Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 16th December, 1953.

CONTENTS.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 5 p.m., and read prayers.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Judges' Salaries and Pensions Act Amendment.
2. Acts Amendment (Allowances and Salaries Adjustment).

Introduced by the Premier.

QUESTIONS.

TRAM AND BUS SERVICES.

(a) As to Vehicle Earnings Per Mile.

Mr. ANDREW asked the Minister for Transport:

What are the respective earnings per mile for the following:—

(1) Tramcar;

(2) trolley-bus;

(3) petrol bus?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Tramcar, 66.07d.;

(2) trolley-bus, 44.15d.;

(3) omnibus, 32.47d.

(b) As to Mt. Lawley-Inglewood Tram Track.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is he aware that certain lengths of the Beaufort-st. tram track in the Mt. Lawley-Inglewood section are in need of repair?

(2) If so, will he take steps to have the necessary repairs effected?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is in the negative, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) This section has been and will continue to be repaired in such a manner as to provide safe permanent way for tramcars.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

(c) As to Extension, Bayswater to Bassendean

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Transport:

In view of the unreliable road transport service running to and from Bassendean, will he agree to the tramways service now running to Bayswater being extended to Bassendean to augment the present service and ensure reliable transport over the Christmas period?

The MINISTER replied:

The State Transport Co-ordination Act requires that in the granting of licences first consideration must be given to an existing service. The plant and equipment of the Bassendean bus service has been given special attention in recent months and there appears to be no reason why that service and the railway service cannot provide adequate transport over the Christmas period.

(d) As to Bus Detention at Bayswater.

Mr. BRADY (without notice) asked the Minister for Transport:

Is he aware that as many as three buses have broken down on the Bassendean road service and yet the tramway buses running to Bayswater remain at the depot for ten minutes at a time, half-a-dozen times a day, when they could be running to Bassendean?

The MINISTER replied:

I am not aware that three buses have broken down on the Bassendean route, but I would point out that in any transport service there are liable to be mechanical failures, whether it be by air, sea, road, or rail.

BUSSELTON SLIPWAY.

As to Cost, Revenue, etc.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What was the cost of erection of the slipway at Busselton?

(2) Who authorised the erection?

(3) What is the total revenue derived from the slipway?

(4) How much is spent annually on upkeep?

(5) What amount per year is charged by the State Electricity Commission for power supplied to the slipway?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) £9,437.

(2) Cabinet approval on the 6th September, 1948.

(3) £94 13s. 10d.

(4) Nil up to date.

(5) No direct charge. Supply to slipway is in circuit with jetty supply and, because of small consumption, cost is met by the Railway Department, the port operating authority.

BUSSELTON JETTY.

As to Cost of Repairs and Revenue.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) What was the cost of repairs to the Busselton jetty for the years 1952 and 1953?

(2) Is it anticipated that this cost will continue?

(3) What amount was received by way of revenue from the jetty for the years 1951, 1952 and 1953?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Maintenance costs were—

1951-52, £3,868.

1952-53, £7,447.

(2) Maintenance costs are a recurring liability and the tendency is for the charges to increase.

(3) 1950-51, £1,561.

1951-52, £4,106.

1952-53, £10,776.

RAILWAYS.

As to Travel Concession to Pensioners.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister for Railways:

In answer to a question asked of him on the 22nd September he replied that he would re-examine the question of issuing travel concessions to old-age and invalid pensioners similar to those issued to retired railway employees—

(1) Has he re-examined the question?

(2) If so, what decision was reached?

(3) If the answer to No. (1) is in the negative, why not?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Assistance to pensioners is a function of the Commonwealth Government and it is considered that requests for additional assistance to cover pensioners' travel costs should be made to the Prime Minister. Any action taken by the State Government could only embrace those pensioners resident near Government bus routes and would thus create an unfair anomaly with those residing near private bus routes.

(3) Answered by No. (1).

ZOO TENNIS COURTS.

As to Condition.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware that the major attraction for adults at the South Perth Zoo—namely the tennis courts—is fast deteriorating?

(2) Is he aware that the change sheds associated with the tennis courts and sports field are in a filthy and disgraceful condition?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes. The State Gardens Board is greatly concerned about the condition of the courts which has been brought about by alien grasses.

(2) No. The courts are provided with shelter sheds which are clean and tidy.

If the question refers to the room under the pavilion, this is not a dressing shed or available to the public. Unfortunately, hoodlums occasionally misuse this room.

HOUSING.

As to Requirements at Carnarvon.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Housing:

As there are at present 23 applications to the Housing Commission for houses at Carnarvon, and as the finding of oil in

this area is likely to increase this number of applications rapidly, will he take immediate steps to have at least ten more houses built at Carnarvon?

The MINISTER replied:

The matter is receiving consideration.

CO-OPERATIVE BULK HANDLING LTD.

(a) As to Storage Facilities, North Fremantle.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

Is he in a position to advise the House regarding the complete set-up of the silo being built by the State Government for Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd.?

The MINISTER replied:

I am not, although the departmental officers have been working on it today, and they find it is an extremely confused affair. I have learned enough to realise that the hon. member is right in what he has said, but I would prefer to wait until tomorrow before giving a complete answer to his question.

(b) As to Tabling Agreement.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands:

Is he prepared to lay the agreement between the Government and the company on the Table of the House so that members can peruse it?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes.

STATE SAW MILLS.

As to Order for Firebars.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Forests:

(1) Is he aware that the State Saw Mills let tenders to Eilbeck & Son Ltd. for firebars?

(2) That Eilbeck's passed the order on to the State Engineering Works to do the job?

(3) If so, what was the price paid to Eilbeck's for the firebars?

(4) What amount did the State Engineering Works get for doing the job?

(5) Will he, in future, see that instead of having orders first placed with private industry, the order goes direct to the State Engineering Works, provided the price is right?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) So far as I know.

(3) Yes.

(4) 15s. 5d.

(5) I am having the question of future supplies investigated. For the information of the hon. member, I will give some further particulars in regard to the firebars, as follows:—

The installation for sawdust firing boilers (one at Deanmill and one at Pemberton casemill), was designed by the late Mr. Fox of Eilbeck & Son Ltd. Eilbeck's supplied two complete boiler gratings to this design. All casings were supplied by them, including firebars branded "Eilbeck & Son."

Replacements of firebars have from time to time been ordered through normal channels with this firm for that reason. No contract exists with Eilbeck's.

All firebars (much larger quantities) other than for these two boilers are ordered through the State Engineering Works.

BURNING-OFF FIRES.

As to Warning to Public.

Mr. YATES (without notice) asked the Premier:

As a number of fires have occurred in the metropolitan area since the beginning of summer, and as most of them have been caused by carelessness in burning off, will the Premier arrange, through the appropriate Minister, to have a warning issued to the public in this regard?

The PREMIER replied:

Yes.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Town Planning and Development (Metropolitan Region Interim Development Powers).

2, Town Planning and Development Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PENSIONS SUPPLEMENTATION.

Recommittal.

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

In Committee.

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 5—Supplementation under the Superannuation Act, 1871:

The PREMIER: The purpose of the amendments on the notice paper in my name is to enable pensions to be paid to all pensioners who come under the 1871 Act, the 1938 Act and the 1949 Act. The Bill as drafted proposes to limit increases to those receiving less than £500 a year by way of pension. The other evening the Leader of the Opposition suggested, and on various occasions members on both sides of the House have suggested that, in view of the small number of pensioners receiving £500 or more a year under the three Acts in question, the Government might give further consideration to the matter

of granting increases to that small number, as well as granting increases to all the others as now provided for in the Bill. As a result of reconsideration by Cabinet, it was decided to bring pensioners receiving £500 or more under the increases and the amendments on the notice paper in my name are provided to achieve that objective.

If agreed to, the effect of the amendments will mean that those who would be brought up to £500 by the amount in question will not be limited if the Bill were amended as they would be if it remained as it is. The amendments would enable the pensioner to receive above £500 per annum if the £26 per year increase proposed had the effect of lifting his existing pension to that amount. The purpose is to enable the pensioners to whom I have been referring to get the £26 increase. I move an amendment—

> That in line 9 of column 2 of the scale the words "per annum" be struck out and the words "or an annual rate of £26 whichever is the greater" inserted in lieu.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am glad the Treasurer intends to give an increase to the pensions he has mentioned. He proposes to lift them by £26 a year. Do I understand him rightly? On a pension of £448 the proposal is now to provide an additional £26.

The Premier: Yes, that is right.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: And on £500 an additional £26.

The Premier: That is correct.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is something. I suggested to the Premier that he might provide an additional £1 per week, but evidently he cannot see his way clear to do that. The £26 will be a help and I have no alternative but to support the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

The PREMIER: I move an amendment—

> That in line 10 in column 2 of the scale the word "nil" be struck out, and the symbol, figures and words "£26 per annum" inserted in lieu.

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

Clause 7—Supplementation under the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act, 1938:

The PREMIER: I move an amendment—

> That all the words after the word "exceed" in line 8 of Subclause (1) down to and including the word "nil" in the scale be struck out, and the words "the rate of twenty-six pounds per annum" inserted in lieu.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I would like to draw the Treasurer's attention to some correspondence I have received. I shall read a letter from the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia Inc. which is signed by Mr. Featherstone, who is the general secretary. It reads as follows:—

> This Union draws your attention to inadequate provisions for pension increases in the "Bill for an Act to provide for the supplementation of certain Pensions" now before Parliament.
>
> A protest is recorded against a departure from the method of assessing increases followed in previous amendments of 1947 and 1951. It is emphasised that whatever increases are allowed on the first eight or twelve units should be allowed to all contributors holding such number, including those who have taken out units in excess of these numbers.
>
> It is emphasised further that those receiving payments in respect of the first eight and twelve units under the Superannuation Act, 1938, should receive an increase at least equal to that granted to beneficiaries under the Superannuation Act, 1871, in view of the fact that those under the 1938 Act have contributed toward the benefits they receive and there is no reason to believe their needs are less.
>
> This Union trusts you will use your strongest efforts to ensure that the anomalies outlined are corrected, and adequate increases granted to retired teachers and other retired Government servants.

I have also had handed to me by the member for Wembley Beaches a comparison of pensions, and I think there is an anomaly to which I would like to draw the Treasurer's attention.

The Premier: That table will not be the same now, with the amendments we have moved.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I will read one or two of the items. A pension of £195 per annum under the 1871 Act will be supplemented by 12s. 4d. per week. The increase in pension for the same salary for a man under the 1938 Act would be 10s. On a salary of £234 the respective increases would be 15s. per week, or £39 per annum; and 10s. per week, or £26 per annum. The figures in connection with a salary of £273 would be 17s. 6d. per week for the 1871 pensioners, or £45 10s. per year; as against 10s. per week, or £26 per year for those under the 1938 Act. A salary of £312 would bring an additional £52 per year for the 1871 pensioners and only £26 per year for the 1938 pensioners. So it goes on until we reach the figure of £442 per year, on which there would be an increase of £1 per week under the 1871 Act as against 5s. to contributors under the 1938 Act.

The Premier: That is altered by the amendment.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Treasurer is correcting that?

The Premier: Yes; the 5s. becomes 10s.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: It is still a lesser amount than the figures under the 1871 Act.

The Premier: Yes; but all the supplementary pensions in the second column would be 10s., instead of as shown.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Therefore they would not equal the pensions under the 1871 Act.

The Premier: Not in every instance.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think that is unfortunate. I can understand the dissatisfaction when a pensioner on £377 under the 1871 Act receives £52 per year, without having contributed to the fund, while a pensioner under the 1938 Act on the same salary receives only £26 per year. I suggest that it would be desirable to make the amounts in each case comparable.

Mr. NIMMO: I hope the Premier will alter these provisions. A pensioner under the 1871 Act, getting £474, receives an increase of 9s. 9d., but one on the same amount, who has contributed to the fund, does not get any increases at all.

The Premier: That is not so now.

Mr. NIMMO: He gets a small increase of £26 a year.

The Premier: That is more than 9s. 9d. per week.

Mr. NIMMO: What about the chap who gets 9s. 9d.? Does he get an increase?

The Premier: An increase of 9s. 9d.

Mr. NIMMO: On top of the 9s. 9d. he already gets? He will not get an extra 9s. 9d.?

The Premier: No.

Mr. NIMMO: That means that a man on £474 will get 9s. 9d. under the 1938 Act.

The Premier: It is 10s.

Mr. NIMMO: I understand that under the 1871 Act a man on £409 would get £1 per week, but the man under the 1938 Act would receive 5s. Is that so?

The Premier: We have altered that to 10s.

Mr. NIMMO: It seems to me that with regard to the units that are affected, for No. 9 there would be 19; for No. 10 there would be 50; for No. 11 there would be 12; and for No. 12 there would be 47. If we increased the pensions to equal those under the 1871 Act, it would mean that only 128 people would be affected, and it would cost the Treasurer approximately £3,300. The situation seems to me to be a little unfair. We are pleased to see those under the 1871 Act getting pensions, but not one of them has contributed to the scheme. There are a fair number of pensioners under the 1938 Act. They have contributed to the scheme, but they get less than the 1871 pensioners. I hope the Premier will review the matter; and if he makes the pensions equal, he will have done a good job.

The PREMIER: The independent committee that inquired into this matter recommended that no increase be granted to the people of whom the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Wembley Beaches have spoken. Despite that, the Government has now, as a result of the amendments that have been moved, given some of them £26 a year extra. So I think the Government has gone a long way in this matter. If what we are doing by this Bill is compared with what the Federal Government did for those on Commonwealth pensions, I think it will have to be agreed that this provision is far above the Commonwealth plan and should be accepted. There is a difference between the 1938 pensioners and the 1871 and 1948 pensioners. The committee did not recommend increases for most of the 1938 people, because the increases granted to them over the last six years were considerably more than those that were granted to the 1871 and 1948 pensioners during the same period.

The scale from which the Leader of the Opposition read really brings the increases over the last six or seven years more into line as between all groups of pensioners. There is the additional point that retired male pensioners under the 1938 Act have a pension right for their widows and for dependent children under a certain age. That is quite a considerable advantage for the 1938 pension group. In the 1948 and the 1871 Acts there are no pension rights for widows or dependent children, so it can be seen that although the 1938 pensioners have contributed some small proportion of their pensions, they received pension benefits in the majority of instances over and above those received by the 1948 and the 1871 pensioners. In the circumstances, the proposal, as we are amending it this afternoon, is, I think, quite reasonable; and when it is compared with the action of the Commonwealth a few weeks ago, it is generous.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: What the Premier has said is true, that under the 1938 Act, provision is made for widows and children, and that this does not apply under the 1871 Act. But there is the other side of the picture, that the pensioners under the 1871 Act are in, I should think, a much older group than those under the 1938 Act. The question we have to face is that if it is necessary to give a proportionate increase to those under the 1871 Act on account of the increased cost of living, surely it is just as necessary that those under the 1938

Act should receive the same increase. Pensioners under the 1938 Act might still have dependants.

I do not want to embarrass the Treasurer in this matter, but I cannot see why we should say to a pensioner under the 1871 Act, "We will give you an additional £52 a year," and to a pensioner under the 1938 Act, receiving the same amount, "We will give you only £26 a year." If one hon. member received a £26 increase in his pension under the 1871 Act and another hon. member sitting next to him received an increase of £52 a year and they both faced the same living costs, I feel there would be dissatisfaction. We could readily agree that the amount in each case should be the same. I think that is only just, and it would create a feeling of satisfaction among all sections of pensioners. I hope the Treasurer will agree to my suggestion.

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

Bill again reported with further amendments and the report adopted.

BILL—ROAD CLOSURE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [5.46]: I am pretty disgusted with this whole business. Here we have a Road Closure Bill brought down in the closing hours of the session, and the member for one district, affected by the Bill, was not notified that it was coming on, or that it was likely to be put through last night. If I had not spotted that some blocks in my electorate were to be dealt with, and a road closed, the Bill would have slipped through, and nothing would have been said until afterwards. I would not mind it not being mentioned to me, provided someone else had been informed, but I say it is gross discourtesy that the local governing body concerned knew nothing about the second portion of the proposed closure.

After getting the adjournment of the debate last night, I had to try to interview the Fremantle Town Clerk this morning. Unfortunately he was attending a conference that was to last all day. I got him out of the conference, and showed him a copy of the Bill. He said that the portion concerning Ocean-rd. had been before the council, and that it had no objection to what was suggested, but he went on to say that the council knew nothing about the other portion, which refers to a piece of land quite close to the silo. Whether this was done so that the member for the district would not wake up to it, I do not know, but it is funny that the Bill should be brought down at this stage and not much said about it.

There is no mention of what it is intended to do with this piece of land. All the Bill says is that the land comprised in the right-of-way so closed "is hereby revested in Her Majesty as of her former estate with the intention that it may be reserved or disposed of in such manner as the Governor may approve." The Governor, of course, is the Minister. Explanations are made in connection with many of these road closures, and we are told what is to be done, but here the right-of-way is simply to be closed so that the Governor shall have it at his disposal to do what he likes with it.

The least that can be done is to refer this matter to the local governing body concerned. We have been talking about town planning and what we are going to allow the local authorities to do, but here we have an important piece of legislation by which it is proposed to close a right-of-way, but the council concerned has not been notified. I propose to agree to the second reading of the Bill, but, when we get into Committee, to do something to delay the consideration of the clause dealing with the matter I have mentioned until such time as the appropriate people —the local governing body—have had it referred to them, and they have given their opinion on it. There was no chance of that being done today, of course, because, as I have said, the town clerk was at a conference; and, in addition, a council meeting cannot be called at a minute's notice. No local governing body should be treated in this fashion.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. E. K. Hoar—Warren—in reply) [5.50]: I wish to assure the hon. member that this is the usual procedure each year; it has been the practice ever since I have been a member.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But the local governing bodies are consulted and usually they agree.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At the moment I am referring to the hon. member's earlier statement that this measure has been introduced during the closing stages of the session.

Hon. L. Thorn: It has never been any different.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. Throughout the year it is necessary in various districts to close roads and, without exception, the department interviews the local authorities concerned to see if they have any objection. If there is no objection all the road closures are accumulated and introduced in the form of one Bill at the closing stage of each session. As the hon. member must know, the usual procedure is for two copies of the Bill to be made available and one week before the measure is to be introduced the second copy is given to the Leader of the Opposition. That was done

in this case so that members opposite could examine the various items and, if necessary, raise any objections.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: To whom was the other copy given?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Minister keeps the other one. That is the normal procedure and I am sorry that I did not bring the file along with me today because this afternoon I read an extract on the file which indicated that the local authority had been consulted about these matters and, in each case, had agreed to the closure of the roads. If the hon. member doubts my word I will show him the file because we have nothing to hide. It has been found necessary to close portion of Ocean Parade and to that the hon. member does not raise any objection. There is also a clause which provides for the closure of portion of a certain right-of-way at North Fremantle and this land will be vested in the Fremantle Harbour Trust Commissioners. As the hon. member knows there is land there which belonged originally to the Commonwealth and the State.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Some still belongs to the Commonwealth.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and it is in the process of being tied up so that it can be legally handed over to the Harbour Trust Commissioners in accordance with the normal policy for the development at Fremantle. In passing, I would like to mention that over the last few years a good deal of business between the Government on the one hand and Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. and other interested people on the other hand has been conducted by telephone. That is a most inconvenient way to do business and I am endeavouring to unravel it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: It is about as hard to unravel as the hospital. It was months before the Minister for Works could get to the bottom of it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am endeavouring to unravel the position so that it can be cleared up. The local authorities were consulted and raised no objections to the proposals. The North Fremantle Municipal Council was consulted on the 15th July this year; a reply was received from that body on the 4th August in which it stated that it had no objection to the closures.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Which one?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Both of them.

Mr. Lawrence: Was that over the telephone or by letter?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: By letter which appears on the file. The road closure about which the hon. member is concerned is portion of a certain right-of-way between the old and new silos. As a matter of fact, the old silo already encroaches on the road and that is why it has been found necessary to close this portion of it. We want to hand over to the Harbour Trust Commissioners the whole area without having to worry about one small piece of it, and there is nothing funny about that.

I anticipated that the hon. member would talk about this item in the Bill although he did not say so when he secured the adjournment last evening. As a consequence I looked at the file today and the position is as I have explained. I certainly shall object to any move on the part of the hon. member to hold up the measure. We have adopted the normal procedure and it is essential that the Bill be passed. If the hon. member wishes to come to my office tomorrow he can peruse the file.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 10—agreed to.

Clause 11—Closure of portion of a certain right-of-way at North Fremantle:

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The Minister said that there is a letter on the file which shows that the council has agreed to this proposal. I had to ask the Town Clerk, Mr. Parks, to leave a conference at the Fremantle Town Hall today so that we could go to his office to find out whether the council had agreed to this proposal. He said that the council had no objection to the closure of portion of Ocean Parade, but he mentioned that he had never been consulted about the other provision. I have gone to all the trouble I can to get the correct information, but if the Minister can show me that the council has agreed to it, I will be quite satisfied. I trust the Minister will delay the Bill until such time as we have had a look at the file because he may have made a mistake.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Evidently the hon. member is certain in his own mind about this proposal. I confess that I was in a hurry this afternoon because I had three different engagements; but the secretary of the Lands Department obtained the file for me and I read a letter from the municipality which stated that it had no objection and, from memory, I believe it referred to both proposals. Like the hon. member I want to know the real facts, but from my information the municipality was approached by the Lands Department earlier this year and the department received the council's approval as regards both propositions. In fact, that authority said it was quite happy to agree because the whole area could then be handed over properly. I do not mind if progress is reported so that we can satisfy ourselves.

Hon. L. Thorn: Could you get the file this afternoon?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am prepared to report progress for a while.

Progress reported till a later stage of the sitting.

(Continued on page 2816.)

BILLS (3)—RETURNED.

1. Workers' Compensation Act Amendment.
2. Firearms and Guns Act Amendment. With amendments.
3. State Housing Act Amendment. With an amendment.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MARINE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR FISHERIES (Hon. L. F. Kelly—Merredin-Yilgarn) [6.3] in moving the second reading said: The amendments set out in this Bill cover amendments to two parts, namely, Parts VI and VIII, of the principal Act. Clause 2 provides an amendment to Section 96 to bring vessels licensed under the Whaling Act, 1937, and the Fisheries Act, 1905, under the section which requires the master or owner of any craft to report any collisions or casualties to the Harbour and Light Department.

Clause 3 provides an amendment to Section 97 giving the department power to hold an inquiry into any casualty on such vessel, or if it has reason to believe that there has been any incompetence or misconduct has occurred on the part of any person on board an inquiry respecting the incompetence or misconduct. The fishing fleet in the past few years has grown apace, and now comprises many large seagoing craft, some of which approach the dimensions of trawlers.

Further, the whaling companies operating in this State, of which there are three, control large whale catchers and tenders, but there is no authority with any power to hold an inquiry into any casualty concerning these vessels. Two examples can be quoted: A whalechaser left Fremantle for her whaling station and was wrecked on a reef north of Fremantle, while one of the largest fishing craft caught fire near Cervantes Island and was totally destroyed. Although an inquiry into these casualties should have been held, there was no authority to do so and these amendments are designed to give the Harbour and Light Department, which controls the Marine Act, the power to hold a preliminary inquiry and, if necessary, refer the matter to a court of marine inquiry.

Clause 6 adds a new Section 184A to the principal Act giving the department authority to institute certificates for masters, coxswain, engineers and enginedrivers on fishing and whaling craft. Clause 7 includes an amendment to Section 204, giving power to make regulations covering the manning, qualifications, conditions, examinations, and the issue and cancellation of certificates to these personnel.

This question was first raised by the Australian Port Authorities' Association in 1948 and a resolution was carried urging all States to bring in legislation to control the manning of fishing and whaling craft. This resolution was reaffirmed at the conferences in 1950 and 1952 and the position in regard to the States is that Tasmania has brought in the legislation and South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland have the legislation prepared and are waiting for their respective Governments to place it before Parliament.

The size, power and value of boats and machinery in the fishing and whaling industries in this State are considerable, yet it is possible for any person without any knowledge of seamanship, navigation or machinery to take these vessels to sea and into and out of ports at a risk to the lives of the men on board, the vessels themselves, and the property of port authorities. Furthermore, if they are lost, somebody has to expend time and money in searching for them, and it generally falls to the lot of some Government instrumentality to do so.

The fishing industry attracts many foreigners, some of whom make no attempt to learn the English language or to become naturalised. It should be obvious that a vessel in the charge of a person who cannot speak or read the language can be a menance, particularly when navigating in and around ports, and, as no British certificate can be held by any alien, but only by British or naturalised British subjects, the institution of this amending legislation will ensure that those in charge must learn the language and become naturalised before they can take out the necessary certificates.

The passing of this amending Bill will ensure that those who go to sea in fishing or whaling craft will have a knowledge of seamanship, navigation, and care and maintenance of machinery which will be a safeguard for those who go to sea with them, and also an added protection for the property over which they have control. It is not intended that those who have been engaged in the industry for some time past will be inconvenienced, as provision will be made to provide these persons with a certificate of service, provided they are British or naturalised British subjects. The legislation is for the future protection of the industry, and those engaged in it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. HILL (Albany) [6.9]: I have studied the Bill and I support the second reading. There is no need for me to repeat what the Minister has already said.

In recent years our fishing boats and whaling ships have grown from harbour and river vessels into seagoing ships. It is necessary, as the Minister pointed out, that they be protected and controlled. It is also desirable that they be under the command of naturalised British subjects. Sometimes I dread to think what might happen in Australia if some of our coastal traders were manned by individuals, who were subjects of a foreign power, as was the case in the last war. We had a lot of Italian fishermen here and they would be extremely valuable to an enemy in wartime. I feel sure the Bill is desirable and necessary and that it would be an advantage to have it on the statute book.

On motion by Hon. J. B. Sleeman, debate adjourned till a later stage of the sitting.

BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of two amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

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

No. 1. Clause 5, page 2:—Insert after the word "up" in line 38 the following words and parentheses:—"(other than a members' voluntary winding-up)".

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I propose to disagree to the amendment. This matter has been discussed fully in this Chamber. The object of Clause 5 is to restrict the appointment of a liquidator. Section 184 of the Act was enacted to protect companies going into liquidation, and provision was made that a director, an officer or an employee of a company could not act as liquidator. Unfortunately the companies seem to get round that provision for the purpose of having their own officers as liquidators. In many cases a particular director or officer would resign from a company and a few hours later would be appointed as liquidator. The clause we brought down made it watertight for a director or an employee to be out of the company for two years before he could be made a liquidator.

There are three classes of liquidation; the official liquidation, creditors' voluntary winding up and members' voluntary winding up. In relation to the members' voluntary winding up, the other place wants to make provision whereby they will not come under the new restriction, which means that the liquidator could be a director, an officer or an employee of that company.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I was explaining the position regarding a members' voluntary winding-up. It seems that the Council wants a privilege accorded companies to which they are not entitled. I see no reason why they should have such a privilege. Through an investigation in England it was found in the case of members' voluntary winding-up that one out of every 27 of the concerns involved was not solvent, although all had signed declarations that they were.

In another place Mr. Watson stated that the companies in question were completely solvent, but that is not the case. I see no reason why creditors should not have an independent liquidator. Why should they have to accept a liquidator who has been associated with the company for years? He may have been a director, an officer or an employee of the company. Such a liquidator would be under the control of the directors, and such an appointment would not be to the benefit of creditors. In many instances members' voluntary winding ups were not solvent, and as a consequence, the creditors suffered. That portion of the Act has been abused in the past.

If a company desires to wind up, but does not want to comply with the Act in regard to a qualified liquidator, it can go to the court and obtain an order to that effect, provided it can give security that it is solvent. I have no objection to the Council's amendment if the company and the directors jointly guaranteed the creditors that they would be paid in full. The appointment of a liquidator not qualified under this section may be approved by a judge in chambers.

There is no reason why independent liquidators should not be appointed. Why should the majority dominate the minority in many cases. Why should the majority want to keep the liquidator under their thumbs? They would be permitted to do so, if this amendment were agreed to. The exemption under this amendment relates only to members' voluntary winding ups, but a creditors' voluntary winding up will be treated in accordance with Section 184 of the Act. Doubtless the member for Nedlands will declare that under Section 336 a declaration of solvency must be made. But this procedure is not always complied with.

Assuming that the figures disclosed by the investigation in England are correct one in every 27 voluntary winding ups is not solvent, which makes it 4 in 100. So what Mr. Craig suggested in another place that only 1 in 1,000 of members' voluntary winding ups would be insolvent, is not correct. I therefore oppose the amendment made by the Council, because the risk would be too great if it were agreed to. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. COURT: I favour the adoption of the Council's amendment. The Minister is unduly perturbed about the effect of

the amendment. When this measure was dealt with by this Chamber, I put forward an amendment to exempt proprietary companies. The Council apparently in considering the matter, has submitted an amendment which is much more restrictive than mine.

The Minister for Justice: They are not dealing with proprietary companies.

Mr. COURT: I agree. As I stated previously, proprietary companies are tightly-held concerns, and there is no real danger to outside parties. I invite the Minister's attention to the fact that if a members' voluntary winding up is proceeded with, the creditors' interest is still paramount. As he knows, a meeting of creditors is held within a certain time, at which they can reject the appointment of the liquidator put forward by the members.

What usually happens is that both the meetings, creditors and members, are held within one hour of each other, so that the minutes of the members' meeting can be submitted to the creditors. If the creditors do not wish to accept a liquidator, they can pass a resolution to that effect. The provisions of the Act have worked quite well. There has not been any abuse of the privileges, to the knowledge of the registrar. The Cohen Committee in England declared that 1 in 27 companies was not solvent, that is, it did not pay 20s. in the £. There are several companies in Western Australia where the creditors have not received 20s. in the £ either, within 12 months or after.

A declaration of solvency is not intended to be a guarantee that creditors will receive 20s. in the £. It is meant to be a declaration that, in the opinion of the directors, the company was solvent, and would pay its debts within 12 months. If this amendment is accepted, all parties will be protected because if there are no outside creditors, what does it matter? If creditors so desire, they can appoint their own choice as liquidator. Whether it is a members' voluntary winding-up, or a reconstruction, the liquidator need not be one registered under the Act. In those cases, he is expressly excluded. With the state of affairs which will occur very often in the near future, through the expansion of industry in this State, many companies will be re-forming.

The Minister for Justice: With a members' winding up, an application can be made to the court to appoint a liquidator not qualified under the Act.

Mr. COURT: Why go to the trouble of getting an order when the creditors can protect themselves by a resolution? The Minister is over-cautious on this matter. If this amendment is somewhat risky, it is one which can be taken. If it does not work out in twelve months' time, the Act can be amended. I support the amendment made by the Council.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 6, page 3:—Add after the word "law" in line 17 the following proviso:—

> Provided that nothing contained in this subsection shall apply to a claim by any person against the insolvent company under any charge now or hereafter given by such creditor company.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

It is merely a protective measure.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of the Minister for Justice, Mr. Court and Mr. Johnson drew up reasons for disagreeing to one of the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—PERTH TOWN HALL AGREEMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—ROAD CLOSURE.

In Committee.

Resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting. Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 11—Closure of portion of a certain right-of-way at North Fremantle (partly considered):

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Fremantle stated that the local authority had received no communication from the Lands Department regarding the closure of this right-of-way. I have a letter, dated the 4th August, from the North Fremantle Municipal Council to the Under Secretary for Lands stating definitely that the local authority had received due warning and had indicated that it offered no objection. This should clear up the point raised by the member for Fremantle once and for all.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: The Town Clerk accompanied me to North Fremantle this morning and made a check, and said the council had not been consulted about the right-of-way, though it had been about Ocean Parade. During the tea suspension, the mayor informed me that the council had not been approached. In the circumstances, what can I do? I can only do as instructed by the North Fremantle council. If there has been any mistake, I am not responsible for it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I can quite understand the hon. member's position. I thank him for the close attention

he has paid to me during the last fortnight, and hope that he will now turn his attention elsewhere.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You will have to get over the North Fremantle silo business first.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 12 to 16, Title agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th December.

HON. L. THORN (Toodyay) [7.56]: I have no opposition to offer to the Bill. The Minister has told us that in the South-West Land Division three months' notice is required of the lessee for cancellation of the lease and in the North-West, 12 months' notice, and that the object of the measure is to require three months' notice in each instance. The Minister spoke of the improvement in the means of communication in the years since the 12 months period was originally introduced. Undoubtedly, communications with the North are good and pastoralists receive a notice within a few days whereas in former years weeks might have been necessary to reach the addressee. When I was administering the department, I had discussions on this matter, and I know how the officers feel. The measure, while facilitating the department, will operate quite fairly to pastoralists in the North.

Reference was also made by the Minister to the provision of suitable land for intense culture. You, Mr. Speaker, as well as other members representing northern constituencies, brought to my notice on many occasions the need for alienating some of the land adjoining North-West towns and included in pastoral leases, where such land was suitable for intense culture. I received applications from several people in the North who were desirous of taking up land for vegetable-growing and other intense culture. This is an industry that might well be encouraged. Small areas of good land should not be tied up in pastoral leases unless the pastoralists are making full use of them.

The Government is subsidising the transport of vegetables and other perishables to the North, the cost of which over a year amounts to a fairly large sum. If we can encourage people in the North to grow vegetables and other requirements under intense culture, we should do so, especially now that another industry is on the point of being developed in the North. I have no wish to say anything that might result in sending up the market for oil shares, but we do know that oil has been discovered at Exmouth Gulf, at least in a small way, and our population will increase in the North.

If this land can be used to supply the requirements of that part of the State we should do everything we can to make that possible. We must look ahead and encourage production of the requirements of the North on the spot, as from the economic point of view that is most desirable. The main clause in the Bill seeks to shorten the term of notice and I feel that that will make land available more quickly to those desirous of commencing production. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1953-54.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 18th November on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £6,079:

MR. MOIR (Boulder) [8.5]: There are a few matters that I desire to mention briefly, and the first of them is the recent discovery of oil in this State, which I am sure must be pleasing to every citizen of Western Australia as well as to members of this Parliament. A study of our Petroleum Act is not very enlightening because as well as the principal Act there are about four separate sets of amendments to it. Some of those amendments are lengthy, as is the principal Act itself, and the whole picture is somewhat hard to follow, but as far as one can see the legislation is of a comprehensive nature and appears to cover all the possible contingencies that might arise from time to time.

The Act seems designed to protect, to a large extent, any oil resources this State may possess. We have no experience of the handling of oil fields and the discovery of oil in this State will bring us many new problems. I, like many others, can see that a host of unfamiliar situations may arise, but we cannot have the advantage of an oilfield in this State without being prepared to overcome the difficulties with which we may be faced. I feel that steps should be taken to benefit from the experience of other people in this regard.

I do not know what the Government has in mind or whether it has given thought to an aspect to which I am going to refer, but there will be many matters to be dealt with, such as the supply of water to the areas in which oil is found. From what I can gather, the nearest available reasonably large supply of water would be about 250 miles from the present scene of activities and it will be a problem of considerable magnitude to transport that water to where it will be required.

Mr. Oldfield: Do you not think the oil company should do that itself?

Mr. MOIR: It is a matter for consideration as to whether the State should do the necessary developmental work or whether the companies operating in the area should bear the cost.

Mr. Oldfield: They have done so everywhere else in the world where oil has been found.

Mr. MOIR: The Government will need to give careful consideration to matters such as water supply and the provision of roads in that part of the State. I am not in accord with those who believe that the discovery of oil will cause a big influx of population to the North-West. In my opinion, not very many men will be employed in boring for oil although, as the search develops, a fairly large number may be so engaged. Some people believe that large towns will spring up in the North-West as the result of the search for oil being successful, but I do not think that is likely. Once the oil wells are established there will not be a great many people required to do the work that is necessary.

Another matter that will require considerable thought is the allocation of leases, as to whether it is desirable for one company to operate over a large area, holding more or less a monopoly, or whether it is preferable to have several companies operating, each with a smaller area. I am convinced that the present oil find is not an isolated instance but an indictaion that there are great deposits of oil in the North-West, and I hope it will not be long before confirmation of that view is received.

An interesting feature of our Petroleum Act is that the Government or the Minister—in this case the Minister for Mines —has the right to require the companies concerned who may find oil in this State to refine it in Western Australia. I do not think any of us wishes to see a position develop where the oil would be taken away from our shores in its crude condition and refined in some other State or country.

Members will agree that it would be highly desirable to have the bulk of any oil found here refined in Western Australia. In that event, instead of having one refinery at Kwinana we might have several spread at suitable points along our coastline. The Government has been faced with many problems in relation to Kwinana and would be faced with still more if other refineries were to be established on different parts of the coast.

I believe that in the near future some very keen thinking will have to be done in overcoming the difficulties that will be met, and that proper regard should be had for the welfare of the State and its people in an effort to ensure that the population of Western Australia participates in every possible way in the good fortune that the discovery of large quantities of oil would represent.

The Government should seriously consider sending the Minister for Mines and the Under Secretary for Mines and some other official who is skilled in planning various projects that may have to be established as the result of the finding of oil, to Alberta, Canada. I have suggested Alberta because, as most people know, that State has now hundreds of oil wells in many large areas and the discovery of petroleum was made at a time when the State was practically bankrupt. It was in a far worse position than that which confronts this State at present. The Government of Canada was faced with all the problems which we will encounter in the near future. It had to find a solution for each of them and if we can profit from its mistakes that will be to our advantage.

If the Under Secretary and the Minister for Mines were sent to Alberta, they could study the Dominion's legislation dealing with oil and obtain all the information available. I would go further and suggest that from there they should go to other countries and complete the investigation in order that they may have a thorough knowledge of oilfields, which can be passed on when they return to Western Australia.

Consideration should also be given immediately to the provision of facilities at the School of Mines at Kalgoorlie, to train and educate our young men who may desire to take part in this new industry. We know that the technicians at present employed at Kwinana and Rough Range have, in the main, come from overseas. At the moment, we have not in Australia people who are trained and skilled in the refining and treatment of oil. It would be wrong if we allowed our young people who are willing to embark upon a career in this industry to lag behind and not be afforded the opportunities that those in other countries have had by the provision of such facilities.

I suggest the School of Mines at Kalgoorlie because, as members are probably aware, it is one of the finest schools in Australia for the training of men in all branches of mining. Some of the students who have graduated there have obtained high executive positions in the most im-

portant mining fields of the world. During the war a one-time student at the Kalgoorlie School of Mines was in charge of all coal production in the United States of America. Other men of great ability, who obtained their initial training at the Kalgoorlie School of Mines, have held down responsible mining jobs in various parts of the world.

Although the search for oil and the refining process is somewhat different from ordinary mining, it is an allied industry because one of the first requirements for an oil technician is a thorough knowledge of geology, and the School of Mines at Kalgoorlie has produced some of the finest geologists in Australia. Apart from that, people on the Goldfields have been reared in a mining atmosphere and quite a number of young men elect to study and obtain their education at the Kalgoorlie School of Mines in order to receive the requisite grounding to follow their chosen occupations. Therefore the Government should give serious consideration to providing the necessary facilities at the School of Mines so that students will be able to gain the knowledge that is required if they are to work on oilfields and at least obtain an elementary training in the treatment of oil.

We would then have young people available who could enter the industry with at least a theoretical knowledge. We would not then be confronted with the alternative of importing from overseas technicians who are generally given first class positions on their arrival in this State. In the Press of yesterday's date I noticed that an oil man had returned to this State from America. Originally he had come from Leonora, but obviously he did not obtain his knowledge of oil in Australia. He had to travel overseas to get it and evidently he is now a competent oil man who is returning here with a view to taking up a position connected with the recent discovery of oil.

There are a few other matters relating to the goldmining industry to which I will now refer. Although the general assistance rendered by the Government is greatly appreciated by all those who are engaged in the industry and the assistance to prospectors has encouraged quite a number of men to resume prospecting, we know that there are insuperable difficulties in the way of the small man who wishes to invest his capital and use his knowledge in an attempt to discover payable ore bodies. Explosives are a costly item for a prospector or small goldmining syndicate. In fact, the price of explosives has increased more than 2½ times what it was two years ago. It has almost become prohibitive for use by a man working in a small way. As a result, smaller operators search for a mining proposition in oxidised country because the use of explosives is not so necessary in soft ground as it is in granite or quartz country.

I suggest that the Minister for Mines should recommend to the Government that it buy explosives in bulk—which is the cheapest way to purchase them, of course —with a view to supplying them at cost to prospectors and others working small shows. If that were done, it would prove of great assistance to such men. During its short period in office the Government has taken quite a few steps forward with a view to assisting the mining industry, which action has been applauded by the Goldfields people. The Government has made a survey of batteries used for the crushing and treatment of ore and some time ago it announced that it was prepared to provide a battery at Menzies where a good deal of prospecting could be done and small mines operated if ore treatment facilities were made available.

The Government is also anxious to carry out a diamond drilling programme over the various goldfields. The Minister for Mines issued a Press statement some time ago in regard to this proposal and I emphasise the necessity of proceeding with it as soon as possible. For many years I have considered that a system of diamond drilling undertaken on some of the known gold-bearing fields might reveal ore deposits of considerable value. In the early days when people were chasing easy gold, many alluvial patches were worked but practically no development was done at depth. Due to the extensive turning over of the ground in those fields, it is almost impossible now for prospectors to find any indications of reefs and lodes. Therefore, the only way they can be found is by a process of diamond drilling.

There are quite a lot of mining matters on which I would like to touch, but I think I will leave most of them until we are considering the mining Estimates. One subject to which I wish to refer at present, however, is that of mineral leases which are held largely on the Goldfields, and in respect of which very little effort has been made to work.

Just recently it was brought to my knowledge that a very experienced miner and prospector left the Coolgardie fields, and he told me that the reason he had left was the difficulty of being able to prospect on worth-while ground, owing to the fact that so much of it is tied up in leases. It is ground that is not worked but simply held, for the most part, for speculative purposes. That is entirely wrong, and it is something that the Mines Department and the Minister will have to look at. Steps will have to be taken to see that people cannot go on year after year holding ground tied up in the hope that they may be able to make a big return at some future time without their doing any work on the leases whatsoever.

Quite a number of leaseholders have no intention of working the ground, but simply hold it in the hope that there will

be a boom in goldmining, and in other minerals too, because these leases are not just confined to gold-bearing land, but extend to areas where there are indications of copper, columbite, tantalite, and other types of mineral. These people hold the land year after year without attempting to do any work on it, hoping that there may be a rise in prices, and that they will be able to persuade somebody to become interested enough to give them a considerable sum of money for the leases.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Some prospectors are good, too. They squat there and do nothing.

Mr. MOIR: I do not know whether the hon. member would know much about prospectors.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I know a lot about them.

Mr. MOIR: The hon. member does not look like a toil-worn old miner to me, but he may have some knowledge of the matter. I think, however, that he is entirely off the beam when he talks about prospectors holding leases. Rent has to be paid for leases, and most of the prospectors I know use all the money they can get their hands on to enable them to continue working their projects. The prospectors the member for Mt. Lawley would be referring to would probably have their camps in St. George's Terrace.

Hon. L. Thorn: That is a funny one!

Mr. MOIR: I am not going to mention names, but I do know people who hold large numbers of leases, and I can assure members that they are not ordinary prospectors; in fact, they are not prospectors at all. They are people of substance, and quite a number of them live in the metropolis and would not know very much about goldmining or any other sort of mining, of their own knowledge. But somebody told them that these leases were good to take up and hold, and they have done so.

I am not referring to leases on which companies have expended large sums of money, but which, for one reason or another, they have not been able to continue operating, and have applied to the warden's court to obtain exemption from the provisions of the Mining Act. They are probably waiting for a more opportune time to start or resume operations on their leases. There are some companies that have spent large sums and have quite substantial quantities of machinery on leases; and if times were a little more propitious for the goldmining industry, they would be prepared to go ahead and work their leases.

They are not the people to whom I was referring previously. I was referring entirely to the speculator, the fellow who is looking for something for nothing. Nobody has much objection to people making fortunes through having a little foresight, but I have strong objection to people occupying land, tying it up, and preventing others from taking up leases and endeavouring to work the areas. The latter are being driven off the land, and probably out of the industry altogether. It is a matter to which quite a lot of thought should be given.

There is also the position of companies that hold large areas of land under an Act of Parliament. I do not know that much can be done about them. I believe that during the last few months one of those companies has surrendered quite large areas that it has held for many years. But unless a company voluntarily surrenders such land, there is nothing much that can be done about it, because they hold the rights by Act of Parliament.

I hope that consideration will be given to the proposals I have put forward with regard to the petroleum industry which has been established here. I think it is one of the most important developments that has ever taken place in this State, and one can foresee many problems arising of which we can have no knowledge now. It is very difficult to prophesy the situations that can arise, but steps should be taken to see that we get off to the best possible start in order to be able to enjoy to the fullest extent the good fortune which has befallen us.

Progress reported till a later stage of the sitting.

(Continued on page 2832.)

BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of 10 amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

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

No. 1. Clause 2—Delete.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The Bill is scarcely recognisable as the one which left this place a short time ago. The differences in outlook between this Chamber and the Legislative Council are so broad that it is hardly worth while debating at length the amendments the Council seeks. I disagree with them in principle, and it is my intention to request that we insist upon the preservation of the Bill in the form in which it left this Chamber. In respect of amendment No. 1, I move—

> That the amendment be not agreed to.

This deals particularly with caravans, and the reason for that form of accommodation having been included in the measure was the extortionate charges levied from time to time in respect of the hiring of caravans. That has been possible only on account of the housing shortage. I

feel that the differences between the two Chambers are such that they can be resolved properly only at a conference of managers.

Mr. WILD: I think the Minister has stated quite clearly that the gap is so great between the desires of this Chamber and those of another place that probably the differences can be resolved only at a conference. However, the Legislative Council has, in effect, done to this Bill what I would like to have done to it in this place. In speaking on the measure, I said there were two phases that, so far as I could see with my limited knowledge, we were not able to handle at all. One was the exclusion of housing from the provisions of the Act, and the other was to be able to give people a fair rent for their homes commensurate with many other rents that are being received today, such as those for State housing homes and those that were let subsequent to the 1st January, 1951. So, in effect, the amendments of another place are exactly what I would have submitted had I been able to amend the Bill. We on this side of the Chamber say that we definitely agree with the amendments submitted by another place. Therefore I shall oppose the Minister's motion.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 2. Clause 3, page 2—Add after the figure "(1)" in line 18 the following:—

and by substituting therefor the following paragraph:—

(d) premises (being a dwelling-house or a self-contained flat and not being a room or rooms leased with or without the use of a kitchen or bathroom) leased for the purpose of residence.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This amendment goes far beyond anything suggested in this Chamber because it proposes that premises being dwelling-houses and self-contained flats shall be excluded from the provisions of the Act. To my mind this is going too far altogether. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I feel the Government can blame itself to a considerable extent for this amendment from the Legislative Council. We have had control of housing for the past 16 years.

The Minister for Housing: Not quite.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Very nearly. We have had it for the past 14 years, and during that time amendments have been brought down to prolong the Act from year to year. When can the owners of houses expect to get away from these controls? Is there any prospect of their getting away from them? I said this Government had to accept some of the blame for the amendment. We can look at the rises that have been received by every other section of the community, but this particular one has had the rents pegged at 1939 levels, and it is not permitted to benefit as a result of any rises.

The Minister for Education: You have changed your opinion in 12 months.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: No. It is true that they have had two rises in the 14 years—one of 20 per cent. in 1950, which applied only to premises that had been firstly leased prior to 1948, and one of 10 per cent. in 1951, making an increase altogether of 32½ per cent. on the 1939 level. If certain additions were made to premises, the landlord was allowed to charge a percentage on the cost of the additions; but what about the cost of repairs and renovations these days? Numbers of people have shown me the bills they have received for repairs. Recently a person told me that the charge for repairing a window amounted to £6 1s. A tradesman charges 10s. an hour, plus the cost of materials. In this particular instance the rent of the house was 25s. or 26s. a week.

Is this justice? Are we doing justice to these people? I do not think any member can agree that we are. This is the one section that I know of that has been pegged down to the 1939 level of rents. It has been given very little consideration. It is wrong to assume that these people are wealthy landlords. Many of them are on incomes below the basic wage. Some of them are retired Government servants who put their money into houses, thinking that if they could get three or four houses, they would have an income for the rest of their lives. But because of what has happened in the last 14 years, their income has been greatly reduced.

It has been said that they have had an accretion of capital. Of what use is that to them? I doubt whether in many cases there has been an accretion. There has been a deterioration in the value of some of these properties because the owners have not had the finance to carry out necessary repairs. The Minister says he is going to disagree with this amendment, but I think we should know more about it. We cannot just go into a conference and say that we disagree with it, because here the Council has got something on its side, and certainly it is an important point from which to argue. I do not agree that we should lightly dismiss this matter.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The first essential is to understand what the Act says. It is obvious that the Leader of the Opposition does not know that. He is merely stating a platitude which has been uttered by the Press and certain sections of landlords and some members here. It has been said that the rents of these people have been pegged since 1939. The landlords have, as has been pointed

out, been given two automatic increases; they are permitted to recover increased outgoings; and they are able to approach the court at six-monthly intervals for a new determination of a fair rent.

This Government, in order to overcome the objection to the owner of premises having to spend money on court fees, sought to make it possible for the rent inspector to determine a fair rent. Many reputable concerns—trustee companies and others—avail themselves of this device at the moment. When properties are placed in their hands, they go to the rent inspector's office for the determination of a fair rent. It is nothing more nor less than sheer propaganda of a false nature, for people to talk about these rents being pegged.

The amendment of the Legislative Council goes further than anything that has been suggested by the Leader of the Opposition. It proposes to remove dwelling-places—houses and self-contained flats—from the provision of the Act entirely in the matter of evictions as well as with respect to rentals. I have devoted some time to this particular amendment because of its importance. I hope it will not be necessary to traverse the details of the others.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The rises which the Minister referred to can hardly be classed as automatic. There have been two of them in the last 14 years. I fail to see that they can be classed as automatic rises when we take into consideration all that has happened in many other directions where there have been automatic rises. The Minister says the landlords can go to the court twice a year. Many people on slender incomes hate the idea of having to go into court to present a case. I do not think justice is being done to them.

I know what the provisions of the Act are. I take it another place has decided on this course because of the injustice being done. They know that the present provision has been in the Act for the past 14 years and that it has been re-enacted annually. What prospect is there of people ever having the right to deal with their own property, into which they have put their life-savings, as they would wish?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: If there is any validity in the arguments of the Leader of the Opposition, that validity was present last year when he was leader of the Government. He did not then attempt to go as far as the Legislative Council wants to go now. If he believed these people were being hardly done by, and that they should be allowed a bigger return on their investment, why did not his Government give them the opportunity to receive that bigger return? The Government of which the Leader of the Opposition was the head believed that it was necessary to keep control of these rents. It is only because the hon. member has changed his position in the House that he is now advocating what he is. He had the opportunity to do this last year.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You have to take action some time.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It is easy to get out of it in that way. The hon. member would take action when he no longer has the responsibility.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Wages were not pegged last year, and if the action contemplated had been taken then, to a large extent it would have been reflected in the basic wage. The workers who would be called upon to pay this increased rent would, after a lag of three months, have received an addition to their wage to enable them to pay the increase. But now there is no quarterly adjustment. The basic wage is more or less pegged.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Until the next quarterly adjustment.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Is it likely that the amount of the adjustment that was withheld last quarter will be added to what is required next quarter, so that the workers will get the lot? I will believe that when I see it. If the Legislative Council has its way on this amendment—and that is what the Leader of the Opposition is now advocating—then the great body of workers will be subjected to this substantial increase in rent.

Members in another place are thinking that rents ought to be more than double what they are now. They propose to allow that, now that wages are pegged, but when wages were not pegged the hon. member's Government would not remove the controls, nor would members in another place take that action.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Wages are not pegged for more than three months, and you know it.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: At present wages are pegged, and I have no indication of whether they will be increased when the next quarterly adjustment becomes due. Is the Legislative Council's proposition fair? The strength of the argument advanced by the Leader of the Opposition is completely dissipated now, because if circumstances have changed in the last 12 months they have changed for the worse; wages are now pegged and they were not pegged before.

If the argument that for a period of 14 years owners of property have been denied proper increases in rents is all right now, it was a good argument 12 months ago; but the Leader of the Opposition did not introduce a Bill to give to property owners what he thinks they should now get because it would have been highly dangerous politically. He had an election to face; but now it is over he advances all these arguments as to why

rents should be allowed to increase substantially. He knows that wages are now pegged.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: He does not know that.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is the position.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It will be considered at the next quarterly adjustment, which takes place in two months' time.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is not now, and in any case there will be a lag of three months.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: No. This Act will not terminate until the end of the year.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The argument advanced by the Leader of the Opposition was weak, and in the circumstances I trust the Committee will not agree to the Legislative Council's amendments.

Mr. PERKINS: I wish to support the Leader of the Opposition. He made a perfectly clear exposition of the real position. I would suggest to the Deputy Premier that while the Government can carry whatever it wishes in this Chamber, he will need to have some constructive proposals to put before the Legislative Council if he does not wish to lose the Bill altogether. It is time the Minister for Housing got his feet on the ground and made this Bill a little more acceptable than it is at present. I made myself clear during my second reading speech, and I agree with the Leader of the Opposition when he says that landlords should be placed in exactly the same position as any other person who invested capital in the prewar period.

The Minister for Education: Why did not he take that view last year?

Mr. PERKINS: The Leader of the Opposition can speak for himself.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: I will.

Mr. Heal: Did you have that view last year?

Mr. PERKINS: Yes, and I did my best to have that point of view accepted, as members here know. There are just as many cases of hardships among landlords as there are among tenants. This legislation only makes the anomalies greater than in the past.

When rents were pegged in 1939 the basic wage was about £4 per week, and since then rentals have increased by automatic rises totalling a little over 30 per cent. Let us take the case of an artisan who lived in one of these houses on which the rent was pegged. If he was on the basic wage plus a small margin, he was earning, in 1939, about £5 a week, but today the same man is earning £13 or £14, or possibly a little more.

Mr. Moir: That is to cover the increased cost of other articles in the regimen.

Mr. PERKINS: Obviously the costs of various items have increased in the same way as landlords' costs have increased. Landlords who have received automatic increases in their rentals are in a much worse position today than they were in 1939. When the Arbitration Court fixes the basic wage and margins for skill, it takes into consideration the question of rent; but rents vary so much these days. A worker who is living in a house the rent of which is controlled pays only 25s. or 26s. a week. But a worker who lives in a Housing Commission house pays £3 5s. or £3 10s. a week in rent, and as time goes on the number of workers living in houses, the rents of which are controlled, will become less, and that will create a greater anomaly.

Why not take the sensible attitude, and increase up to a reasonable figure the returns for all people owning rented homes. If these people had invested their money in some other avenue, they would be receiving a return commensurate with the appreciation of capital at present. Why should landlords be treated differently?

The Minister for Housing: Do you honestly think that is the function of Parliament? Is it not the function of an independent tribunal after hearing all the facts and making an inspection—the court or a rent inspector, as is provided in the Act?

Mr. PERKINS: The powers of a rent inspector are greatly circumscribed now, and from what I have heard the returns that rent inspectors are prepared to give on capital invested are very low compared with investments in other directions. That must be the case, because at present people in this State are not prepared to invest in houses for renting. I know the position in the country, and I am sure other members know the position in the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Education: Does that apply to flats, too?

Mr. PERKINS: They are in a different category. In any case, most flats have been let furnished, and for that reason the owners of those premises have been able to get outside the terms of the Act. While I do not want to see the position get out of hand altogether, I do not believe it will get out of hand so far as the vast majority of landlords are concerned. It is only the odd case that is likely to occur. I would like to see some reserve powers held to deal with that type of landlord, but I think members generally will agree that there are few rack-renting landlords.

The Minister for Housing: That is all the Government wants to do.

Mr. PERKINS: The Bill, as presented, does not provide for that, otherwise the Minister would not be so concerned about insisting upon its provisions. When the Minister gets into conference he should be

prepared to agree that landlords should get a proper return on the value of their properties, whether the houses were built in 1939 or 1953—in other words, the replacement value of the property, with a proper allowance for interest on capital invested, repairs and all other outgoings. If that is done, we will get a worth-while measure.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I want to reply to the Deputy Premier. He said that I made no mention of this matter during the election compaign. That is not the case, because I was asked a number of questions about it.

The Minister for Education: I did not say that.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I thought the Minister did.

The Minister for Education: I said that when you led the Government last year you did not put your ideas into operation.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: There must come a time when those ideas must be put into operation, and I think the time has arrived.

The Minister for Education: What has happened in the intervening 12 months?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: We know what has happened. There has been a tremendous increase in building: building materials have been decontrolled and there is more incentive for people to build houses.

Mr. McCulloch: And there has been an increase in population.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I admit that. The member for Roe made a point to which I wish to refer briefly. This amendment affects, in the main, houses with the lowest rentals. It is true that rents on Housing Commission homes are increasing. Only yesterday or the day before there was a letter in the paper from a constituent in Northam complaining about the steep increase in his rent—he was a tenant in a Commonwealth-State rental home. But that could not happen with the homes I have mentioned; it would not be permitted.

The Minister for Housing: Why not?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Because rentals have been pegged.

The Minister for Housing: They are not pegged.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister wants people to go to the court; he would not do so in connection with his home. There are many people who do not like the idea of going to court. I think the provisions are unjust.

Mr. O'BRIEN: I am amazed that the Leader of the Opposition should support the action of another place. Only a few months ago, members opposite were seemingly concerned about the aged people and the 2s. 6d. they were to get, but now they only think of the property-owners.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: And many of them are aged.

Mr. O'BRIEN: I received a ring on the telephone from an aged lady in South Perth. She and her husband pioneered the Murchison and came to live here years ago. This person has her daughter living with her; the daughter lost her husband in the last war; she is a war widow and is there to look after her mother. They are trembling with fear about what will happen as a result of the action taken in another place. They are prepared to pay a few shillings extra, but not 100 per cent. above their present rental. I oppose the Council's amendment and support the Minister in his action.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I was amazed at the specious plea of the member for Roe on behalf of the person who in 1939 decided to put his money into property rather than to invest it in war loans.

Mr. Perkins: I did not say that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is the comparison I wish to draw. He said that type of person did not get a reasonable return. Let us draw a comparison. On the one hand, we have the man who decides to put his £1,000 into war loans as a result of an appeal by the Commonwealth Treasurer for funds to defend the country: he receives 3½ per cent., or £3 2s. 6d. per year for each £100 invested. After ten years, he would get something like £300 in interest, and, together with his £1,000, he would have roughly £1,300. In 1949, that £1,300 would have a purchasing power of approximately £700. The individual to whom the member for Roe refers and on whose behalf he appeals decided not to invest in war loans but to buy property at a cost of £1,000. One would have no difficulty in getting 35s. for a house which cost £1,000 in 1939.

Mr. McCulloch: It would be a very good house.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would; very nice homes were being built for £1,300 then. That would give him a return of £91 per annum. Allowing £20 for rates and taxes, which is liberal, he would get over £70 clear return on his £1,000 invested.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What about depreciation?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What about repairs?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: A new house does not need much repair for at least ten years after it is constructed.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Ask the Minister for Housing.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not need to; I have lived in a new house, and few repairs are needed for the first ten years. It might require to be repainted.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: At a cost of £500.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I would not accept the hon. member as an authority on anything.

Hon. L. Thorn: I would not accept you, either.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I might know.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member might say something contrary to what he thinks he knows. That house in which the property owner has invested his money would today be worth £4,500 to £5,000. The man who put his money in loans got £1,300 in inflated currency returned to him, whereas this man gets £70 a year rental clear, so it is useless the member for Roe putting up such specious arguments. It is true that the increase in the actual rental he has received as compared with the increases that have taken place in the cost of other commodities is not very much, and probably a prima facie case could be established for the property owner. In point of fact, the property owner has done very well and has come out on the right side.

Mr. PERKINS: I must say something about the specious speech made by the Minister for Railways. He obviously tried to put words into my mouth. He drew a comparison, but unfortunately he forgot that at the outbreak of war housebuilding practically stopped.

The Minister for Railways: It did not stop for two years afterwards.

Mr. PERKINS: It stopped when the Government called for materials for the war effort. At the time to which the Minister for Railways refers, we were in a very critical position, and people were thinking about matters other than houses. There may have been some houses sold at cheap rates because of the scare, and people leaving the city for the country areas. But there would not be too many people building for investment in Perth. Most of the houses rented date from 1939 backwards. The comparison the Minister for Railways drew between the property owner and the man who invested in war bonds is completely specious. The Minister will find on inquiry that the overwhelming number of houses affected by this measure were built prior to 1939.

The Minister for Railways: From which the owners got a very good return.

Mr. PERKINS: Any property the Minister might care to name has increased proportionately; real estate has increased possibly to a greater extent. If the money had been invested in vacant land around Perth the people would have done better. The Minister for Housing had better reconcile himself to the fact that he cannot discriminate greatly between one type of investment and another, unless he wishes to kill the attractiveness of a particular type of investment.

A great deal of damage has been done to the attractiveness of real estate as an investment, the result being that the Housing Commission is left with the job of accommodating the larger proportion of the people, and many of us would have liked to see private enterprise do this. In consequence, we are finding that great amounts of loan money for various works, such as building schools and hospitals in which members on the other side are interested, are not available, and these works are far behind schedule. The Minister for Works has often given me that reply when I pressed for work to proceed in parts of the State I represent.

The Minister for Works: Do you not think that is true?

Mr. PERKINS: It is perfectly true. Obviously loan money cannot be used twice. If it is used to build houses, there will be that much less money available from loan funds for other works. That is the direct result of making investments in housing unattractive to private landowners. I disagree with the Minister's argument that money invested in houses in 1939 has appreciated, while money invested in war loans in that year has not.

Mr. McCULLOCH: If the basic wage had not been pegged a couple of months ago, this discussion would not be taking place. Regarding houses built and let before 1939, I consider that some of the landlords should be paying the tenants for living in them. In Kalgoorlie some landlords have not even attempted to make the necessary repairs and maintenance to houses let. In 1927 landlords in Kalgoorlie were shifting the houses to the marginal wheatbelt areas because people were walking out of them. But just prior to 1939 those same houses were brought back to Kalgoorlie and let for 30s. a week.

Those landlords do not worry very much about these regulations, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out. They do not mind going to court. The tenants have been living in those houses for years prior to 1951, but in 1951 landlords increased the rents without reference to the Fair Rents Court. I know this type of house because I bought three myself in 1928 for £100, and they are still standing today. I sold them long ago, unfortunately, but the landlords of those houses are getting £1 a week as rent today. That is the type of landlord who is not being unjustly dealt with, if the rent is pegged at 30 per cent. above the 1939 rental.

We must also have regard to soldiers in Korea, or soldiers who lost their lives there and whose wives or families live in the State. What will happen to such people? If this amendment is agreed to, the landlords can evict these people.

Mr. Perkins: If they go to the Housing Commission they will not get much consideration. They will have to pay the full rent.

Mr. McCULLOCH: The Housing Commission should be on the same basis as anybody else in regard to rent. In Kwinana

there are nearly 200 houses standing empty; these could have been erected in other areas where they would be occupied by now. Unless people work in Kwinana, they are not prepared to rent them. There is no comparison between the cost of building in 1939 and in 1953. The cost in 1953 would be between £3,000 and £4,000, but then the landlord can charge what he likes; he is not pegged. I oppose the amendment made by the Council.

Mr. HEARMAN: A good deal has been said about the position if this Bill is lost. That will be the position if the Minister does not bargain in the conference of managers and sticks rigidly to the intentions he expressed when introducing the Bill. If the Minister is prepared to make a concession, then, as members of this Committee, we are entitled to some idea of the lines along which he intends to proceed. I remind members of a similar position two years ago when the managers of both Houses met. The result was a very much hashed-up Bill. Clauses which had not been envisaged by either House were inserted. That is an undesirable state of affairs. For that reason, I hope the Minister will give us some indication of how far he is prepared to go.

The Minister for Housing: Can you give me some indication of the extent to which the conference managers from the Legislative Council are prepared to go?

Mr. HEARMAN: That is a ridiculous proposition, because I am not a member of that House, I am a member of this Assembly and I am permitted to discuss what takes place here, but I am not permitted to discuss what transpires in another place. It was said that if this amendment is agreed to there will be no control. But let us remember that the State Housing Commission is the biggest landlord in the State. If the commission is of the opinion that the situation is getting out of hand then, as the biggest landlord, it can take remedial measures. By and large, the State is charging higher rents than private landlords.

The Minister for Housing: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. HEARMAN: In some country towns there is difficulty today in finding tenants for Commonwealth-State rental homes because the rents are higher than those charged by private landlords. The Minister will not deny that there is difficulty in finding tenants for country homes.

The Minister for Housing: I suggest no one can go beyond saturation point.

Mr. HEARMAN: Which means there are some houses to spare. It is a desirable state of affairs in many ways, because it becomes a safeguard. When there is a surplus, exploitation becomes more difficult. Economic factors decide where a person works. Many people have to live on the Goldfields because they work there. Sometimes they live in a particular locality because of other considerations, which may vary. Today there is plenty of work in the country. There are many farmers who have gone to great lengths to provide new houses for married couples. They have great difficulty in getting them.

Mr. Lawrence: You are now suggesting regimentation of the worker.

Mr. HEARMAN: I am suggesting those are the factors which tend to influence people in moving from one place to another. If a person wants a house badly he will take a job anywhere in order to get a home. It is most unlikely that we will reach the position where there is a surplus of houses in every town in the State.

Mr. Lawrence: Do you think we should stop people building in the country?

Mr. HEARMAN: I am not suggesting that. I am suggesting we should encourage the private investor. It has been indicated that in certain areas the State Housing Commission will find great difficulty in improving the situation. This amendment will tend to encourage the private investor.

Mr. YATES: As regards ex-servicemen, and widows as a result of the war in Korea, not a great number is affected, but when we moved a couple of years ago to improve the protection, we did not know what the future would hold and legislation was provided more to meet the needs of the time than of the future. Had the war in Korea expanded, it was felt that some protection should be given under the Act. That danger has disappeared, and the potential loss of life there is not as great as it was, so that the few concerned in this State would not have a big effect on the housing problem. If a war widow is affected, provision is made under the War Service Homes Division whereby she may obtain a war service home on a very low deposit.

Mr. McCulloch: And wait for five years.

Mr. YATES: Such cases have come before the R.S.L. committee.

Mr. Lawrence: What is the present position?

Mr. YATES: There are individual instances of hardship such as a widow with children having no accommodation, and it has been possible for her to get accommodation through the emergency committee of the War Service Homes Division, and a good job has been done These widows are also assisted by Legacy and in other ways and not one case has been neglected. Accommodation has been found for all.

The Minister for Housing: Up to what date?

Mr. YATES: Up to the time I relinquished membership of the committee last July.

The Minister for Housing: The Commonwealth has made certain decisions since then.

Mr. YATES: The period in which one could get a home has been extended, and that is a terrible state of affairs. As regards this measure, the position of the R.S.L. is that many landlords are ex-servicemen and in such cases the organisation cannot take sides. Only when an ex-serviceman is the sole party concerned does the league take action.

Nearly four years ago the number of cases dealt with each fortnight was staggering, but that gradually diminished until last July, when the number of individual cases per fortnight had dwindled to two or three, and some of them were not urgent. Therefore we felt that, with the assistance we were receiving, the major problem for ex-servicemen had been overcome. The State president of the R.S.L. recently deplored the action of another place in throwing out some of the important clauses of the Bill. I think I can claim to have housed more people than has any other member.

Mr. Lawrence: I should like to take you up on that.

Mr. YATES: I am referring to the period of seven years that I have been in the House. When the hon. member has been in the House as long, he might exceed my figure. We cannot do the impossible; we cannot conjure houses out of thin air. We have to rely upon the commission because outside finance is not available for the building of private dwellings. This is due to the restrictions that have been imposed on landlords.

The Minister for Housing: What restrictions are there on a man who wants to build a house for the purpose of letting?

Mr. YATES: None now, except the right to get an unsatisfactory tenant to leave.

The Minister for Housing: Only for a limited period.

Mr. YATES: The three months' notice required is quite sufficient to enable a nasty tenant to wreck a home, and that has happened in many instances.

The Minister for Housing: Seven days would be ample time in which to wreck a home if a tenant thought of doing so.

Mr. YATES: But if the period were only seven days, the tenant would probably be occupied in looking for other accommodation. Houses are easier to purchase now—a fact that has not been mentioned. A house has just been sold in South Perth for £2,150 in a street where the land is valued at £600.

Mr. O'Brien: Some of those houses are not worth much more.

Mr. YATES: I am referring to a brick home with two nice bedrooms and a lounge, and it was well worth the price. A seven-roomed house at Scarborough was advertised for a deposit of £375 with vacant possession. Quite a number of houses are being advertised at reasonable prices, and the average man who has not been able to save enough since World War II. to pay a deposit will never become a home-owner.

Conditions of sale are much easier since the control on house-selling was lifted. Today there is open competition, and often terms can be arranged for prospective buyers before the sale takes place. Many people are not of the saving type. I have handled cases where the income of two or three persons in the home was £30 a week and they could not even buy furniture for the home, but they ran a motor-car and patronised races and entertainments. I think the position will settle down in a year or two, and it might be better for the State if we took this step now. If, in 12 months, conditions became worse, members would support the reintroduction of the necessary legislation.

Mr. Lawrence: That would be a considerable risk.

Mr. YATES: But there is a risk of losing this measure now.

Mr. McCulloch: The basic wage has been pegged.

Mr. YATES: That is unfortunate, but we cannot do anything about it. The Government received more support for the Bill from our members in this Chamber than from those in another place, but we have mentioned year by year that action must be taken towards lifting these controls.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 3. Clause 4, page 2—Delete all words after the word "amended" in line 20 and substitute the following:—

> by repealing subsection (3) and substituting therefor the following subsection:—
>
> (3) In determining the amount of the rent, the inspector or the court, as the case may be, shall take into consideration—
>
> (a) the annual rates and insurance premiums paid in respect of the premises;
>
> (b) the estimated annual cost of repairs, maintenance and renewals of the premises and fixtures thereon;
>
> (c) the estimated amount of annual depreciation in the value of the premises and the estimated time per annum during which the premises may be vacant;
>
> (d) the capital value of the premises as at the date of the application and, having regard to the nature and locality of the premises and

the purposes for which the premises are leased or are to be leased, what is a fair net annual return (being not less than three per centum per annum and not more than eight per centum per annum) on such capital value;

(e) any services provided by the lessor or lessee in connection with the lease;

(f) any obligation on the part of the lessee to effect improvements, alterations or repairs to the premises at his own expense;

(g) any amount charged as a bonus, fine, premium or other like sum;

(h) the relationship of the rent to the whole of the premises;

(i) such other factors as the inspector or the court may consider relevant.

Provided that during the term of any lease of premises which has been or may be entered into for a fixed term exceeding twelve months, the rent shall not be altered during the period of that fixed term.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The clause proposed that an inspector might determine the rent, which would have overcome some of the objections about people having no desire to embarrass themselves by appearing before a court. It also provided that an inspector of his own motion might investigate premises and determine fair rents. The Council has deleted those provisions and inserted a long schedule laying down the basis upon which an inspector or the court—evidently the Council has no objection to people approaching the court—shall determine the amount of rent to be paid. It is thought that another place has gone to excess in this matter in that it would permit rents to be increased substantially. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. WILD: Members on this side of the House agree that there should be a considerable lift in rents and therefore I must support the amendment.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 4. Clause 5—Delete.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

This Chamber decided that there should be a period of 90 days' notice given in respect of tenancies entered into since the 31st December, 1950, and we feel that that is fair.

Mr. WILD: As I pointed out previously, the present position is such that hardly anyone can get before the court under 70 days. There is first the 28 days' notice and then all the machinery of the law must be put in motion, the result being that it is anything up to 70 days before the case is heard. If a further 90 days were added it would be the best part of six months before the landlord could state his case. I support the amendment.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 5. Clause 6—Delete.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

We know of instances where persons have regained possession of homes and within a week or so have sold them subject to occupation by the purchaser at the expiration of 12 months. This clause lays down that when a person has sworn a statutory declaration and has had his premises returned to him, he should not be permitted to dispose of them within a period of 12 months except by approaching the court and giving evidence of altered circumstances, following which the court could sanction the transaction.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 6. Clause 7—Delete paragraph (a).

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

This is to a great extent complementary to No. 4.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 7. Clause 7—Delete paragraph (b).

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

This, again, is consequential.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 8. Clause 9—Delete.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

This Chamber agreed to some token extension of consideration to wives of deceased ex-servicemen, and I think we should insist on that protection.

Mr. WILD: I think I agreed, previously, that there was no objection to the provision, particularly as the Minister said so few people would be involved, and it appears that the Housing Commission would not be called upon for more than an extra half dozen houses in a year.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 9. Clause 10—Delete.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

It is necessary that the rent inspector should have power to enter premises and call for certain documents and records in order to determine a fair rent. The Government knows the great majority of landlords play the game, but there are a few such as the famous or infamous Clara Spanney, who has been arraigned before the court on a number of occasions and such people, if the amendment were agreed to, would be able to refuse to produce documents, with the result that there would be no evidence to support a charge.

Mr. WILD: Once rent-controls are lifted I am sure that within a few months the position will level itself out and the need for rent inspectors will practically disappear. There are many big houses at present occupied by only one or two people and once owners know they can get back to common law, most of those houses will be let at a fair rental on today's basis. If, on the other hand, we continue this legislation, such homes will not be available and rent inspectors will be required in the case of houses subdivided by unscrupulous people who charge outrageous rents. I support the amendment.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

No. 10. New Clause—Insert a new clause after Clause 3 to stand as Clause 4 as follows:—

4. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section eleven of the principal Act is amended by deleting subparagraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) and by inserting the following words after the word "exceed" in line five:—

a rent producing or calculated to produce an annual amount equivalent to a gross return of six per centum per annum on the capital value of the premises as at the thirty-first day of December, one thousand nine hundred and fifty-three and in addition increased outgoing, if any.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: This final amendment proposes to introduce a formula for rents in respect of premises which were let prior to the 31st December, 1950. Actually there are two classes of premises: Those let before the date mentioned in the Act and those let after it. I ask the Committee to disagree with the Legislative Council's amendment. I move—

That the amendment be not agreed to.

Mr. WILD: I cannot see how we can reconcile the statement that we can continue to have two houses side by side, the tenants of which are paying different rents. I know of one instance relating to a duplex home. One of the houses was let in 1939 and the tenants are paying 25s. a week for it. The other tenant who has been in occupation of the other half of the building since 1950 is paying £3 5s. a week.

Such a difference in rental cannot be justified. All the Legislative Council's amendment is endeavouring to do is to level out such a state of affairs. We are trying to substantiate an idea that was brought into practice by a piece of legislation introduced as a wartime measure. At present there is no incentive for a man to go out and do something for himself and it is time that we gave him some incentive. I support the amendment.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment not agreed to.

Resolutions reported and the report adopted.

A committee consisting of Mr. Lapham, Mr. Court and the Minister for Housing drew up reasons for not agreeing to the Council's amendments.

Reasons adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—AGRICULTURE PROTECTION BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with an amendment.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 11th December.

HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT (Mt. Lawley) [10.27]: The Bill has, principally, two objectives. The first is to simplify licensing by local authorities and enable them to obtain the fees even although, in some cases, persons may have neglected to renew their licences when they became due. The Minister explained fully the provisions of the Bill in regard to that proposal, and I see no reason for me to repeat those explanations. I agree with the provisions and I intend to support them.

The main provision in the Bill is that dealing with the imposition of penalties for reckless and drunken driving. At present, for the first offence of reckless driving the penalty is £20, and for a subsequent offence £50 or imprisonment for three months. The Bill proposes to increase the penalties by imposing a fine of £50 for the first offence and for any subsequent offence a fine not exceeding £100 or imprisonment for three months, and the court, before whom the offender is convicted, shall suspend any licence held by the convicted person for such period as it thinks fit, but in no case for less than three months.

There is a distinction between this provision and that for drunken driving inasmuch as the court can impose a suspension for such period as it thinks fit for the offence of reckless driving, so long as it is not less than three months, whereas specific periods are provided in each case for drunken driving. I cannot see any objection to granting the court discretion to suspend the licence for longer than three months. I think that the Minister might have made a maximum period, but he has not seen fit to do so, leaving it instead to the discretion of the magistrate. However, as I have said on many occasions in this House, I think we can trust the magistrates to use their discretion wisely, and I am not opposing this provision.

Section 32 of the Act contains the following:—

> (1) Any person who, when driving or attempting to drive, or when in charge of a motor vehicle in motion on a road, or when in charge of a horse or other animal or drove of animals on a road, is under the influence of drink or drugs to such an extent as to be incapable of having proper control of the vehicle or the horse or other animal or drove of animals, shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

The penalty at present is £50, or imprisonment with hard labour for three months, and the court shall, for a first offence, suspend the offender's licence for three months; for a second offence, for six months; and for a third offence permanently. The new provision imposes a fine for a first offence, not exceeding £50, or imprisonment for three months, and the suspension of the licence for three months. For the second offence the fine is £100, or imprisonment for six months, and the suspension is for 12 months. For the third offence the fine is £200, or imprisonment for 12 months, and the suspension is permanent.

The penalties have been very severely increased, and I am just wondering whether a distinction should not have been made between a horse-drawn vehicle and a motor-car. When these penalties were under consideration, the Minister probably had in mind more particularly the danger to the public from one in charge of such a dangerous vehicle as a motorcar. Of course, it might be said that anyone driving a cart is a menace to road users, if he is under the influence of liquor. That is so, because, under certain conditions, someone in a cart or other horse-drawn vehicle, who is unable properly to control it, can be an absolute menace and cause loss of life. So probably the Minister was justified in bringing down this provision, although I think he could have given more consideration to the matter.

There is no provision for penalties that will be a further deterrent, and I have considered whether there should not be included a similar provision to that dealing with inebriates under Section 160 of the Licensing Act. I propose therefore to submit an amendment to provide that the magistrate, in his discretion, may prohibit a person, on conviction, from being sold or supplied with liquor by a licensee for a period not exceeding two years, the period to commence from such date as the magistrate shall think fit.

It is a difficult problem. We should try to prevent people from getting into a position where they can be a menace both to themselves and to the public. It must be remembered that the livelihood of a large number of people depends on their possession of a driver's licence, and the penalty of suspension of a licence is for them infinitely more severe than it is for those who earn their livelihood by some other means. If a man's living is obtained by his driving a car or a truck a disqualification for twelve months is a terrific penalty. I think that, if possible we should try, to some degree, to protect people from themselves. A disqualification for twelve months for a second offence might be an extremely heavy penalty, not only on the man himself, but on his wife and family also.

I have in mind pitiful cases that were brought before me, when I was Attorney General, by married women with families who were dependent on the bread-winner who had lost his means of livelihood because of the removal of his licence. However, I fully appreciate that we have to do the best we can to make the penalty such that it will be a deterrent, and will perhaps prevent someone from committing a very much worse offence than merely that of drunken driving, because such driving can very easily result in a charge of manslaughter or some other serious offence.

There are one or two other little provisions in the Bill. The Act is being amended to facilitate the making of regulations in connection with traffic lights and also in connection with alteration of the limit of weight that a truck may carry, even though it has been issued with a licence for a certain weight. Although such a licence is held, under certain circumstances it may be advisable that that should be altered, and provision is made in the Bill that there can be a variation in the permitted weight from time to time even during the currency of the licence. I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 9—agreed to.

Clause 10—Section 32 amended:

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be added:—

(iv) In addition to all other penalties, as provided by paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) hereof, to have an order made that no licencee under the Licensing Act, 1911-1952, shall sell or supply to him any liquor for not exceeding the space of two years, commencing from such date as may be ordered.

Upon such an order being made, the provisions of Section 160, Subsections (3), (4) and (5) of the Licensing Act, 1911-1952, shall apply as if the subsections had been specifically repeated and enacted by this Act.

I explained the object of this amendment, which is practically to put a man under the "Dog Act" if the magistrate thinks fit. I have no strong conviction as to whether the penalty should be imposed for a first or a second offence. The effect of the amendment will be that the magistrate may, in addition to imposing any other penalty, order that a man shall not be supplied by a licensee for a period of two years commencing at any date. I have incorporated the three provisions in the Act. The magistrate would have power to cancel so much of the penalty as relates to the prohibition against being supplied with liquor. If a man were well behaved for three months, he might have that portion of the sentence suspended.

The Minister for Transport: Only the prohibition portion.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: In addition to being regarded as a penalty period, this might be looked on as a reform period. As it does not propose to interfere with the penalties provided in Section 32, I have no objection to it.

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

Clauses 11, 12, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Council with an amendment.

BILL—JUDGES' SALARIES AND PENSIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [10.52] in moving the second reading said: The salaries of judges were last fixed in 1950, and legislation for the purpose was introduced at that time. The maximum rates fixed then were £3,000 for the Chief Justice, and £2,600 for the puisne judges. As the 1950 amendment fixed the maximum salaries of judges, they have remained at that maximum ever since.

In other words, the judges have not benefited as they would had their salaries been subject to the same adjustment as were those of Public Service officers who are not under statutory control or control by the Executive Council. If the salaries of the judges had been under the same system as those of the ordinary Public Service officers, they would, at this date, have risen, in the case of the Chief Justice, to £3,300 and in the case of puisne judges to £2,900. The major factor in bringing about those increases would have been the cost of living adjustments.

By the Bill it is proposed to set a new maximum of £3,300 for the Chief Justice, and £2,900 for each of the puisne judges. It is also proposed to provide for variations in the rates in accordance with the cost of living adjustments. It must be clearly understood that no cost of living adjustment will be applied to these salaries unless granted to all workers coming under the Arbitration Court. In other words, in a period such as we are in at present, when cost of living adjustments are suspended, there will be no addition to the salaries of the judges because of any increase in the cost of living. Adjustments will only be applied if the State Arbitration Court grants an increase which has taken place in a particular quarter.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Is this the same principle as that which applies to parliamentary salaries?

The PREMIER: Yes, that is correct. When the Bill is in Committee, I propose to amend one of the clauses as it provides, in part, that the proposed increases shall apply from the 1st July this year. I shall move to provide that the increases shall apply from the 1st January, 1954. There will therefore be no retrospective granting of increases.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: It is proposed to increase the salaries, but there is a backlag in regard to basic wage adjustments.

The PREMIER: The backlag runs back to 1950, but it is not proposed to date the increases from 1950, or from any time between now and then, but to apply the full increase of £300 a year from the 1st January next. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (ALLOWANCES AND SALARIES ADJUSTMENT).

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam) [10.58] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is very similar to the one I have just introduced. It proposes to amend the Audit Act, the Stipendiary Magistrates Act and the Public Service Act. The amendments will increase the present maximum salary of the Public Service Commissioner from £2,050 to £2,150, and of the stipendiary magistrates from £1,550 to a maximum range of £1,550-£1,700. The Auditor General's present salary is £2,000. He has moved up £300 from 1950 because he was then on £1,700. He has been entitled to annual increments which have taken him to £2,000. Consequently, he is not entitled to any increase at this stage. There will, therefore, be no increase at this time in his salary.

However, the Public Service Commissioner will, for reasons I stated in connection with the previous Bill, go from his present maximum of £2,050 to £2,150. In 1950, he was on a salary of £1,850, so he has also had the £300 made up to him, some of it by automatic increases and the balance by cost of living adjustments. Stipendiary magistrates will come under the same principle if the Bill becomes law. The measure also contains a new principle which members might find acceptable. It is that, instead of always coming to Parliament in connection with salaries covered by this legislation, the Governor will have power to fix a new maximum at any time it is considered reasonable to do so. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Ross McLarty, debate adjourned.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1953-54.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from an earlier stage of the sitting, on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates, Mr. Moir in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £6,079:

HON. C. F. J. NORTH (Claremont) [11.3]: I listened to the speeches of the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Country Party, and I think they covered the main points sufficiently. Therefore I will not mention the points they made but will have something to say on subjects adjacent to the main debate. Firstly, I would like to deal with the question of the proposed alterations of the Constitution. This subject was dealt with by the Leader of the Opposition and in the Senate recently Senator Seward said that he thought the Constitution should be amended in certain directions. There are three ways in which I think the Constitution should be amended. Firstly, there is a need for some means to enable the States to have uniform legislation for certain laws, for instance, divorce laws; secondly, there is need for an amendment to the Constitution to deal with the financial problems of the State and the Commonwealth, which question has been raised on many occasions; and, thirdly, there is an important need to have a change in the Constitution as regards the question of loan moneys for the development of States.

In 1940 I moved a motion, which was strongly supported by Sir Norbert Keenan and Sir Ross McDonald, stating that the Grants Commission should be given permission or extended powers to make recommendations as regards loan works in the various States. Under the Financial Agreement the States receive moneys in accordance with a certain formula and New South Wales heads the list, with Victoria second and Tasmania last. Obviously the younger States in which there is a greater potentiality of development, can never catch up with the older States because of the population position . If members follow the various meetings of the Loan Council they will notice that New South Wales always heads the list of loans and Western Australia is one above the last on the list. It is quite obvious that the various States have different potentialities for development and in Western Australia we have a greater opportunity for expansion in the future. But so long as we are placed in the position in which we find ourselves today, because of this existing population influence, we will never get an opportunity to carry out the necessary developmental work.

As members know, the Grants Commission can make grants for disabilities but in the motion I moved in 1940 I suggested that the commission be given power to make recommendations to the Loan Council for money to be allocated for certain developmental work in the States. If that could be done, the Loan Council would receive an unbiassed report similar to that which is now submitted to the Federal Government in connection with various grants for disabilities. We have a need for developmental work in this State but we have no means of enabling loans to be granted. Since 1940 the Federal Government has created a new portfolio, namely, National Development and that fits in with my ideas. But there is still no provision which will enable some committee to travel round Australia and recommend

to the Commonwealth Government that certain States be granted loans for developmental works.

It would be possible for the Grants Commission, as it travels around Australia, to co-opt engineers to examine the various works in the States. There is no need for me to tell members what works I have in mind because they have been mentioned by the Premier on many occasions. The Premier and other members have discussed certain developmental works that could be proceeded with if the money were available. Since the motion I moved that the Grants Commission be given power to recommend loan expenditure for the States, the problem has been taken up, to some extent, by private enterprise. Only in the last few years we have witnessed certain undertakings commencing in this State, such as Kwinana, the B.H.P. steelworks, the cement works and now the new oil-drilling enterprise. There is no need for me to discuss the question from the angle of private enterprise because members know that they have already taken some hand in our developmental work.

But if the Grants Commission were empowered to make recommendations for loan expenditure the necessary ancillary public works, which must follow projects such as Kwinana, could have been undertaken without any worry. If this is not done, we will have to think of some other way to enable the States to move forward according to their actual resources and not on a population basis as it is today. I know that today States are given permission to float loans outside the formula in certain directions. For instance, in the West the State Electricity Commission floated a loan for its developmental work. That is the first of its kind in Western Australia although there have been a number of such loans in the Eastern States. Many millions of pounds are allotted in that way for works which really do not come under the Loan Estimates but are separate jobs.

There is enormous development ahead of Australia, and particularly in this State, in view of the huge migration programme —and there is a good reason behind that. All economists who speak on this matter recognise that it is impossible for Australia to finance itself in its huge developmental programme and they agree that it will be necessary, from a public works point of view, for extra money to be obtained from America, Great Britain and elsewhere. Recently some money was obtained from Switzerland. The reason is obvious; the resources of this country, by themselves, are not sufficient, even though we have £1,000,000,000 in the savings bank. That sum is not sufficient to finance the development of this country and, in addition, we have a huge defence programme which is costing us £200,000,000 a year.

So I say it is necessary for the Government, and for all other Governments, to find some way of enabling an independent body to be set up to travel around Australia and recommend finance for necessary public works. At present the Premier or Deputy Premier of this State has to plead with the Commonwealth Government for an allocation of £1,000,000 or £2,000,000 for works at Kwinana, or for any other purpose. There is no denying the fact that if the same sort of system applied with regard to grants, we would have similar trouble every year. That problem has been overcome because grants are now made automatically and on a certain basis. I think it would be a simple matter for the Commonwealth to draft legislation to enable the Grants Commission to co-opt certain engineers or experts to examine public works and make recommendations upon them.

Mr. Lawrence: Would you suggest that they be public servants or private individuals?

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: I would not go so far as to say which. I am not making specific statements but am merely submitting what I consider to be the germ of an idea. Sir Norbert Keenan made a fine speech on this subject in 1940. He supported the proposal I submitted then and his speech is recorded in "Hansard." He made some interesting forecasts as to what might happen after the war and much of what he said has come true. Some people say, "It might be necessary to set up another body." People do not like too many boards—even the Premier does not like them—but if the Grants Commission can do the job it will avoid the necessity of creating another board.

The Grants Commission could undertake the task quite well in conjunction with its other work. When it visits the States the Ministers concerned could show members of the commission what works they have in mind and the commission could co-opt experts, study the problems and make recommendations. Some people argue—and "The West Australian" submitted a similar argument—that the works on the Ord River and other rivers that are to be eventually dammed, should be held over for some years. It is not a satisfactory situation when the Premier has to go to the Loan Council or the Commonwealth Government, and I consider that some body should be between the two so that it could make the necessary recommendations.

I noticed an interesting statement in the "Daily News" a few weeks ago and it has become even more interesting now that oil has been discovered and we are showing further interest in the development of this country. The article states—

> WASHINGTON, Sun. (AAP): The United States was pictured today as a nation whose natural resources were draining away fast while the population increased at 300 an hour.

> "We are mining our fields, forests and water resources at a suicidal rate," said the Population Reference Bureau, a private study organisation.
>
> This meant that science would have to find ways to tap the vast reservoirs of minerals far below the earth's surface and in the oceans. The problem was world-wide.
>
> The world could not merely hope that future generations would have the ingenuity to provide new sources of natural wealth or substitutes.
>
> Unless technology was applied to control the birth rate as well as the death rate, it was not likely that the world would gain the breathing spell needed to develop a rock-sea-water-sunlight economy which could nurture 5,000,000,000 people.

The point there is that some people say America is now developing so fast that she is existing on her reserves. That need not worry us for very many years to come. But I throw out the suggestion as to what could happen to a country when it goes ahead too fast. The only other points I wish to make in view of the heat of the night and the lateness of the session, are in relation to the complaints from my own people. I want to see if I can build them into questions of State import.

When our electors complain, some of their ideas may be very good and could quite easily lead to big projects. They are our masters and when they want things done, they come to us with certain ideas which we put forward to the Government. One of my electors was very interested in what the member for Greenough had to say when he was Minister. He referred to the fact that the water supply people were preparing a plan to provide water for a million people in Perth.

This caused a great deal of interest to the electors in my district, and they wanted to know where the water would come from. It staggered them. I asked the present Minister if he could let me know from his calculations what population we could really carry. I think it would be a very good idea to copy the American system of using salt water to develop our water supplies when the plan is perfected. My question was what would be the population basis in the Kimberleys, in the Great Southern and in the South-West.

No answers could, however, be given. It was said in the answer that the Government had been testing some rivers for years in the South-West, but nothing was known by the people in this State as to what water could be made available to support the industries that might operate here. I think that is a matter that should be followed up by the department concerned. The rainfall in Western Australia is really very large, having regard to the enormous areas that we have to operate.

Even if we take off half a million square miles, there are still thousands of square miles with a very good rainfall indeed. If we compare the rainfall of those areas—and I have all the figures in a certain official work which is quite good—with the other States of the Commonwealth, we will find that Western Australia compares very favourably indeed. We are very often told that the rainfall in this State is far below that of the more lucky States in the East.

Another question which was brought to my notice was that of fluorine in water. People have sent me important letters and are worried about the injection of fluorine into the water supply of the State. While it does do some good to teeth in certain cases, it has been found to undermine the health of people later on. I asked questions and obtained answers to the effect that it was not known whether it would be allowed or not. It has been allowed in some places and refused in others. There is a great deal of heat being engendered now and the suggestion is that it should not be permitted in our reservoirs. Before the matter is finally decided I hope the Minister will give us an opportunity to discuss it. It could perhaps be done by regulation, although I do not know whether it is possible.

I think it might be a little risky for the State to be tricked into using fluorine. Some people possibly believe there is a lot of fluorine to be sold somewhere in the world and the various companies want to unload these fluorides into the different reservoirs. There was a report that Melbourne would have to spend £50,000 a year to deal with their water supply if they put fluorine into it. So it is a costly business, although £50,000 might not be much for a city like Melbourne.

Another matter is that not long ago I was approached by a panic-stricken lady who woke up one morning to find that the State Electricity Commission employees had arrived and had half erected a tremendous transformer at the back of her garden. She said it was two storeys high. She was very worried about this because she felt it took away from the beauty of her property. As always, members of Parliament are approached as a last resort in these matters. The transformer was half-way up. Anyway, I spoke to Mr. Edmondson about it and he was very co-operative and advised the lady not to sell her house because he proposed to move the transformer further back where it would do no harm to her property.

A further important matter which was raised was the question of the metropolitan area being criss-crossed by poles and wires. If we are to have a beautiful city—and we talk about it enough—there must be a move to do what has been done in Forrest Place and Riverside Drive and in some of the bigger States. It has also been done as it relates to telephone wires

in the Claremont and Cottesloe areas. The mayor of Cottesloe and I were very fortunate in being able to get these telephone wires placed underground. I do believe things could be arranged whereby these hideous poles and wires in the metropolitan area could be done away with and be replaced by an underground system of wiring.

Mr. Yates: They are very dangerous in some cases.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: Things are moving fast. The member for Cottesloe referred to the helicopter age. Residents in my electorate have gone out from their homes to find that live electric wires are lying around after a bad storm.

Mr. Yates: A young schoolboy was killed a short while ago.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: The question arises as to whether the cost is greater in putting these conduits under the ground than by having jarrah poles which have to be replaced from time to time, because of ants and for other reasons. I have an idea as to how this can be accomplished; the main difficulty is, of course, finance. My suggestion would include the Tourist Department, when it eventually develops. I know at present it is under a slight cloud because of immigration.

While there is immigration we are not likely to have too much in the way of a tourist trade. But when we do get right down to the tourist problem and are making money from it in Western Australia—just as other countries with less than we have to offer are doing—then the resulting revenue can be used for this purpose. It would beautify the metropolitan area if these poles were done away with and an underground wiring system was established.

Perth could very easily develop into the Paris of the southern seas. I spoke to Mr. Edmondson and he was very interested in the matter of having underground transformers similar to those they have in foreign countries like Holland, Denmark, and New York. They have huge concrete boxes underground. If one looks around the metropolitan area one will find that it is impossible to take a decent picture of Perth, whether it is a movie or otherwise, without it being ruined by these crooked poles and wires all round the place. The town planning authority might be concerned, but the main thing is, of course, to get the finance, and I think that will eventually come from the tourist trade which could quite easily start in a big way later on.

Another very important question which is raised is that of Swan River pollution. This is a big problem now and is out of the hands of the people of Claremont. People all round the metropolitan area are agitating for the river to be cleaned up. We had questions asked in our district and it led to the setting up of the river committee which is now operating. I am glad that the Minister for Works is giving adequate consideration to keeping the river clean in future. This will be supported by everybody in Western Australia. When references to the matter appeared in "The West Australian" about ten years ago, I had letters from all over Western Australia from people writing in about the river. They had only just seen a simple question asked in the House. I would say that the electors are more interested in our river than in a great many other matters.

The question of traffic lights is moving very fast. The people of Claremont took that matter up in 1946 and we are hoping that in a few months the city will have further lights installed, and that the suburbs, including the much-discussed Stirling Highway in my district, and in Nedlands, will also have these lights eventually.

Argentine ants represent another very important subject. It is quite easy to laugh off this matter, but it is definitely becoming serious. It was published in the East recently that our metropolitan area has an infestation of 40 square miles and Sydney has an infestation of four square miles. Some people are inclined to think that it will cost too much to eradicate the pest and that it is impossible to deal with them now. The Government is doing a very good job in providing cheap materials such as D.D.T. and chlordane.

I think there is a great need for more warnings to be issued to people who have not given the matter any thought at all. Three days ago my neighbour said his ceiling was black with ants; his meat was also black with them. For five years he has been trying to get rid of them and just as he thinks he has got the upper hand, they are back again in 24 hours. Where I live there are open spaces and these ants are becoming a menace.

It will cost the State many thousands of pounds unless some move is made now to eradicate this pest. The only way that it can be done is for the matter to be brought to the notice of the householder by perhaps the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Health; it could perhaps be done by a folder in the rate notices. Many people are indifferent to this subject until it is too late. Only this week Melbourne University was flooded out with this nuisance. The ants were in the baths and beds, and the university is now spending a lot of money to clean up the premises.

The last point I wish to raise is the control of nuisances, noise and dust. We heard an example of it from the member for South Fremantle last night. There was a provision in the Factories Act to prevent nuisances and noises, but until the town-planning scheme is fully developed and zoning is complete, there will

be many cases of nuisances, neighbour to neighbour, arising from the use of saws or cement mixing machines. That is because there is no zoning, or if there is zoning the local authority cannot shift the nuisance because by so doing a great loss will be suffered by the business concerned. There is no overriding authority to deal with this question. Neighbour to neighbour nuisances will gradually worsen until such time as the town-planning scheme is fully in operation. I am glad the previous Government made the move to implement that scheme, and the present Government is carrying it on. In years to come it will cost many thousands of pounds to carry through this job.

I have an interesting quotation from a newspaper dealing with a matter which has received constant attention in the Press, namely, that Australians do not work enough, they should do better and they should follow other countries. We all agree that more production is necessary. Occasionally one reads something in the Press to the credit of the Australian workers. The article I have referred to states—

> Mr. Menzies points to blessings. Australians had to spend less time earning the equivalent of a loaf of bread or a pound of meat than workers of any other country.

How refreshing it is to hear that. For many years we have been critical of ourselves, and perhaps rightly so, but it is nice to read something like this when a comparison is drawn with other countries. It goes on—

> To attain the Australian standard of living an American would have to work seven per cent. longer, a Canadian 25 per cent. longer, a Frenchman three times longer, an Italian four times longer and a Russian over seven times longer.

Those figures are taken from a world-wide survey made by the American Department of Labour, and so they are official. That is an interesting line of thought because a great many people have the idea that we should do more work and increase production. This angle shows that with less work than others, we are getting better results. It really means that our production is more efficient than anywhere else in the world. After I have spoken, some members may quote from another newspaper showing quite the contrary. With those remarks I support the Estimates..

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.38 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday 17th December, 1953.

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