

being broken, it would very quickly be enforced.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Of course there is a law being broken. You are talking tommy-rot.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member knows that is not correct, so I think little attention can be given to such idle words.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: As the Bill must be passed by an absolute majority of members, I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority present. There being no dissentient voice, I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 10.12 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 22nd September, 1948.

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

QUESTIONS.

PETROL RATIONING.

As to Reduction in License Fees.

Hon. A. THOMSON (for Hon. C. F. Baxter) asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Seeing that an additional 20 per cent. reduction of fuel will be imposed on the 1st October next, will the Government take steps to have the license fees of vehicles reduced accordingly?

(2) Did the Government anticipate taking such action to operate from next July?

(3) If so, why as from that particular date?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

Consideration is now being given to the question of introducing a Bill this session to enable the Governor in Council to effect reductions in license fees before the 1st July next, if the petrol consumption position has not improved.

HOSPITALS.

As to Accommodation at Esperance.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has the Minister's attention been drawn to the serious position which has arisen at the Esperance hospital?

(2) Is the Minister aware that on Saturday the hospital had to accommodate 20 patients, notwithstanding that it has provision for only 11 patients?

(3) Does the Government intend to take any immediate action to enlarge the hospital so as to cope with the immediate needs of the district and the large influx of visitors during the holidays?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) The Minister has read in the Press that there is some congestion at the Esperance hospital at the present moment.

(3) No. The needs of Esperance are being carefully considered in conjunction with the hospitalisation plans for the State.

BILL—BRANDS ACT AMENDMENT.*Third Reading.*

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [4.28] in moving the third reading said: When speaking to this Bill yesterday Sir Charles Latham expressed the opinion that it was entirely unnecessary as all the required powers for the alteration of the brands register were already contained in the principal Act. As I do not want members to think that the department which I administer prepares legislation which is unnecessary, I took the trouble to find out what the exact position was. I do not intend to go through all the minutes that were sent to the Crown Law Department, but that department was asked what powers were available under the Act to carry out this work. I will read now a portion of a minute from the Assistant Registrar of Brands to the Registrar of Brands which begins—

The opinion given by the Solicitor General has completely upset our plans, as this Branch has always interpreted Section 25 of the Brands Act as giving authority for the cancellation of the registration of a brand provided three months' notice is given by registered letter, and no reply is received to confirm that the brand is required by the owner or his estate.

It is suggested therefore, that an approach be made to have the Brands Act, 1904-1935, amended as follows:—

The minute then sets out the provisions that are contained in the Bill.

The **PRESIDENT**: I take it that the Honorary Minister is moving the third reading.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: Yes. I think it is within my province to make an explanation of this nature.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You can speak on the third reading.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: I thought it would be best to make that explanation to the House as the opinion of Sir Charles Latham was the same as that of the officers of my department until an opinion to the contrary was received from the Crown Law Department. I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (East) [4.40]: I am very glad to have that assurance from the Minister. If I have erred in company with the departmental officials, I do not mind. I felt satisfied that anybody reading the section would say that there was power to write to the people concerned and that, if no reply was received, action could be taken and an intimation published in the newspaper. There is often disagreement amongst lawyers in interpreting various laws. After reading the provisions of the Act, I believe that the departmental officers were very close to being right. If some further power is required, however, I am prepared to forget what I said.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: It is better to be sure.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT AMENDMENT.

—Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [4.43]: Seemingly the House is in the position of having to support a continuance of the Act, though members may feel a certain amount of reluctance in doing so. When this legislation originally came before us and we raised the limit from £50 to £100, the managers in conference agreed to a reduction to £50. I consider the amount too small, particularly in view of the conditions prevailing in the country and the difficulty people experience in securing requirements. If that provision were under consideration now, I would move for an increase to £100 in order to meet the enhanced cost of materials.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Such a concession would be abused in the metropolitan area.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I do not know that it would be. One cannot do very much for £50 under prevailing conditions. Of course

it is essential that the provision of homes should be paramount and should have priority over additions to existing houses.

The Housing Commission has a difficult task. I congratulate the Government upon the way it has grappled with the problem, for which it deserves considerable credit. There has been a good deal of criticism of the Commission and I for one was quite free in expressing my views. I was not altogether in favour of establishing a housing commission. I should have preferred the appointment of an outside body to control all materials, but Parliament in its wisdom decided otherwise. We know that a big department has necessarily had to be built up in order to permit of the duties imposed upon the Commission being carried out.

Western Australia as a whole has been fortunate in many respects. We have a fairly plentiful supply of timber and up-to-date firms undertaking the manufacture of roofing tiles, asbestos sheets and fibrous plaster boards, for which the requisite raw materials are available in the State. Thus, with the local manufacture of cement, bricks, fibrous plaster and asbestos sheets, the Housing Commission has been fortunately placed, especially as it has received the co-operation of the manufacturers of those materials. Timber supplies on the whole have been reasonably satisfactory, except that there has been a shortage of dry jarrah for joinery and other building requirements. There has certainly been a shortage of suitable material.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Are you speaking of your own district? That cannot be said of Kalgoorlie, where the conditions are bad.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I do not for a moment imply that the timber is of first-class quality. Timber is being used for buildings nowadays that in the pre-war years would have been condemned, but as regards the ordinary scantling used for floor and ceiling joists and roof supports, even though it contains flaws such as gum veins, it is capable of giving good service.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We cannot get enough even of that quality.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That applies throughout the State. I believe that the merchants and manufacturers have co-operated with the Housing Commission as far as possible in the distribution of supplies. Though

they could not give satisfaction to everyone, they have done reasonably well. Quite a large proportion of the timber we have been using is not first-class. Spot mills have been established in certain parts of the bush which had been previously over-run and were looked upon as being of no value and yet from which good useable timber is being obtained. If members were to drive behind some of the trucks hauling logs into the city along the Albany-highway, they would experience considerable difficulty in passing them comfortably.

Imported products constitute one of the greatest problems of the Housing Commission and those who are seeking homes. If the coalminers in the Eastern States would play their part equally with the people who are manufacturing in Western Australia, there would be much greater supplies of the necessary commodities available. We know that the production of galvanised iron, water piping, baths, sinks, basins and hardware generally depends entirely on the output of steel. Unfortunately—I say it with a great deal of regret—there has not been that co-operation from the Eastern States that would have been of such material benefit to Australia as a whole and particularly to those desiring to have homes erected.

I congratulate the Government on its endeavour to provide homes for small unit families. I have in the past advocated, and still advocate, that it should be possible for a man who has a block of land to be permitted to erect two rooms temporarily and live therein, thus saving the rent that he is throwing away week by week owing to his inability to obtain a permit to build a house for himself and his family. The Housing Commission has agreed to allow a man to erect a home provided it does not exceed seven squares; and he may even have two squares of verandah. That is quite all right; but, in the eyes of practical men, economically it is not a very wise provision.

The whole trouble is that this is one of the regulations promulgated by the Commission, and the Commission will not depart from it. I know a carpenter who has a block of land and is willing to build his own home upon it. His mates are agreeable to help him at week-ends. He has

applied for a permit but he is being pinned down to the seven squares. If he were allowed to use his practical commonsense, he would build the structure in such a way as to avoid having in the future to pull off portions of the roof and re-construct it at a later period. This regulation is one to which I have an objection. I know it is argued that if a man were allowed to build one of these places in accordance with his own ideas, it might never be finished. That would be his bad luck.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It might be other people's bad luck, too.

Hon. A. THOMSON: No. If a man wishes to build two rooms and takes a pride in the structure, giving evidence that he desires to improve his position by working at week-ends instead of devoting his time to the races, why should he not be allowed to do that?

Hon. E. H. Gray: He should be encouraged to do so.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I quite agree. The Housing Commission says it is up against the local authorities. Unfortunately it has laid down this provision that the house must be built in the way I have mentioned, and it will not allow any different course to be followed. That, to my mind, is entirely wrong. I was hoping that the Commission might see its way clear to alter that provision in the interests of a man who may say, "If you compel me to build this house the way you want it built, you will cause me a great deal of unnecessary expenditure later on when I want to extend the premises." At present the Commission simply says, "This is all we will allow you to do." If a man has four or five children who are not all of the same sex, he needs a little bit more space than does a man who has only one child. I draw attention to the position in the hope that the Minister may be able to effect some improvement. I have taken the trouble, and it has been a pleasure, to drive around the metropolitan area.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You will see plenty of new homes there.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have been astounded. I have come across groups of 40 to 50 houses, all new, and provided with roads, water supply, electricity and all the necessary conveniences. I do not object to

that. But when one thinks of the privileges and opportunities being extended to those who live in the metropolitan area and reflects upon what country people are able to obtain, to say the least of it—comparisons are somewhat odious. I may be regarded as a pessimist; but we find that, according to the Honorary Minister, something like 3,000 houses have been built in the metropolitan area.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I think it is 3,100.

Hon. A. THOMSON: And only 100 have been built in the country.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Disgraceful!

Hon. G. W. Miles: Not one has been built in the North-West.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is unfortunate. I hope the North-West will receive its quota. I want to draw attention to the fact that Perth is swelling like the proverbial frog, and one wonders how all these people are going to obtain sustenance. When one compares the progress made in country districts that are producing the wealth upon which the State is dependent—because it is the high price being obtained for our export commodities that is placing people in such a financial position—with what is happening in the metropolitan area, one is astounded. When the time comes for prices to decline, I wonder whether all those houses may meet the same fate as was experienced in Victoria a little over 50 years ago. I remember the bursting of the boom in Victoria when I was a boy. At that time, there were available hundreds of houses for people to live in without paying even a few shillings rent. I do not think things will ever again be as bad in Australia as they were then.

Hon. E. H. Gray: No, because Labour Governments have prevented that recurring.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That may be so. Provision has been made to tide people over by means of social service funds. The metropolitan area is receiving an unfair advantage over country districts, and I will draw attention to some of the disabilities suffered by those living outside the metropolitan area. We are told that when a permit is granted a man can build a home, but in fact that is only the first step, merely giving him a prior right to obtain the neces-

sary materials. A man in the metropolitan area has much more chance of obtaining his requirements than has one who resides in the country.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You have something there.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am pleased to know that bricks are not now controlled and that the Minister believes timber will soon be freed from control, but there is such a demand for timber of all kinds that I am doubtful whether the control can be lifted entirely. Supplies of scantling and so on have been fairly good, thanks to the spot mills and others who have helped to meet the demand. In certain country towns, bricks are being manufactured, but, unfortunately, they must be brought by rail to many other places.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They should be able to make good bricks at Katanning.

Hon. A. THOMSON: They can, but the difficulty is to get the necessary labour. Men say the work is too hard.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And they have no homes in which to live, even if they decide to go there and do that work.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is so. Builders in the metropolitan area can have bricks delivered to the building site. That applies also to cement, timber and most other building requirements. I do not know how the Housing Commission will be able to overcome that disadvantage to country districts. I doubt whether there is any hope of improving the position in that direction, but I do feel that more consideration should be extended to the rural areas. A No. 1 priority gives a man the right to build a house. He may want only half a dozen sheets of asbestos and a couple of bags of cement, a few bricks, and so on, and they are given a No. 3 priority. That is where the trouble begins. If he wishes to build in the country, the cement and asbestos must be railed from the city, and, while there may be plenty of No. 1 priority material to be railed, there may not be a large quantity of the No. 3 priority. I hope the Minister will take note of this and that it will be so arranged that people catering for this class of business in country towns may be able to obtain supplies. A firm in the city may find that there is sufficient material of No. 1 priority to fill half a truck and sufficient of No. 3 priority to fill more than

one truck. In those circumstances, it should be able to say, "We will send the No. 3 priority material with the No. 1."

I do not suggest that the supplying companies are not doing their best, but a man may want only two or three sheets of asbestos and yet be unable to get them. It might be even two or three months before there is sufficient material of that priority available to form a truckload. That may appear to be a slight disability, but it is a very real one to country residents. The Government has endeavoured to do a difficult job, and the Housing Commission has at last got into its swing. I hope the day is not far distant when, instead of having to extend this measure further, we may be able to get back to normality. The sooner that takes place the better, because the more controls we have the more expensive building becomes. Some people argue that without controls prices would rocket upwards, but I do not subscribe to that view.

Hon. E. M. Davies: What about the price of fish or pork, when controls were removed?

Hon. A. THOMSON: That may be. It depends on supply and demand.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That has not much to do with house building.

Hon. A. THOMSON: If some things become too expensive, people will not buy them. It may not be long before we will find people doing without things for which they are paying outrageous prices today. The Government has made an honest endeavour to do its job. When the Labour Government introduced this legislation, it experienced many initial difficulties and was faced with numerous problems. The present Government has also had to overcome many difficulties. I could criticise if I wished to do so, but I believe that in providing different types of houses the Government has made an honest effort to meet the difficulties with which our people are faced today. I support the second reading.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [5.10]: I support the Bill because this is essentially successful Labour legislation. Mr. Thomson is to be congratulated on his speech, and I subscribe to almost everything he said, particularly as to the requirements of rural districts. Many years ago, I lived in the country for a considerable time and I know all about

the difficulties with which people there are faced. Until the housing position in the rural areas is considerably improved, we cannot expect to attract many people to country towns and districts generally. Splendid bricks can be made in the Great Southern area, but it is impossible to expect workers to go there and make bricks if decent homes are not provided for them to live in. That fact, demonstrated by Mr. Thomson, merits the serious consideration of the Housing Commission, and I hope the Minister will agree to the request that that phase be investigated thoroughly and every possible assistance granted to aid in the building of houses in the country towns of this State.

No-one is satisfied with the present housing position, and every worker and member of Parliament recognises the evils emanating exclusively from the housing shortage. There are in the Fremantle district hundreds of cases of people suffering great hardships—particularly two-, three- or four-unit families—through living under crowded conditions. It seems almost impossible for the Housing Commission to do anything to assist smaller families, but something simply must be done. I think I said during last session that an honest endeavour should be made to utilise the large number of well-built old stone and brick houses that can be seen in the metropolitan area and which could easily be converted into flats—perhaps two flats each.

Almost all people who have homes are assisting by accommodating other members of their families, and in many instances difficulties arise. Sometimes the mother-in-law is blamed. No notice at all—of course—is taken of the father-in-law. Generally, the son-in-law blames the mother-in-law. This problem must be faced as it is impossible for the average young couple to live happily and amicably with older people. Their outlook on life is totally different, and the crowded conditions under which so many people are now forced to live are resulting in great hardship and harm, particularly to young children. How is it possible to rear healthy young Australians—physically and morally—if they are forced to live in homes surrounded by continual bickering, unhappiness and bad feeling between the families residing there?

Although I am now embarking on a dangerous proposition, I think an attempt should be made to attract the attention and co-operation of people who live in large stone

and brick houses of the type that will be in good condition in years to come when many modern buildings are falling to pieces. A special officer of the Housing Commission should be detailed to obtain the assistance and co-operation of local government bodies, building surveyors and health officers to arrange for special exemption for the owners of that class of building from the application of the building bylaws of the local authorities concerned. I admit that there would be some risk, and the position would have to be carefully administered and controlled. However, I should say that in the metropolitan area, particularly in the older parts of Perth and Fremantle, we would be able to obtain at least 2,000 homes each of which could be converted into two small flats, at least temporarily. In fact, I suggest that the owners should be given temporary permits for 12-monthly periods. If that course were adopted, material assistance would be rendered to the Housing Commission and also to thousands of unfortunate people who are more or less hopelessly waiting for homes.

Hon. G. Bennetts: But apparently the Housing Commission does not approve of flats.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I do not believe in flats, but I would certainly prefer to live in one rather than in a room 10ft. x 10ft.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Or have 20 people living in a four-roomed cottage.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: There are many instances of four-roomed houses in which two families or even three families are living, with five or six or more children. Today there are hundreds of greedy landlords and owners of houses who are prepared to allow tenants to put up with all kinds of inconveniences so long as they can thereby extract rents from those unfortunate people. To enforce the bylaws where elderly people, particularly in cases where the husbands are approaching the retiring age, desire to convert their homes into flats, is hardly satisfactory. Particularly is that so when we remember that under the regulations the walls in the kitchens and living rooms must be not less than 10ft. 6in. high, and it is impossible to construct a kitchenette on old-fashioned verandahs under such circumstances.

Then again, if a householder desires to convert his premises into two two-roomed

flats he must provide two bathrooms and two lavatories. Surely it should not be necessary for old couples, when seeking to make provision for two- or three-unit families, to insist upon provision of that description. We are practically in a worse position regarding housing this year than formerly. I do not blame anyone for it, but we should take steps to improve the situation, and the suggestion I make would have that effect. During the course of his remarks, Mr. Thomson spoke about the conditions in the rural areas and contrasted them with those applying in the metropolitan area, but I can assure him that there are still thousands of people living in terrible conditions, and something quite out of the ordinary will have to be done to meet the situation. I think that if the officers of the State Housing Commission were to approach the local authorities and owners of the larger types of houses, the proposition of converting their homes into a couple of flats under permits for 12 months would be gladly availed of. By the end of the year it might not be necessary to renew the permits.

I realise that many people would be anxious to take advantage of such a proposition, and the Housing Commission would have to scrutinise the applications carefully in order to ensure that there would be no abuse. I am certain that such a scheme would speed up building operations and make available many homes for small families. The greatest difficulty at present is to secure homes for two- and three-unit families. I hope the Housing Commission will give serious consideration to my suggestion. I have advanced it previously and I certainly believe it is worthy of consideration. I regard it as the duty of every public man who takes an interest in Western Australia and its citizens, to do everything possible to assist all the authorities concerned in the provision of homes for the people.

When he placed the Bill before members, the Honorary Minister spoke about decontrol of building material available in this State. The Government can keep the situation well in hand, because if abuses are observed in any direction it can reimpose control over the items concerned. As Mr. Thomson pointed out, the greatest difficulty arises in connection with building material

imported from the Eastern States. We all know there is a great shortage of porcelain, piping and other lines required for homes. The Bill should be passed with but little opposition and I trust that very shortly the building position will be greatly improved and everything possible done to assist the unfortunate people and the thousands of young Australians who are being adversely affected under existing conditions through not being able to live in decent homes. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [5.22]: We can all conceive that some of the wartime controls must be continued, yet this is one that in some respects I think the Government might have tried to modify rather than just re-enact the legislation as it is. I am quite prepared to concede that we cannot take away controls from the building trade altogether and thereby allow those who have abundant funds—there seem to be quite a few such people these days—the unrestricted use of the available supplies of building materials. There is justification, however, for expecting that the Government, insofar as country operations are concerned, might have given some favourable consideration to easing the restrictions upon the cheaper types of houses, which would provide all the accommodation that young couples would require. It seems to me, as I view the present position in the light of past experience, that the administration of the State Housing Commission today is more unsympathetic towards the country areas—

Hon. E. H. Gray: I would not say that.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE:—than that apparent previously. I do not mean to criticise the Housing Commission itself. On the other hand, I think the responsible Minister in charge might very well interest himself a little more in the operations of the State Housing Commission as they affect the country areas and the results that are being obtained. Whilst figures can be produced showing that the issuing of permits to the country is in about the same relationship as those issued in the metropolitan area, I think it will be found that the releases being provided for the country are nothing like those made available in the metropolitan area.

Certainly the rate of building outside the metropolitan area is about one-third of that applying in the metropolitan area, and there may be some satisfaction in quoting the number of permits issued in the country as against those issued in the metropolitan area, but that does not mean very much if the necessary releases of materials do not go with the permits. Under such circumstances, the issuing of permits is of little value. Recently a case was quoted to me with regard to the Gnowangerup district. The local road board applied to the Housing Commission for permits and releases for six houses. In Gnowangerup during the last three years, four houses have been built, and the people there have been told by the Housing Commission that the position at Gnowangerup is not as bad as that obtaining elsewhere. In the circumstances, no success has attended the representations to date.

It seems to me that the present time provides an ideal opportunity for the Government, particularly through the operations of the Housing Commission, to do something to promote decentralisation, about which we have heard so much from all Governments. Under existing conditions we have an increasing concentration of people in Perth, many of whom would be prepared to go to the country areas to work if they could secure a home there. On the other hand, we are not allowed to build a home in the country districts unless the people to occupy it are there and, as I have already said, even if the permits are made available the necessary releases of materials are not authorised. In consequence, very many people are hanging around the metropolitan area. They are simply stagnating here while the country is crying out for their services. Eventually, if those people remain in the metropolitan area long enough, they will get homes and that will merely serve to accentuate the position which we all deplore so very much.

When the Minister replies to the debate, I hope he will give us some information not only as to the permits issued in the country districts and their relationship to those provided in the metropolitan area, but will give some details regarding the actual building operations undertaken in the country areas and the releases of materials

that have been made. In a letter I received from the Gnowangerup Road Board, some figures have been provided showing that for the six months ended the 31st December, 1947, the houses built in the metropolitan area represented 66.19 per cent. and in the country districts 33.81 per cent. Those figures may not have been obtained directly from the Housing Commission but possibly came from the Government Statistician. However, I hope the Honorary Minister will give us a little information under that heading.

One matter that concerns me about the housing situation in the rural areas has regard to some materials that are in short supply only in the city and the Goldfields but not throughout the State. Possibly it also applies to the northern pastoral and agricultural areas. I have in mind particularly the supply of timber, of which there is ample in those parts that lie south of Perth. Although the timber required is readily available there, I understand that transport to the city represents the major difficulty. About three months ago I was assured on quite the best authority that the building advisory panel of the Housing Commission, which was appointed to advise the Minister, had recommended to him that, with the approval of local authorities, the Housing Commission should be prepared to give releases automatically for such building material as timber, a limited quantity of iron and asbestos sheeting, over which last item there would require to be control to some extent. At that time, of course, asbestos sheeting was in very short supply, but I understand the position in that respect is now considerably improved.

The idea was that material for up to 10 squares, or 1,000 square feet, should be made available and that by such means, at an over-all cost of £1,000, there would be sufficient material available for many years to meet the requirements of many people, particularly of young couples who are at present forced to live with their in-laws or to "pig-in" as best they can. Under such an arrangement, they would be able to secure at least sufficient material with which to start homes of their own. There are plenty of men who can build a reasonable home out of timber and asbestos; they may not be highly skilled tradesmen, but I know half a dozen men in my district who

are capable of doing that work. However, they will not be messed about with this permit and release business in connection with small jobs. They are not contractors in a big way of business.

If the Minister would but follow the advice of his advisory committee in that respect, I think the housing position in the country would be considerably improved. Although I support the Bill, I must say that I do so with ill-grace, as I realise there must be some control; but the manner in which the control is being exercised and its effect in the country, which could be far better served by some lightening of the control, are to me essentially unsatisfactory.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [5.31]: I support the Bill, although, as a country representative, I am deeply concerned about the shortage of supplies of timber in country districts. I speak of such parts of the State as Newdegate, Ravensthorpe, Esperance, Norseman, Southern Cross and the Eastern Goldfields. Early last year I had occasion to pay a visit to Newdegate, where a widow and her daughter were evicted from the home they were occupying. A court order was made against them and they were forced to live at an hotel at a cost which absorbed the wages of both. They did not have anything left to buy clothes. They were granted a permit to build after some time; but were unable, owing to the lack of transport, to get sufficient timber to erect a house. I do not know whether it is yet constructed. There was a carpenter in the district and he, with the assistance of other people, could have built the house for them at once.

Members can readily understand that the big timber merchants in the metropolitan area would rather supply timber to contractors who can take it away in their own vehicles, than load it on trucks and consign it by rail, and then make out invoices and wait for their money. That is the reason why country places are not receiving the supplies they should. On Monday night, while in Kalgoorlie, I was reading about the number of houses constructed during the past month in the metropolitan area and the number constructed in the country. The total was four to one in favour of the metropolitan area. We want decentralisation and, if we are to get it, we must ensure that goods and materials are supplied to

the country, where our wealth is being produced.

People in country districts must have homes. Most members in this Chamber have young families, although we are not all circumstanced in the same way. A young man decides to get married and do his duty to the State. How the devil can he get money to provide a home, when prices are as high as they are today, leaving out of account the shortage of materials? These young people are forced to live with their parents, or board, and, in order to get some comfort, they are forced into hotels, where they can talk privately. That is the ruination of our young people today. I should like to see all the States, or the Commonwealth, do something in the way of providing cheaper homes in country places such as Norseman, Southern Cross and our goldmining districts. We do not want elaborate homes. Homes costing about £500 would serve our purpose. The Kalgoorlie Municipal Council, of which I am a member, has the idea that we ought to give first priority to six- and seven-unit families. Some of the children in such families are now 16, 17 and 18 years of age and their parents had a chance before the war to secure a home.

I think, however, that we should first cater for our returned soldiers and the younger people who are now coming on. The position is becoming so acute on the Goldfields that, were I in the position of some of these young men, I would do what the pioneers on the Goldfields did. When we arrived there, we built shacks of canvas and saplings. These young people should take the law into their own hands and never mind a damn about what will happen.

— Members: Oh!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I contend that these young people are entitled to build their little cottages in order to have somewhere respectable to live. Take Norseman as an example; we find that people are transferred there. Some of them are in Government positions and when they arrive, there is no accommodation available for them. One of my sons, who is an inspector on the Commonwealth railways, was recently transferred from an outlying centre to Kalgoorlie. He, his wife and two children were forced to live in a hotel and the tariff he was paying was above what he was earning per week. I ask members if they consider that is right.

The States and the Commonwealth should combine in evolving a building system by which small places could be erected as homes for these young people, who are the ones we should consider. We need population, and what is better than the Australian-born? Australians have proved themselves to be outstanding on the battlefield and elsewhere, and yet we are bringing in Germans and other foreigners. I hope the people on the Goldfields and in the farming areas will get a better deal. They are further penalised owing to the shortage of labour, as workmen do not go to the country because accommodation is not available for them there.

Again, the contractors prefer to stay in the metropolitan area, where they get jobs at their own prices. On the Goldfields at present there are numerous jobs that require completion for the sake of the health of the town. For instance, there is the sanitary system for the High School and other schools. The conveniences at the High School have been condemned and, owing to the increased number of scholars, that work has become exceedingly urgent. I asked the municipal engineer whether the council could undertake the work, but he said, "I am sorry, we have only one mason and he is employed on erecting chimneys. The only carpenter we have is also engaged on other work." The local governing bodies are making an effort to provide homes, which are being constructed of secondhand materials. There are three bodies doing good work in this connection—the Boulder council, the Kalgoorlie council, and the 2-28th Battalion Association. I sincerely hope the Minister will look into the matter of assisting the Goldfields and the outback places I have mentioned with supplies of materials.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.42]: As it seems to me that the Bill will pass, I shall not delay the House very long, but there are one or two comments I wish to make on the measure. One could, of course, make out a good case in opposition to it. We all realise, however, it is essential that this legislation be enacted. I would like the Commission to deal a little more sympathetically with persons who offend against the Act. I am aware that probably I may be accused of making a plea for law-breakers. Persons who attempt to build homes for themselves, I think, should be

assisted in every way possible and not be penalised. Penalties provided by the Act have been the cause of putting people in gaol, people who are decent, honest citizens and who have never before offended against the law.

Only a week or so ago, I met a young man in the Terrace. I have known him all his life and he is now about 30 years of age. He said to me, "Excuse me, but I am in such a state that I must speak to someone." He then told me his tale. He is a small man and has not married and he goes into the country at various periods of the year to work. He likes to have his own little domicile in the metropolitan area and he attempted to build one.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Domicil.

HON. G. FRASER: Whichever form the Honorary Minister desires; I do not know the legal signification of the word. This man knew he could not get a permit, but by various ways and means he got materials and commenced to build his little shack. He had proceeded with the work for some time when, unfortunately, a building inspector came and told him to stop. He did not comply and was brought to court and fined about £15. That did not deter him. He went on with the building and was caught later and fined £85. The result was that he could not find the money and, for the first time in his life, he had to go to gaol. When I met him in the Terrace he had been released only about an hour or so, and, of course, was bubbling over. He said to me, "As you know, I have been a decent citizen all my life. I had no possibility of getting a permit because I am a single man. Because I erected a small domicile for myself, I have had to serve a term of imprisonment."

Whilst we could quote a number of somewhat similar cases, we realise that we are placing an obstacle in the way of people who want to help themselves. But even so, we have to support the Bill. I only make the plea that some consideration be given by the Commission to the reasons advanced by the people who commit offences against the Act.

HON. A. Thomson: They should not put a man in gaol for trying to build a room for himself.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is what happened. I suppose there are other cases. Many people can pay a fine, but this unfortunate man could not. I suggest the Commission take into consideration the circumstances of people who offend against the Act, and not just refer their files to the Crown Law Department because once they reach there, we merely get the legal position—an offence has been committed and a summons is then issued against the person concerned. Whilst I do not want to condone offences against the ordinary laws of the State, I think this is an exceptional law and special consideration should be given to people who offend against it.

I would like to be as optimistic as the Honorary Minister regarding the lifting of controls on timber, but I cannot for the life of me see why he should say it is hoped to lift those controls, because that sort of thing has a bad effect on the morale of the people. The poor devils who have been waiting and scrambling for homes for years, have been told through the Press that the position is improving to such an extent that the controls on timber will be lifted. What do we find the Housing Commission doing? Up to a few months ago a person who applied to build a weatherboard-asbestos home, after having satisfied the Commission that he was a suitable person for a permit, was notified that his home had been placed on the priority list. At one time it would remain there for five or six months, then the period went to eight months, and up to recently it has been 10 months. In the last month or so it has gone to 12 months.

The other day I mentioned that I had handled cases that were put on the priority list last December. If those people are fortunate they will get their permits in December of this year. I have also discovered that no permits, except a few two- and three-unit applications, have been issued for timber-framed houses for nearly three months. If that is the actual position, it is astounding to me that the Honorary Minister should say that the Government is thinking of lifting the control on timber very shortly. If the position is as bad as I have outlined, I would like to know who is going to wave the magic wand so that control on timber will be lifted.

Hon. A. Thomson: You do not have to wait seven months to get a permit if you have the material.

Hon. G. FRASER: No. The procedure is that the applicant has to satisfy the Commission that he is a deserving case and he is then given preliminary approval and put on the priority list. He then waits his turn, and the period of waiting on that priority list has gone from five to six months in the past, to nearly 12 months at present. Yet the Honorary Minister says that the Government will shortly be lifting control on timber. What I have said, and what the Honorary Minister has suggested do not dovetail.

The sorry part is that his announcement gives false hopes to large numbers of people who have been waiting for permits under the timber-framed section. I would rather see this accomplished and then the people told, because in that case no false hopes would be raised. This is a bad procedure, and it is not new, because the same thing happened some time ago over cement. We were told that a second kiln would be opened and that any amount of cement would be available. The second kiln was not opened, and the position became worse.

Hon. A. Thomson: That was due to the coal trouble.

Hon. G. FRASER: These announcements should not be made.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Can you prove that they raise false hopes? You are only giving your opinion.

Hon. G. FRASER: The Government announced that because of certain changes there would be an improvement. My point is that such an announcement gave false hopes to a large number of people. I would much prefer that no such announcements were made until such time as the Government achieved what it had in mind. It could then get all the glory possible, and no-one would be injured. I hope the Minister is right, and that the timber position will improve so that the control can be lifted. But if that is going to be the position in a short time, why has it deteriorated in the last few months?

One other matter I wish to put to the Housing Commission is that relating to the attitude it adopts when a person, who has made application for a permit for a home,

has been threatened with eviction. I cannot say I am satisfied with the method by which the Commission deals with these people. If a person is told by the owner that he wants the property back, in most cases he is served with the usual notice or order of 30 days. The tenants, having nowhere else to go, apply to the Commission for a home. Many of them apply under the rental scheme, and others under the permit-to-build section.

The attitude of the Commission is that it will do nothing until such time as the eviction order is granted. The tenant gets 30 days' notice, and at the expiration of that time is issued with an order to appear in court. The usual thing is that the court adjourns the case for two months. At the end of that time there may be a further adjournment, or an eviction order to take effect at the end of two or three months. But until such time as the court makes the actual eviction order, the Housing Commission takes no notice. I have suggested, and I do so again, that when a person is first served with his 30 days' notice, he should be put on the priority list. Finally, when the eviction case is heard, if the eviction is not granted, he could be removed from the list.

But because of the present attitude of the Commission, these people are placed in the position that they have to wait right up to the time of the granting of the eviction order, when they have only a month or two in which to get out of the premises, before they are put on the priority list, or the list for a home. If they got on the priority list at the time I suggest, it is possible their turn for a permit would come when the eviction order was made against them. There would then be only a temporary period of a month or two in which they would have to make whatever arrangements were necessary. The position is ridiculous. What happens at present is that an eviction order is granted, but the people concerned cannot make any private arrangements. The Government then has either to provide them with a home until their own can be built, or put them into one of the camps until other premises are available.

I do suggest to the Minister that he discuss this aspect with the Commission, so that consideration can be given to placing these people on the priority list at the time

they receive the 30 days' notice to quit. If that were done, a lot of hardship would be saved to a large number of people in this State. I hope the Bill will be passed, because I realise the necessity for it. I do not agree with Mr. Thomson about raising the £50 limit. I suppose a logical case could be made out to increase the amount from £50 to £100, but I can see so many dangers in it, that I shall not support it. Not a great deal of work can be done for £50, but if it were raised to £100, it would be possible for outbuildings—garages and buildings of that description; and thousands are wanted in the metropolitan area—to be erected without a permit, and that would retard the provision of a number of homes that could be built.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: There is a lot in that.

Hon. G. FRASER: Whilst I would like to see an increase to £100, there is that danger. I cannot support Mr. Thomson's suggestion.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South) [5.58]: I support the Bill, but with no great enthusiasm, because I am against restrictions of any sort, on principle. But I believe these restrictions are necessary evils. I have hopes that, because of the good work the Government has done during the period it has been in power, in the near future the need for these restrictions will be removed. I am only trying to add some weight to the appeal made by some other members for greater consideration for the inland areas and home builders. Permits have been issued for various jobs from time to time, but, as we know, a permit does not mean a thing until the actual release is granted.

I can quote an instance of a public building—part of a school in Boulder—where work in connection with a small shed out in the sun-scorched playground has been held up for over 12 months. The whole building is complete except for 200 square feet of flooring. Any day we can see kiddies climbing over the joists and bearers, and that has been going on for a year because it is not possible to obtain the necessary 200 square feet of flooring board. That is a disgrace.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is that in the school itself?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: It is a school shed in the playground. In the summertime on the Goldfields, it is an ordeal for any child to have to play in an open ground. The building is only 20ft. x 10ft.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We have no lawns there for the children.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is so. The building is still not ready for use by the children as a shelter shed, which is what it is intended to be.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I am surprised at them putting the joists down before the boards were laid.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: They must be put down so that the framework for the walls can be placed on them. The Premier and the Minister for Housing actually saw this state of affairs and were amazed when they were told that the building had been permitted to remain in that state for 12 months. Much good could be done by the Government if some sort of control could be exercised over local governing bodies as regards their bylaws in relation to building. Recently the Commissioner at Esperance introduced a new set of building regulations and bylaws. Esperance has been recognised as a working-man's or wage-earners' holiday resort. These people very often decide, after working for some years on the Goldfields to settle down at Esperance. It is the obvious place as it has probably the most salubrious climate in Australia and conforms more closely to the climate of the Mediterranean than any other part of the world.

The people of whom I am speaking usually have a few hundred pounds saved up and require to erect small cottages of three or four rooms. Their families, if they have them, are most probably grown up and the couples have only themselves to look after. The new regulations which have been brought down contain such provisions as these—

The building must be from five to six rooms. Each room must be a minimum of 12ft. by 12ft.

A minimum of 600 square feet for floor space, exclusive of verandahs.

A home of that size in the metropolitian area, constructed of weatherboard and asbestos, could probably be erected for about £1,000.

Hon. L. Craig: I do not believe it could.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If that is the case, and it cannot be erected for

£1,000, how much would it cost a working-man to erect the same type of house at Esperance?

Hon. G. Bennetts: It would cost £1,500.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: People in country areas should not be limited to building a big home when it is not needed. A person building at Esperance would naturally obtain his timber through the warehouse or timber yards at Kalgoorlie. The freight rates set out in the new schedule mean that goods will come to Kalgoorlie at a cost of plus 10 per cent. The builder puts that extra charge on the timber and the freight rates from Kalgoorlie to Esperance add another 20 per cent. Therefore, the timber which has been purchased 500 miles from Perth costs an extra 30 per cent. for freight.

Hon. L. Craig: Why do they not order it from Perth?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Possibly they could.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There would not be double handling if that were done.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: People in that area do not usually get the timber direct from the city because they are expected to deal through their local suppliers, when they can get it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: If we had the "Kybra" back on that run, we would be able to get it more easily.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I sighted an invoice the other day where a man had purchased two bags of cement. I will admit the date was quite old but those two bags of cement cost 9s. 6d. and the freight on them was 11s. 6d.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Each?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No, for the two. How are people to cope with such a freight rate as that? In connection with the regulations to which I referred, I also have a cutting from "The Kalgoorlie Miner," which reads as follows:—

The Commissioner submitted new bylaws, effective as from August 20, in regard to buildings in the Esperance ward. Prescribed fees will have to be paid and a scale plan of the proposed building will have to be approved. Copies of the new bylaws are available at the board's office, and a charge of 1s. is made for each copy. There is also a charge for each permit issued.

These regulations are in addition to the restrictions imposed by the Government. There are charges all round and the board imposes a charge of 2s. 6d. per square on the proposed building. That means if a person wishes to build a place of seven squares, it will cost—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It will cost 17s. 6d.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Thank you! My reason for urging that something should be done with a view to controlling some of these, what I consider irresponsible, regulations by local governing bodies, is the fact that in the Esperance area particularly there is a factory being built which later on will entail the employment of some 30 or 40 men. Those men will all want homes, but as things are in that district, they will be compelled to build homes of at least five or six rooms each and of at least seven squares; yet, they cannot get the material to build a house of that size. If they were permitted to build a small home of three or four rooms, which would be suitable for that district, it would come within the ambit of their ability to pay for it. If the Government would permit a house of that size to be built, then those 30 or 40 men could get their homes, but if they are compelled to build a house of at least five or six rooms, then only half of them would be able to build.

Hon. L. Craig: Why do they not adopt the idea of the expansible house?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I do not think they have seen them.

Hon. L. Craig: They could try by making an application for them.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: They do not want to build shacks, but on the other hand these workers do not want the district to be transformed from a wage-earner's health resort to a rich man's paradise. Therefore, it is time the Government took a hand in it to protect the people in the district so that they can build a holiday home as they have been able to do previously. I am speaking in support of the Bill in order that I can add weight to other members' speeches and urge that better consideration be given to people in rural areas. Country members are in the city from time to time and see quite a lot of building going on, apparently indiscriminately and without much trouble. I know that is not so, but the fact remains

we want the people in the country to get their homes, and we must make it easy for them to do so.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is the trouble.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I support the Bill.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East—in reply) [6.7]: I am pleased with the reception of the Bill and I have very little to say except to tell members who have raised certain questions that while I have not the information with me, I will make sure that their suggestions are passed on to the Housing Commission and, I trust, they will be given consideration. The point raised by Mr. Cunningham is a good one. I refer now to his remarks about the collaboration between the Housing Commission and local authorities. It is a valuable suggestion and I do not see why it should not be carried out.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Collaboration already exists between the Housing Commission and local authorities.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: I had not heard before that collaboration did not exist between the Housing Commission and local authorities, but apparently that is the position as far as Esperance is concerned. However, I am glad that Mr. Cunningham brought the matter up. I can assure him that I will convey his suggestion to the Housing Commission and I hope that consideration will be given to it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILLS (5)—FIRST READING.

- 1, New Tractors, Motor Vehicles and Fencing Materials Control.
- 2, Hospitals Act Amendment.
- 3, State Housing Act Amendment.
- 4, Northampton Lands Resumption.

Received from the Assembly.

5, Wheat Pool Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Honorary Minister for Agriculture.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—NEW TRACTORS, MOTOR VEHICLES AND FENCING MATERIALS CONTROL.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [7.30] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to exercise controls over the sale of new tractors, other motor vehicles, and fencing materials.

Hon. E. H. Gray: And new motor cars.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: Yes. I have said enough on other measures for the House to know that members of the Government, including myself, do not like controls, and I believe the Government has, by its action, proved that contention. I think, however, that certain controls are still necessary, and particularly over the distribution of tractors, which control is administered by an officer stationed at the Department of Agriculture.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Are agricultural tractors controlled at this minute?

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: At the moment they are not, and the Government appreciates the action of distributors in honouring what has been done and what has not yet by law been continued. That action is greatly appreciated because actually tractors are not controlled at the present moment.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They deserve credit for that.

Hon. L. Craig: Why cannot they go on doing that?

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: Because very few tractors have been available for distribution in the last week or two, and it has not mattered very much. It must be admitted that the supply of tractors today is far below the requirements of primary producers.

Hon. L. Craig: And will be, for years.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: I hope that will not be so. Before I sit down, I will give a few figures in regard to the tractor factory, which will operate in Western Australia and which, plus the tractors which are arriving from America and the smaller tractors coming from England, will overcome the unsatisfactory position. It is indeed desirable that the control of these tractors should be placed in the hands of one central authority only. I assure the House that once adequate supplies become available, controls will be removed. Of course, this measure will operate for only 12 months and if supplies come to hand within that period, then the Government will lift the control. No-one wants to control them, if the supply is available.

Hon. L. Craig: What we object to is the person who is going to control the situation.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: I will have something to say about that, too!

Hon. L. Craig: Not individually, of course.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: I have something here which relates to the person whom we seek to keep in his position. It has been said, and will be said again, that control of tractors has been discontinued in the Eastern States. I venture to say that the persons most concerned in the Eastern States—the farmers—were not consulted at all. There was no time to do what I have done, namely, to ascertain the views of those who most desire controls. On every occasion they were most emphatic that the present controls should be continued.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is, the farmers.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: Yes.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: I have spoken to some of them, and they told me they did not want control.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: I would venture to say that the hon. member has not interviewed as many farmers as I have done to ascertain their views. I have a letter here from the Farmers' Union which represents about 9,000 people who desire the present system to continue.

Hon. L. Craig: You asked them if they wanted control to remain over machines?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I did not ask them anything of the sort. I did not intend to read this letter at this stage, but I will do so now. It is not actually addressed to me insofar as it is quoting the minutes of the executive committee of the Farmers' Union. I did ring up the Farmers' Union and say, "What do you think of the proposed central control for tractors?" The reply is as follows:—

Further to our conversation of this morning, I have pleasure in enclosing an extract taken from the minutes of our general executive meeting on the 15th July last, from which you will gather it is the policy of this union to support the present system of tractor control.

Farm Machinery: Mr. Simpson moved the following motion from Jennacubbine Branch:—

"That all applications for rationed machinery be endorsed by a committee of three from the local branch of the Farmers' Union."

The minutes show that Mr. Anderson seconded the motion.

Hon. L. Craig: Good for him!

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, he is entitled to his opinion. To continue—

This was opposed by Mr. Ladyman on the ground that they had had enough control.

Mr. Noakes said a problem which arose in this position was that farm machinery was in short supply and, on the one hand, there was the farmer who had not got a tractor, and on the other, the farmer who was fairly well equipped but who wanted another tractor. The job of the Personal Service Officer was to do the best for union members, but he had to do the most for the one who needed it most. If a committee of the local branch were to endorse the application, then it would help the Personal Service Officer.

Mr. Lewis suggested that the words "made through Head Office" be inserted in the motion after "applications." This was accepted by the mover and seconder.

Mr. Ball said the machinery control was just a farce. There was no check on the applications.

That is the opinion of people who use this type of machinery. That is Mr. Ball's opinion and he is the president of the wool section of the Farmers' Union. The letter continues—

After more discussion the following amendment was accepted and carried as the motion:—

"That branches be advised that any application for rationed machinery made through Head Office would be strengthened if supported by the branch."

Mr. Anderson moved a motion from Watheroo Branch:—

"That we press for a committee of five instead of one, to deal with tractor allocations."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Kelsall on the understanding that the word "five" be altered to "three." Mr. Anderson agreed.

Now, this is the important part of the letter, Mr. President, and I do hope members will listen very attentively whilst I read it. It is as follows:—

However, most members were of the opinion that the present officer in charge of allocations was doing a splendid job, and the motion might be taken as a slight on his capacity. The motion was lost."

That is the man to whom Mr. Craig objects.

Hon. L. Craig: I do not object to him.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member referred to the person at present occupying the position.

Hon. L. Craig: I do not know him; I know nothing about him.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I would suggest that members take more notice of other people than of Mr. Craig. That is what the executive of the big Farmers' Union considers should be done in regard to tractor control.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Who owns the tractors?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The distributors until they are passed over to the farmer who obtains ownership after payment is made.

Hon. L. Craig: Who owns the wool?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think we are dealing with wool, and the hon. member cannot push me off the track with that subject.

Hon. H. L. Roche: He cannot pull the wool over your eyes.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No. The letter concludes—

I am also forwarding under separate cover a copy of the "Farmers' Weekly" wherein the Minute referred to is printed in full on page 10.

I checked up on that copy of the "Farmers' Weekly" and the minute contained in it. The executive of the Australia-wide R.S.L. also carried a motion desiring the continued control of tractors. In my wanderings through the wheat belt recently, I have asked quite a cross-section of many farmers what they think of the proposed control of the distribution of tractors by the present controller, Mr. Linton. On every occasion they expressed the fear that the farmer who had been a good customer for some considerable time or the man who could afford to go to Perth and sit on the doorstep, or get somebody to do it for him, would get more tractors and consideration than the man in the outback who could not go to Perth.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Has not that always been so?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is also the fear of the farmers, and my fear too, should the control be lifted. I do not suggest for one moment that the distributors would be willingly unfair, but I do not think they are in a position to exercise control. They have not got the information which the present controller has.

Hon. L. Craig: Where does he get his information from?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: From the farmers concerned.

Hon. L. Craig: That is, the man with the best story.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: What about the man putting up the best story to the distributors? It was stated to me that the distributors would be in a better position to control because they would use the information received from their local agents. What a position that would be! Can members imagine, say, the agent in York or the agent in Beverley getting away with all the tractors, and so on right through the whole piece? It is only natural that where an agent is also acting for a firm like Elder, Smith & Co. and has a large client who sells most of his sheep through the firm, he would wish to let that client have a tractor. I do not think there can be any argument about that.

Let me quote a case in my own experience that occurred two or three years ago. A certain firm in Perth for some reason or other obtained possession of a large number of Army trucks and I wanted one of them. In spite of representations made by the local agent and my coming to Perth and being promised a truck—it was the Army wireless type of vehicle and cheap—I was hoodwinked and fooled around for a number of weeks and did not get one.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Is that one of the firms distributing tractors?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: So far as I know, it is not. I do not think that the principals of firms would countenance that sort of thing, but the business is done through their sales managers. I believe that I had a good case because my truck was hardly worth the name, being something like 20 years old, but I claim that if I did not have a good case, I do not know who had. Had there been an independent controller, I venture to say that one of those trucks would have been allotted to me. It was not a question of money; I had the money ready. That is what would happen if we did not continue control of tractors. I did not have the influence or the local agent did not have the influence to get a truck for me.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Do you think you would have had greater influence with a Government controller?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I believe that the needs of applicants would have been considered by a Government official, whereas they were not considered by the firm I have referred to, which did not care a hang about the needs of the individual farmers. For the life of me, I cannot believe that many farmers were in worse case than I was at that time.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: All of them think that.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In order to give members an appreciation of the need for control, I shall quote some figures showing the number of applications for tractors and the number of tractors released in the past few years. Anyone desiring to purchase a tractor must fill in an application form setting out the make of machine required, the size

of his farm, the area he intends to cultivate, the number of stock carried, etc. This information is required to enable the officer in charge to determine the need of the applicant for a tractor of the particular power applied for. If a man has no power at all, he is more entitled to receive a tractor than a man who has power, whether it be an old tractor or horses.

I went to Mr. Linton long before I became associated with the Department of Agriculture, and I am quite sure that he is giving the greatest consideration to the needs of applicants. I do not claim that he has not made mistakes; he has, and I think he would admit it, but so far as I can gather, he has made very few mistakes. Having determined the need of an applicant for a tractor, it is next necessary for the applicant to establish his need for the particular type applied for. Some men can establish a need for perhaps only a small tractor while others require a very large one.

Some men, in order to ensure having plenty of power, might apply for a powerful machine capable of doing twice the work required. I have discussed this matter with Mr. Linton and he insists that the largest tractor shall go to the farmer who has twice as much ploughing to do as has another. It could happen that some farmers would be compelled to curtail their operations on account of their inability to obtain the type of tractor necessary to carry out their programmes. However, tractors are allotted in accordance with the power required by the applicants and the amount of power actually needed, rather than the amount of power they think they need. That is an important point.

All these factors are taken into consideration by the controller. It is unfortunate that these matters have to be taken into consideration. I should like to have a tractor half as strong again as I actually need because it would last longer, but that cannot be granted when there is such a shortage.

Hon. G. Bennetts: When making application, an applicant would give all that information on a form.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, and some information would be obtained at interviews. I do not say that farmers always tell the truth—

Hon. E. H. Gray: You would need a check on what a farmer said.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:—but I maintain that the present system is far and away better than any proposed system and is less open to abuse. Mr. Linton has no axe to grind. He is there for one purpose, namely, to see that every applicant gets as fair a deal as is possible. I have gone to him on occasion with what I thought was one of the best cases that could be put up by a parliamentary representative for a constituent, but he has shown me quite a number of more deserving cases. Apparently he takes no notice of members of Parliament; he has taken no notice of me. I have had quite a list of tractor needs by various people and he has asked me, "What do you want?" I have replied, "These people want tractors." Sometimes he has asked, "Where is the greatest need?" and I have pointed out the particular case and done nothing more.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I can certify to that because I have been there and had a similar experience.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Did the hon. member get a tractor?

Hon. G. Bennetts: No, but the controller showed me cases which he said were more deserving.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: And you agreed that they were?

Hon. G. Bennetts: Yes.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I know that Mr. Linton is not influenced by anyone if he thinks that a tale is not in accordance with the facts on the file.

Hon. G. Bennetts: And the priority he lays down is very fair.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. There are quite a number of tractors coming into Australia, but they are mostly small and I do not think their arrival will affect the position very much.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: They will all be sold, will they not?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, but they are small

machines and not suitable for large wheat farms. I do not condemn them as they are doing very useful work, but they will not fulfil the need for the cropping programme which I hope will be undertaken in this State during the next few years. All applications received are held and tabulated. If we removed this control, it would take months to retabulate all those requirements; in fact, I doubt if we could ever get the same information together again.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Applicants would not bother, anyhow.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think they would lose heart and the big men would get the lot.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Rubbish!

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is true.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You do not believe that. You are making a very bad case for what is a very good cause.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I cannot agree with the hon. member.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I have dealt with farm machinery just as much as you have and perhaps more than you have.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have had considerable experience during the last 18 months. One man said to me, "You ought to order Linton to give me a tractor." I replied, "I shall do no such thing." I could mention quite a few people who have approached me recently. One man told me the other day, "If control goes off, I shall get a tractor all right."

Hon. G. Bennetts: Money speaks all languages.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But not to all people.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not talking about money, but it is only natural that the best customer will get the best service. I have had similar experience in other directions. I have not been able to obtain field peas or rams of the type I wanted because the agent would only ration them out and I was not a good customer; I did not have enough lambs to send to market. That is a positive fact.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Was he the only man through whom you could buy rams?

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, rams of the type I wanted. If you knew as much about the business as you say you do, you would know that a farmer often requires rams and field peas of a certain type.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Honorary Minister must address the Chair.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I apologise. As I have stated, I was not able to get what I required. I do not blame such people altogether, but obviously if it could happen in one case, it could happen in another. I believe that everyone having any knowledge of business will agree that distributors in the city rely on some of their local agents, not all of them. With regard to wheel tractors, at present applications are held for 4,017 of all makes and of various powers. That is a large number.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Sometimes those orders are duplicated, are they not?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They are. I shall refer to that in a moment. I do not propose to mention any particular make of tractor for which applications are held, but for one make there are 415 applications, for another 1,329, for a third 861, for a fourth 358, and for a fifth 226. I am prepared to admit that the total might be somewhat above the actual number of tractors required, because applications are held from some people who have not made inquiries for a considerable time. Meanwhile they have probably bought a second-hand tractor or made other arrangements. It is reasonable, at any rate, to assume that they have secured a tractor.

An official estimate made recently is that there are at least 3,000 applications for tractors. I believe there would be even more than that if the farmers knew that the tractors were available. I am one of them. I know that tractors are not available and therefore I have not submitted an application and I am not game to ask the controller for one. I am now quoting my own experience but I know there are other cases. I could mention various neighbours who are

using tractors that ought not to be employed, but they know that it is useless to submit an application for another. They have asked me, "What chance is there of my getting a tractor?" and I have replied, "You have got a tractor." The retort has been, "What! A tractor 20 years old!" and I have replied, "Yes, because there are other people without tractors."

I believe that if tractors were available and people knew of it, there would be more applications. Although there are 3,000 applications, the total number supplied from the 1st July, 1943, to the 30th June, 1948, was 3,151, an average of 52 a month or about 600 a year. During the year ended June, 1946, 797 tractors were supplied, equal to 66 a month; for the year ended June 1947, 63 a month; and during the year ended June 1948, 72 a month. For the period from the 1st July, 1948 to the 15th August, 1948, 81 permits were granted. It is safe to say that 3,017 applications are held for wheeled tractors and there is an average of 67 a month available. Four years would be required to meet all the applications assuming no more were received during that period. Let us hope that the supply will increase. We must also remember that more tractors will wear out during that time. At the moment the position is almost hopeless.

Here is a country needing cultivation, while the world is crying out for food; but owing to the tractor shortage, we cannot carry out what we would like to do. We are missing a tremendous opportunity through lack of power. I am not going to say that the supply of tractors would be increased whether the control stays where it is or goes somewhere else. I am trying to indicate that some control is necessary. I have been referring to wheeled tractors. In addition, there are 1,117 applications held in Melbourne for the crawler type; and as the supply of those machines is no greater than the supply of the wheeled type, the same problem faces those who are charged with the distribution of crawler tractors as faces the distributors of the wheeled type. I know that quite a lot of pressure has been brought to bear on members by the distributors, but so far as I can see they have not put up a case except to use the hackneyed phrases "We want freedom. We are tired of this control."

If I thought for one moment that the continuation of control would prevent any distributor from selling a tractor or would interfere with his business in any way at all, I would not be introducing this Bill. I am very surprised that the distributors want to take over control. If they had it, they would have a lot of headaches just as the present controller gets them. Believe me, he has a lot! As a matter of fact he experienced a breakdown in health recently, though I am glad to say he is all right now. I do not know why the distributors want to have control. It is a puzzle to me. I know they are not unanimous on the matter. I have heard men in the trade say, "We do not want it."

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: We have heard farmers say the same thing.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Very few. I have taken a cross section of farmers and I believe I found only one man—he was in business in a big way and already had two tractors and desired a third—who wanted this control removed. That was because Mr. Linton would not give him another tractor; and he thinks that if control is removed he will get one.

Hon. H. K. Watson: How many tractor distributors have you heard say they do not want control?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not prepared to give an answer to that. I do not want to embarrass anybody, but I will say this: The first person who rang me about this matter said, "I hope you are going to continue the control of tractors." Five days afterwards he changed his mind, and over the telephone he said, "I hope tractor control will be relinquished." I asked him why he had altered his views, and he said, "We have had a meeting and have decided that we want to take on control ourselves." I am not prepared to mention the names of the people who have spoken to me, but I will give them to Mr. Watson privately if he wishes.

The man to whom I have referred is a big man in the game. I do not think that distributors as a whole—that is to say, the principals—would be out to do anything but a fair thing, but the principals of these businesses do not attend to such matters, which are left to other people. I am not going to say they are all dishonest or care-

less. I do not suggest that for a moment. But it is only natural that their friends will receive a better go than other people.

Hon. E. H. Gray: The big customer would get the best deal.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

Hon. H. K. Watson: May I inquire whether you are going to refer to industrial tractors? Up to date you have been dealing entirely with agricultural tractors. What is the case for industrial tractors?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Control of those will be taken from the Commonwealth very shortly, if it has not already been taken.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Who wants that control? Why is control necessary?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Control may be necessary over industrial tractors also. I am dealing principally with agricultural tractors. I think control might be very desirable over industrial tractors; but they are of a different type and do not come into competition with tractors used on farms. Motor vehicle control was handed to New South Wales. That State thought that the cost of administration of control would be too great; and the Commonwealth was so concerned about the matter that it has resumed control. That shows that the Commonwealth Government considers some sort of control should be exercised in that respect.

With regard to motor vehicles, at the end of June there were 8,639 applications for 3,168 commercial vehicles and 5,471 motor-cars. Permits over the past year have been issued at an average rate of 112 commercial vehicles a month as against 293 applications, while motorcar permits have totalled 319 as against 642 applications. I can well imagine that if the control, which is now in the hands of the Commonwealth, were removed, the people in the city would receive most of the cars. I do not think there can be any argument about that at all. The men outback would not be in the race.

Hon. H. Hearn: Why?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not going to answer that, because it is obvious that the man who

is on the spot would have a far greater chance of getting a motorcar than would the man at Muckinbudin or some other far-away place. It is only natural.

Hon. H. Hearn: It is unnatural. The business man takes a long view of his business.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It will take 28 months to catch up with the applications for commercial vehicles and 17 months to supply all the motorcars required, providing there are no more applications. When one notes these figures, which are authentic, one realises that some sort of control is necessary.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Does that refer to all cars?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The control of small cars of under 12 horse power has been lifted.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is covered in this Bill, is it not?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think all these applications need to be in the hands of one authority before a proper allocation can be made. Suppose a man at Carnarvon wants a motorcar and another man at Albany also requires one. Naturally the agent at Carnarvon would say he had made out a good case, and the agent at Albany would say the same. How could the matter be decided? If a central authority had all the facts and figures, he would be in a far better position to allocate the vehicle.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They have made a good job of it up to date.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: A very good job indeed. Mr. Ferguson has made mistakes, but they have been honest ones. I know the worry he has undergone, just the same as has Mr. Linton. I know people who think they have been very badly treated indeed. They have come to me and asked why they have not got this or that. I have told them, "Because you did not have a case as good as the next man's." These controllers have a thankless task, but they have this consolation: they know they are doing an honest job to the best of their ability.

I want to speak briefly of wire, wire products, and steel fencing posts. The supply of these commodities is hopelessly below de-

mand, and there is just as much need for control over their distribution as is necessary in the case of motor vehicles. I know from my own journeyings in the bush of the hopeless position of some farmers in the north-eastern wheat belt, Southern Cross and other places, because they cannot obtain plentiful supplies of netting to keep emus away. They have asked for some sort of control because they think they will then obtain fair treatment, which they do not receive today. Some men are able to exert influence because control of wire netting does not exist. If they have a friend in the city they have far more chance of obtaining supplies of wire netting and ring-lock netting than have others less fortunately placed.

With regard to wire and wire netting, I know one farmer who placed an order in 1941 and has not received anything yet. A farmer will go to three or four different firms and submit an order; and if there is no co-ordinating authority, what is to prevent each of the firms giving him a quota? If there were a co-ordinating authority that could not happen. I have information concerning one farmer who went to five different firms and eventually three supplied him. What about a man at Wialki? He may not be in a position to go to five different firms. The most he may be able to do is to get the local store-keeper or agent to contact one firm.

It is said that we are getting our quota here; but we are not, because very little imported wire netting is coming to the State. We are short of wire rods and the necessary material to meet requirements. Before the war there was imported into this State 36,000 cwt of plain wire, 1,000 cwt of barbed wire and 15,000 cwt of netting. In 1947-48 the imports dropped to 248 cwt of plain wire, 459 cwt of barbed wire and 236 cwt of netting. When I was in New South Wales I made inquiries from and representations to the two manufacturing firms with a view to obtaining supplies and found that one of them was not operating on account of lack of manpower. Tremendous quantities of wire netting used to come to this State from Rylands and Lysaghts before the war; but only small quantities are now received.

Again I say there is urgent need for a central authority to distribute the quantities of those materials that are available and to explore further possibilities of importing wire and wire netting. Representa-

tions are now being made to Sweden for wire netting and though the price will be terrific I believe the farmers will pay it. The cost will be about 150 per cent. more than was paid before the war. I think we will get at least a trial shipment and we may later be able to secure more, though it is not everyone who will be in a position to pay such a high price.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Can you get plain wire?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Inquiries were not made for plain wire, but we will take that question up. The people concerned did not consider plain wire.

Hon. H. Tuckey: We must have it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Hundreds of thousands of miles of it are needed in the North.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. All the wire we can now import would not go very far in the North-West. It will take years to catch up the lag, but I am concerned at the moment to see that the person with the greatest need receives supplies.

Hon. H. K. Watson: If the Bill is passed, the Government will get most of what is available, and the farmers very little.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: What makes the hon. member think that? The Government is getting this wire for the farmers, and they will receive it, if it is obtained, at cost price. The Government does not want to set up a trading concern, but believes that something must be done to remedy the present deplorable position. If farmers are prepared to pay as much as £5 16s. or £5 18s. for 100 yards of netting, that is their business, and I believe they will pay it, particularly in view of the deduction allowed for taxation purposes.

Hon. H. L. Roche: It is a case of needs must, at all events.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is so. I, for one, would like to get some netting, even at that price. I do not quite understand why the distributors desire to get control. Cabinet decided the other day that if this control is continued the controller will co-operate with the distributors in all manner of distribution. Mr. Abbott and I hope soon to have a conference with the distributors and

endeavour to come to some arrangement with them. The controller co-operates now, to some extent, but we are prepared to co-operate extensively with the distributors. This measure is to operate for 12 months only and I believe that, with the output of tractors from the local factory, perhaps at the end of 12 months there will be no further need for this legislation.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Will there be plenty of wire available by then?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, I think it will take years to catch up on the lag.

Hon. H. Hearn: Will there be years of control of wire?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Government desires to remove controls at the earliest possible moment. The Bill, as a Bill, does not provide for the control of anything. The Minister is to make the first order when he considers that tractor control is necessary, and when it is considered that wire netting, wire products or motor vehicles should be controlled, the order must be made by the Governor-in-Council. If the Bill is passed one of my first jobs will be to say that tractor control is necessary. I do not know what the Governor-in-Council will say as to the other matters, but I am quite certain what I will have to say regarding tractors. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban) [8.20]: I rise, Sir, with considerable reluctance to speak on this Bill. The reason for my reluctance is that during the last general election campaign, during the campaign in relation to the biennial election for the Legislative Council and during the referendum campaign I spoke from many platforms, in both the metropolitan area and the country, and at all times advocated what I believed to be the Government's policy—the early decontrol of as many items as possible.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I am therefore extremely disappointed to find a Bill, such as is now before the House, being presented by the Government that I support, in spite of my advocacy and that of the Government for decontrol rather than re-insti-

tution of controls that have ceased to exist. The history of the control of fencing materials is that almost at the beginning of the war Commonwealth control was established over the distribution of fencing wire and fencing materials. In a very little while the Commonwealth Government admitted that that control was not workable, and it was lifted. For some years now wire fencing materials have been distributed by the manufacturers or their agents.

Hon. H. L. Roche: And who has been getting the wire?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: The farmers. I believe there is little genuine complaint about the distribution of wire. Of course there must be complaints about the distribution of any controlled line. No such line can be distributed without complaints from disappointed persons who fail to receive what they have applied for.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Everywhere I go I find that the deserving cases cannot get wire.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: In reply to that interjection, I may say that is the story told by every disappointed applicant. The Honorary Minister said he had applied for an Army vehicle, and because he was unable to get it he was a disappointed man.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: And genuinely so.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Every person who fails to get what he applies for is genuinely disappointed. Perhaps the person who received the vehicle that the Honorary Minister failed to get had a greater priority, in the estimation of the distributor, than that of the Honorary Minister.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Most of those vehicles stayed in the city.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: The Honorary Minister quoted a great number of figures regarding the amount of fencing wire available, and the demand for it. Members must realise that this Bill, if it becomes an Act, will not produce one yard more of fencing material. All it will do will be to centralise the control in a Government department instead of allowing the distribution to be made by people who have been distributing that material for many years. The supply of tractors was one of the features of the Honorary Minister's argument, and again, this Bill will not increase the supply of tractors.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I made that very plain.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I quite realise that, and I wish also to make this plain: Information which I think has been available to all members of this House indicates that while the number of Fordson Major tractors imported into the Commonwealth in 1948 from dollar countries was, or will be, 3,000 by the 31st December, it is anticipated that, in the year 1949, 6,000 will be imported from sterling countries. Every tractor importer has hopes of increasing his importation of tractors from whatever source he previously obtained them. In addition we shall have—I am informed—a large number of tractors available in this State from Chamberlain Industries Limited.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: When?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Mr. Chamberlain told me, as late as last Thursday week, that he hoped they would be in production early in 1949.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: How many?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I do not know, but whatever number is produced will be in excess of the number available to tractor users during 1948.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I know how many he hopes to produce.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: We have read that 1,000 are to be produced in Victoria before January.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: What kind of tractor are they?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I was disappointed to hear the slighting references made by the Honorary Minister to the distributors of tractors and their country agents. He said that they would supply tractors first to their best customers.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: That is only natural.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: The firms that are distributing tractors have been distributing them from the inception of power farming. Some of them have been distributing merchandise for a longer time than the Honorary Minister has been on this earth.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Merchandise that was in plentiful supply!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Those firms have built up a reputation for fair dealing and honest trading, of which they are extremely jealous. The greatest asset of any commercial undertaking is its goodwill, which is built up only by fair dealing with its clients. No firm will jeopardise its goodwill by unfairly treating either customers or potential customers. I have been associated with the motor industry of this State for the past 30 odd years and I know the executives of every one of these firms. I also know most of the country agents and I say emphatically that neither distributors nor country agents are going to depart from sound practices in the conduct of their business, because they do not wish to jeopardise their goodwill.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I made no reflection on the distributors or their agents, and said they had done the best they could.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Their best would be a great deal better than distribution by a Government official. Goodwill is the most valuable possible asset of any business house. As an illustration, General Motors of U.S.A. recently acquired the whole of the assets of the Dodge-Chrysler Corporation. They paid 225,000,000 dollars for the tangible assets of that corporation. Those tangible assets would include land, building, plant, machinery and so on. In addition, the concern paid for the goodwill no less than 250,000,000 dollars. That is the value placed upon goodwill. Firms that are distributing tractors are not going to spoil the goodwill that they have built up over the last 50 years or so merely for the sake of the sale of a tractor. The distributors will work along sound lines and give the tractor to the man in the greatest need of it. These people want to be in business 50 years hence—much longer than this legislation will be in existence.

During the course of his remarks the Honorary Minister admitted that the present Government controller had made mistakes. Of course he has, and so will the tractor distributors make mistakes. At the same time it is more in the interests of the tractor distributors to avoid mistakes than it is for the Government controller to avoid making them. He has no goodwill at stake.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Why should he not?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: The mistakes of the Government officer do not re-act against him, but the mistakes of the tractor distributors would do so.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Why would they not react against the Government officer?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Because, according to the Bill, his job will last only for 15 months. The point must not be overlooked that tractors have been decontrolled since the 31st July last, so that any machines of that type sold during the last six or seven weeks have been disposed of by the distributors quite outside of any control. Then again, the tractor distributors have given an undertaking that in the event of the control being returned to them—that is to say, if the Bill is defeated—they will set up an independent office and honour all the priorities established by Mr. Linton, and further that they will retain that independent office with a view to avoiding duplications and to ensure the equitable distribution of tractors. This office will be entirely independent and will collate information that will be passed on to the distributors.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Do you believe that?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I believe that these men are honest in making that statement.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: But you say these people do not believe in control!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: But this will be independent control that will be at their own expense.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: But it is still control.

Hon. H. Hearn: But it is their own business, controlled by themselves.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Mr. Dimmitt will proceed.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I consider that the merchant who has been distributing merchandise for 50 years can certainly distribute it better than can a Government controller who has been doing it for a few years only.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: That was quite easy when there was plenty of merchandise available, but there is a shortage now.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I admit that there is a shortage today, but that does not disqualify the tractor distributor from being a better man to undertake this work than any Government officer. I still believe that his 50 years' experience will stand the former in good stead and will enable him to do a better job than any Government instrumentality.

Hon. G. Bennetts: But he will be a "Yes" man and do as he is told by the big firms.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I am sorry that I apparently have not made it clear to Mr. Bennetts that these firms have a very high standard of ethics.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: We admit that.

Hon. L. Craig: Mr. Bennetts had better stick to his Kalgoorlie council.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Quite apart from the observation of ethical standards, it pays the firms to do so.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: No-one said anything to the contrary.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: It pays them in pounds, shillings and pence to be fair, equitable and just in their treatment of their clients, and they will not dream of giving a tractor to "A" when the needs of "B" are greater. They will not do so because it will not be even in their own financial interests, quite apart from any consideration of ethics.

Hon. G. Fraser: But would they take the trouble to find out?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Yes, and they have a better organisation for that purpose than has any Government instrumentality.

Hon. G. Bennetts: But can you tell me—

The PRESIDENT: Order! Will the hon. member allow Mr. Dimmitt to proceed?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: The firms have their agencies in the different districts and some of those agents have represented them for many years. They are not going to do anything to jeopardise their own interests by being unfair in their treatment of clients. It does not take long in a country township to undermine a business if unfairness is displayed.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: What about competition between the agents in the various towns? How will you get over that? Suppose the agent in Northam wants 20 tractors and the agent at Katanning orders 20 tractors. How will they work that out?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I should say they would send a representative down to the towns to make a complete investigation. These firms have travellers and they are sent all over the place. It would take only a few hours by motorcar. On the other hand, I suggest that no government instrumentality would provide a motorcar to send an officer to carry out such investigation. The only way the Government controller judges is to hear the story told by the applicant. Is there any other way?

Hon. E. H. Gray: Yes.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Would the firm send a man to Woop-Woop to investigate such a claim? Of course it would not.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: If ten tractors were ordered from one place and ten from another place, from the very standpoint of selfish interests the firms would supply where there was the greatest need.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Where the money was the greatest.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Money does not count in the scheme of things these days because the farmers have the cash with which to pay for the tractors and do not require terms.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: What about the man who cannot pay cash? Will he be in the race at all?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Of course he will be.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Will Mr. Dimmitt please resume his seat? I did my best to give the Honorary Minister every opportunity to place the Bill before members and I hope similar consideration will be extended by the Honorary Minister to every other speaker. Mr. Dimmitt may proceed.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: There is another point. Every business house is anxious to extend its clientele and to develop its goodwill. No Government instrumentality is concerned with extending the State's clientele. Because the tractor distributor is anxious to maintain his clientele, he will do the right thing by his potential customer. There is no question about that at all. In the course of his speech, the Honorary Minister said that the greatest argument he had heard advanced was the hackneyed statement that private control was better

than Government control. It seems to me that he used the equally hackneyed statement when he retorted that Government control is better than private control.

Leaving the question of tractors I shall deal with the question of motor vehicles. The Bill seeks to control all motor vehicles with the exception of trucks. Some time ago the Commonwealth Government released from control all motor vehicles of 12 horse power or less. I cannot understand why the State Government seeks to re-impose control over a type of motor vehicle that has been sold freely and without any control for some time. On the other hand, it seeks to impose wide sweeping control over all motor vehicles, regardless of horse power. Here we have a peculiar set of circumstances under the Bill. Any buyer of a motor vehicle up to 12 horse power will go to the State instrumentality to get the necessary permit or release, whereas if he wishes to purchase one of more than 12 horse power he must approach a Commonwealth instrumentality. Could there be anything more ridiculous than such a suggestion of divided control?

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: You are wrong there. That is not intended at all. Will you read Subclause (6) of Clause 7?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I assume that the Commonwealth provisions will take precedence over the State provisions and that will apply to vehicles of more than 12 horse power.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: The Bill does not control anything—as a Bill.

Hon. L. Craig: That is quite right.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I am perfectly convinced that in the hands of people who have been distributing this particular type of machine for years, potential customers will receive a fair deal. It is in the interests of the distributors themselves to ensure that the distribution is fairly carried out. Sound business principles will be followed in dealing with that distribution and the man who is in the greatest need will have priority over someone else whose needs are less. For the reasons I have advanced, it is my intention to vote against the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. H. L. Roche, debate adjourned.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [8.43]: It may be of interest to members who know just what happened when the provision included in the Bill was put in an Act passed in 1922 or 1923. At that period it was necessary that two Bills to amend the Factories and Shops Act should be introduced. The first Bill contained this particular provision, which was passed by both Houses. When it went to the Governor, His Excellency refused his assent and returned the Bill to Parliament for amendment. I think that is the only time in the history of the State that such a course was adopted. An understanding was arrived at so that the Bill was passed again with this provision deleted, the Premier promising that he would introduce another Bill which would include the clause in dispute. The idea was that after the legislation was passed, it would be sent to England for the King's assent. Finally that assent was given and the Bill became law.

I believe the contention raised at the time was that such a measure was likely to cause international complications and there was a danger that if such an Act found a place on the statute book there might be repercussions. However, we find today that the provision still remains and this is the first time since 1922 or 1923 that any attempt has been made to amend it. While it might appear to be a minor matter, with Mr. Davies I regard it as very dangerous. It sets out to provide for certain persons of an Asiatic race who may be a natural-born British subject domiciled in this State or with dependants of any such person. That might seem to be a minor matter and, on the numbers quoted by the Honorary Minister, one would agree that it is. But we have often had small Bills, innocent in appearance, presented to us that go much deeper. Any ordinary person reading this Bill would not feel greatly concerned, but I am anxious about it, as I know the history of the provision inserted in the parent Act and therefore feel that I should play safe.

I am inclined to oppose the second reading, because there must have been some very

sound reason for the provision in the parent Act. That amendment was considered to be so important that it had to be referred to England for the King's assent. We should not treat this matter lightly, as I am aware of the experience that other countries have had owing to the influx of Asiatics. While it may be said that the measure applies merely to Asiatics who are natural-born British subjects, it cannot be said that the danger is small.

Last night Mr. Davies raised a point about the Japanese. What he said is quite possible. I, for one, am not prepared to confer upon natural-born Asiatics all the privileges enjoyed by Australians. In my opinion, there is serious danger of infiltration by them.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Where from?

HON. G. FRASER: Under our immigration law, they can be admitted to the North. They would then populate that district and that is how the infiltration could start. The Minister shakes his head; I admit, on perusing the Bill, that not a very large number of Asiatics will benefit by the Bill. However, there is the danger which I have pointed out.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: Not under this Bill.

HON. G. FRASER: The Minister says not.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: No. Read the Bill.

HON. G. FRASER: My contention is that the danger is serious. I am not prepared to cast a vote that will leave the way open for infiltration of that description. I thought, on account of the smallness of the number of people concerned, that I would vote for the second reading; but, after having delved deeper into the matter, I shall play safe and vote against it.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East—in reply) [8.49]: I am surprised at the attitude adopted by Mr. Fraser, because nearly always he does understand the contents of a Bill. I am afraid he does not understand the present measure. He spoke about being afraid of the Japanese coming into Australia. After all, that is a matter for Commonwealth control. In any case, it could not apply to such Japanese.

Hon. G. Fraser: There are other Asiatics.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It would not apply to such Asiatics. The proviso states that the section shall not apply to any person of the Asiatic race who is a natural-born British subject and whose domicile is in the State on the day of the commencement of the Factories and Shops Act Amendment Act, 1948.

Hon. G. Fraser: But a similar amendment was passed in 1922, and this is 1948!

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: But the Bill applies to any Asiatic who comes into the State after the measure becomes law.

Hon. G. Fraser: But in 1960 the Act may be similarly amended.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not fearful of that.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Does the Bill exclude descendants of any Asiatics?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

Hon. G. Fraser: The Bill does not limit them to 1948.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It does. The Bill deals only with Asiatics now in the State and their descendants. Much has been said about the Japanese. I tried to ascertain the number of Japanese who would come under the Bill and, as far as I could find out—I do not want to mislead the House—there was none. There are eight Japanese in Western Australia, but the Bill does not refer to them, as they are not domiciled here and not natural-born. We were asked by the Indian Government to introduce this Bill in order to cover a few Indians living in Western Australia.

Hon. G. Fraser: The Russian Government might ask us to do something.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Indians referred to have been here for a long time. I wonder how Mr. Fraser would feel if he lived in India and his sons were not allowed to have a similar privilege. The other States have passed similar legislation and we want to bring this State into line with them.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Is the legislation in force in all the other States?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

Hon. G. Fraser: The fact that they made a mistake is no reason why we should make one.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I can see no danger at all in passing the Bill.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: What about the Broome Japanese? They are Australian-born.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Bill does not apply to them. We have got off the track in speaking about Japanese. There is none here to whom the measure would apply. As for infiltration by Japanese, that is a matter for the Commonwealth to control. I have nothing more to add.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Sections 26 and 135:

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I move an amendment—

That at the end of paragraph (2) of the proviso, the following words be added: "Nothing in these sections shall apply to a person of the Japanese race or to any descendant of such person."

This is a safeguard which the Committee should provide. There is a danger of Japanese infiltrating, and they and their descendants would not, if domiciled here, be covered by the Bill. Under the parent Act, Asiatics must be registered and so the authorities would know their whereabouts.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Mr. Davies still does not understand the Bill, which applies only to Asiatics already domiciled in Western Australia and their descendants. If at some future date 10,000 Japanese were allowed to enter Australia and they had 50,000 descendants, they and their descendants still would not come within the provisions of this Bill.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Play safe!

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Bill is safe. I oppose the amendment.

Hon. G. FRASER: The Minister seems to have the idea that we do not understand the Bill applies only to those Asiatics who are in Western Australia at the time the Bill comes into force. We quite understand that.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I beg your pardon. I thought you did not.

Hon. G. FRASER: I have already pointed out that the Act might be amended again in the future in the same way as it was amended in 1922. Who can say that there will not be another amendment in 10 or 15 years? That is what we want to make sure of.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Even suppose 10,000 Japanese were admitted into Australia, does Mr. Fraser think that any Government, of what political colour soever, would bring down an amending Bill such as this? I do not think any Government would. There is nothing to prevent the Act from being amended again in a few years' time.

Hon. G. Fraser: Make it safe now.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The amendment will mean that Sections 26 and 135 of the Act will not apply to the Japanese.

Hon. G. Fraser: I admit there is a danger in connection with the point made by Mr. Watson.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I think that instead of the word "sections" Mr. Davies should have used the word "proviso." I do not think his amendment will attain the object he desires. The explanation given by the Honorary Minister should satisfy him; it certainly satisfies me.

Hon. G. Fraser: I think you are right. I think the word "proviso" should have been used.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—RAILWAY (BROWN HILL LOOP KALGOORLIE-GNUMBALLA LAKE) DISCONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [9.5] in moving the second reading said:

This short Bill, which will be of interest to the Goldfields members, writes the last chapter in the official history of the Brown Hill loop railway line. Parliament approved in 1900 of the construction of a loop line of railway traversing the Brown Hill area and connecting the Hannan-street station on the Kalgoorlie-Gnumballa Lake line with the Kamballie station on the same line. The loop which was four miles 43 chains in length, was opened for traffic on the 17th March, 1902, and was last used for train service in August, 1930.

As there was a serious shortage of 60-lb. rails, a section of the loop, comprising 76 chains from Kalgoorlie to Hannan-street was taken up in October, 1935, and the rails used in the Hulongine deviation. A further section was lifted last year and there is now only one mile 34 chains of line remaining. This is at the Kamballie end of the loop and since the 6th July, 1936, has been used by Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie Ltd., to whom it is leased under a siding agreement.

Hon. G. Bennetts: All the oil for the mines is carted there.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The consent of Parliament is required to formally close the line and for its cost to be no longer shown in the accounts prepared under Part IV. of the Government Railways Act.

When the Bill is assented to, the capital cost of the line, less the value of material recovered, will be written out of railway capital, as provided by Section 2 of the State Transport Co-ordination Act, and a statistical adjustment made in the Public Accounts. The passing of the Bill will not affect the validity of the siding agreement with Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie Ltd., and the indemnification clauses of the agreement will fully protect the Commissioner of Railways.

It is not feasible, or necessary, to exclude from this Bill that section of the line held on lease by Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie Ltd. If this were done a further Bill would be necessary, on the termination of the lease, to formally close the remaining section and to write off the proportion of capital cost remaining in railways accounts. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [9.8]: I am sorry to learn that this line is to be taken up, because I saw the first train run on it. Also, I was a ticket collector there 30 odd years ago, and at that time there was a big population in the district and also where I lived at Trafalgar. The part of the line still being operated is used for the cartage of oil from Esperance to the Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie Ltd. It is also used for the cartage of cyanide and other mining materials. I do not know whether the mining companies would appreciate this line going out of existence. They might be prepared to purchase it, because it is a valuable asset to them.

The siding that is used by the company has a roadway into it for motor vehicles. That road passes over big hills. I do not know whether road transport vehicles would be suitable, unless they went a few miles out of their way. They would have to haul their loads at least another three miles. I would not like to give my decision on this Bill tonight, but would prefer to make an inspection of the line and the obstacles there, on Monday next. At the present time I could not support the Bill. I would like some other member to get an adjournment of the debate so that I might inspect the position.

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

BILL—GOLD BUYERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th September.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [9.12]: I secured the adjournment of the debate on this Bill until today and I now find there are many things contained in it which will act against the wishes of the people on the Goldfields. The Act at present is a very watertight affair, but with certain regulations included, as are suggested here, it will be a menace to the industry. We are in the middle of getting all sorts of advice in the way of legal opinion, etc. I still want the consideration of the Bill further adjourned because of the many amendments it proposes to make to the Act.

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

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the previous day of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. W. J. Mann in the Chair; the Honorary Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 130a:

Hon. G. Bennetts called attention to the state of the Committee.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

The **HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE**: I move an amendment—

That the word "principal" in line 2 of paragraph (1) be struck out.

There can only be one domicile. My domicile is at York just the same as Mr. Gray's domicile is at Fremantle and therefore I wish to have the word "principal" struck out.

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

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 28th September.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.19 p.m.
