buildings—some of them in the end of a shed.

I think all members would agree that one of the problems with lending institutions is that when one can prove one is in a position where one does not really need the money it is readily made available; but it is the people who are in dire straits who cannot obtain money. I hope this legislation will make money available to people in such circumstances, but I am fearful that, the way the Bill is worded in some instances, funds may be made available to those who are in a better position to repay the loan and the Bill will do nothing for those who most need assistance.

All would agree we must start somewhere. Mighty oaks from little acorns grow, and I am sure the legislation will grow further to help all sections of the farming community where help is needed.

As has been mentioned previously tonight, it is stated in the Minister's second reading speech that the authority may advance money if such funds are available. This concerns me. There is no indication how much money will be available. At the moment no money is available for war service homes or defence service homes and there is a waiting period of about 12 months. I wonder what will happen if such a circumstance arises under this legislation.

I believe much more can be done, as a natural extension of this legislation, to provide money from the Reserve Bank at low interest rates to help people in these circumstances. The member for Roe mentioned the war service land settlement scheme, which many of us remember very well. The scheme still operates in some areas and some of the farmers who originally obtained finance under it are still farming on those properties.

After the war money was made available to help ex-servicemen become established on farming properties. If the legislation is still effective in regard to war service land settlement, it should be updated. There is an anomaly here, and I will point out where money would be available for rural housing. When someone buys out a war service land settlement farm, the 99-year lease at about 2 per cent interest is available to the purchaser—sometimes a person who was not a serviceman. This money was intended to help ex-servicemen and many people are receiving the benefit of this 2 per cent interest rate when they are not entitled to it. If such funds could be channelled to help rural housing, I believe we would achieve much better use of the money

available. We know the Commonwealth Bank can lend money at low interest rates, and in fact at no interest at all if it so desires, and the money does not even have to be paid back. So money should be available for this particular purpose. As a Government, I hope we look towards this type of finance to help make the legislation work.

I would be remiss if I did not agree to some extent with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition when he indicated his fears that people on some of these properties will be so overburdened with an additional mortgage that there will be no hope of their paying back the loan. I can only trust that arrangements will be made to overcome this real problem.

One of the greatest problems with farming is spending money wisely where it is most needed to bring back a return. Indications over the last 100 years of farming in Australia show that farmers put housing last on their list of priorities; a new plough, tractor, or some other machinery is necessary before the house. If this money is channelled into dwellings, I wonder what the viability of the farms will be? Unfortunately the word "viability" was coined lightly, and it plays far too important a part in deciding who will and who will not be eligible for finance.

Certainly my sentiments are to help rural people to obtain adequate dwellings in which to live with their families. I am fearful that if the matter is not watched very closely, we may end up with a disastrous result from what is undoubtedly a good idea. Perhaps I am being a little pessimistic, but when we introduce such legislation it is necessary to appreciate the point that it is useless unless it is carried out in the spirit in which it is introduced. I know this matter will not end here because if it does, the long-term benefits will not be very good. The people on these new land farms are facing serious times. While the gross income may be increasing—and very often it is not—the net return is reducing. This fact must be taken into account, and I am sure when preparing this legislation the Minister has considered it thoroughly. However, I am worried that it is not spelt out precisely in the Bill. No doubt when the Minister replies he will explain just how it will be implemented.

As a person interested in rural people and in the principle that a man must provide food, clothing, and shelter for his family, I must support the Bill. However, I warn members that the measure in its present form is not the be-all and end-all of rural housing. A great deal more could be said in support of the suggestion made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that transportable homes should be provided so that when families move on, the homes can be relocated. I assure members

that with the present price of superphosphate and other materials, many rural families will be moving from these new land areas in the very near future.

I know I have been a little pessimistic tonight, but I am endeavouring to be realistic, and that is what we must be. I support the principle of this legislation, and I will do all I can to ensure that it works, particularly for those people out there who depend so much on what we are trying to do. We just have to make it work. With these remarks I support the legislation.

MR SHALDERS (Murray) [11.16 p.m.]: I rise briefly to make one or two comments and to indicate my support for the Bill. I listened to the remarks made by the member for Merredin-Yilgarn and the member for Moore. These members asked the Minister to spell out additional details about lending limits and the type of accommodation which could be provided. I must admit I do not subscribe to that particular point of view. This legislation is certainly breaking new ground, and I believe a degree of flexibility is required. I do not intend to take serious issue with those members, but simply to express my different point of view.

The need for finance to be made available for genuine farmers in rural areas to finance farm housing and to provide up-graded and new accommodation is one that has been well canvassed and I do not propose to cover it again. Suffice it to say that this Bill provides three additional alternatives which may be traversed in the search for finance. Firstly, an indemnity may be provided to a lending institution by this authority for finance at current rates of interest. Secondly for a blending of finance between current interest rates and low interest rates provided by the authority; and thirdly, finance provided by the authority *in toto* at low interest rates. Suffice it to say that it will be necessary for the authority to obtain finance before the last two alternatives may be utilised.

In his second reading speech the Minister said it is hoped steps would be taken for the authority to obtain this finance and he outlined possible ways this could be done.

The remarks made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition are notable both for their paucity and for their lack of support from Opposition members. I can only assume that no member on that side of the House supports the member for Warren.

Mr Davies: We all do—what are you talking about?

Mr SHALDERS: Perhaps no-one is capable of putting together an argument to support him. He made two points.

Mr Taylor: Your side never supports a Minister in the presentation of his case. Does that mean you do not support your Government?

Mr SHALDERS: Of course I support the Government.

Mr Taylor: Then why criticise our side because we have not supported our lead speaker? Surely this applies to every piece of legislation.

Mr SHALDERS: For an Opposition which said it would go out to woo rural voters, and the Opposition will have to seek rural votes if it wishes to win the next election, I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition did not deputise at least one or two more speakers. He did not take the trouble—in fact he is hardly taking the trouble now to listen to this debate tonight.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SHALDERS: Firstly, the member for Warren said that this legislation would not help all new land farmers. The honourable member may well be right, but surely this is destructive rather than constructive criticism.

It is not possible to guarantee that a new piece of legislation will provide what is required in every situation. When he sums up, I am sure the Minister will say that. But goodness gracious, because the Bill does not provide for every case is no justification for tearing it down. Obviously, the argument of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was so thin that he had to seize on that aspect, as well as the fact that we are creating an authority.

I am no great lover of authorities. However, if it can be shown that an authority is needed and there is no other viable alternative—and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not demonstrate an alternative, and if he had perhaps the Minister would have listened—then I would support an authority. But the argument of the honourable member was that it would not help a section of the farming community, and that we are creating another authority; and that is a terrible thing for members on this side to do. That was the substance of his argument, and it is perfectly obvious that he wants to have two bob each way.

He certainly does not want to oppose this measure because he realises that would completely destroy what is left of the credibility in rural areas of members opposite. On the other hand he says it will not give much help to certain rural people, instead of being constructive and saying this is good legislation which will provide a great deal of help, and perhaps suggesting ways in which he thinks it could be improved. With those few words, I support the Bill.

MR P. V. JONES (Narrogin—Minister for Housing) [11.22 p.m.]: Firstly, may I thank those members who have contributed to this debate.

Mr A. R. Tonkin: I interjected a couple of times.

Mr P. V. JONES: I am not quite certain where the Deputy Leader of the Opposition stands. He eloquently recounted all the reasons that we should have this Bill, and then suggested various ways in which it could be improved. However, he also suggested things that we perhaps ought to look at without suggesting any positive remedy or suggesting any course of action other than the one we are taking.

Mr H. D. Evans: I approved of it as far as it goes, but it does not go to the areas of greatest need.

Mr P. V. JONES: We were criticised even for proposing an authority, and yet no suggestion at all was put forward as to how any effort could be made without an authority. I will come back to that in a moment.

I suggest it ill-becomes the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to criticise the Government for doing something when during the course of the three years of his Government nothing was done in respect of housing for farmers.

Mr H. D. Evans: And what happened in the 11 years before that? When you put the people on that land, what did you do?

Mr P. V. JONES: The common thread running through the speeches of all those who have contributed is agreement that there is a requirement to provide an alternative vehicle which will enable primary producers to gain access to home loan finance; and, in simple terms, that is exactly what is being offered in this measure. The Bill contains provisions saying that the assistance applies only to the first home and that it applies only to persons who receive the greater part of their income from primary production, and that the primary producer and his dependants must occupy the house. Whilst those are additional criteria, we are still back to the same basic point that it is a legislative vehicle to provide finance for farmers' housing.

Having said that, we come back again to the point raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition: that it is in fact a financial measure. He recounted the difficulties which have been, and are still being, experienced by new land farmers as a result of all sorts of vagaries that accompany all forms of primary production, but this has nothing to do with the Bill. The Bill relates to only one aspect of new land farming—namely, housing.

Mr H. D. Evans: And your lack of action to help new land farmers for whom you are responsible.

Mr P. V. JONES: We are not debating new land farming problems in total, but only the housing aspect.

Mr H. D. Evans: In your introductory notes you referred to new land farmers, and by implication made them your primary consideration.

Mr P. V. JONES: That is right; but the reference was to housing—and I emphasise "housing"—for new land farmers as distinct from the total economics of new land farming.

Mr H. D. Evans: But you cannot divorce the housing situation from their predicament.

Mr P. V. JONES: The clauses which relate to the manner in which those who seek finance from this authority or through this authority shall go about it, and the manner in which they will be screened and approved, and the loan determined, have one vital point in common; that is, their extreme flexibility. Several members have referred to the eligibility criteria and the manner in which they will be used; however, I think they have perhaps overlooked the aspect that in clauses 16 and 17 there is a degree of flexibility which is so great that any farmer who applies can be accommodated to some degree, subject to funding.

We are not dealing with a welfare housing situation where the eligibility criteria relate to income, total assets, and that type of thing. A person who applies to this authority for housing finance will present an application which is not different from that which would apply if he were to seek finance from a bank, a building society, or any other conventional finance institution.

There is sufficient flexibility in interest rates, sources of funding, terms of the loan, repayments, periodic reviews, etc., because all these are individual and will be tailor-made to each application, and there will be no stereotyped system prevailing.

That is clearly indicated in the manner in which an applicant will be treated; because he may be referred to a financial institution such as a building society; he may receive a loan from a building society which has received a transfusion of low-interest funding, because it might suit his particular operation; and then it varies all the way down until the stage where provision may be made for him to receive finance for housing purposes at the concessional rate of interest, and in that case he could receive it direct from the authority at a rate of interest which is that applying to the housing funds made available under the Commonwealth and State housing agreement.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked, as did the member for Mt. Marshall, what will be the sources of funding. The sources will be, firstly, the ordinary commercial lending institutions, which will

advance moneys at commercial rates of interest. Secondly there is the long-term Government bond rate, which is currently 10.2 per cent. Then there is the concessional interest moneys made available under the Commonwealth and State housing agreement, subject to the approval of the Commonwealth—which has been given in principle—at 4½ per cent. Further to that, with the approval in principle of the Commonwealth—and this is subject to final agreement at the Housing Minister's Conference next week—an applicant may receive housing finance from moneys which will become available at 5½ per cent; and the Commonwealth and State housing agreement will have to be amended to allow this.

So, there are a variety of sources of funds and a variety of interest rates, all of which can be utilised to provide an advance suitable both in quantity of money and terms of years, and at an interest rate to suit each individual applicant.

The member for Merredin-Yilgarn asked whether there would be any upper limit. The answer is "No, there will not". The only limit will be in terms of the ability of the borrower to service the loan.

Mr Skidmore: Surely that would be limiting in itself. If someone wanted to build a \$65 000-home, and could service the loan, he would get the money, but if someone could service a loan of only \$20 000, that would be all he would get.

Mr P. V. JONES: The amount of finance advanced would be restricted by two things—firstly, the farmer's own inclination as to the amount of money for which he wished to apply. Already, people have written to me saying that they can find so much money at certain rates of interest. We have been told by the permanent building society movement that its members have funds to provide up to 300 home loans.

The second limiting factor is the capacity of the enterprise to service the loan. This is quite similar to any other funding for which the farmer may apply. If he applied to his normal financial house for a loan to develop his property in any manner, the determination of that loan would be influenced by the ability of the enterprise to service the loan. This provision does not vary in any way from any other normal financial operation within any farming enterprise.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to the social aspects of sub-standard housing, and I am sure all members would agree with his remarks. While it is absolutely true that the provision of a house will not increase the earning capacity of a farm unit by one dollar in real terms, it would improve the social conditions under which that family lived, and must make for a more congenial situation

for the family unit to enjoy. In providing finance of this nature, we are in fact providing a social measure.

Members seem to have overlooked the point that there was no other way to provide the type of funding desired by the Government and the vehicle which would make available finance for primary producers without establishing a separate authority. It was suggested this could be done within the normal operations of the State Housing Commission. However, as I am sure the member for Cockburn appreciates, this is just not so; it would have required quite massive amendments to the State Housing Act, including such things as redefining the term "worker", and re-establishing established criteria which would have been restrictive and not given us the same access to funding as would a newly established authority.

It was also suggested that the composition of the board was somewhat restrictive and that the expertise of the Rural Reconstruction Authority would not necessarily be available. However, the Bill provides that the authority shall have access to any financial records relating to a particular farming enterprise. It is a reasonable assumption that farmers—particularly the new land farmers, who have raised such interest in this debate—already will be in receipt of loans which would have occasioned considerable scrutiny of their enterprises.

The Government does not wish to duplicate such scrutiny, and this Bill provides for the financial records which are already available to the Government to be made available to this new authority. This applies whether the loan is through the Rural Reconstruction Authority, the applicant's private bank, or any other source of funding he might have for his operation.

The matter of transportable housing was mentioned. Nowhere is there any attempt not to include transportable housing. Indeed, the contrary is the case; it is the intention of the authority to provide that under certain conditions, only transportable housing may be utilised. I refer to particularly marginal situations, where such accommodation is desirable. This decision has been taken for two reasons. Firstly, such housing may be all that particular enterprise could sustain and, secondly, if the enterprise at some later date became nonviable, there would be an asset on the property which could be removed, either by returning it to the authority or by the actual occupier of the block. In each case, that would depend on his financial commitments—whether he had discharged his commitment to the Crown in respect of the block, or to some other lending institution.

The member for Mt. Marshall referred to the historical aspects of the matter, and suggested that this legislation was long overdue. Although the new land

farmers and the new land situation in general has received considerable attention, it is by no means an isolated problem. As the member for Vasse has indicated on other occasions, there are some farmers who are group settlers and are still living in accommodation which was provided, probably, up to a century ago and which really needs replacing. There is no reason whatever that they should not have access to home loan finance, but it would take an authority such as this to provide that access.

The member for Mt. Marshall also referred to the question of screening applicants, and their eligibility. I believe I have already covered this matter; the screening procedure will be as outlined in the Bill. The authority will receive an application from a farmer and consider the information put before it; it would have access to the financial records relating to his other commitments, and would then do one of several things provided for in the Bill. It could refer him to a financial institution or, at the other end of the scale, it could provide the total advance from within the rural housing fund.

Mention was made of the phrase, "if such funds are available" which was contained in my second reading speech. Unfortunately, this appears to have been taken from context, because the entire quote reads as follows—

It is proposed that, where an application is received from a farmer deemed worthy of assistance but whose circumstances will preclude him from meeting the repayment of an advance at current mortgage interest rates, the authority may advance, if such funds are available, an amount of low-interest money to the approved lending institution . . .

It applies to funds which would be received by the rural housing fund at a concessional rate of interest from the Commonwealth and State housing agreement, or the home builders' account or some other concessional source. It is quite obvious that, as with all other welfare housing funding, it is not available in limitless amounts. If an applicant applied late in a financial year the amount of low-interest funding for that financial year may already have been committed and may not be available. In the welfare housing field where purchase homes are concerned at 5½ per cent interest, an applicant waits until the next financial year because funds are not necessarily available.

Mr Skidmore: Many people are waiting for that sort of funding.

Mr P. V. JONES: That is right; this is exactly the aspect to which it refers. It is not a total funding. It is not to say that the authority can operate only if funds

are available. We are specifically referring to the applicant who is at the bottom end so far as ability to repay is concerned and who requires a substantial portion of his loan, if not the total loan, provided at concessional rates of interest. In any one year that amount of money may be utilised prior to his making application.

I believe all the questions raised by the member for Merredin-Yilgarn have been covered except that I am advised the new home savings grants scheme, which was announced by the Federal Minister for Housing four or five weeks ago, is available for this type of operation. The announcement explicitly said that it is available for building on farms. This subject will also be discussed at the Housing Ministers Conference next Monday, but it has been indicated that the present scheme will be available on a far wider basis than the previous home savings grants scheme.

The question of reviews was also raised by the same member. Clause 17 provides for reviews up and down the scale. Reviews have been included for one reason. It will be conceded that the economic circumstances of a person in receipt of a loan will change during the life of the loan. If his circumstances deteriorate the Bill provides for additional low-interest money to be fed into his loan, for deferments or for a certain flexibility which will allow him to live through a period of difficulties in financing the loan.

Similarly, if the authority is to make the best possible use of the low concessional funding which will become available there ought to be a review if the person's economic circumstances improve.

Mr Skidmore: I wish the building societies would apply that criterion to the people who borrow money from them when the interest rate goes up.

Mr P. V. JONES: Perhaps we are being more generous.

Mr Skidmore: I would say so. It disturbs me a little.

Mr P. V. JONES: If we are to get the greatest use from the concessional funding, if it is available, it ought to be used to the greatest extent by having it repaid into the rural housing fund to enable it to be re-lent to another person in need of it. If after five or 10 years a person's economic circumstances improve his loan could be the subject of review.

I feel I have covered all the points that have been made. However, I should like to conclude by suggesting that at no time in any of the comments I made prior to the introduction of this legislation or even in the second reading speech did I say that it is the most perfect thing. All I have suggested is that it represents an effort to provide funding for a section of the community which up till the present has been denied access to funding for homes in the same manner that it

may be provided within the private urban sector. In fact we are doing better than that. We are providing a flexibility which is not available in any other form of housing finance situation in the Commonwealth. Therefore, I will accept any criticism as constructive criticism, only on the basis that we are looking at establishing the legislative vehicle to start something which most certainly would be open to improvement in the future. But there is no reason to suggest that any apparent imperfection which may be seen is a reason why it should not have been introduced.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Mr Blaikie) in the Chair; Mr P. V. Jones (Minister for Housing) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 4 put and passed.

Clause 5: Rural Housing Authority—

Mr H. D. EVANS: Clause 5 refers to the establishment of the authority. The Minister referred to the specific needs of the authority so that it will be in a position to fulfil the function with which it will be charged. He suggested that the State Housing Commission would not be appropriate. It seems to me that the second consideration is a specialised agency designated under the R. & I. Bank, which has been used on a dozen occasions previously. I ask: What would be the cost of the operation of the authority? As there must necessarily be some cost involved, how is this to be recouped? Will the operating costs be derived from the funds, from increasing the interest charges on the funds that are loaned or in some other way? I am assuming that some staff will be employed and that, as a consequence, the authority will require operating costs.

Mr P. V. JONES: I shall deal first of all with the latter part of the comments made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. It is necessary to understand that for the bulk of the applicants we are talking of the funding coming from other institutions and that funding from the rural housing fund would be given to them and they would make the advance using the mixture of funds. This means that we are looking at only two persons as permanent staff, one secretary and one other person, who would have offices within the State Housing Commission building in the same way as the Government Employees' Housing Authority has offices.

Regarding the costs involved with the services of these persons, it is considered that no costs will be levied against rural housing funds or the authority.

On the question of the composition of the board, we could not use the services of the Rural and Industries Bank and

so we decided to set up a separate authority. The reason is that it is necessary to have a separate statutory authority if we are to have the advantage of two courses of action: firstly, to utilise the funding from semi-Government borrowings, and secondly, to utilise the concessional funding made available under Commonwealth and State housing agreements. This cannot be done through the normal operations of the Rural and Industries Bank; nor can it be done through the State Housing Commission without a large number of amendments to the State Housing Act in respect of eligibility, definitions, and so on.

It is necessary to establish a separate, identifiable, statutory authority in order to gain access to and utilise the wide range of funding; and to establish a rural housing fund in the manner provided in the Bill. We can establish a fund on its own, but such a fund cannot be utilised as a vehicle or a source of other funding, particularly in relation to Commonwealth and State housing finance.

I assure the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that we tried to adopt this method, and initially I saw no reason to establish a separate authority. We tried to determine whether it could be done through some other body, or through a separate section attached to an institution like the Rural and Industries Bank, but by using such a method it would be impossible to get the widest possible application of funds.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 6 to 22 put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported, without amendment, and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 11.53 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, the 19th May, 1976

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. A. F. Griffith) took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (2): WITHOUT NOTICE

1. JAPAN-AUSTRALIA JOINT STUDY GROUP

Report

The Hon. W. R. WITHERS, to the Minister for Federal Affairs:

It was reported in a Japanese newspaper on the 15th May, 1976, that a report from a non-Governmental Japan-Australia joint study group was released in the name of Sir John Crawford.

The release was made simultaneously in Tokyo and Canberra early this month.

In view of its reported content regarding Australian currency and long-term mineral arrangements, would the Minister please arrange to obtain a copy of that report for study by this Government?

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF replied:

Although the report is non-Governmental, in view of the comments of the honourable member I will endeavour to obtain a copy.

2. PENINSULA HOTEL, MAYLANDS

Preservation

The Hon. R. F. CLAUGHTON, to the Minister for Cultural Affairs:

- (1) Did the Minister meet today with representatives of the Peninsula Association and/or the TLC?
- (2) If so, what assurances did he give—
 - (a) as to the future of the Peninsula Hotel;
 - (b) of assistance from the Government in the restoration and maintenance of the building?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON replied:

This question was sent through to me as I was saying "Goodbye" to the two people who visited me. The answer to the question is—

- (1) Yes, I met with two people claiming to be representatives of the Peninsula Association. I had made arrangements with Mr F. Parkes that he could come and discuss the matter with me. At the appointed time he did not turn up. The two young people who did apologise on his behalf and discussions with them ensued.
- (2) (a) and (b) I gave no assurances to the young couple. I pointed out to them that this was a matter of very long standing; indeed it had first been brought to my attention well over twelve months ago, in fact, almost two years ago. Approaches at that time had been made to the Federal Labor Government without success. Applications had been made under the NEAT scheme, the RED scheme and indeed as I understand it, every pertinent scheme that was in existence at that time. The closest was a glimmer of hope under the NEAT scheme. This, however, faded out upon receipt of a long telegram