

# Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 28th September, 1948.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### HOSPITALS.

*As to Perth Nurses' Home, Rented Accommodation, etc.*

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Who were the Government representatives on the committee which met the City Council to consider the use of the land opposite the hospital in Wellington-street and to discuss generally the best use of the land adjoining the hospital?

(2) What reply was sent to the City Council's letter of about July, 1946, following this discussion?

(3) Has the Government yet authorised the erection of a nurses' home—

(a) If so, what policy is the Government adopting in regard to the trained staff living in the home;

(b) if not, when is the erection of a home to be authorised?

(4) Where is the nursing staff now accommodated?

(5) What sum is spent annually for the rent of premises used for the accommodation of nurses?

(6) How many of the nursing staff now reside outside the hospital accommodation?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) Under Secretary for Health; Under Treasurer; Commissioner of Public Health; Town Planning Commissioner; Principal Architect; Chairman, Royal Perth Hospital Committee.

(2) There were various discussions but no finality was reached and no formal reply sent.

(3) No.

(a) The Government considers that with shorter working hours a proportion of the trained nurses may live out.

(b) Uncertain.

(4)—

(a) Royal Perth Hospital quarters.

(b) Forrest House.

(c) Hay-street annexe.

(d) Murray-street annexe.

(e) Infectious Diseases Hospital quarters.

(5)—

(a) Forrest House, £3,035 per annum.

(b) Hay-street, £628 per annum.

(c) Murray-street, £250 per annum.

Total, £3,913.

(6) 19.

### RAILWAYS.

*As to Kalgoorlie-Esperance Service.*

Hon. W. J. MANN (for Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham) asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is the Government aware of the hardship and inconvenience which will be

caused by the change in times for the "Esperance Flyer"—

New time: Depart Kalgoorlie Friday night, arrive Esperance Saturday morning, depart Esperance Saturday night, arrive Kalgoorlie Sunday morning?

(2) As this means that 150 people, mainly women and children, will have the whole of Saturday from 8 a.m. till 7.30 p.m. to wait around in the street with all their luggage, and meals almost unobtainable because of Esperance's limited resources, will the Department reconsider the present decision and give first consideration to the passengers' convenience?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) No change in the times for the "Esperance Flyer" has yet been decided upon as the matter is still in the investigatory stage.

(2) Full consideration will be given to the claims of those concerned before a decision is made.

#### ROADS.

*As to Definition and Government Grants.*

Hon. W. J. MANN (for Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham) asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What is the Government's official definition of—

(a) feeder roads;

(b) developmental roads?

(2) Are Government grants made to local governing bodies for maintenance of these roads?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) Only two classes of roads are recognised under the terms of the Main Roads Act. These are—

(a) Main roads.

(b) Developmental roads.

For a road to become a main road a recommendation by the Commissioner of Main Roads is necessary and approval by the Minister, following which the road is declared a main road by gazettal.

All roads other than declared main roads are regarded as developmental roads under the terms of the Main Roads Act which is the Act under which all road funds are administered by this department.

(2) Not as a general rule.

#### BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1, Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act Amendment.

2, Factories and Shops Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Assembly.

3, Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act Amendment (Continuance).

*Passed.*

#### BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

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

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 22nd September.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [4.40]: This is a very important Bill, and I will deal briefly with its least important aspects first. I could not quite understand why all motor vehicles were again to be controlled. The Federal Minister, Mr. Ward, recently made a Press statement to the effect that all motor vehicles manufactured in soft currency countries would be decontrolled. That would include the Australian motorcar which is to be manufactured by General Motors Holdens Ltd. I can understand control being required over the big and expensive American cars owing to the dollar position, but I cannot understand why English cars, and particularly the lower-powered vehicles, should still be controlled. When the Honorary Minister is replying I would like him to give a further explanation of the necessity for continued control over motor vehicles.

The remainder of the Bill deals with the requirements of farmers, such as tractors, fencing wire and so on, and I believe it is of the utmost importance to our farmers that this Bill should be passed. Nearly 10,000 members of the Farmers' Union have considered the propositions contained in the Bill and the executive of that organisation has circularised members and has had statements published in the Press pointing out the absolute necessity of tractors being con-

trolled. The argument that that control is essential in order to look after the interests and needs of the smaller farmer, is quite sound. It must be borne in mind that there is a large number of new farmers—particularly ex-Servicemen—to whom consideration must be given.

It is obvious that, as a matter of business—despite representations made for the abolition of the controls—the distributing firms will give consideration to their best customers. It is not a business proposition for any such firm to make an equal distribution irrespective of the value of the trade of the various clients concerned. Lack of control would place the small farmer, who may be a long way from Perth, at a grave disadvantage, particularly if he had to come to Perth in order to put his case to the distributing firm. I do not think it is unjust to say that a business man must, of necessity, look after his best customers, and there are many men, farming in a big way, who have been in the habit of purchasing perhaps four or five tractors at a time. Despite what Mr. Dimmitt has said to the contrary, it is only commonsense that a distributing firm will look after a customer of that kind and will not be over enthusiastic about meeting the needs of the small farmer who may not previously have purchased a tractor.

It must be borne in mind by members that the big farmer can look after himself. This House has a duty to the farmers, who desire that the Bill be passed. The Farmers' Union, with 10,000 members, would not pass a resolution requesting that tractors and fencing materials be controlled, if that were not necessary. Despite the criticism of the Bill that has already been voiced, I am satisfied that all members representing country electorates will support the measure. I can understand members representing city electorates being led astray by the statements of the distributors, but those representing rural areas know the difficulties and needs of the farmers and, I am sure, will comply with the request of the Farmers' Union. The same arguments apply, to a lesser degree, to fencing materials, which I understand have not previously been controlled. I am informed that up to date the allocation of fencing materials by the distributing firms has not been satisfactory.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What firms are they?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The distributing firms, I take it.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It is only now that that has been discovered.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I received a letter today stating that the distribution of fencing materials so far has been very unsatisfactory.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: In the past six years there has been no organised opposition to it.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The letter states—

The existing method of allocating fencing materials is not only most unsatisfactory, but also in many cases harsh, while the present method of allocating tractors and motor vehicles has proved generally satisfactory.

We cannot lightly cast that statement aside, and I hope that members representing city areas will listen to the representatives of country districts who, I feel sure, will put up a good case for the farmers being looked after. I can speak with experience as a farmer and I know the difficulties with which the smaller men are faced. In competition with the bigger farmers it is impossible for them to get much satisfaction in matters of this kind. With the present dire shortage of plant and materials, I hope this House will heed the request of the Farmers' Union in order that justice may be done. The executive of that organisation says definitely that the farmers require control over tractors and fencing materials. I support the Bill.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East) [4.50]: I rise to oppose the Bill. It covers the categories in regard to the three types of requirements which are outlined in the Bill, the first being, of course, the control of tractors. So far as road-making traction machinery is concerned, I think that some of the country local authorities at any rate have had a pretty raw deal. I consider the distributors are the people who could possibly deal with the applications just as well, if not better, than the present set-up, notwithstanding the fact that the person who has been dealing with the allocation of these permits has, I know, done a wonderful job with the materials he has had at his disposal. At the same time, I

believe the greatest culprit in dealing with the allocation of tractors is the Government.

It looks as though it will be 12 months before local authorities on the Goldfields will get a certain type of road-making tractor. I was given to understand by one of the leading tractor distributors that they could fulfil some of their requirements better than under the present set-up if it were not for the fact that applications are received and allotted, and then the Government steps in and decides that it wants half-a-dozen tractors. The result is that it upsets the whole of the equilibrium in dealing with those applications for permits, which may have been received over a period of 12 months. Regarding the control of new cars—I claim to have had a little experience in this matter—I think, seeing that one of the Government's cries during the Referendum was for the release of certain materials then under control, this is one particular item that could come under its policy of decontrol because little harm would be done to anyone. In my opinion, the distributors, with their years of experience, are the people best able to judge as to the applicants most entitled to new vehicles.

I think Mr. Ferguson has done a wonderful job with the materials at his disposal and indeed he has allocated new cars, to the best of his knowledge, to the most deserving cases. However, it has been said that mistakes have been made. Mistakes will also be made by the distributors; they cannot be avoided because of the human element. The goldfields areas in particular—not only Kalgoorlie—have had a pretty raw deal to my way of thinking in regard to the allocation of new cars. I move about a fair bit and cannot help but notice the new cars that have been distributed in the metropolitan area. If one takes up the "Trade Protection Gazette" and sees the number of new vehicles that have been allocated to the farmers, one must admit that they have had a pretty fair deal in comparison with other industries and other districts including the goldmining areas. Today when I look around the Goldfields, which used to have the greatest proportion of the latest vehicles in the State, I find that there are very few new cars.

With the lifting of controls, the distributors will have a chance to deal with trade-in vehicles which, to some extent, they are not

able to handle at present. It will give them the means of trading in a decent car on a new one, and in turn someone will get a car that they will be quite content to have instead of a new one. The Bill is not justified, especially after what was heard during the Referendum, and I think the people have had just about enough of controls. If the Government confined itself to the control of foodstuffs generally instead of dealing with cars and so forth, it would be more in the interests of the people. Regarding fencing materials, I do not profess to know very much about that phase, but I would like some amendments agreed to in Committee, which would perhaps satisfy other members in this Chamber and thereby overcome some opposition to the Bill, of which undoubtedly there is plenty at the present time.

Whilst the demand is greater than the supply, as no doubt it is to a large extent, I think it is time that the controls on motor vehicles were lifted because it will be found that in a very short time the bottom will fall out of the market for secondhand cars and the demand for new cars will be only a nine days' wonder. Thus the position will right itself in the very near future.

**HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM** (East) [4.57]: I do not agree that this is the type of Bill that anyone can readily support. It is not the question of controls. There is a new departure introduced in the Bill, and I hope the Honorary Minister will listen to my remarks. He led me to believe—I do not know whether he impressed other members similarly—that the Bill does not impose any control; but it does because automatically we have taken over control by adopting all orders and regulations that were made by the Commonwealth Government. Although some of them have lapsed because the Commonwealth Government has decontrolled certain lines, we have placed them under control again as from the 31st July last.

That is bad enough in itself, but, in addition, we are introducing quite a new form of legislation. The Interpretation Act by Section 36 provides that regulations, rules and bylaws, after they have been made and agreed to by Executive Council and published in the "Government Gazette," shall be laid on the Table of the House. But we are not dealing with regu-

lations in this legislation. We are providing only for orders and we will have no control over them whatever. The danger is that it is not the Minister only that will promulgate these orders, but they may be promulgated by a delegate of the Minister.

Hon. W. R. Hall: The same man again, I suppose.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes; which, to my mind is very dangerous. The handing over of controls by the Commonwealth Government does give the State the power to impose orders, which are more or less rules and thus we have no control over them after they have been introduced. I want the Minister to agree to strike out the word "orders" wherever it appears in the Bill. I do not know who is going to pay these officers. Unless the officers that are today in the Civil Service are provided for under the annual Appropriation Act, there is no provision in this measure for paying their salaries. That is a departure from the practice adopted when dealing with legislation of this sort. At one stage I made the statement that the Commonwealth Government was paying the salaries of the prices control officers, but I do not know whether that applies to the officers who are dealing with the permits covered by this legislation.

I cannot agree with the statement made by Mr. Gray that distributors would be likely to give consideration only to what he described as their best clients. The best clients of today may be the worst clients of tomorrow, and vice versa. During my years of farming life, I have known most prosperous farmers to go to the wall quickly, while smaller men have built up their assets until they took the place of the men who had been regarded as big farmers. I cannot believe that the executive of any commercial concern would be so short-sighted as to look after the affairs of its best clients only. The executive of any enterprising commercial firm would try to get a satisfactory clientele throughout the country and win a good name in every part of the State. There might be individuals who consider that money and materials are all that count in the make-up of human beings, but I cannot imagine that applying to any commercial concern worthy of the name.

The distributors, I believe, could be trusted equally as well as anyone else to deal with this matter. I have not been able to satisfy myself that, in the event of a person applying for a machine from a number of distributors, the orders would not be duplicated or multiplied. If the merchants wanted to retain control of their business, they should set up a man to place the applications in the order in which they were received. After all, the real problem is not the distribution of the machines; it is the insufficiency of machines to meet requirements. Apparently for a very long time we shall not have enough tractors.

Personally, I have very great doubt about the statement that tractors would be released in this State next month and that, by the end of the year, we would have quite a number on the farms. I fear that that announcement will not be lived up to. I do not think we are likely to have sufficient tractors for a considerable time. I only hope that the statement proves to be true and that the tractors will be as satisfactory as we have been told they will. I said a while ago that no tractor had been manufactured in this State. I have learnt that one was tested out on a farm, but that it had been made in Melbourne. I believe that statement to be true. Of course, I do not mean to imply that the same type of machine could not be built here.

I hope the Minister will not introduce a different form of parliamentary control. Members have a responsibility, and while I will not say that I do not believe in any change, I do say that if there is to be a change, let it be for the better and not for the worse. All we shall accomplish by legislating for orders will be to displace regulations, bylaws and rules and deprive the legislature of its powers. I am surprised that this provision should have been passed by another place without its having been noticed by members having an exact idea of the privileges of Parliament.

Possibly, the Minister might be able to tell the House whether, under Clause 4, we shall not be automatically compelled to take over controls that existed at the 31st July. After that date, there was no control of tractors, wire, wire-netting or steel fencing-posts. I also wish to be assured on another matter that is in the mind of Mr. Gray and of other members, namely, that the

small farmer would have little chance of getting requisites unless these controls are retained. Will the State Government get priority as it is getting in other directions?

Local authorities want tractors, particularly of the crawler or caterpillar type, and are getting priority over other people, and I hope we shall not pass on to the Government the right to commandeer all the machines and material coming on to the market from time to time. There are many farmers on the edge of settlement in need of wire, wire-netting and barbed wire but, owing to the prevailing shortages, are unable to procure them. If the Government is to get all supplies reaching the market for use on its experimental stations, the small farmer will be in no better position than he was before.

I hope the Minister will agree to Parliament having the right to control by regulation the officers undertaking the distribution of these supplies. We are asked to approve of the delegation of the Minister's power. While that power is in the hands of the delegate, the Minister will have no authority until he withdraws it. The orders issued by the controller will remain orders, and the Minister will have no right to interfere unless he withdraws the authority from the delegate. To adopt such a practice would be very dangerous, and I hope the House will agree to strike out the word "order" wherever it appears and insert in lieu the word "regulation."

**HON. H. L. ROCHE** (South-East) [5.8]: I am as strongly opposed to the continuance of controls as is anybody inside or outside the House, but we have to recognise that some controls must be temporarily maintained. That is the attitude I adopted the other night when we were dealing with the Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act Amendment (Continuance) Bill; it is a point of view that is held by other members. I think the same attitude should be adopted regarding the Bill now before us and that we should provide machinery for the continued control of the items set out in the measure. The justification for adopting this course is that while we have a tremendous demand for such requirements, we are faced with a marked under-production of those lines. Where machinery and manu-

factured goods such as those specified in the Bill are essential to the producing section of the community, I consider that we are justified in accepting the Government's proposal to maintain the controls.

The Bill provides for the control of tractors, new cars, motor vehicles and wire, but the most necessary is the tractor. It seems to me that the position in relation to fencing-wire is so unsatisfactory that it would be to the advantage of essential users and those in dire need if it were brought under the control of a Government official, for the reason, if for no other, that we may be able to ascertain what is happening to the quantity of wire being imported into and manufactured in Western Australia. I move about my part of the country extensively and, in the last two or three years, I have not seen a coil of new wire, except on one property repurchased by the War Service Land Settlement Board.

Recently Mr. Loton asked questions and was informed that last year alone 1,366 tons of wire had been manufactured in Western Australia, but that only 140 tons of that quantity had gone to war service land settlement. It seems difficult to ascertain where the rest of the wire is going. No doubt it is being put to use somewhere. As a representative of the farming community, I should like to see something better than what is happening at present. The manufacturers claim that they are passing the material on to the distributors, and the distributors say that they are selling to their clients, but so far I have not been able to meet one of the fortunate clients, though there may be some. I think there is justification for an inquiry into the wire position, and possibly control may afford us an opportunity to ascertain how it is being disposed of.

In so far as continuing the control of tractors is concerned, we have to recognise that the position is somewhat more acute in Western Australia than in certain of the Eastern States. Under the lease-lend arrangement, the Government of the United States of America provided the finance and the machinery and had the authority to direct where the machinery should be used. As a result of this, it was largely sent to the Eastern States where there was a large concentration of ex-Ser-

viemen, particularly as it was urged that the production of foodstuffs in the Eastern States should be increased. Of the lease-lend tractors that arrived in Australia, I understand that Western Australia received approximately four per cent. Our percentage of the tractor population of Australia, as far as I have been able to gather, is 13.7. So, during the years of lease-lend, there was a definite lag in the number of tractors received here. At the same time, a correspondingly additional number was allocated to certain of the Eastern States.

During the last three years, the importation of tractors into Western Australia has been 10.6 per cent. of those brought into Australia. If the figure of 13.7 per cent. is correct, it shows that for those three years there was also a definite lag in this State. Taking the particulars for 1944-45, we find there were 7,831 tractors imported into Australia, 603 of which came to Western Australia. That works out at 7.7 per cent. For 1945-46, there were 5,898 tractors imported into Australia, 648 of which came to Western Australia, or 11 per cent. In 1946-47, there were 4,348 tractors imported into Australia, and Western Australia received 667, or 15.3 per cent. Certainly, in that last year our percentage went up so that it exceeded our percentage of the tractor population of Australia. But in 1944-45, when nearly double the number of tractors came into Australia, Western Australia received only 7.7 per cent.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: This Bill does not seek to alter the importations, but only the distribution.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: No-one suggested that it did. It has been argued against the Bill that certain other States of Australia have dropped the control of tractors. I want to make the point that during the operations of lease-lend, and in the last three years, Western Australia has not been receiving its proper quota of the tractors coming into Australia, in accordance with its percentage of the tractor population of the country.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: The Bill will not improve that position.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: No, but it at least justifies the Government of this State taking some action to see that the disposal of tractors is regulated here. I think that is

a complete answer to those members who suggest that, because the other States have abandoned this control, Western Australia should do likewise. Those other States have received many more tractors, on a percentage basis, in the last few years, than has Western Australia. From personal inquiries and from a circular, which I presume all members received, from the Ford company, I gather that somewhere about 70 per cent. of the new tractors coming into Western Australia are going to the wheat belt or the mixed farming areas, which are particularly concerned with the position. I presume that when those organisations, which are recognised as representing the farmers of this country, speak, they have in mind the position more particularly in those districts.

The organisations I refer to are the Farmers' Union, which wants this control continued, temporarily at least, or the power to give effect to this control, and also the land settlement section of the Returned Soldiers' League. Those two bodies are in a position to speak virtually for all the organised farmers in this State. So far as I am aware, there has been no organised opposition to this proposed legislation, except from the distributors of the machines and the business people in the city. If the measure is designed to assist anyone, it is the producers, and it has the approval of the only people who claim to speak for the organised producers of the State. As I have said, the only opposition that I am aware of comes from the distributors, so I think the House must be prepared to pass the Bill in order to protect the people represented by the Farmers' Union and the land settlement section of the R.S.L.

The position with respect to heavy caterpillar tractors for the agricultural areas is, perhaps, more serious than that in regard to wheel tractors. I am told—only by word of mouth, and it is a haphazard guess, no doubt—that there are ten applicants for every heavy caterpillar tractor likely to come into Western Australia within a reasonable time. I inquired about the position from one firm, and I understand that it has had allocated to it, through the dollar pool, and may get by the end of the year, six tractors of 60 to 165 horse power. I am now referring to the heavy tractors that have other uses besides agricultural. An-

other firm has had allocated to it ten tractors ranging from approximately 50 to 100 horse power, and it may get them by the 30th June, 1949. I mention these machines because there is a great demand—which will become even more extensive as time goes on—for them, apart from the agricultural work they would do in cropping, etc., for clearing and dam-sinking. I could place two of these heavy machines amongst farmers in the district where I live.

I submit, in all seriousness, that in circumstances such as these, some control and supervision of the allocation of these tractors is necessary. It may be ten or 20 years before another machine of the same type would be sold to those people—or possibly never. If this matter is left to the business people, the question of goodwill, which has been raised, enters into it. Goodwill is good business, and good business depends on good clients. If a business firm were faced with the prospect of selling a machine to someone who would never need another or to a man who already had £10,000 or £40,000 worth of its plant, I do not think it would have much alternative.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: You grossly misjudge businessmen.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I may. Mr. Dimmitt has this advantage of me, that he has been a businessman, so I cannot talk to him on that basis. It just appeals to me as commonsense. There are not enough tractors to go around, and there will not be for some time to come. The Government has had to make a decision either to let these controls go or to take the necessary action to secure power to exercise some regulation of the disposal of these machines when they reach the State. I think, because of the support the Bill has been given by those representing the farming industry and the rural community, this House cannot do anything else but accept the measure and thereby support the stand the Government has taken.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.25]: I cannot take part in this debate without first twitting the Government on its altered attitude over different items. I read in "The West Australian" this morning that it is the intention of the Government to lift the control over timber; or, as I would put it, to shift the control from it-

self to the timber merchants—and that is a commodity, as I pointed out last week, that is used extensively in the building of homes. I also told the House on the same occasion that the timber position had not improved, because now a person has to wait 12 months on the priority list for a timber-framed house as against eight months a few months ago. Yet, in those circumstances, the Government hands over the distribution of the commodity to the merchants. I cannot understand its attitude on the two questions.

However, as regards this Bill, I am in a very happy position, which is unusual for me in this House, because it has practically no effect on my province. I am, therefore, able to decide my vote according to the debate. I waited rather patiently to hear the case put up against the Bill, but so far there has been only one speaker, and it looked a moment or two ago as if it would go to the vote. I admit I am a little prejudiced one way, but I am prepared to adopt, shall I say, a judicial attitude and decide the merits of the Bill according to the debate. The only argument I have heard came from Mr. Dimmitt who said that goodwill would be a guiding factor.

We have had some experiences in the metropolitan area, in the past few years, of what goodwill might mean in this case. I confess quite freely that the experiences I refer to have been in connection with matters of not very great importance, but they are the only ones I can look to in order to judge how much faith I can place in goodwill. I refer members to the fact that during recent years there have been shortages in various commodities, and although only of minor importance, they give a line on what might happen if control of the items in the Bill were refused. Take chocolates! If, when chocolates were in short supply, a person went into a shop and asked for some, he would, if he were a stranger, have no chance of getting any. The same thing applied to cigarettes. We would see a fellow coming out of a shop, putting a packet in his pocket, but if we went in we would be told, "We have not got any," and probably before leaving the shop we would see someone else walk in and be given a packet from under the counter. The same thing happened with regard to beer.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That is goodwill.



Hon. G. FRASER: Exactly, and I can only judge the value of goodwill from what I see occurring.

Hon. W. R. Hall: Did not you have any pet shops of your own?

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, the same as everyone else did. It is from my own experience and what I have seen that I place my value on the so-called goodwill mentioned in this debate. The same thing occurs with the grocer. If he receives a line which is in short supply he does not put it on a shelf but when asking his customers for an order he tells them that he has so-and-so in stock and asks them whether they would like it. This is an actual fact; that is the practice. Unless some very solid evidence can be produced to indicate that a different business practice will be carried out in regard to the items mentioned in the Bill, I intend to vote for it, although I am a little prejudiced against the measure. However if any other members—and there appear to be a number interested in it, if we take the amendments on the notice paper as a guide—can supply me with reasons for voting against the Bill, my attitude may be different. Mr. Dimmitt has been the only member to put up any sort of argument.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You did not hear Mr. Hall.

Hon. G. FRASER: I heard Mr. Hall and I have heard the other speakers who have addressed themselves to the measure. The Bill almost went to a vote before the two previous members had spoken.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: They may have wanted to listen to you first.

Hon. G. FRASER: Members know that I cannot give them any information on the control of these commodities because very few of my constituents are concerned.

Hon. W. R. Hall: What about the cost of the controls?

Hon. G. FRASER: I am not worrying about the cost of them, if the object is to give the citizens of this State a fair deal. If the Government considers control desirable and is prepared to meet the cost, then it has nothing to do with me. As far as I know, most Treasurers are against spending money on things that are not wanted, and if the Government considers it necessary to establish a committee to

control certain articles, then the Treasurer must have reasons to support his point of view.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That argument may be used against you later on.

Hon. G. FRASER: Quite a number of things are used against me. So far as I am concerned I have an open mind about the Bill as it affects very few people in my province and at this stage I intend to support it.

**HON. H. TUCKEY** (South-West) [5.33]: I find it rather difficult to make up my mind as to how to vote on this measure. We have been told that the Farmers' Union is very much in favour of it, and, as a matter of fact, I have received a communication from that body asking me to support the Bill. On the other hand, I have been approached by some members of that union and they have asked me to vote against it. The position so far as my province is concerned, seems to be that there is a good deal both for and against it.

I cannot see that there is any possible hope of getting large quantities of fencing wire of any kind for many years, and to me it seems rather late in the day to talk about new controls such as the control of fencing wire, which is proposed in the Bill. Recently I was in the Eastern States and farmers in New South Wales told me that they require thousands of tons of wire. This is not the only State experiencing an acute shortage. Until manufacturers can produce more wire, I cannot see that we are going to receive any great quantity in this State. It has been said that the distributors and the merchants would favour certain people. That has not been my experience, and I have had a fairly lengthy association with business people, not only during the war, with its consequent shortage of certain materials, but also with regard to the shortages experienced years ago with different commodities. I have always found merchants to be very fair and some organisations have pointed out that they are prepared to go a long way to meet the present situation and are willing to take over some of the arrangements that have been entered into.

Hon. E. H. Gray: How can they do that?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: They have expressed that willingness. Only yesterday two

small farmers approached me and said that they had orders for fencing wire of about 2½ years standing and these farmers had just been told that when the next shipment comes to hand they will get a quota of it. They will not receive all they asked for, but they will at least get some. However, if this legislation is passed they may possibly be put further back on the list. It is difficult to decide just exactly what the people in the country do want. They are definitely against controls if such controls can be avoided. If the other States are doing away with the control of various commodities, why is it that Western Australia cannot follow suit? Why can we not carry on in like manner? Thousands of farmers in New South Wales and the other States are similarly situated. I cannot quite understand why there is a fear that if this legislation is not passed, the people will not be treated fairly. I would be one of the last to agree to handing over control to merchants if I felt for one moment that they would be unfair in distributing their commodities.

In my province there are a number of producers, including dairy farmers as well as graziers in a small way, who want tractors as badly as anyone else. It is not the wheat farmers only who require them but there are many farmers in the South-West in the same position. They have been waiting for a long time. However I may be guided somewhat by the information received to the effect that the supply of tractors will be increased considerably in a short time. We have been told that by the end of next year this State will secure some hundreds of tractors more than it is receiving at the present time. I cannot see that this legislation is going to improve the position as regards the small percentage of tractors that are coming to this State, as Mr. Roche would have us believe. It is not going to improve or alter that position at all.

If we do not get a larger percentage of tractors manufactured, then it does not matter whether the merchants or the Government control the distribution. Whoever controls it will not be able to cope with the demand that exists. I hate controls and we have had a skinful of them up to date. I do not like adopting further controls such as that proposed over fencing wire, but I want to do the right thing. I find

it difficult to decide when I hear the differences of opinion that have been expressed. When the vote is taken, I will use my own judgment and vote—

Hon. G. W. Miles: Against the Bill.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: —as I think fit.

**HON. H. K. WATSON** (Metropolitan) [5.39]: I am sorry that Mr. Fraser was not in the House when Mr. Hall was speaking against the Bill, or he would have heard some cogent reasons why it should not pass the second reading.

Hon. G. Fraser: I was in the House and I heard Mr. Hall's remarks.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I regard the Bill as useless as it is provocative, having regard to the result of the recent referendum, and having regard also to the fact that the Government, which is at present in power, was returned in an endeavour to diminish controls rather than to impose new ones. The Bill has very little to commend it. Mr. Roche reminded members a few minutes ago that this House passed a control Bill dealing with building materials some nights ago. On that occasion this Chamber agreed to the continuance of a control which had been in existence for five years and had been inherited by the present Government. The controls with which we are dealing now are in an entirely different category.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Have not tractors been controlled in the past?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Not by the present Government.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They were controlled by the Commonwealth Government.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I will explain the difference to Mr. Baxter, or endeavour to do so, in a moment. In my view the Bill is wrong in principle, and I intend to vote against the second reading. It covers the control of netting and fencing materials which are not at present controlled and which have not been controlled for years. The measure includes the control of motor vehicles which are at present controlled by the Commonwealth Government and therefore do not require to be controlled a second time by the State Government. Motor vehicles up to 12 h.p. have been recently decontrolled by the Commonwealth authorities because in their opinion the

control is no longer necessary on that particular class of car.

The Bill also seeks to control the allocation of tractors which are not at present controlled. The Commonwealth Government, in its wisdom, arrived at the conclusion on the 31st July last that no good purpose would be served by continuing Government control over the distribution of tractors. The Wise Government did not consider it necessary to control fencing materials, and no good reason has been advanced as to why the present Government should introduce this entirely new control. Like other members, I have received correspondence from the Farmers' Union and from the tractor distributors' association as well as from other parties explaining their views in connection with the Bill. As I see it, it is not a question of whether the Farmers' Union wants the control or whether the tractor distributors do not want it. The question is whether the House and the Government of Western Australia should meddle with the question at all.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Does this House come before the Government of Western Australia?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: This House and the Government of Western Australia are clearly required to direct their attention to affairs which are indisputably public affairs. However, in connection with goods which are in short supply, whether they be chocolates or cigarettes as Mr. Fraser has mentioned, or whether it be tractors or toilet paper, I suggest it is not the duty of this House or of the Government of Western Australia to decide whether Tom Jones of Mukinbudin shall receive a prior preference over Bill Jackson of Gnowangerup.

Hon. G. FRASER: You are breaking down your case on goodwill.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: They are matters which in the ordinary nature of things must be left to be settled by the commercial and the farming communities—merchant to customer. Tractors were controlled by the Commonwealth Government which, however, decided on the 31st July last that the necessity for that control no longer existed, and it was abandoned. No other Government has seen fit to reimpose that control and, notwithstanding the remarks of Mr. Roche

I suggest that the reasons he advanced were no reasons at all why Western Australia of all States, having regard to the particular type of Government in power, should give unto itself the unenviable distinction of being the only Administration running round picking up controls from the Commonwealth Government as fast as that Government drops them. Then, too, the query has been raised as to the ability and possibly the integrity of the tractor distributors in the matter of distribution.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Their integrity has not been questioned.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: That is where we come to the interjection by Mr. Fraser with reference to goodwill. The tractor distributors and merchants generally are out to carry on business throughout the whole of Western Australia, and one firm to my knowledge—I mention this to indicate the very thorough manner in which it carries on its business—is not concerned with the big man any more than with the small man. I refer to the International Harvester Company, which for years has kept a record of the farm machinery on every property in Western Australia, to the best of its ability. It has kept that record and has made its own estimates as to when the machinery possessed by each individual farmer is likely to wear out.

That is a very fair indication, to my mind, of what will be done by any sensible business concern, and this company is anxious to see that the market is always maintained on the widest possible basis. Another suggestion made as to why the tractor distributors might extend favouritism to one farmer as against another, was that they would not sell a tractor to a farmer unless he gave the company concerned his business with regard to sheep, wool and so forth. I suggest there is very little in that argument.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: But the distributors would sell him one if that farmer gave them his business.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Let us consider the firms we are talking about. They include the International Harvester Company, H. V. McKay Massey Harris Proprietary, Winterbottom Motor Company, Skipper Bailey Company, Lynas Motors and West End Motors. Those firms are interested in tractors and it is the only

business in which they engage. They are not interested in buying sheep or wool. In moving the second reading of the Bill, the Honorary Minister rightly explained that with the imposition of controls and in view of the shortage of tractor supplies, it certainly did ease the position of tractor distributors in one direction inasmuch as instead of their having to make decisions as between one farmer and another, they passed the buck on to the Controller who had to do that; and therefore the distributors maintained their goodwill and reputation in the eyes of the clients, irrespective of whether the one client was satisfied or the other dissatisfied. Being able to pass the buck, the merchant did not have to make any decision and therefore was able to say to the dissatisfied client, "I am sorry I was not in a position to give you the tractor as it was a matter for the Controller to deal with."

In view of those circumstances, the Honorary Minister said he could not see why the tractor people did not desire the continuance of the control. He also mentioned the fact that there was a lot of work to be done in making the necessary allocations and exercising the control over the situation. I would remind the Honorary Minister that the distributors entered into some correspondence with him and in a letter under date the 27th July last they referred to the matter. I suggest that he look at that letter which should make very clear to him why the distributors, although it meant added burden and more worry to them, nevertheless felt that control of their own affairs should be restored to them. I direct the Honorary Minister's particular attention to the last paragraph in the letter which reads—

All that control has done for some time is to relieve distributors of their responsibility to their individual clients for the fulfilment of orders. Admittedly, it is convenient to say—"the delivery of a tractor to you depends entirely upon your ability to secure a release from the Government Controller." That is a convenience the distributors do not desire to retain. It frequently means that the tractors go to intending purchasers who can put up the best story to the Controller. Furthermore, it is wrong in principle, for distributors are entitled to manage their own businesses and to serve their own clientele without the intrusion of a Government officer, and without having to combat the suggestions of those officers that some other make of tractor will be

sooner available or is better suited for the work to be performed.

Hon. H. L. Roche: They recognise the need for some control, do they not?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The hon. member will appreciate that there is a difference between a man controlling his own affairs and for his affairs to be controlled by some Government officer.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Or by some other person.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The tractor distributors recognise the need for co-operation.

Hon. H. L. Roche: You read Mr. Dickson's letter, of course.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: But they object to Government control. The whole point is that their affairs are controlled by a Government officer, and they prefer to take charge of their own affairs. Next we come to the question of motor vehicles, which as yet have not been dealt with. We find that the control is to include all cars, trucks and omnibuses. Control is to be exercised over cars, including those up to 12 horse-power which had been released from Commonwealth control as that control was no longer regarded as necessary. It covers trucks including those over one ton. Trucks of that weight have not been controlled for years. Again, omnibuses are to be brought under control although they have not been controlled at all so far.

When he replies to the debate I would like the Honorary Minister to explain why this comprehensive over-all inclusion of all types of motor vehicles, as indicated in the Bill. He told us that tractors were included in the Bill because the farmers desired the adoption of that course. Now he wants to control all trucks and omnibuses. I do not know if he is in a position to tell us that the omnibus people desire control to be exercised over buses, but I can tell him what will happen if that control is imposed. Buses are not in a position similar to motor cars. In respect of the latter a person need only go to the local distributor, pick one of the vehicles available and drive it away. On the other hand, buses are only delivered through orders that are sent to London and the vehicles are despatched from there. If the intention is to tell someone in London to whom he can forward the omnibus, whether it be to a Government instrument-

ality or to some client, then I can tell the House what will happen. It will not be a question of telling Leyland Motors, for instance, to whom it can despatch the omnibus, but it will be a matter of Leyland Motors telling the Controller that it will not send the bus to Western Australia at all. I would like the Minister to explain why that particular feature was included in the Bill.

Another point is that this legislation is to be administered by the Minister for Agriculture. As Mr. Hall remarked, I do not think that fact is one that would cause much rejoicing in the goldfields areas because, particularly with regard to some makes of motorcars, the Goldfields has had an extremely raw deal under the existing control, which is exercised under the direction of Mr. Ferguson. The complaint has been made, especially with regard to some classes of motor vehicles most suitable for the Goldfields, that that particular type has gone to the agricultural areas which have received more than their full quota, whereas Kalgoorlie has been almost forgotten. With one type of car, I can give details of the distribution. Members have often heard it said that the distribution as between the country and metropolitan areas was unsatisfactory, but with respect to the car I have in mind, the pre-war distribution was on the basis of 60 per cent. to the country and 40 per cent. to the metropolitan area. Last month it was 81 per cent. to the country and 19 per cent. to the metropolitan area.

Hon. H. L. Roche: I would be inclined to question that.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Yes.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: It will be seen that practically the whole of the distribution has gone to the agricultural areas. The Kalgoorlie business has been seriously affected for years seeing that that type of car was not allowed to be sold in the goldfields districts. The Commonwealth Government approved of the company's proposals, and requests, to sell more of these cars in Kalgoorlie, but I understand that the control authorities in this State stood by their earlier direction, which was that the cars were to be sent to the agricultural areas. I regard that as an injustice. If we are to deal with the State as a whole, all sections are entitled to equal consideration.

Next we come to the question of fencing materials in respect of which we have had no controls. At the very outset of the war some control was instituted. I understand it continued for 12 months, but then the situation got into such a hopeless mess that it was decided that the business could not be administered successfully under Government control and it was handed back to the merchants. During the remaining five or six years the merchants have undertaken the work themselves. The Association of Fencing Materials Distributors has agreed to make special allocations for the soldier settlement scheme and the Government, but apart from those allocations the merchants have been fulfilling orders under a sensible system of priority, the materials being supplied in strict accordance with priority of receipt of orders. At present, the merchants have some thousands of orders unexecuted, orders which were received by them up to 2½ years ago. Some of these orders are about to be fulfilled, and it is advisable that the system adopted by the merchants should not be departed from.

I have no recollection that during the whole of the period I have mentioned the Farmers' Union has protested. The present protest seems to have been made during the past month or two. I do not know whether members have received any letters from the Farmers' Union this year, last year or the year before that, but the position is that the merchants have done their best to supply fencing material and make it go round as far as possible. I have received a letter from Bunbury dealing with this point. The writer states that if the present system is scrapped and some new system adopted under a Government controller, severe injustice will be inflicted upon many farmers who have been waiting for 2½ years for supplies and who are now on the brink of receiving them, or part of them.

Hon. G. Fraser: They would still get supplies if they had a good case.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I do not think they would. What better case could a man have than that he had the commonsense to place his order when he needed the material?

Hon. G. Fraser: The fact that he had commonsense would not create a need.

**Hon. H. K. WATSON:** The Minister told us—and Sir Charles Latham adverted to this aspect—that the Bill does not impose any control at all. He said that all that would happen, if the Bill were passed, would be that it would give power to impose a control, if and when the Government deemed it necessary. On the 19th June, 1943, there was gazetted, under the National Security Regulations, Agricultural Machinery Order No. 1, under which a person was prohibited from selling agricultural machinery as specified in the Second Schedule to the order, unless he had first received the consent in writing of the Controller of Agricultural Machinery, or of an officer of the Department of Agriculture of a State authorised by the Controller of Agricultural Machinery, in writing, to give consents under the order.

The Second Schedule enumerated a host of all manner of agricultural machinery, including wheel and crawler tractors. In November, 1945, by Agricultural Machinery Order No. 4, the Second Schedule was amended to exclude from control, under that order, all agricultural machinery other than wheel and crawler tractors. Clause 4 of the Bill provides—

Every direction, condition, regulation, order or requirement, and every consent, permission, exemption, approval, license or other authority whatsoever which was given, made or granted under or pursuant to the National Security Act, 1939-1943, . . . shall . . . continue in force . . . . .

Order No. 4 was in force on the 31st July and it will continue in force by virtue of Clause 4 of the Bill. I therefore subscribe to the view expressed by Sir Charles Latham that, despite what the Minister has told the House, the position is not as he would have members believe and not perhaps as he himself believes. He said that the Bill, if passed, will require further executive action in order to institute the control; but I submit that, as Clause 4 automatically adopts Agricultural Machinery Order No. 1, the order and the control will automatically be in existence as from the date on which the Bill is assented to. For these reasons I intend to oppose the Bill. I suggest that as a matter of policy it is indefensible, and just one more step towards the creation of the State almighty.

On motion by **Hon. H. Hearn**, debate adjourned.

## **BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.**

- 1, Constitution Acts Amendment (No. 1).
- 2, Industries Assistance Act Amendment (Continuance).

Received from the Assembly.

## **BILLS (2)—RETURNED.**

- 1, Land Alienation Restriction Act Amendment (Continuance).
- 2, Interpretation Act Amendment.  
Without amendment.

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

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 22nd September.

**HON. R. J. BOYLEN** (South) [6.10]: I have perused the Bill and do not intend to oppose it. The greater part of the railway line affected by the measure has not been used for something like 15 or 20 years, but the portion between Trafalgar and Kamballie is under lease to one of the mining companies and produces revenue for the Government. I understand that the Minister has given an assurance that that section of the line will not be pulled up and, provided that is so, I am satisfied. The main company using the line, Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie, carries most of its requirements, such as timber and oil, over the line.

**THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE** (Hon. G. B. Wood—East—in reply) [6.11]: I can give Goldfields representatives an assurance that the measure will not affect the validity of the lease with the mining company. Only about one mile of the track is being used and there will be nothing to prevent the company from buying the line if it so desires. The position is well safeguarded.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

# **BILL—GOLD BUYERS ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 22nd September.

**HON. R. J. BOYLEN** (South) [6.13]: I understand that certain provisions embodied in the measure are of an oppressive nature. The suppression of illicit gold-dealing in this State has been legislated for during the last 27 years by three Acts of Parliament. In the first place, proceedings were taken under the Police Act of 1892 which provides, in brief, that any person brought before a justice of the peace and charged with having in his possession anything reasonably suspected of having been stolen or unlawfully obtained must give an account to the satisfaction of such justice how he came by the same. The penalty provided was a fine of £10 or, in default, six months' imprisonment. The law was rendered still more drastic by amendments made in 1902, which may be summarised as providing that the owner or occupier or reputed owner or occupier of any house, shop, room, building, erection or yard upon which gold is found in any uncoined or unmanufactured form shall be deemed to have been in possession of such gold until the contrary is proved, and must prove to the satisfaction of the magistrate that such gold was lawfully obtained.

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

**Hon. R. J. BOYLEN**: Before tea, I was dealing with the second Act for the suppression of illicit gold-dealing. Amendments were made to the original Act in 1902, and the default was then fixed at £50 fine or six months' imprisonment. The Gold Buyers Act of 1921 still did not include coined or wrought gold, and the "possession clause" did not extend to "gold matter" or go beyond the persons caught red-handed.

But the Act added to the "ipse dixit of a constable" the arbitrary right of a licensed gold buyer, gold assayer or justice of the peace to question any person about his possession or handling of gold, even from his own mining tenement, and provided that failure to satisfy the questioner should result in the person's being

charged before a police or resident magistrate. Again the onus was thrown upon the accused of proving his innocence; and, from the usual petty sessions sentence of six months' imprisonment, the penalty was increased to two years' imprisonment or a fine of £300 or both. The latest proposals go so much further as to be in every sense of the word "oppressive." The possession clause is to embrace "gold, gold matter and wrought gold" and no longer stops at persons caught red-handed. Trinkets such as gold rings or any gold ornament that may be found in a person's house come under the proposed amendment to the Act.

**Hon. E. M. Heenan**: Watch chains!

**Hon. R. J. BOYLEN**: Yes, and wedding rings and any manufactured articles which may contain gold. It is not necessary for a person to be caught red-handed, but it is possible for him to be arrested under this amending measure if he has been in possession of gold at any time. It may be hard for a man to prove that he has not been illicitly in possession of gold which could be put in his premises by a gold "pimp," whose moral scruples and fear of publicity amount to nothing. Such folk having been in trouble before, publicity means nothing to them.

I realise it is necessary to restrict the thieving of gold, but this provision is hardly fair to people who may be wrongly implicated in an illicit possession charge by someone who may have a grudge against them. For instance, a servant girl may have been dismissed from her employment and may accuse her previous employer of having been in illicit possession of a gold trinket, such as a deceased wife's mother's ring. Such a man may have his house searched, and he called upon to explain how he came to be in possession of the trinket which he did not even know he had amongst his belongings. A statement that he did not know it was there would not be sufficient to prove that he was not guilty of illicit possession.

The most important feature of the Act is that portion which provides that a person must be caught red-handed. The amending legislation really permits a type of blackmail. It is the kind of legislation that I very much doubt would have been tolerated in Nazi Germany or would be tolerated

in Soviet Russia. I am certain that members of this House will not allow the integrity and honesty of people of Western Australia to be jeopardised as a result of the unscrupulous action which could be taken against them by informers, upon whom the police would have to rely to supply them with information that gold had been stolen; informers who might be acting from spite on account of a real or an imagined grievance. I hope the proposed amendment to the Act will not be passed.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—HOSPITALS ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

**THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE** (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [7.35] in moving the second reading said: This Bill may be described as a benevolent Bill. Its purpose is to broaden the definition in the Hospitals Act, 1927, of "public hospital," so that the Minister, on the recommendation of the Commissioner of Health, may subsidise, or otherwise assist, hospitals that, under the present definition, cannot receive such help. The present definition of "public hospital" expressly excludes "any hospital, maternity home or convalescent home carried on for private gain, or any philanthropic institution carried on without Government subsidy." The payment of subsidy by the Government or the provision of assistance to build, renovate, or equip, is confined by Section 15 of the Hospital Fund Act, 1930-1937, to "public hospitals."

The Solicitor General states that there is therefore no legal authority for the Government to subsidise any private hospital and that the only way in which to do so is to convert such private hospital into a public hospital. Any hospital so converted would thereupon become subject to the conditions laid down in the Hospitals Act for the control of public hospitals. There, briefly, are the appointment by Executive Council of a hospital board to manage and control the hospital, the period of appointment and removal of members being determined by Executive Council. The board becomes a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal, and has power, with the consent of Executive Council, to deal with

land. It is given wide powers to control, manage and maintain the hospital and may engage and dispense with staff, arrange for voluntary contributions and donations and may make bylaws. It may establish and manage a medical fund, giving benefits to subscribers, and is required to submit annual reports to the Medical Department. Executive Council may at any time close the hospital or abolish the board and the Minister may hold inquiries or investigations into any matter concerning the hospital and may arrange for visits and inspections of the hospital.

The necessity for the introduction of the Bill was brought about by a request for a subsidy in March last by the committee of the Armadale-Kelmscott District Memorial Hospital. The committee, in a deputation to the Minister for Health, stated that unless Government assistance was forthcoming, it would be forced to close the hospital. The Minister, after thorough discussion and investigation, was wholly sympathetic to the committee's request, but was forced to advise it that as the hospital was not a public hospital he could not provide assistance. Subsequently the committee asked that the hospital be converted into a public hospital. To enable this to be done, it is necessary to amend the Act in accordance with this Bill, which will enable the Armadale-Kelmscott Hospital, or any similar institution, to be declared a public hospital and to be eligible for Government assistance under the Hospital Fund Act.

I know something about this hospital, having represented that area for a considerable time and having taken part in many of the discussions with the people concerned, and members may be interested to hear a brief history of it. It is a solidly constructed brick building standing in an acre of ground in Church-avenue, Armadale, and was licensed in March, 1929, by Sister Olive Whitehead as a four-bed maternity home, plus one bed for general patients. In 1945, Sister Whitehead decided to retire, owing to advancing years, and offered the hospital for sale. No person was prepared to take it over and it appeared likely that it would be bought as a guest house. To obviate this the Armadale-Kelmscott Road Board decided to purchase it and let it to a suitable tenant in order to ensure that nursing attention



would continue to be available to ratepayers of the district. This proposition fell through as, on application to the Public Works Department for a loan of £3,000 to meet the purchase price and effect improvements, the board was informed it had no authority, under the Road Districts, Health or Hospitals Acts to purchase the hospital.

A public meeting was thereupon held at Armadale on the 10th February, 1946, and it was decided to raise funds to purchase the hospital as a memorial to those persons who lost their lives in either of the World Wars. A committee was appointed and a lease obtained of the hospital which was sub-let to a Sister Brady. On the 15th June, 1946, the committee exercised its option and the purchase of the hospital was arranged. The hospital is still licensed for four maternity beds and one general bed. It is the only hospital between Pinjarra and Perth, and an idea of its value to the district can be gauged by the fact that during 1947, some 305 patients were admitted. This is not quite a true reflection of the position, as on two occasions during the year the hospital had to be closed through shortage of staff. Members will agree, no doubt, that with the present shortage of hospital beds in the metropolitan area, it would be most undesirable for this place to close. In fact, on one occasion last year owing to the crowded conditions of Perth hospitals, 18 patients had to be accommodated at Armadale. On a subsequent occasion two serious cases sent from the district to Perth could not be found beds and had to be admitted to the Armadale hospital, the matron being forced to give up her bed for one.

It will be noted that Clause 3(a) proposes to delete the word "philanthropic" in the definition. There appears to be considerable doubt, both in lay and legal minds, as to whether the Armadale hospital is a philanthropic institution. It can hardly be classed as philanthropic as patients are required to pay the usual hospital fees, and it is not carried on for private gain as any profit made would be utilised to improve the hospital and service. The matron and staff are, of course, paid, but the secretary is voted an annual honorarium. The Solicitor General has recommended that the word "philanthropic" be struck out of the definition so that the matter may be clarified. Should the Bill

be passed, it will mean that if the Commissioner of Public Health considers any institution should receive a subsidy, the Minister may then declare such institution to be a public hospital. The Commissioner in his recommendation would be guided by the suitability of the premises to be a public hospital. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

## BILL—STATE HOUSING ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

**THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE** (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [7.47] in moving the second reading said: The Bill should be received with appreciation by members representing the North Province, as it provides for special consideration to be given in respect of housing to persons resident above the 26° parallel. The Government is fully alive to the circumstances prevailing in the North, which warrant the provision of facilities greater than those enjoyed by more southern residents. It is felt that some liberalisation of the provisions of the State Housing Act should be given, where merited, to persons living beyond the 26° parallel—that is, north of Shark Bay.

The Bill consists of three amendments, the first being to the definition of "worker," namely, any person who is entitled to benefit under the provisions of the Act. Such a person is at present defined as in receipt of an income, exclusive of overtime, of £500 per annum plus £25 for each child. The Bill proposes to add to that definition, the words "or is ordinarily resident north of the twenty-sixth parallel of latitude and, on recommendation of the Commission and for reasons given by it in writing, is approved by the Minister as a worker under and for the purposes of this Act." Every safeguard is contained there, of course. Basic wage

adjustments and increases to district allowances are lifting many incomes in the North above the maximum prescribed in the Act, thereby precluding such persons from benefiting under its provisions. The amendment will allow the Commission to recommend to the Minister that certain persons receiving more than the maximum be allowed to participate under the Act.

The two other amendments relate to the maximum cost of workers' homes and the maximum amount that the Housing Commission is permitted to advance to any person. The present figure in each case is £1,500, and the Bill provides that this sum may be exceeded on behalf of a resident of the North on the recommendation of the Commission to the Minister. Difficulties associated with building in the North have considerably increased costs. Recently a contract was signed, after calling tenders, for a house at Carnarvon that would have cost £2,375, but, unfortunately, the contractor decided he would not continue. Earlier efforts to obtain a tender had been unsuccessful.

The development in the North of industrial projects, the improved outlook for the pastoral industry and schemes for rural development, all indicate that there is an immediate necessity for special consideration for housing in the North. Surveys have been made in various centres and indicate that there is an urgent need for home construction in Wyndham, and that six houses are required immediately at Onslow. Four applications are to hand from Derby and five from Roebourne. Carnarvon paints a sorry picture, 17 applications having been submitted there, and there are, no doubt, other instances in other centres.

The Housing Commission is preparing plans for a modest type of house suitable to North-West climatic conditions, but I am told that an estimate of cost has not yet been arrived at. It is to be hoped that members will give this Bill their approval. I believe it is an honest effort to do something for the people of the North-West. We hear a great deal about the disabilities under which they work, and the Housing Commission has recognised those difficulties. The Minister, on the recommendation of the Commission, has submitted this Bill to Parliament. It will enable the Housing Com-

mission to initiate a long-term programme for the better housing of the people of the North-West. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. R. M. Forrest, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—NORTHAMPTON LANDS RESUMPTION.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE** (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [7.52] in moving the second reading said: This is an unusual measure and I do not think a similar Bill has ever previously been before the House. Its purpose is to resume certain land in the Northampton district in order that it may be thrown open for selection. The land, apparently, has no owner. The sooner it has an owner, the better. The previous Minister for Lands, Hon. A. H. Panton, visited Northampton some years ago, and it was brought to his notice that there was an area of approximately 376 acres, known as "Copper Estates," that was not being utilised. When the present Minister for Lands was at Northampton the matter was also brought to his notice. The land in question comprises Victoria Locations 27, 37, 183, 324 and 325, its area being approximately 376 acres 36 perches.

The local branch of the R.S.L. brought the matter to the notice of the present Minister and pointed out that it was desirable for the Government to take over the land so that it could be subdivided and made available to people in the district. As the result of an inquiry by the Northampton Road Board the Secretary to the Agent General for Western Australia in London forwarded the following particulars which he had obtained from the registrar of companies, on the 4th February last year. The land was held by a company known as Copper Estates, the directors being James Barrie, Chairman, of 78 Lowther-street, Carlisle and W. Fairlie, Clarkson, Oswald-street, Glasgow. The name of the company was changed to Base Metals and General Development Limited on the 10th August, 1925, and the company was subsequently dissolved on the 20th January, 1933.

When Base Metals and General Development Limited was formed on the 10th August, 1925, the men I have mentioned, together with Baron Napier and Etterick, and James Nelson, of 15 Fawcett-street, London, were shown as directors. Later Barrie and Smith apparently dropped out, leaving Baron Napier and Nelson as directors. A search at the Companies Office reveals that Copper Estates of W.A. Limited was registered as a foreign company on the 18th December, 1903, with its registered office in Western Australia at the offices of Nicholson and Hensman, now Nicholson and Nicholson, but no further records have been filed since 1904, and the company is still on the register. No record of Base Metals and General Development Company Limited appears. A search at the Titles Office reveals that a power of attorney was granted by Copper Estates of W.A. Limited to John Nicholson of Messrs. Nicholson and Nicholson, solicitors, Perth, on the 14th January, 1926. That refers to a gentleman who was a member of this House, and who has since died.

The originating Crown grants reserved to the Crown the rights over gold, silver and other precious metals. The lesser minerals would be the property of the owner of the land. Every effort has been made to obtain from the solicitors mentioned information about the owners and whether they wished to sell the land, but all correspondence has been ignored. The Lands Department has written to the firm on two occasions, asking for the opportunity to discuss the matter and negotiate for the land, but no reply has been received. I hope the House will agree to the measure in the interests of the people of Northampton, who desire to utilise this land. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. L. Craig, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—WHEAT POOL ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE** (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [7.58] in moving the second reading said: Attention has been called to the desirability of a measure such as this by the Trustees

of the Wheat Pool, who, at present, have not the power to invest their reserve funds. In the Bill power is sought to amend Section 15 of the principal Act by adding after the word "do" in Subsection (5) paragraph (e), line 11 the words "and from time to time to invest any moneys forming part of any such reserve funds or the accumulations thereof in any investments or securities which the Trustees shall think fit or in the purchase of real estate with power as to real estate to sell, transfer, improve, manage, develop, exchange, let, mortgage or otherwise dispose of, deal with, or turn to account, the same." Actually the Bill seeks to give power for people to invest their own moneys—trust money that the Wheat Pool has in hand. I do not think the measure requires any elaboration. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 8 p.m.*