

Bill. I commend it to the House, realising that unless it is passed it is almost certain that our railways will face a very grave position indeed. Members on the other side of the House are just as keenly aware of the position of our railways as are members on this side. I hope the Bill will meet with a favourable response, thus enabling the new system to be brought into effect as early as possible. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Marshall, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.20 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 13th October, 1948.

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QUESTIONS.

OATS.

As to Control of Marketing.

Hon. A. L. LOTON asked the Honorary Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has he been advised whether or not the Commonwealth Government will control the marketing of oats for the season 1948-1949?

(2) If the answer is in the negative, will he, as a matter of urgency, give immediate consideration to having legislation introduced to control the marketing of oats for the season 1948-1949?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied:

(1) The voluntary pool amongst oat growers will cease to function after the 31st December next. The information was given to the States at the last Premier's Conference. This matter was discussed at the conference of Ministers for Agriculture and while the Commonwealth Minister said he would be agreeable to co-operating with the States, that had nothing to do with any minimum price or any "hand-out" to the oat growers.

Hon. A. L. Loton: They would not finance them?

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, they were not interested.

(2) The growers' organisation in the State was approached in August last and I am still awaiting an indication of their desires in the matter before taking action.

BUILDERS' REGISTRATION ACT.

As to Prosecutions and Fines.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) How many persons have been prosecuted for alleged evasion or breaches of the Builders' Registration Act?

(2) What is the total amount imposed by way of fines?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) 15.

(2) £12.

MOTION—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT.

To Disallow Court Proceedings Regulations.

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

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (East)

[4.35]: I move—

That Regulations Nos. 10, 11, 12 and 15, made under the Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act, 1939-1948, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 3rd September, 1948, and laid on the Table of the House on the 14th September, 1948, be and are hereby disallowed.

Although I may be a little wide of the mark, my object in moving for the disallowance of these regulations is to try to make it easier for the lessor of a building to obtain possession from the lessee. When the Act, under which these regulations have been issued, was before the House, consideration was given by members to doing something to make it easier for the owner of a house to obtain possession. In years gone by many citizens both on the Goldfields and in farming areas, set aside sums of money to purchase homes for themselves either in the metropolitan area or in townships adjoining their farming or mining operations. Those places were leased or rented and probably at the time there was no difficulty in obtaining repossession, but now these regulations bar the owners from an easy process of repossessing their homes.

Under the regulations the position is that the lessor must serve a notice on the lessee, and if the lessee refuses to leave the premises, the lessor must make an application to a magistrate for an ejection order. The magistrate then has to consider the matter on the basis of the hardship of the lessee, as well as the hardship of the lessor and the availability of other suitable premises. The lessor not only has to give consideration to the hardship of the lessee, but must provide other suitable premises, and we all know just how difficult that is. In addition, the lessor must give his tenant one week's notice for every six months' occupation, so that a man who has been residing in a house for, say, 10 years must be given 20 weeks' notice.

Hon. G. Fraser: I think you will find that 30 days is the maximum.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not think it is, although I will admit that it is most difficult to interpret the regulations. I have attempted to do so and I think I have picked out those regulations which affect the case I propose to submit to the House. In my opinion, the person who

has spent a considerable sum of money in the provision of a home where he can live in his old age, should be given more consideration. It is now two years or more since the termination of World War II and many people are still handicapped in securing possession of their homes. What I suggest does not affect Service personnel at all because they are already safeguarded under the provisions of the Defence Act. Members can be assured that it is not a question of turning out soldiers' wives or widows at all.

Hon. G. Fraser: That protection lasts for only three years after a man's discharge.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: They are not affected at all.

The Chief Secretary: What do you mean by that?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: They are provided for under the Defence Act, quite apart from these regulations.

Hon. G. Fraser: But only for three years after discharge.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: At any rate, that is a lengthy period.

Hon. G. Fraser: Not many are affected now.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Most of them are protected.

Hon. G. Fraser: That applies to very few.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Many of them have been provided with homes because they were accorded priority over civilians. I had particulars of a case placed before me of a man who had enlisted and went oversea. Prior to that he had represented his firm in the country districts. The man who took his place did not desire to leave his home unoccupied, and it was let. On the enlisted man's return from active service, and when he resumed his old position, the other individual could not secure repossession of his home. In consequence he had to rent premises for which he had to pay twice as much as he was securing for his own dwelling. An unfortunate factor was that the rent he received for his own home became part of his income, and this had the effect of increasing his rate of tax. Even today that man is not in possession of his own home, due to the fact that the magistrate has ruled that the hardship of

the occupant of the house is greater than that of the owner himself. I cannot follow that line of reasoning at all. Possibly a change over could be effected, but I do not know about that. I do know that it is most inconvenient for the owner of the property at present because he has to pay a considerable amount in fares in order to get to and from his work. There are instances on the Goldfields of men who have provided homes for themselves but are unable to secure possession of them.

I certainly think it is for the Government to make the position a little easier for such people. I suggest that, after having been given the required notices when the specified periods have elapsed—if I accept Mr. Fraser's information as correct, the interval is 30 days, although I thought it was longer than that—the occupant should be required to make some adequate attempt to get other housing accommodation. It is well known that these people realise that they can squat in the houses they occupy. I know of instances where persons have had to make three or four applications within the periods allowed, before anything could be done. It is regrettable that in most cases ejectment orders have to be issued before the magistrate will give favourable consideration to the claims of owners of dwellings. A man may desire to build his own home, and that means it will be months before he can occupy it, which has the effect of still further extending the period of his occupancy of the rented premises. I do not know how that matter can be adequately dealt with by alterations to the regulations now before the House. I think most members will agree that something should be done to help persons who find themselves in the position I have described. It should be distinctly understood that I am not submitting any plea on behalf of the man who has a lot of property. The individual I seek to help is the man who owns the one house in which he desires to live. I hope the House will agree with me and pass the motion as an instruction to the Government to frame regulations to meet the contingencies I have outlined.

On motion by Hon. G. Fraser, debate adjourned.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TROT- TING ASSOCIATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. Sir Charles Latham and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Northampton Lands Resumption.

Passed.

2, Friendly Societies Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—GOLD BUYERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [4.50] in moving the second reading said: This is a very important Bill; I should say it is one of the major Bills to be introduced by the Government this session and it is the outcome of deliberations which have extended over a very long period. In 1937, a Select Committee was appointed by another place to inquire into workers' compensation. The members of the committee were the Hons. A. R. G. Hawke, W. D. Johnson, D. R. McLarty, A. F. Watts and J. T. Tonkin. That committee's main investigation was in respect of a proposal dealing with the State Government Insurance Office. The committee recommended that a Royal Commission should be appointed to go into all the ramifications of workers' compensation. That happened over ten years ago.

Nothing was done on account of the war and probably for other reasons until the present Government appointed a Royal Commission in July of last year. That commission made recommendations, some of which are embodied in this amending Bill. I shall explain later on why all of the recommendations were not adopted. Members no doubt have perused the report of the Royal Commission; if they have done so, it will be all the easier for them to comprehend the Bill and to suggest amendments should they de-

sire to do so. The Royal Commission's investigation extended over a wide field of inquiry, covering every type of employer and employee, employers' and employees' organisations, insurance offices and the medical profession.

The Government, after having given the most careful consideration to the Royal Commission's recommendations, has decided to adopt those which are now embodied in the Bill, as it believes the amendments to be essential in the interests of employees and industry generally. One of the main objects of the measure is to bring our rates of compensation payable to injured workers into line with the rates paid in the Eastern States. For many years this State was in the van as far as workers' compensation legislation was concerned; but the Eastern States have gradually got ahead of this State and their workers' compensation legislation today is in advance of ours. The Government is of the opinion that it is extremely difficult for injured workers at the present time to provide reasonable comfort for themselves and their families during their period of incapacity, especially if the injury necessitates a long absence from work. These difficulties have been accentuated lately owing to the increased cost of living.

To indicate to members the disadvantages under which Western Australian workers labour, I propose to give some comparative figures of compensation payments made throughout Australia. The following are the scales of compensation for death:—

Victoria: Fixed sum of £1,000 with £25 for each child under 16 years. Weekly payments not deductible, but amounts in redemption prior to death are.

New South Wales: Four years' earnings or £400, whichever the greater. Maximum £800. Additional £25 for each child or stepchild under 16 years. Amounts received by worker are deductible, but no such deduction shall be made so as to reduce amount payable to dependants below £200.

South Australia: Four years' earnings, minimum £500. Maximum £900. Plus £50 each dependent child under 16 years. Amounts received by worker are deductible but not so as to reduce the amount below the above minimum.

Queensland: Fixed sum, £1,000. Additional £25 for each child or stepchild under 16 years.

Tasmania: £1,000, plus £25 each child under 16. Weekly payments not deductible. Any lump sum payments not deductible.

Western Australia: Fixed sum of £750, less sums paid to worker.

As regards total incapacity, the following are the comparative figures—

Victoria: Four pounds in respect of the adult worker, £1 in respect of wife; alternatively, in respect of relative standing in loco parentis to children of the worker under 16 years; in either case, if wife or relative is wholly or mainly dependent. Ten shillings in respect of each child under 16 years who is wholly or mainly dependent. Not exceeding average weekly earnings or £6 whichever is the lesser amount.

New South Wales: 66 2/3% of average weekly earnings of adult worker. Maximum £3 10s. (earnings less than £3 per week 100%. Maximum £2) plus £1 5s. for dependent wife and 10s. each dependent child or stepchild under school leaving age.

South Australia: 66 2/3% of average weekly earnings plus £1 a week for wife totally or mainly dependent on workman's earnings and 10s. a week for each wholly dependent child under 16 years. Maximum £6 or average weekly earnings, whichever is the lesser.

Queensland: 66 2/3% of average weekly earnings (which shall be deemed to be not less than award rate). 100% of average weekly earnings, if such are less than £3 11s. with a maximum of £2 7s. All plus 10s. for each child under 16 years, or (if no claim payable in respect of dependent children or stepchildren) brother and sister under 16, plus £1 for wife or female dependent.

Tasmania: Worker, £4. Wife, £1. Each child under 16, 10s. Not exceeding 90% or £6 whichever is less.

Western Australia: 50% of wages for week immediately preceding the accident or average weekly earnings, whichever the greater plus 7s. 6d for each dependent child under 16 years. Maximum £4 10s. Minimum £1 10s. or weekly wage or average weekly earnings, whichever the lesser.

From the figures which I have quoted, members will note that there are substantial anomalies in the benefits received by Western Australian employees compared with their opposites in the Eastern States. The Government recognises that this is unfair; but it also recognises that under the existing Act there are many avenues for exploitation. Cases are on record where workers have received large lump-sum settlements, up to the maximum compensation of £750, and have immediately afterwards accepted employment of the same or a very similar nature to their pre-accident employment. The Government is anxious to preserve the rights of the workers which they have enjoyed under past legislation;

but this is a loophole that the present measure seeks to close.

I think everyone will agree with me when I say that we have in the community, workers with a compensation complex. All that they appear to be concerned about is to get some compensation, but I hasten to say that their number is few. The Government's desire, however, is to protect the general workers and the insurers from such claimants. On the Goldfields the full amount of £750 compensation has been paid to miners who, because they were suffering from silicosis, were not able to carry on their employment. Some of these workers, notwithstanding that they had been certified by a doctor as suffering a permanent disability, have, upon receipt of a lump-sum payment, again engaged in the same occupation, mining; and before long have submitted a claim for a further payment of £750 because the disease had progressed.

Under the Act, the second claim cannot be resisted, and there appears to be no limit to the number of occasions on which compensation can be claimed in respect of silicosis, which is naturally a progressive disease. A case is now being dealt with in which a miner received £750 because of incapacity due to silicosis. Upon receiving this lump sum, he obtained work at the Kalgoorlie Electric Light and Power Station, feeding a furnace with 6ft. logs, which was far heavier work than he had done at his previous employment. He has now lodged a claim for a strained back, and it may cost the insurer a further £750. That sort of thing is not desirable, if it can be avoided, and the Government seeks to avoid it by this amending Bill. The provisions of the Second Schedule are so open to abuse that one worker has, in fact, received over £2,500 for an injured forearm. Had the arm been amputated at the elbow, as was recommended at the time of the original injury, the worker would have received only £650, yet he has had £2,500. That should not be allowed to go on any longer.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Who was to blame there, the doctor?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: While the Government is anxious to improve the lot of the genuine worker, it is not prepared to provide large compensation benefits for the small and costly minority that has a compensation

complex and which loses no opportunity of exploiting the Act in every possible way. I was closely associated with the timber industry, and I remember that all the foreigners thought of was getting compensation—even to the extent of chopping off a finger now and again. They made no secret about what they did. At that time, the amount of compensation was not £750, but it was quite a large sum—sufficient, anyhow, to enable them to return as wealthy men to Yugoslavia or Albania, or wherever else they came from. Some workers—foreigners particularly—have a compensation complex, and this provides a wonderful rake-off for them.

The Royal Commission to inquire into the question of social services was, therefore, requested to examine thoroughly all matters relating to the Workers' Compensation Act, and to submit recommendations covering every phase of the subject. A most comprehensive survey was made, and 69 witnesses, representing all interested sections of the community, were examined. In addition, the chairman of the commission visited the Eastern States with a view to obtaining first-hand information regarding legislation in other parts of the Commonwealth. To save time, I shall refer to the few recommendations which have not been adopted rather than enumerate all those that have been accepted. It was recommended that the words "by accident" wherever they appear in the present Act be deleted, and a definition of "injury" inserted. This suggestion was fully considered, but deemed inadvisable. However, the provisions of the Third Schedule have been extended to cover a wider range of industrial diseases, and this substantially meets the Royal Commission's intentions. No doubt the commission was concerned with the loss of employment through a disease which a worker might suffer, but the extension of the Third Schedule will provide for most diseases of an industrial nature but which could not be said to have been caused by an accident.

It was also suggested by the Commission that the words "ten years" should be substituted for the words "twelve months" appearing in Subsection (1) of Section 7. The amending Bill, however, provides for a three-year period. A ten-year period cannot be considered until it is possible to introduce the legislation recommended in

Part V of the report. The legislation referred to there visualises the amalgamation of three existing Acts which provide for miners suffering from disease. They are the Mine Workers' Relief Act, the Miner's Phthisis Act and the Workers' Compensation Act. Part V and the Third Schedule thereof also make provisions for pensions to miners suffering from silicosis. It is not possible to legislate for these improvements in the goldmining industry until the suggestion can be actuarially examined.

The Royal Commission stressed the need for this actuarial valuation. Steps have already been taken to secure the services of a competent actuary, and Mr. Gawler, Victorian Government Actuary, has examined the position and is now preparing a report. Mr. Gawler, in the course of his inquiries, visited the Goldfields and discussed the whole matter with Dr. Outhred, a silicosis expert, and other persons able to submit reliable information. There is no doubt that the House should have the fullest information before considering a measure that will confer increases and permanency to miners' pensions, and at the same time be a heavy charge against Consolidated Revenue.

In connection with revenue, I refer to the position of certain reserve funds of the State Insurance Office, as follows:—Amount in silicosis reserve fund at the 30th June, 1948, £337,000. The Treasury has transferred to Consolidated Revenue from this silicosis fund £25,000 per annum, or a total of £407,000 over a period of 16 years. This practice has now ceased, the State Insurance Office losing interest on approximately £13,000 per annum. Claims have increased enormously over the last eight years. Some 30 claims were received from miners in respect of silicosis for the year ended the 30th June, 1941, and total compensation of £17,396 has been paid. For the year ended the 30th June, 1948, there were 157 claims, and the compensation paid amounted to £127,460. The premium income for the year ended the 30th June, 1941, was £130,000, for the year ended the 30th June, 1944, £50,298, and for the year ended the 30th June, 1948, £104,079.

It is apparent that in the mining industry, with rising costs and pegged price for gold, and some companies working only low-grade ore and consequently ceasing produc-

tion, the premium income will be further reduced, while silicosis claims may become heavier. In these circumstances, the small reserve of £337,000 could soon become exhausted. Having transferred such a large amount from the silicosis fund to the Treasury over a long period, it is reasonable to ask the Treasury to make a contribution, if required, from Consolidated Revenue. I have submitted these observations regarding the finances of the fund to indicate to the House the Government's reasons, for not proceeding with Part V of the Royal Commission's recommendations.

The Government is not agreeable to the inclusion of a "de facto wife" in the definition of "member of a family." This term was introduced by the Commonwealth Government during the war, but the State Government considers that persons coming within this category should not be included as dependants under a measure of this nature. The Bill, however, does make provision for children born out of wedlock, and for all persons who can reasonably be considered to be dependent upon the worker. Nor can the Government agree to the suggestion that power be granted to the compensation board to increase medical expenses from £100 to £150. In this respect the Western Australian rates are in excess of Eastern States rates as follows:—

Victoria: £75 which may be increased by board to £100 in special cases.

New South Wales: Medical expenses £25, hospital expenses £25, ambulance £2 2s. The commission may grant additional expenses on application.

South Australia: Maximum £35.

Tasmania: Maximum £75.

Queensland: Medical £25, hospital £25 maximum.

From this table it will be seen that Western Australian workers are, in respect to medical and hospital compensation, in a much better position than those in the Eastern States. In addition to the statutory amount of £100 maximum allowed under our Act, it has been the practice for insurers, where employers have sent employees to specialists for treatment, to meet the additional costs, even if they are in excess of the £100. That covers the recommendations of the Royal Commission that have not been accepted. However, the Government considers that additional benefits which were not recommended by the Royal Commission, are necessary in the interests of

injured workers, and has accordingly included them in the Bill.

The definition of "worker" has been extended to include a member of the Police Force and a member of an employer's family dwelling in his house. I refer to the case of the late Detective Roe, who was killed at Claremont in the execution of his duty, and no compensation was given to his dependants. The Bill provides for the dependants of a police officer who is fatally injured in the course of his duty, to receive compensation up to £1,000. With respect to a member of an employer's family living in his house, as the Act stands at present, such a person is excluded from compensation. There may be exploitation if he is included, but the proposed compensation board, to which I shall refer later, will examine each case. Provision has been made for a worker whose employment necessitates his travelling to some other State of the Commonwealth. There is some doubt whether such a worker is covered for compensation while he is outside the State boundary, but he should be. I hope members will agree with that.

Provision is made for the dependants of a worker receiving compensation for a mining disease and who dies of any other cause, to receive the balance of compensation payable, notwithstanding that the worker has been receiving compensation for less than six months. In the case of a recurrence of an injury, a worker will be entitled to an allowance in respect of any dependent child born after the date of the original accident. The cost of repairs of artificial aids will be payable notwithstanding that the worker does not suffer personal injury within the meaning of Section 6.

The living-away-from-home allowance has been increased from 6s. per day and 25s. per week, to 10s. per day and 60s. per week. These amended rates are recommended in view of increased costs of board, lodging, and foodstuffs. Provision has been made for the payment of an attendant's fee at the rate of £1 per week in respect of cases of certified total and incurable paralysis. A number of additions favourable to the worker have been added to the Third Schedule. It will also be noted that the Royal Commission strongly favoured steps being taken to prevent, as far as practicable, industrial accidents and to minimise unneces-

sary risks being taken by workers. Under the Bill the proposed compensation board is empowered to give directions regarding the provision of safety devices.

From the facts which I have so far submitted to the House, it will be noted that there are three major provisions emerging from the Bill. They are—

1. Providing increased benefits to workers injured during the course of their employment, thereby bringing compensation payments to at least equal to what may be regarded as a fair Australian standard.

2. Removing the existing weaknesses in the present Act because of which large sums must now be paid to workers whose disability does not preclude them from resuming their pre-accident or some equivalent employment.

3. Placing the administration of the Act on a better basis, for which purpose the establishment of a compensation board is proposed.

Regarding item No. 1, reference has already been made to certain minor amendments not recommended by the Royal Commission. Other amendments are as recommended, subject to the few exceptions already mentioned. The more important amendments recommended by the Royal Commission and accepted by the Government provide for the following increased benefits:—

Permanent total disability from £750 to £1,250.

Dependants in the event of the death of the worker: From £750 to £1,000 plus an additional £25 for each dependent child.

Weekly payments during period of incapacity: From 50% of average weekly earnings plus 7s. 6d. for each dependent child with a maximum of £4 10s. per week to 66 2/3% of average weekly earnings plus £1 per week for dependent child with a maximum of £6 per week or average weekly earnings, whichever is the lower.

Funeral expenses: From £20 to £30.

Injury sustained while travelling between place of residence and place of employment: Not now compensable—an entirely new provision.

The Second Schedule has been adopted from the Victorian Act and is as recommended by the Royal Commission with the exception of the addition of an attendant's fees for cases of total paralysis. All benefits under this schedule have been proportionately increased on the basis of the new maximum of £1,250. The amendments which it is proposed to make to the Third Schedule have been considered and approved by representatives of the B.M.A., the Principal Medical Officer and the State In-

insurance Office Medical Officer. An important amendment is the substitution of the word "communicable" for the word "zymotic." This provision has been extended to all workers. In the Act it is restricted to a medical officer, nurse, quarantine station, hospital or ambulance employee. This provision to a large extent meets with the Royal Commission's desires in recommending the deletion of the words "by accident" in Section 6 and elsewhere in the Act.

Dealing with the second item, the Bill contains provisions which should ensure that no worker can claim the maximum amount of compensation more than once in respect of the same injury. Where a person suffers a partial disability in respect to an injury which is the subject of compensation under the First and Third Schedules, he will receive compensation commensurable with the degree of disability and not necessarily the maximum, i.e., £1,250. Similarly, workers suffering injury for which the Second Schedule provides compensation will also be limited on a proportionate basis to the degree of injury sustained, and £1,250 will be the maximum amount of compensation payable. Another provision on the lines of the New Zealand Act has been included to compensate persons suffering a genuine hernia disability which can be directly attributed to their employment. Most employees suffering in this respect claim that the rupture is the direct result of their employment but in nine cases out of ten their work only aggravates the hernia. As the Act stands at present, insurers have no alternative but to admit the claim as compensable.

Regarding item three, it is proposed to set up a compensation board. The Royal Commission recommended that this board should have for its chairman a judge or a person qualified to be a judge, and two members, one an employers' representative and the other a representative of the workers. In Western Australia there are only three judges of the Supreme Court and it would not be possible for one of them to accept the added duties of chairman of the board. It is therefore suggested that the chairman be a legal practitioner of not less than seven years' practice and standing, who shall be appointed by the

Governor, the other two members to be appointed in accordance with the commission's recommendation.

The compensation board will have far-reaching powers. It will determine all questions of fact solely on the merits and justice of the case, and there will be no appeal from the decision of the board except it be on a question of law. Complaints against members of the medical profession, now dealt with by the Medical Register Committee appointed under Section 23, will be heard by the board and provision is made for two practitioners nominated by the Western Australian Branch of the B.M.A. to sit with the board when such complaints are being dealt with. Its jurisdiction will extend, *inter alia*, to—

Providing facilities for the complete and adequate medical treatment of injured workers;

Providing facilities for the rehabilitation of injured workers;

Dealing with the question of the prevention of industrial accidents, which from the economic viewpoint is far more important than providing substantial compensation for injured workers.

The entire cost of the board's administration and activities will be met from a special fund contributed to by all approved insurers and self-insurers, and controlled by the board. The remuneration of board members will be fixed by the Governor. The board's fund will also be responsible for all reasonable expenses for accident prevention and safety measures. In addition, it will cover any injured worker for compensation who may not have been insured by his employer. Cover is compulsory under the Act and cases of this nature would be rare. I think they should have some cover. The board will replace the Medical Register Committee and when matters concerning complaints against medical practitioners are being considered, two members of the profession will take part in the discussion.

The Bill also provides for the appointment of a premiums committee to determine maximum premium rates. This proposed committee shall comprise the Auditor General, who will be chairman, the manager of the State Insurance Office and another person to be nominated by all other insurers, approved by the Minister and appointed by the Governor. This committee

will consider premium rates in respect of any type of industry and what is a reasonable rate. Its policy will be directed by the compensation board with whom it will work in conjunction. To give effect to a further recommendation of the Royal Commission, provision has been included to make it compulsory for an insurer to issue a policy to any employer requesting it. That practice has been adopted in respect of the Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act, and while normally insurers have the right of selection in connection with their ordinary business, there should be no such choice in respect of a form of social service legislation which makes insurance of all workers compulsory.

Various reasons have been advanced to justify the refusal of insurance companies to quote for mining diseases risks when the Third Schedule was introduced by Act No. 40 of 1924, but the fact remains that for the past 24 years they have steadfastly refused to indemnify the employers in respect of those risks. A case occurred recently where a mine manager thought that he had obtained full cover from a company and was only disillusioned when he discussed the matter with the manager of the State Insurance Office. The company refused to include the industrial disease in the cover and promptly cancelled the policy. Mining diseases risks have therefore been excluded from the compulsory provisions of the Bill.

On the other hand, the Government cannot afford to be forced into a position of having to carry a tremendous potential liability in respect of miners suffering from silicosis while the whole of the profit from the general accident business is gradually absorbed by other insurers. As in the past, the companies have refused to indemnify employers in respect of miners' diseases so the State Government Insurance Office has refused to issue a policy for those risks unless the company also gave its general accident business to the State office. To safeguard the position, it is necessary to give the State Government Insurance Office the sole right to issue policies covering all liability to employers carrying on mining operations within any area proclaimed under the provisions of Section 2 of the Workers' Compensation Act, 1924. Provision has been made accordingly; the effect being to maintain the status quo of 24 years.

As I said before, this is a very important Bill, and I know it will receive a good deal of consideration by members. I have no doubt that certain members will desire to place amendments on the notice paper so I suggest that the debate be adjourned until next week or even the week after next. This will give members a chance to put their amendments on the notice paper so that when the Bill is considered again, the amendments will be known and information will be made available to those members who desire it.

Hon. G. Fraser: You mentioned that workers cannot obtain full compensation twice for the same accident.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think it would be desirable if the hon. member were to bring such matters up at a later stage when they will be answered fully. It is not desirable to answer that question now. I therefore appeal to members to place their amendments on the notice paper as quickly as possible so that when the debate is resumed, we can go right ahead with it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

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

Assembly's Request for Conference.

Message from the Assembly received and read requesting a conference on the amendments insisted on by the Council, and notifying that at such conference the Assembly would be represented by three managers.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move—

That the Assembly's request for a conference be agreed to, that the conference be held in the President's room at 2 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday) and that the managers for the Council be Hon. E. H. Gray, Hon. R. M. Forrest and the mover.

Question put and passed and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban—in reply) [5.30]: During the course of the second reading debate, several questions were asked. Mr. Loton wanted to know how many people were concerned in the advances totalling £13,313 for the year ended the 30th June, 1948. There were 48. That was the amount actually approved for advances by the Commissioners of the Rural and Industries Bank for that period, but the sum actually advanced during the year was £40,412, made up as follows:—

	£
Machinery and plant	1,270
Stock	70
Fencing	15
Superphosphate	9,147
Seed	121
Insurance	1,439
Wages, sustenance and stores ..	14,833
Machinery parts	2,101
Fuel	6,321
Harvesting expenses	223
Tobacco growers	3,445
Miscellaneous	1,427
Total	40,412

As I have pointed out, this total includes amounts approved in the previous year but advanced last year. Sir Charles Latham wanted to know why the Rural Bank could not take over this business. I thought he realised that the bank can only advance up to 70 per cent. of the value of the security, whereas under the Industries Assistance Act an advance may be made up to the full value of the security. This is done for the purpose of assisting industry. There is no suggestion that it is a business proposition, except that it does help to put farmers on their feet and that this redounds to the welfare of the State. The Act has proved of great value in the past and has been the means of setting many farmers on their feet.

Hon. A. Thomson: It deals purely with farming, does it not?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am dealing purely with farming.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The provision for advances to mining was repealed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Obviously the true value of the Act cannot be assessed in money, but the statute is required for use in future contingencies, such as droughts, etc. All sorts of contingencies may arise. Certain portions of the agricultural areas at

present have not received sufficient rain and contingencies may arise there. Many farmers have to be carried on year after year under the Act. Under the bank's lien, the whole of the proceeds of their harvest are taken by the bank and they then usually have to apply for a fresh advance, which is invariably made. The Commissioners of the Rural Bank advise that to make advances under this Act is the more expeditious method of assisting needy settlers.

According to Sir Charles Latham, the Government has all the necessary power to make advances under the Rural and Industries Bank Act. It has not; it can only advance up to 70 per cent. of the valuation of the security. The hon. member also said that last year a Bill was passed authorising the Treasurer to grant financial assistance to persons engaged in mining or other industry. He was referring to the Industry (Advances) Act, which was necessary, as the Rural and Industries Bank Act had repealed Section 24 of the Industries Assistance Act which previously covered such advances. That is what the hon. member referred to by interjection just now.

The Industry (Advances) Act could not replace the Industries Assistance Act as it has not the requisite provisions to protect Government securities included in the latter Act. If advances to farmers were made under the Industry (Advances) Act, the bank would have to arrange mortgages and bills of sale, which are costly matters for a borrower, and there is also the risk that bills of sale might be caveated. I did not mention all these matters when moving the second reading because I believed that members realised the position, but perhaps I was in error and should have given these details for the information of new members, who were not aware of the bearing of other Acts. Sir Charles also said—

As the Rural and Industries Bank Act transferred the administration of the Industries Assistance Act to the commissioners, the House could appreciate that, for the purpose of making advances we had all the necessary legislation without the need for continuing the Industries Assistance Act and that if we extended the Act, we would be duplicating the powers contained in the Rural and Industries Bank Act.

As I have already pointed out, that is absolutely and entirely wrong. I thought that Sir Charles would have known of this because, when he was Minister for Lands, I

imagine the Industries Assistance Act came under his control. It is strange reasoning. If we do not continue the Industries Assistance Act, there will be no Act for the commissioners to administer and, as I have stated, no more than 70 per cent. of the valuation of the security may be advanced under the Rural and Industries Bank Act.

For the purpose of assisting farmers from year to year, it is essential that we continue the Act. As was stated by Sir Charles Latham, the original legislation was introduced 35 years ago. When he was a member of a Government, it had been in existence for 15 years, and was renewed in each of the three years he was a Minister. True, we do not like these Acts continuing from year to year, and we thought it would be preferable to propose on this occasion a continuation for five years instead of one year and try to get the business wound up.

Hon. A. Thomson: You are optimistic if you think you are going to get it wound up.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: According to the figures, the total of advances a little while ago was millions, whereas now it is a matter of thousands and we do hope to get the business wound up. If the Act is not continued, this legislation will cease and a lot of farmers will simultaneously be wound up. We desire to keep those hard-working industrious men, who have fallen on evil days through no fault of their own, on their holdings, and this is the only way in which we can assist them. Therefore, I trust that members will support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. W. J. Mann in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 15:

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 the word 'four' be struck out.

The effect of the amendment would be to limit the duration of the Act to 1950. The information given by the Minister shows the desirability of our having an opportunity to discuss the matter each year. I appreciate the aim of the Government to

assist the farmers. The Minister has said that the amount outstanding has been reduced considerably, but that is no more than we should expect in view of the high prices ruling for primary products. Each year since 1915 the duration of the Act has been extended and we would be wise to continue the practice of yearly extensions.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I intended to move a similar amendment for mainly the same reasons. I fail to see why it should be necessary to extend the duration of the Act for five years. Wonderfully good work has been made possible by the Act, but in some of the far eastern and northern areas, fire or drought might necessitate farmers' seeking assistance. I see no harm in extending the Act from year to year instead of providing for a five-year period, and I support the amendment.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I support the Government in this matter, because the people in my district will be in need of this measure for some time. The five-year period will give them more spirit, because they fear that with the measure coming up for review each year, there is a possibility of its being abolished.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I listened with interest to Mr. Thomson and Mr. Loton but I cannot see the reason they desire to prevent the measure being continued for a period of five years. Obviously it cannot be wound up this year. Is it their intention that the Act shall be subjected to the risk of being abolished at the end of 1950—in other words in 18 months' time?

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It is over two years.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It finishes at the end of this year.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: The present Act does not finish until the end of next year. That is why I questioned whether it is an annual continuance Bill.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In 1947 it was continued for two years.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: It is not an annual continuance Bill.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: For some reason or other the representatives of the farmers want to take the risk of the Bill being thrown out at the end of next year.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is absurd.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Of course it is! That is why I am asking for the period to be extended to five years.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Your logic is absurd.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This measure is intended to assist settlers. It gives the Government power to arrange loans for a period of five years instead of only up to the end of 1950. The only reason Mr. Loton and Mr. Thomson advanced for the amendment is that the Bill may be rejected in 1950.

Hon. A. L. Loton: No.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Then why do those hon. members want the measure brought up for review each year?

Hon. L. A. Logan: If you had listened to Mr. Thomson you would have known why.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I will sit down while the hon. member explains.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am in agreement with the Minister's point of view; but Mr. Thomson asked for this amendment to be accepted so that there would be an opportunity to discuss the Bill from year to year, and obtain information such as has been given to us this afternoon.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Thomson is not backward in asking questions; and he can ask as many as he likes and obtain all the information he wants without our having to reprint this Bill every year and put it through both Houses of Parliament. A lot of money is spent each time a Bill is presented. This is a measure which, in the interests of the farmers, must not be thrown out or allowed to lapse. We are asking that we be given an opportunity to make arrangements for loans for a five-year period in the interests of indigent settlers.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I almost feel like crying and sobbing at the deep sympathy the Minister expresses for the poor, struggling farmers. I have represented them for many years; and, as far as looking after their interests is concerned, I do not require any admonition from the Minister.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You are not looking after them now.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am looking after them and after the interests of the country as well. This board is a very convenient

adjunct to the Rural and Industries Bank and has the right to advance not only to settlers, as the Minister told us—

The Chief Secretary: It was amended last year.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The position is that the Government can advance up to 100 per cent. to establish any industry whose outlook may be doubtful.

The Chief Secretary: Not under this Act; under a different Act, the Industry (Advances) Act.

Hon. A. THOMSON: The agency section of the Rural and Industries Bank may advance any funds required and the bank accepts the responsibility.

The Chief Secretary: Under the Industry (Advances) Act, yes.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Anyone would think, to hear the Minister, that I was opposed to the Industries Assistance Act and that I had not looked after the interests of farmers ever since I have been in this House. The Minister himself apologised this afternoon because he had given us so little information. Then after we asked questions he told us a considerable sum of money had been advanced. I was not able to follow him but I am sure it was a considerable amount.

The Chief Secretary: It was £40,000.

Hon. A. THOMSON: But the Chief Secretary in his second reading speech told us that only £13,000 had been advanced.

The Chief Secretary: I should have said approved when I said advanced.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Are we not justified in asking questions? Regarding the expense of introducing a renewal Bill each year, I wish the Government were as careful of its finance in other directions. We have had plenty of Bills introduced this session dealing with renewal of measures, and we have had the definite assurance of the Minister that they would last for 12 months only. I resent the imputation that I am opposed to and wish to endanger advances made to the farmers. Since 1915 the Act has been in existence and advances have been made throughout the intervening years. Does the Minister mean to tell me that the renewal of the measure for only a year will endanger any advances made by the Rural Bank or the Industries Assistance Board?

The Chief Secretary: You do not know who will deal with the Act next year. You do not know what members will do with the measure on that occasion.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am willing to chance that, seeing that it has been renewed year after year, since 1915. Mr. Bennetts said he was going to support the Government because his people will get a better deal than if the Act were renewed for only one year. I would be sorry to think that was possible. I am afraid that the Minister is sometimes more anxious to get his measures through than to give members the information to which they are entitled. The previous Government extended that courtesy to us on more than one occasion. I offer no apology for moving the amendment. I would not do anything that I thought would be the means of taking away from the Rural Bank or the Government the opportunity to assist farmers.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I disagree with Mr. Thomson. This Act was brought into being through the 1912-14 grant and has been of tremendous assistance to the people. Over the years the assistance given has been gradually reduced, and now help is being afforded only to farmers who have special problem farms. I am positive they would not feel happy about the amendment. I think the hon. member is sincere, but the extension of the measure for a period of five years is likely to be more comforting to settlers than its extension for only one year.

Hon. A. Thomson: I resent your suggestion—

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I think the hon. member is sincere in his argument, but he is wrong; and I think that the farmers concerned would be unanimously of the opinion that he is wrong. The Committee should stick to the period specified in the Bill.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I resent the Minister's saying that we are trying to do the farmers an ill turn. I represent a rural centre and I am not going to do anything opposed to the interests of the farming community. As this Act has been continued from year to year since 1915, I fail to see why we should depart from the practice that has been adopted. Mr. Gray said that the measure should be continued for five years. Why did not the Labour Party, dur-

ing its long period of office, do something along those lines?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: This Chamber had a say in that.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I do not know that when the Labour Party was in office a terrible lot was done for the farmers.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—BUILDERS' REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [6.2]: The legislation we are now seeking to amend originated in a private member's Bill introduced on the 6th September, 1939, by Mr. Needham, member for Perth. In the course of the debate that took place, the then Minister for Works supported the measure because he thought it might mean cheaper homes for workers. Mr. Watts, the member for Katanning, drew attention to the fact that the legislation would impose severe restrictions on those resident in country districts. It was fortunate that the operation of the measure was eventually confined to the metropolitan area. Under the measure, as it stands, the Minister has power to bring any district under control, as at present it is confined to the Second Schedule of the Metropolitan Water Supply and Drainage Act, provided that the Governor may from time to time by proclamation declare that the Act shall apply to any other place or places. It can therefore be seen just how far-reaching the measure is, and the effect that it could have.

I congratulate the Government on having introduced this legislation in a desire to improve the opportunity for homes to be built for the people. I also congratulate Mr. Fraser, who last night gave a very practical and instructive discourse and produced plans for four-roomed houses. Those plans were drawn up by the State Saw Mills and the various timber companies. Mr. Fraser demonstrated that he had a good grasp of the subject. When the original

legislation was introduced it was alleged that it would be a safeguard against unscrupulous and incompetent builders, and that it would prevent jerry-building. Registration was necessary as the master builders and the unions had great difficulty in policing the industry. I believe that the main reason why Mr. Needham introduced the measure in another place was to make of the building industry a close preserve for those already engaged in it in Western Australia. I think the main reason for the measure originally being suggested was a desire to see if it were possible to eliminate those who unfortunately—perhaps through lack of experience in costing—undertook contracts at prices that eventually showed a loss.

The average person desiring to build a home at that time secured the services of an architect. Tenders were called and frequently the architect told the prospective owner that the price submitted by tender was on the low side and that it would be preferable to accept a tender closer to the architect's estimate of cost. The prospective owner might then say, "I am engaging you to protect my interests, and it is your job to see that the work is done correctly." Frequently, against the advice of the architect, a price that was really too low was accepted, with the inevitable result that the builder lost his savings in the venture and left the merchants lamenting. That was one of the reasons for the original legislation being introduced. I did not support that Bill, though I did not vote against it.

At that time we did not dream of the examinations that are imposed as a condition on would-be contractors of today. They are so severe and extensive that many men who are quite competent to build small homes such as Mr. Fraser mentioned last night, are unable to pass the examinations. I cordially endorse the suggestion of the hon. member that there should be different types of certificates graded (a), (b) and (c). The original measure was introduced, also, to prevent jerry-building. I have been associated with this industry all my life and have had extensive practical experience both here and in other parts of Australia, but I must confess that I have seen no evidence of the alleged jerry-building. Had contractors or architects in pre-war days insisted on building divisional walls on edge

they would have been accused of jerry-building.

Hon. G. Fraser: They have certainly changed their ideas recently.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes. It has been demonstrated that such a mode of construction is not jerry-building, as would have been suggested at that time. While the legislation was introduced allegedly to protect the building industry, it has, in fact, made of it a close preserve. The secretary of the board is not helpful to those desiring to improve their position. During and since the war period we have experienced an abnormal shortage of homes, and I congratulate the Government on its endeavour to make it possible for those who are anxious to build their own homes to be able to do so within certain limits. In pre-war days there were dozens of young men who built homes for sale. Such a man would buy a block of land and erect a home on it. When it was completed it would be sold. I could show members dozens of houses in the metropolitan area that were deemed, when they were built, to have been jerry-built, but which have proved to be quite substantial. I could never understand the antipathy exhibited towards the men who built those homes, putting in their own labour and risking their own money in the venture. Frequently it was years before they were fully paid, as the houses were sold on time-payment and might not be fully paid for until perhaps ten or fifteen years had passed.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I was drawing attention to the very excellent houses which have been built by men known as spec. builders. These men performed very satisfactory work by providing homes for people who were desirous of obtaining them without approaching the Workers' Homes Board. It gave the small men an opportunity to branch out and ultimately become successful contractors. Unfortunately, since the Housing Commission has come into being, nothing can be done without a permit, or unless it is in accordance with the regulations laid down for the housing scheme.

Hon. A. L. Loton: They not only have to get a permit, but a release as well.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes. They not only have to get a permit, but they also have to go to the further trouble of trying to get materials. I feel the Government is on the right track in suggesting an increase in the maximum amount, but I sincerely hope that Mr. Fraser's proposed amendment will be carried into effect. His amendment is to increase the amount to £800. We find that the Commonwealth Bank has realised the necessity for increasing the maximum amount of loan for home building. As far as the mortgage bank department is concerned, loans payable by the Commonwealth Bank will be increased. The Federal Cabinet proposes that housing loans shall be raised from a maximum of £1,250 to £1,750, and loans by the mortgage bank department from £5,000 to £10,000. So the Commonwealth Bank Act will be amended to apply the new ceiling. The Commonwealth Government will also recommend the granting of authority to the rural credits department of the Commonwealth Bank to make advances to marketing boards constituted under Commonwealth law on the security of a Commonwealth guarantee. That shows the trend as far as housing is concerned. We must realise that costs have increased.

I asked the Chief Secretary how many people had been fined for breaches of the Builders' Registration Act and the total amount of those fines. The answer I received was that 15 men had been prosecuted for alleged evasions or breaches of the Act, and they were fined to the tune of £123. The Bill makes provision for increasing the maximum amount to which an unregistered builder may go; frankly, I think that many of the small builders do just as good work, if not better, than some of the bigger builders. Frequently, the smaller unregistered builders are expert tradesmen and know their job, but are not competent to pass an examination. Clause 3 is intended to amend Section 4 by inserting the following words:—

"and in either case if the offence consists of a contravention of subparagraph (b) of paragraph (A) of this subsection a further penalty not exceeding two pounds for every day or part of a day during which such offence continues to be committed after any conviction."

If a house is half completed, I do not know how a man is going to be fined a penalty of £2 per day if he is not in a position to

pay that sum. The Bill also intends to make the Act more stringent by including a new section which will impose an additional restriction upon local authorities. It will be unlawful, if the Bill is passed, for local authorities to issue a permit to any person who is not registered under the Act, under the Municipal Corporations Act or under the Road Districts Act. That means that no building will be permitted to be erected in any part of a municipality or road district, particularly in town areas, unless it has the approval of the local authority.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: That regulation is already in existence.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, but it is intended to impose further restrictions. If the hon. member will look at page 2 of the Bill, he will find the following:—

(a) the total fee or charge payable in respect of the carrying out of such building does not exceed six hundred pounds; or

I hope that Mr. Fraser's amendment will be agreed to and that this figure will be raised to £800. The clause further states—

(b) the person to whom such a permit is issued is a person exempted under subsection (2) of Section four of this Act from the necessity of obtaining registration; or

(c) the person to whom such a permit is issued is proposing to construct the building to which the building relates for himself and not for the purpose of the immediate sale thereof.

As far as timber and asbestos structures are concerned, a first-class carpenter can do almost all the work himself. The sanitary and sewerage work has to be done by a licensed plumber, but if the carpenter was fortunate enough to get hold of iron, there is nothing to prevent him from putting on the roof, and he can also line the structure with cellite and, in fact, do about 90 per cent. of the work himself. So that if he were permitted to do all the work, with the assistance perhaps of his son or somebody else, he would be able to build a house which would actually exceed a cost of £800 for the materials. We should encourage such men. Another point about the clause which I do not like is as follows:—

(2) Any person who, in order to obtain from any local authority any building permit makes any false and fraudulent declaration, representation or statement, either in writing or otherwise, relating to the total fee or charge

payable in respect of the carrying out of any proposed building or relating to the qualifications as to either the registration or the right to exemption from registration of the person proposing to carry out the building, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds or be imprisoned for any term of not more than twelve months.

I can see a "smart Alec" landing men in very serious trouble under that clause. A man might make quite an honest statement that a building could be constructed for £600 or £800 but, before the house was completed, owing to various difficulties which occur these days, it might cost £50 or £60 more, and he would then be liable to a penalty. Although the Bill is endeavouring to assist the small man, I think the penalties are too severe, and I cannot understand why it is necessary to impose such a strict—

Hon. W. J. Mann: Almost vicious.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, it sounds vicious. It does not seem right that the man who is trying to earn a living, and trying to make a home for himself, should be so severely punished if he unfortunately makes a statement which is later found to be incorrect. I know that we will be told that that is not the intention of the Act, but when the parent Act was originally before the House, quite a number of members did not think that the examinations which were to be conducted under the Act, would be so rigid. So, I feel that these penalties are too severe. Any local authority should be able to issue a permit for the erection of a building because such authorities have a perfect knowledge of the person making the application, and if the man is reliable he should be issued with a permit. In my opinion there is too much snooping going on at the present time as far as building is concerned.

Hon. E. H. Gray: There is not enough.

Hon. A. THOMSON: My honourable friend is one of those who believe in controls, and more controls. He is a keen supporter of any measure that has as its aim any form of control. If he had stuck to the task on which he was engaged when I first met him, on the land, I think he would be a rather unhappy man today because of controls. I do not think he would have reached the position of being a member of Parliament. I do not like these restrictions. I shall give one illustration from several I could quote to indicate how

severely they apply and to emphasise that all this snooping is not in accordance with the intention of Parliament. Inspectors go round and may find that an individual has been able to procure some secondhand material, and he is haled before the court. I know the people concerned in the instance I shall quote. In outlining the position to me, my informant said—

The facts of the case are that some months ago my son found it necessary to repair his front verandah. Hearing that a contractor had on hand some 2,000 bricks which had been condemned as unfit for use on a house, he secured the bricks at a cheap price and did the job. The Housing Commission then summoned him for acquiring the bricks without a license.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Snake in the grass!

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes. He continued—

He considered that as they were condemned bricks it was not necessary to get a permit. He got a certificate from the architect to say the bricks were useless for housing and presented this to the court. The Housing Commission knew all about the circumstances. The magistrate inflicted a fine of £5.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That was an injustice.

Hon. A. L. Loton: A reward for industry!

Hon. A. THOMSON: The individual concerned was a young married man whose house required repairing. Instead of replacing the flooring, he decided to get hold of the bricks and he got some bricklayers to work at week-ends, which is the only way private individuals can get such renovations carried out.

Hon. H. A. C. Daffen: That is one of the advantages of the 40-hour week.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Quite so, and I do not blame the men for adopting that attitude. They are rendering a very useful service to people who are in a small way. In this instance the man, after securing the bricks, did the carting himself and also the filling, after which he got the floor cemented. By this means he improved his home; in consequence, he was taken to court and fined. Mr. Gray suggests that there are not enough inspections, yet he admits that a grave injustice was inflicted on this individual. Unfortunately that is provided for in the Act, and now we are asked to agree to additional penalties which will mean the imposition of a fine of £2 a

day, making the position more stringent than ever. If a man does work that costs a little more than is covered by his permit, he runs the risk of being fined £50 and going to prison for a specified term.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: The contractors for the Royal Perth Hospital would be on the spot.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes, that is so. I do not know if the figures were correct but a member of this House informed me that a small hospital in the South-West with provision for 32 beds, was estimated to cost £120,000. If that amount were exceeded and the man were prosecuted, it would just show how ridiculous and unjust such a provision is. The original estimate for the Royal Perth Hospital, which was constructed by the Public Works Department, was £650,000, and we are aware of what it is costing. I know we will be told that the building being erected is not the same as that contemplated at the start. That sort of thing frequently happens. As people proceed with the erection of their home, they make small improvements with the result that the cost may easily be £30 or £40 more than anticipated—and they will be liable to this penalty. It is useless to say that that sort of thing was never intended; that is what the Act states.

While I congratulate the Minister who introduced this legislation in another place, I cannot understand why, when he endeavours to give people greater opportunities for building homes, he should at the same time impose these added restrictions. I trust that in Committee we shall be able to delete the penalty of £2 a day, which I regard as neither fair nor just, particularly when it is a matter of a man trying to provide a home for himself. I shall support the second reading of the Bill, which I regard as an honest endeavour to improve the position in some directions. I confess that I would like to wipe out the original Act, if that were possible; but as it cannot be done, we should encourage the spirit of self-help among those who strive to provide homes for themselves. If a man can erect a home and satisfy all the conditions imposed by the Public Works Department respecting the quality of work and materials, I fail to see why he should not be able to do so. Fortunately this measure does not apply to the country districts. I trust that when we deal

with the Bill in Committee we shall be able to increase the limit to £800. I would like to raise that figure, but I am afraid that if we were to attempt that, we might endanger the position.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [7.55]: I am afraid of the Bill for the very simple reason that it appears to me a case of transferring responsibility from the Government to local authorities. Section 39 of the Health Act reads—

Every local authority shall, under its local governing Act, make a levy on all rateable land in the district, and cause to be collected, in addition to the rates which it may be otherwise authorised to make and levy, such annual health rate as may be required for the purposes of this Act.

That sounds all right; but when we look at the Bill, we notice the concluding portion of Clause 3, which reads—

and Argentine ants and other insect pests as may be proclaimed from time to time.

The Minister during his second reading speech said that the ant was probably confined to some centres in the South-West but are the people residing in those areas to pay a special rate to combat the pest in the interests of the whole of the people? If that is the object, then the rate should apply generally and the cost be distributed in that way. I fail to see why the Minister may not at some future date proclaim the lucerne flea, the red-legged mite and the cabbage butterfly as pests to be brought under the control of the Health Act. If that were done, we would find the local authorities throughout the State being called upon to control the pests, as they would be declared vermin and be proclaimed as such under the Health Act. It would also mean building up the Health Department.

In some of the country areas we have had experience of what the setting up of boards means, thereby increasing the financial burden imposed on the people in the rural districts. It will mean expanding the Civil Service, and that involves more expense

for the people as a whole. The Minister did make one satisfactory statement when he said that contractors were being employed in certain areas to deal with the pest. I think such work could be done only in confined areas. I cannot see how contractors could be employed to deal with ants in a larger area such as the municipality of Albany. The work can be done by spraying or poisoning, the only two ways known of combating the pest at present. I shall not indicate whether I will support or oppose the Bill, but will follow the debate closely. At present I do not like its wording.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South) [8.0]: I feel rather concerned about this piece of legislation. The Argentine ant was imported into Australia some few years ago, and since its introduction there has been no proof whatever—not the slightest vestige or even suspicion—that it is any way a menace or a danger to health. It is not a vector of any form of disease or parasite. Admittedly, it is a pest of the first water. It is a nuisance that has assumed proportions today that make it a menace, but not to the health of the community. The Health Department at present has to concern itself with any menace to public health, whether it be a vector, insects such as mosquitos or flies, or rodents such as rats.

In my opinion, it is an imposition on an already over-worked department to force its inspectors to stop the activities of the Argentine ant. I understand from the highest authority that what is intended by this Bill is that health inspectors, on whose shoulders the work will fall, will act as field workers. They will report any signs of the Argentine ant they may discover on their rounds, and I am sure members will agree that that, in practice, will mean the health inspectors themselves will have to do the job. If they are to report back to an authority, to whom else can they report but the Health Department? That throws the onus on the Health Department.

All the inquiries now being made about the Argentine ant come from agriculturists, horticulturists and nurserymen. They are not concerned with the health of the community. It is not long ago since the Argentine ant was considered to be vermin and was so called. Everyone knows how ants mul-

tiply; and I feel that, if the Bill passes, the Health Department will, if made responsible for the destruction of the Argentine ant, be inundated with reports of infestations from private people all over the State, and the department will be expected to exterminate them. I do not know whether members are aware of the set-up of the Health Department in Perth, which is the area I have in mind at present.

I understand that Perth is divided into nine sections, each of which is under the control of one inspector, who is directly responsible for it. His regular routine is first to open the mail, which contains notices and reports of infectious diseases cases and so on. The inspector then makes his examination and carries out his other routine duties of inspecting shops, foodstuffs and so on. When the Argentine ant starts to multiply in the summer, I am certain that the inspector's morning mail will consist, as to at least 90 per cent. of it, of reports on the Argentine ant, and he will be compelled to look into them.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: And the people would not know whether the ants were Argentine ants or not.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is so. I can quote the example of a supposed expert, who reported to the Health Department that the ant was infesting a footpath in St. George's Terrace and that it was up to the department to do something about it. An inspector was sent to catch specimens of the so-called Argentine ant and he took them along to the Government Entomologist, who admitted he had to put them under a low-power microscope to ascertain whether they were Argentine ants or not. Yet this supposed expert claimed that he could tell they were Argentine ants. An inspector could not be expected to carry around with him a low-power or high-power microscope in order to decide whether the pests were Argentine ants or not. If the inspectors are forced to carry out this work, their other duties must suffer.

At present, a health inspector's prime duty is to worry about poliomyelitis. It is his duty to report every such case to the head of the department and have it investigated. His work in that connection would suffer, as would his inspection of foodstuffs. The summer is now approaching and he cannot afford to neglect that side of his duties.

I understand that the Argentine ant being complained of is infesting fruit trees. Who are better qualified than fruit inspectors to deal with the pest? These inspectors are required to examine so-called backyard orchards, and consequently they would be in an excellent position to report on Argentine ants. I admit the Argentine ant is a menace and I would support the Government in any action it might take to destroy the pest; but I am opposed to the work being done by health inspectors, who I contend are being overworked.

I repeat that neither the Argentine ant nor any other type of ant is a danger to public health. I must admit that the ant could possibly be claimed to be a vector of disease in one respect, and that is a mechanical vector. This means that if the ant were to contact anything poisonous, or filth or contaminated food, it could carry disease to other foodstuffs; but the fact is that the ant is one of the cleanest insects we know of. Ants can infest bags of sugar, but they do not pollute the sugar; they merely carry it away. Ants avoid filth. If ants are to be claimed as possible vectors of disease, then we must also include in that category bees, butterflies and other insects that could contaminate food. I am not speaking as a layman. I am a health inspector and am looking at the matter from the point of view of a health inspector. I consider it is an imposition to expect health inspectors to do work of this character, which I feel to be wholly and solely the responsibility of the Agricultural Department, even if it means employing a team of men in conjunction with the officers who are now controlling other pests.

What has happened is that the Agricultural Department has found it cannot do anything about the ant. There is really no known method of destroying it. Everyone is apt to point straight away to D.D.T., but that does not affect ants to any great extent. D.D.T. is not a poison; it will not poison human beings; but if a man got a sufficient dose of it, it could make him as sick as would an overdose of soda or salt. There is no guarantee that D.D.T. will destroy the Argentine ant in the same way as it destroys fleas, cockroaches and other insects infesting buildings. The reaction to D.D.T. is known; it is definite. I feel the Bill will merely pass the buck to the Health Depart-

ment. I certainly think that if the second reading be passed, we should, when in Committee, delete the provision with respect to "other insect pests that may be proclaimed from time to time." That is most unfair and I would like to see it struck out of the measure.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [8.12]: It must be admitted that the Argentine ant is fast becoming a great pest. Mr. Cunningham is probably quite right in what he says. The ant is probably not injurious to public health. Nevertheless, when we get them in our food, I do not think that is conducive to good health, nor is it in any way beneficial. The Bill simply authorises a local health authority to frame bylaws for the control of the Argentine ant. It does not go as far as Mr. Cunningham stated. There is nothing mandatory about Section 185 of the Health Act, which provides—

A local authority may, of its own motion, and shall, when the Commissioner so requires, make bylaws with respect to all or any of the following matters

and then the matters are set out. That in no way instructs a local authority to take action; it merely gives that authority power to make bylaws so that, if action is necessary, it can be taken. I do not know whether the Act contains anything to the contrary, as I have not had time to peruse it all.

Hon. A. L. Loton: If a local authority passes bylaws, how is the action brought about?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This section merely gives a local authority power to make bylaws.

Hon. E. H. Gray: If it wants to.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: If instructed by the Commissioner.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes. This Bill merely adds the words "and Argentine ants and other pests" to the section. D.D.T. may not destroy the ant; nothing will completely destroy it until it is followed to its nest, where it breeds, and there exterminated.

While the ordinary ants only breed in their season, these cursed things, which are generally under cover, breed throughout the whole year. They are spreading right through the country because they get amongst goods being transported from place to place. It will not be long before they

are all over the State. I do not like the addition of the words "and other insect pests as may be proclaimed from time to time." While I shall support the second reading, I do not feel like allowing them to be included. If the necessity should arise we could always meet it as we are doing in connection with the Argentine ant. I do not know of any pest that progresses as rapidly as do the Argentine ants. They breed by the million.

Some years ago a health inspector who lived in the Terrace had a fortnight off and he said he would take two or three days of his holidays to clear out the Argentine ants. He spent two days on the job, and most of his time was taken up tracing the ants. He finally found them under the cement blocks of the footpath. He eradicated the nests, and up to three years after not an ant was to be seen there, although I daresay they are pretty thick again there now. That is the only way to eradicate them. In connection with that part of the Bill dealing with other insect pests, if we get an over-zealous Commissioner of Health, and some pests start to run wild, he might compel the local authorities to make bylaws to deal with them as well.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [8.17]: I am not happy about the Bill. I object to the foisting of the responsibility of controlling ants and other pests on to the local authorities. Not only this Government, but others down the years, have always been desirous of handing over to the local authorities any matter involving expenditure, but where there is any revenue accruing, it is brought within the purview of the Government. I cannot imagine how the ambit of the Health Act can be extended to include provision for Argentine ants. Mr. Cunningham has already pointed out that the Argentine ant is not a conveyor of disease. At the same time I realise that in Western Australia it has become a menace and should be controlled. But I am not in favour of this control being handed over to the local authorities.

The Health Act provides that the maximum rate that can be charged by municipalities is 9d. in the £. We have to find ways and means of obtaining revenue to pay for the various items that come under the Health Act from time to time. The

local authorities are charged with the responsibility in connection with infectious diseases. They voluntarily accepted the responsibility of immunisation against diphtheria, which also cost a large amount of money. In addition, they are parties to the Infectious Diseases Hospital. Only recently we have been advised that the daily rate there has been increased to 27s. 6d. I admit that the Commonwealth Government pays part of that, and the State Government pays 50 per cent., but the local authorities are expected to meet the balance, less anything that is collected.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Plus transport.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: That is so. Whilst I admit it is absolutely necessary to control the Argentine ants, I feel it should be done by the Department of Agriculture, because the Vermin Act provides by Section 10—

All moneys appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of this Act may be applied to the following purposes, that is to say—

(d) and generally in such manner as the Minister may from time to time direct for defraying or contributing towards the cost of any measures taken on Crown lands, public reserves, vacant areas adjacent to private holdings, and generally on all lands, whether held privately or otherwise, for the prevention or the incursion or migration or for the destruction of vermin in any part of the State.

I feel there are many local authorities with large areas of Crown land within their boundaries, and if the responsibility is passed on to them they will have the job of eradicating the Argentine ants from those parts. I therefore consider it is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture. Already we have the Vermin Act, and a number of inspectors to police it. It is reasonable to assume that those inspectors could police any regulations brought down for the control of this particular pest. It has been said that it does not necessarily follow that if this is made part and parcel of the Health Act, any expense will fall on the local authorities. If they have the responsibility to make bylaws for the control of Argentine ants, it is only reasonable to assume that they will have to police those bylaws, and will be directed to do so by the Commissioner of Public Health.

As I said previously, these ants should be controlled, but it could be better done by the Department of Agriculture, under

the Vermin Act. Another point I would like to mention is that after the words "Argentine ants" the clause goes on, "and other insect pests as may be proclaimed from time to time." We shall have all sorts of things foisted on to the local authorities. Some of the coastal areas have been infested by a plague of snails. They were imported, I understand, in the ballast of some ship. During my period on the coast, I have noticed them invading the country as far as Mandurah. When I first arrived in Fremantle, they were only just around the waterfront. How are we to know that eventually snails will not be brought under the Act? It would then be the responsibility of the local authorities to control them.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What about grasshoppers?

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: They are also pests, and there is no reason why they could not be added. The time has come when we should call a halt. It is the Government's responsibility to control these pests, and the cost should be met from taxes paid by people all over the State. Another question arises in connection with penalties. If the local authorities are empowered to make bylaws, some penalty must be provided in the case of a person not carrying out the provision of those bylaws. In the Vermin Act there are also penal provisions. Sections 95 and 96 provide for penalties of £20 and £10 respectively. If the local authorities have this responsibility, there is the possibility that a person could be charged under the two Acts, and be fined twice. Whilst at the moment I do not raise any serious objection to the inclusion of the Argentine ants, I strongly object to other insects being added. I hope that when the Bill is in Committee, the words "and other insect pests as may be proclaimed from time to time" will be deleted.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [8.27]: I do not think the Bill goes far enough with regard to the Argentine ants. If an attempt is to be made to eradicate these pests, now is the time to do it. To amend the Act so that the local authorities may include the Argentine ants, is not sufficient. One local authority may do something and others nothing at all. On two or three occasions I have spoken in this

House against the spread of a poison weed in the South-West. We have one which is spreading today, and nothing is being done about it.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: What weed is that?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: The Cape tulip.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You have not a monopoly of it.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: It is very bad in the South-West and has already accounted for some very valuable stock. The Government should take a more direct hand in the matter. I agree with Mr. Davies that local authorities today have difficulty in meeting all their charges. Rates have been considerably increased in recent years, and these matters are building up a cost that is difficult for a few people to bear. This is something in the nature of a national matter; it concerns the whole State. Is it not far better that towns, which have not the pest, should contribute towards stamping it out where it is established? What is the use of getting rid of it in Cottesloe if it is allowed, say, to continue in Claremont? The residents of Claremont would do much more good by assisting to clean up the other suburb.

This is a big question and should be tackled in a business-like way. To do just what is suggested in the Bill, and no more, is merely tinkering with it. If all we can accomplish tonight is the passing of the measure, then further steps should be taken to see that the pest is completely wiped out. There is no doubt it is a curse. I am of the opinion that an army of inspectors will not eradicate it, but that it is a matter for co-operation by the people. If we have to go to every crevice on every street corner to ascertain if the ants are established, then we have an impossible job. It is only by educating the people to pull their weight and assist in making it a complete job that we are going to get anywhere.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The local authorities can formulate bylaws compelling the people to destroy the ants.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: That is all very well. Some people have no idea of identifying them. The same applies to the Cape tulip weed. We have Cape tulip growing by the roadside, but no-one seems to know what it is. In the South-West I have seen it growing close to road board premises, but people have known nothing whatever about

it. It is a bulb which lasts for years in the ground and once it sheds its seeds is very difficult to get rid of. The position is similar as regards the pest with which we are dealing tonight. I understand that Perth is actually reeking with these ants. If that is so, it will be a nice job to clean up the city; but if any money is to be found for this kind of work, let us try to do it in a business-like way.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: I agree that something should be done and the using of inspectors is just playing with it.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I do not think the Bill will accomplish what the Government is seeking. I am opposed to the last clause of the Bill which provides an open go for anything and everything to be proclaimed vermin. We should have a say such as we are having tonight as to whether other pests should be declared vermin or otherwise. However, I support the second reading.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [8.32]: Might I point out that the Act to be amended is the Health Act of 1914-48? I do not think that any amending Act was passed in 1948 and therefore I think the year should be 1944. However, that does not affect the contents of the Bill.

The Chief Secretary: It is a Committee Bill.

Hon. G. FRASER: I was rather interested at the time when the measure was introduced in another place and I read in the Press that the Government was tackling the Argentine ant question, but I am satisfied, after reading the Bill and hearing the debate on it, that it is only a sham fight that is being waged.

Hon. A. L. Loton: No.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is the good old game of pushing it on to somebody else. I am advocating that the measure be defeated so that the Government will bring down legislation of a more positive character.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It is just a step.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am afraid that if we take this step, the only other step will be an attempt by the Health Department to make all the local authorities do their job.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: To the detriment of their other jobs.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is just the position.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Is the power there?

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, the power is there—firstly, to give the local authorities power to make bylaws or leave the matter to the direction of the Commissioner. I will admit that it may be a case of being able to take a horse to water but not being able to make him drink.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Do not forget that the Minister has overriding powers to make them do it at their expense.

Hon. G. FRASER: There is that authority, but once the Commissioner directs that they shall make bylaws governing this particular thing and they refuse, the Commissioner can override them.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: At the local government expense.

Hon. G. FRASER: And we will be starting something of which we know nothing but which is to be put on to the local bodies. Although I advocate the defeat of the measure, I do not want it to be assumed that I am against the control of the Argentine ant. In fact, I think it is about the only control of which we are all 100 per cent. in favour.

The Chief Secretary: We do not want to control it; we want to eradicate it.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, but we are all prepared to have at least some form of control, although I do not think there is anything in the Bill that will be effective. The Government has not tackled the question in the proper manner. I do not want the job to be shifted on to some other authority, with the possibility that it will not do the job unless directed. The point raised by Mr. Davies is vital, because if it is correct that the local authorities have only 9d. in the £ with which to finance the control of health matters, I think we should give very serious consideration to the Bill before placing any further responsibility on the local authorities. The best thing to do is to defeat the measure and there will be plenty of time before the end of the session for the Government to deal with this pest in a more effective way.

Hon. L. Craig: What way?

Hon. G. FRASER: There may be some finance under the Vermin Act that could be used for the eradication of this particular pest. I am only suggesting—

Hon. L. Craig: The best way is the way we have it here.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not think very much of this way. If this is the best means of dealing with it, I do not think we will get very far with it. I want to see something more definite than what is set out in the Bill.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: What did your Government do about it?

Hon. G. FRASER: My Government did nothing about it because the Argentine ant did not appear till after we had gone out of office.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. G. FRASER: It did not appear in very large numbers up to then in the metropolitan area. I did not hear anything at all about it until last year when some reference was made in the Press indicating that it was bad out Wembley way.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: It has been here for years.

Hon. G. FRASER: If it has been, nothing has been said about it, and the increase in the last year or two has not been so alarming as to attract attention. However, I am not concerned as to which Government is responsible for bringing it here. What I am concerned with is that some definite steps should be taken to eradicate the pest, but I do not think the Bill will do it.

Hon. L. Craig: What is better than the Bill?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know what is worse.

Hon. L. Craig: You tell me what is better.

Hon. G. FRASER: I cannot, because I know nothing about the question, but from the debate I have heard tonight I doubt whether the Bill will do any good.

Hon. L. Craig: If it is properly administered, it will be all right.

Hon. G. FRASER: I have heard it said that even if the Act is properly administered the authorities still do not know what is the best method to adopt to eradicate the pest.

Hon. H. Tuckey: There should be some Government assistance.

Hon. G. FRASER: If the situation is so alarming, it does not matter who does the job, but as we do not know how to get rid of the ants, why should we put an experiment like this on to a local government authority?

Hon. L. Craig: Who is putting it on?

Hon. G. FRASER: The Bill is, and the hon. member will, if he votes for it. I am not prepared to do that, so I would rather see the Bill go out because there is plenty of time before the end of the session for a more effective measure to be introduced. I oppose the second reading.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (East) [8.40]: I support those who have been somewhat positive in their remarks this evening. The first thing we have to do is to educate people as to what Argentine ants really are and look like. Not many people can distinguish between the ordinary small ant and the Argentine ant.

Hon. L. Craig: They do not smell.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: So we have to pick them up in our hands and smell them, do we? What a beautiful interjection. So we have to go around smelling the ants!

Hon. L. Craig: You can pick them up and smell them.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: So that first of all we have to determine their smell. Let us be more serious. These ants are a pest. There are two varieties of small ants, namely, the Argentine and the Singapore ant. I understand they are not identical although I cannot tell what is the difference between them. The first thing to do is to educate the people so that they may themselves determine which are Argentine ants and which are not. When we have done that we shall have gone a long way towards the extermination of the pest. I understand that the areas particularly infested at present with small ants comprise

Nedlands, Claremont, South Perth and probably the outskirts of Victoria Park.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: And Mt. Lawley and North Perth. They are found right through those districts.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not know whether they are Argentine ants or not. Having educated the public as to which ants have to be exterminated and which may be left alone, I then find myself in agreement with Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Fraser that the mere giving of power under the Health Act for the framing of bylaws will not in itself get rid of the pest. I was surprised to hear Mr. Baxter say "Give this power to the health authorities because we shall then know that the ants will be exterminated." I point out that the hon. member was once Minister for Agriculture for some time.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member should withdraw his remark. I made no such statement.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not know what statement the hon. member means.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member has asked that the statement be withdrawn.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The whole of my speech?

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member's reference to Mr. Baxter.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: What I stated was that Mr. Baxter said all that it was necessary to do was to frame bylaws under the Health Act and then we could exterminate the ants.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I made no such statement.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: If that is so, then I made a mistake.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member must withdraw.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: If necessary I will withdraw, but that is the impression I gathered from Mr. Baxter's speech. Possibly I did not use his exact language. No-one knows better than the hon. member, who was once Minister for Agriculture, that many bylaws have been made under the Vermin Act and that one local authority will do everything necessary to exterminate a particular pest while

the local authority next door will do nothing. That is what will happen if we have bylaws promulgated under the Health Act for the extermination of the Argentine ant. It is not the function of health inspectors to deal with pests of this nature. They have a full-time job looking after the health of the people of the State. They could not do this other work effectively in the time at their disposal.

Mosquitoes alone constitute a problem, and flies, which are so dangerous to public health, represent another problem. There are local authorities adjoining each other, one doing everything possible to exterminate mosquitoes and flies while another close by does nothing whatever. No-one knows that better than does Mr. Baxter. We are starting on this business at the wrong end. I do not know what action the Government has taken to eradicate the Argentine ant. Little else has been done except through the Press which has endeavoured to educate the public. "The West Australian" has done quite a lot in that direction. On one occasion I asked the Minister to procure some of these insects and also some ordinary ants and have them placed in glass bottles for public exhibition. This would have been very useful, because we could then have learnt which are the Argentine ants and which are not. The department ought to start at the right end.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Which is the right end?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The Department of Agriculture. Two or three inspectors, if necessary, should be put on to ascertain the best means of dealing with this pest. I do not know who would be likely to tear up the flags of a footpath in order to deal with the ants. In some districts, the health authority is not the road board; there are two separate authorities, and I cannot picture a road board permitting a local health authority to tear up its footpaths in search of the pest. These are problems that ought to be considered. All we shall accomplish by agreeing to the Bill will be to pass the buck. Consider what we have done. We have empowered the health authorities to deal with pests, and they have not done it. I want to see some effective means taken in this instance.

I am aware that the Honorary Minister for Agriculture is not the Minister for Health, but he made an admission that the

problem was too great for the Department of Agriculture. At any rate, that is what I understood him to say. Therefore, he had a conference with the Minister for Health, and it was decided that the Health Department was the better one to deal with the problem. Seemingly, all we are doing is to pass the buck to the Health Department. If this were a matter that affected the health of the people, I believe the Health Department would take an active interest, but it will not do so—this was demonstrated by Mr. Cunningham's speech—and thus we shall have an increase of the pest.

It is my intention to vote against the second reading of the Bill, not that I am averse to measures to control the pest but because I wish to see an effective effort made. I believe that the Government could attain its object by other means. The Department of Agriculture, which controls much of the vermin, should be the department to do it. That department is expected to deal with the fruit-fly menace. Even in that direction, the public does not assist very much. The fruit-fly is easily detected, more easily than is the Argentine ant. The first thing to do is to educate the people to understand what they are expected to destroy and then give them the simplest and best method of doing it. I confess that I do not know the Argentine ant, and therefore I consider it difficult to educate others in their duty. I have seen ants in this House, and have been told that they were Argentine ants.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They have been here for years.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I first heard about them three or four years ago. I think there might be grounds for the Minister's fear of the ants getting into the fruit. If they do, the loss on our export fruit will be considerable. While I am anxious to help the Minister, I am satisfied that he will not accomplish the slightest good in this way. I want to see something of a positive nature adopted, so that we may get somewhere. The Minister, in replying, will probably say that the Argentine ant is a pest and that members are not prepared to assist in its eradication. I am prepared to help in every way possible, but we ought to go about it in a sensible manner.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [8.50]: Some surprising things occur in this House during debates on various Bills. With many members, it is a tradition to take the part of local authorities and to throw back any responsibility on the Government. This is quite a simple proposition. Argentine ants are responsible for a great waste of food and often, through carelessness, large numbers of flies are harboured, and the health of the people must be affected, if only indirectly. The health authority, with its local inspectors, is the most effective organisation to deal with this pest. I am of opinion that if the local health authorities had supervised the measures for the eradication of fruit-fly, that pest would have been exterminated in the metropolitan area many years ago.

For the Government to undertake the work of exterminating the Argentine ant would be an expensive matter, especially when there are local authorities in the metropolitan area and in the larger country towns with health inspectors that could do the work. If the housewife knew that this responsibility devolved on the local health authority, proper steps would be taken to eradicate the pest.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: What are the proper steps?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I have been informed that D.D.T. is effective, and nobody can tell me that the Department of Agriculture and the Health Department could not agree upon a policy for economically dealing with the pest. I hope that the Bill will be passed. Steps must be taken to eradicate this pest; we cannot afford to disregard it. If we defeat the Bill, we can hardly expect the Government to introduce another measure stipulating that the Department of Agriculture shall be the responsible authority. All said and done, who will pay for this work? The people pay all the time whether through the local authority or through the Government.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The difference is that the ratepayers pay in the one case and the general taxpayers in the other case.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: But the cost all comes out of the one pocket—the pocket of the people. We should pass legislation that will permit of the eradication of a pest in the least expensive way, and the proposal in

the Bill is the least expensive method of dealing with this pest.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [8.54]: I am amazed at the opposition to the Bill. Mr. Fraser and other speakers have said that they desired that something practical should be done. Over three years ago I asked the then Chief Secretary, Hon. W. H. Kitson, question after question as to the action proposed to be taken by his Government for the eradication of the Argentine ant. I pointed out that this pest was causing considerable trouble at Albany, and that the people were fearful of its reaching the fruitgrowing areas. Storekeepers and others made a point of closely examining any goods that came from that town to ensure that the pest would not be transferred to the country. The then Government, however, did not face up to its obligations; it threw the entire responsibility upon the Municipality of Albany. That municipality appointed a man specially to make a house-to-house examination and, where ants were discovered, to give instructions how to destroy them. If people say that these ants are not a pest, they cannot know what they are talking about.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Who said that?

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Everyone admits they are a pest.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Then I must have mistaken the hon. member. Let me relate what happened in the home of some of my people in one of the suburbs of Perth. On one occasion they found their kitchen table, sink and meat safe alive with Argentine ants, and considerable expense was entailed in an attempt to eradicate them. The trouble was that the pest was coming from a neighbour's place where nothing at all was being done to combat it. Evidently the neighbours did not care two hoots. This young couple, on retiring one night, could not imagine what was wrong with their bed, and when they investigated, they found it covered with Argentine ants.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Was it the female of the species?

Hon. A. THOMSON: We are dealing with a serious problem, so let us be serious. I congratulate the Government on having tackled it. The previous Government did not face up to the situation. Had action been taken

three years ago, considerable good might have resulted. Instead of that, the then Government passed the buck and left the responsibility with the municipality affected at that time. I have stated what happened in the home of some of my people in one of the suburbs of Perth. Had this measure been in operation, I believe they would have reported the trouble to the local authority, and the health inspector would have taken steps to ensure that the neighbour played his part in combating the pest. That this should be done is absolutely essential. We have been told that the Department of Agriculture should take the responsibility. No doubt it would be willing to accept its share.

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: It is doing that now.

Hon. A. THOMSON: But every municipality, as well as a majority of the road boards, have their own health inspectors and, in my opinion, the work could be done most effectively through them. I do not agree with the remark of Mr. Cunningham that these health officers are so greatly overworked. I know some of them in the province I represent and some boards seem hard-pressed to find full-time employment for the health inspectors. Dr. Cook has insisted on each of them employing a health officer. We know very well that, with regard to contagious diseases, the doctor notifies the local authority and necessary precautions are taken.

The Argentine ant is no laughing matter. As far as entrusting the control to the Health Department is concerned, I know that some of my people in a suburb of this city would be very much happier if they could ring up the Perth City Council and ask for an inspector to be sent out to deal with careless neighbours who live next door. My people are doing their utmost, even to the extent of spending money on D.D.T., with the idea of eradicating the pest, but they cannot go next door to deal with it because that would be trespassing.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Could not the fruit-fly inspector do the same job?

Hon. A. THOMSON: How many fruit-fly inspectors does the hon. member want employed? Those men travel all over the State. All municipalities and most of the road boards have health inspectors.

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson: They do not do anything about fruit-fly.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I presume they know a little about it. If we want this pest eradicated, we should give the local authorities power to frame bylaws to that end; and I hope the Minister, when replying, will make a statement that the Government is willing to accept its share of the responsibility of eradicating the pest and that it is not intended to throw that responsibility entirely on the local authorities. After all, it is a national affair. The local paper in my district did say that I was endeavouring to make the Government do its job. But I was not very successful. The Minister is trying to do his job.

Hon. E. M. Davies: He is asking local authorities to do it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: Suppose that goods came from Albany and were landed at Katanning, my home town. If ants were discovered in these goods after a period, surely the local inspector could oversee the job of destruction, under the direction of Government experts. The local inspector himself need not even do the job. He would probably have a casual employee and could instruct him to do his best to exterminate the pest, telling him what treatment to use. It is not necessary for the health inspector himself to go from house to house carrying out the work, but he is what might be termed the responsible man. Under normal conditions, when an infectious disease is reported, the health inspector may fumigate the house himself, but it is likely that he would pass the work on to one of his subordinates. I know that some members thought my story of the ants in the bed was funny; but there is no gainsaying the fact that it is not nice to find these creatures in one's house. All the meat in the kitchen of the people to whom I referred earlier in my remarks, had to be destroyed, and that meant a considerable loss to them. They were absolutely amazed to find the place almost black with the ants.

I could not distinguish an Argentine ant, because one ant looks like another to me. I think it is a matter for the expert, and I hope the House will agree to the second reading of the Bill, because I believe it is time we grappled with the pest. Interjections were made about the Cape tulip. If that had been tackled in the early days, it would not have spread and been the trouble that it is today. The sooner we get

to work to eradicate Argentine ants, the better it will be. Let us give the Minister an opportunity to show that he is in earnest in trying to do a job which has been long delayed.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [9.7]: This little ant has caused the expenditure of a good deal of time. I intend to support the second reading because I am a member of a local governing body and there are a number of local authorities in my district, none of which I think would be opposed to measures for the destruction of these miserable little creatures. There is no doubt they are a pest to the community. Last year I stayed at an hotel in the city and had these little customers in bed with me, just as Mr. Thomson's friends had them. They were in the hotel for a considerable time and were a nuisance to the proprietor.

The statement was made by Mr. Cunningham that they would not spread diseases. I do not know whether that is correct. It is possible for them to get into the linen of people in hospital suffering from infectious diseases and then travel on to the food of other patients, and that might cause trouble. I know that health inspectors have plenty of work to do, but the extra labour entailed in this suggestion would not be so great. They would only have to see that people with the ants on their premises carried out the provisions of the Act by endeavouring to suppress them. If necessary, an employee of the local authority could be sent out to destroy the pest under the direction of the health officer. I do not think that would put the local authority to much expense.

If the ants come on to one's premises from a neighbour's property, one is not permitted to go on to the neighbour's place to destroy them; but why should one be pestered with them? The same trouble exists on the Goldfields with regard to mosquitoes. Two doors away from me there are a couple of septic tanks; and although I have wire gauze on my windows and doors, these pests are present in thousands. What is needed is some covering for the septic tanks. Lacking legislation to compel people to eradicate insect pests, we must suffer from their visitations. It is time such things were controlled by the Health Department.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Central) [9.10]: I think this Chamber has already been undermined by the Argentine ant! I see no reason why this Bill should not be passed with the exception of portion of the last clause. I believe the Minister is endeavouring to do something about the pest and has introduced this Bill with a view to strengthening his hand. It has been said he is trying to pass the buck. Knowing the Honorary Minister and the job he is doing in the department today, I think that is all wrong. I agree to a certain extent that he should have introduced another Bill to deal with the matter; but I am sure that he will tell us in his reply to the debate that the department is doing something in the matter, and that this measure is only an attempt to strengthen its hands.

As Mr. Thomson has said, one person will endeavour to destroy the pest and another will not. What Mr. Bennetts said about the mosquito, I can say about the rabbit. I do not see why we cannot get every department on the job. If this ant is a menace, as is claimed, why not let the departments combine to find some method of extermination? The more people we have on the job the better. I see no reason why we cannot give the Minister some assistance by passing the Bill. If it is found that there is still not sufficient power, then let another measure be introduced. Why stop people who are endeavouring to do something about the matter? I have every sympathy for the Minister in the endeavour he is making to do his job.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [9.13]: I hope members will support the second reading, despite what they might do with the last few words of the Bill. Many curious factors have come into this debate which make it quite plain to everyone in the House that there is considerable need for a revision of many of the factors that lie in association one with another between the Government and the local governing bodies. It is obvious that the time is not far distant when some comprehensive study will have to be made of the relationships of the two authorities; and if measures of this sort are to be carried out by the local governing bodies, they should be given sufficient finance to do the job satisfactorily.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You have something there.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Associated with this there must be, as I have suggested in this House previously, a review of the activities of the Health Department in order to bring them into close association with those of the local governing bodies. What has been said in this House is that if the Government allows the local governing bodies to frame regulations for the control of the Argentine ant, it is possible that in one area attempts along those lines will be made but not in another area. Such a procedure has been proved in the past to be completely useless. I would refer to the control of rats; and I say quite frankly that Brill's disease is fast spreading from the coast to every country town. If we are to do anything to control these pests, there must be co-operation between the Health Department and other departments.

I feel that there should be appointed a committee to inquire into the best methods of associating together the various departments that could co-operate in the control of pests of this nature. While I believe we should pass this measure, I think the Government ought to take notice of the views that have been expressed in this House tonight and adopt immediate steps to bring these pests under control. Some doubt has been expressed tonight as to what are Argentine ants and what are not. All that we need worry about at the moment is the fact that there is an ant or a series of types of ants that are a great nuisance to housewives in certain parts of the metropolitan area, and that we must take measures to get rid of them.

When we first heard of these creatures, they were graced by the name of Singapore ants. Whether they were the same type of ant that is now known as the Argentine ant, is not of great importance. We know there is an ant, the habits of which we, as human beings, do not appreciate. To us his habits seem extraordinary. I have seen ants going to the fourth floor of a building where there was little or no food for them. My own belief is that the secret of eradication of this ant lies in getting rid of the stagnant pools of water that are often to be found round wash basins, cisterns and so on, or the troughs that contain water for animals.

If we control the distribution of water more adequately, we may do a great deal towards the destruction of these ants. My theory may be completely wrong, but I have reached that view through watching these ants over a considerable period. By attending to the odd places where water is left available for them, I think we could do a great deal towards solving the problem. Were we completely to close in the tops of all water sewers, I think we would be taking a step in the right direction.

Hon. G. Bennetts: What about cock-roaches?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: All these pests must drink and they go to where water is available. So far as is known—although we do not like these pests—they do not carry any specific disease. I realise that housewives, when they have placed a custard in a refrigerator, do not like to find it covered with ants when the times comes for it to be served. A strange characteristic of this particular type of ant is that it seems to be equally at home in the heat of the day or in the extreme cold of a refrigerator. Another reason why the control of this type of pest requires the co-operation of more than one department is that though one destroys the ants in one's own home today, it will be found to be swarming with them again in the morning. Seemingly, therefore, research is needed into the breeding and living habits of these creatures. Having determined those questions, the eradication of the pests should be a much more simple matter. I believe that as a matter of course the various Government departments are probably making a study of the habits of these ants. Once we have discovered where their breeding grounds are, and have established their habits of living, feeding and drinking, their eradication should be much less of a problem.

Advice should be given to the housewife on what to do within her own home, and the control outside the home should be a matter in which one department or another could assist. Whether it should be the Health Department or the Department of Agriculture matters not, so long as the necessary action is taken. I feel that we should pass this measure. I do not for one moment imagine that the Commissioner of Public Health has not given his sanction

to the legislation. I presume he must have seen the Bill as I cannot imagine the Minister for Health bringing down legislation that that officer had not considered. If the Commissioner of Public Health has given his sanction to the Bill, he must feel that he is able, in the interests of the public, to give some advice in the matter. I would be content to leave it in his hands at the moment.

The debate tonight has brought forward many interesting points that the Government should consider. The first is that there should be a realisation of the need for a reorganisation of the association between Government and local governing bodies, and a further review of the provision for local governing bodies to impose rates adequate to allow them to put into operation necessary health measures. There should also be research into the elimination not only of these ants, but of all pests that are a nuisance in our cities and towns. Having co-ordinated the necessary departments, we could form a body to take charge of the control and eradication of these pests. I support the second reading of the Bill.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. G. B. Wood—East—in reply) [9.21]: I have never before been so disappointed at the reception given a Bill by some members. Since I came to the Department of Agriculture I have received dozens of letters from local authorities in various parts of the State where this ant is found. I maintain that this is the first genuine attempt made by any Minister to do something towards the eradication of this particular pest. If the House throws the Bill out, it will take on itself a grave responsibility. As Dr. Hislop remarked, what does it matter who does the job so long as a real attempt is made to do it? Mr. Cunningham said that the buck had been passed, but that is not the case. The Department of Agriculture was prepared to do the job. I will read the minutes of a conference between the Minister for Health, Mr. Jenkins and myself. They are as follows:—

It was considered—

That it would be advisable that action dealing with the pest should be administered in

conjunction with health matters, and that the Health Act should be amended to obtain the necessary authority.

The best method of co-ordinating action against the Argentine ant would be through the local authorities and their inspectors.

That the Government should set up an administrative section at once in the Health Department for controlling Government activities, which should be under the Under Secretary for Health for administrative purposes and under the Government Entomologist for professional and technical matters.

The section to consist of one competent administrative officer with the necessary clerical assistance, and with the Government Entomologist or his deputy in control of the technical side.

That the Government Entomologist, with such other assistance as he may need, should submit as early as possible the steps to be taken, and that he consider (1) the necessary materials to be used, such as D.D.T., baits, containers, etc., and (2) the necessary spraying equipment and what steps should be taken to provide these for use by Government authorities and other persons.

That a case should be prepared by Mr. Jenkins for the purpose of submission to the C.S. & I.R. for general advice and assistance, with a view to obtaining, if possible, assistance from the Commonwealth Government.

That a plan of action be prepared and submitted to a conference of representatives of local authorities.

That is how the buck was passed. The Under Secretary for Agriculture told me he would do the job, but that it would require more finance in order to take on more inspectors to educate the people. Inspectors do not eradicate the pests, even in the case of rabbits. They instruct the people what to do and, if necessary, apply pressure. Sir Charles Latham said that the people must be instructed, and that would be the function of the inspectors.

The Health Department will co-operate with the experts of the Department of Agriculture in showing the people which is the Argentine ant. One member suggested that the Department of Agriculture would have to engage a lot of inspectors to tear up the footpaths in order to eradicate the ants, but that would not be the position. There are only two or three rabbit and vermin inspectors in that department. They make contact with the inspectors of the local authorities, who in turn do the job.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Is this not a plague?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think so.

Hon. H. Tuckey: They did not do this to eradicate rinderpest.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think anyone could say that the Argentine ant is comparable with rinderpest. There was a way of getting rid of that scourge, though it was a drastic method. I am surprised at Mr. Cunningham's statement that the ant cannot be eradicated, as I have definite proof that it can. I have a letter from a contractor who says that he can get rid of Argentine ants from any house on a quarter acre block at a cost of £3 and will guarantee that there will be no recurrence of the pest for three months. There is a letter to the Acting Under-Secretary for Agriculture from Mr. Jenkins. Portion of it reads as follows:—

Regarding the eradication of the Argentine ant, evidence obtained from American literature shows that several localities have been entirely freed of the Argentine ant by the use of the standard Government formula, Argentine ant poison. This is the bait which is at present recommended by me.

In the American campaigns the bait was distributed by inspectors attached to local plant boards and to give some idea of the magnitude of their organisation it may be quoted that for one campaign 1,136,028 bait containers were distributed at a cost of 35,000 dollars.

The Department of Agriculture is fully co-operative. A letter to the Public Service Commissioner from Mr. G. K. Baron-Hay, Under-Secretary for Agriculture, states—

The Honorary Minister has approved of the appointment of an inspector who would be concerned almost entirely upon measures to control the Argentine ant. This would not occupy the whole of his time during the winter months, but there is ample scope for his activities in administering the various Acts for which inspectors are needed, i.e., Plant Diseases Act, Stock Foods Act, Fertilisers Act, etc.

I propose for the time being to attach this inspector to the Horticultural Branch, as a great deal of his work would be concerned with inspecting parcels of plants at the various nurseries for freedom from Argentine ant and, if time permits, supervising control measures.

I should be obliged if applications could be called for the position of inspector, and suggest that his title should be "Inspector—Department of Agriculture," at a salary equivalent to that of fruitfly inspectors. A graduate of Muresk Agricultural College would be preferred.

That shows that the Department of Agriculture is ready to co-operate. Mr. Logan

said that all Government departments should co-operate, and I agree that they should all take a shot at the Argentine ant if it appears in areas under their jurisdiction. Only by a concerted effort will the pest be adequately controlled and eventually eradicated. Dr. Hislop said this ant could be destroyed but would show up again next day. I am informed by the experts that if they get to the breeding ground of the ant—apparently it does not breed inside houses—the pest can be destroyed and will not return. This particular expert guarantees freedom from ants for a period of three months. I am prepared to accept his advice.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Send him to me.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I will give the hon. member his name and address. The person who is not prepared to spend £3 to clear his premises of the ants deserves to put up with them. Farmers spend a great deal in ridding their properties of rabbits and grasshoppers, so after all £3 is not a great price to pay to be rid of these ants. The people must co-operate and, if they will not, the local authorities must be empowered to do the work and charge the people for it.

Hon. E. M. Davies: The payment of £3 is a guarantee for only three months.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: He cannot guarantee it indefinitely but the fact remains that he guarantees it for three months. I wish someone would guarantee my property as being free from rabbits for three months. I would chance the rabbits coming back afterwards. The man could not guarantee a house to be free of ants for a longer period than that and the fact that he does guarantee immunity for three months shows that he is prepared to clean them up.

I am rather disappointed at the criticism of the Bill. It is all very well to say that it is not the right way to overcome the trouble but so far nobody has told me a better method to adopt. We cannot create another Government department and we are always hearing about Government departments and Civil Servants. If we do not want another department to control Argentine ants, the responsibility must be thrown on some department and it has been placed in the hands of the Health Department. That department can co-operate with the Depart-

ment of Agriculture which has all the technical advisers available. One member said that the health inspectors are overworked. I do not know whether they are, but if so we must employ a few more. Some department must do the job. The point raised by Mr. Baxter has a lot of merit. He stated that other insects could be prescribed by regulation as being pests, and that is a good idea.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I intend to deal with that.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have no objection to that proposal and would agree to such an amendment.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 185:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 after the word "may" the words "by regulations" be inserted.

When speaking on the second reading, I spoke strongly about the latter part of this clause, but I fear that I was too hasty because the time may come when other pests will appear and thus make it necessary for more bylaws to be brought before the House, whereas the matter should be overcome by regulation. If the amendment were agreed to, we would still have regulations, to which we could disagree, laid on the Table of the House.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If the amendment is agreed to, we will be getting back to the idea of administration by regulation. We can do better than that by asking the Minister to introduce a new Bill. The Minister when speaking in reply made certain references to remarks which I had made—

The Honorary Minister for Agriculture: I suggest that the hon. member should refer to that on the third reading.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member should confine himself to the amendment now before the Committee. His other remarks can be made on the third reading.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If that is so, Mr. Chairman, I oppose the amendment.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Where another pest turns up, could the regulation be put into force without first being submitted to the House? Two years ago we had a plague of mice on the Commonwealth railways.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: This is dealing with insect pests.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes, I had forgotten that.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Is the amendment necessary? Bylaws would still have to be made to control pests. All the amendment does is to extend the power for making regulations.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	14
Noes	8
Majority for				6

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. H. B. W. Parker
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. D. H. Simpson
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. J. G. Hislop
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. Sir Chas. Latham
Hon. H. A. C. Daffen	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. J. M. Cunningham
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 the word "proclaimed" be struck out and the word "prescribed" inserted in lieu.

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

Title:

The CHAIRMAN: It will be necessary to amend the Title.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move an amendment—

That the figures "1948" be struck out and the figures "1944" inserted in lieu.

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

Bill reported with amendments and an amendment to the Title.

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

Assembly's Message

Message from the Assembly received and read requesting the Council to alter the time for the conference of managers from 2 p.m. to 11.30 a.m.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move—

That the Assembly's request be agreed to.

I understand that this House will have to meet to consider the report of the managers at 3.45 p.m. tomorrow. If we were to adhere to the time I originally suggested, there might not be a sufficient period allowed to do what is necessary.

Question put and passed.

Sitting suspended from 9.50 to 3.30 p.m. (Thursday).

Conference Managers' Report.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I beg to report that the managers appointed by the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly to confer regarding the control and distribution of new tractors, motor vehicles and fencing materials met and came to the following conclusions:—

As to Legislative Council's amendment No. 4, relating to fencing materials—agreed to.

As to Legislative Council's amendment No. 5, relating to motor vehicles—not agreed to.

The remaining amendments are consequential on the foregoing and will take effect or be altered accordingly.

I move—

That the report be adopted.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

Sitting suspended from 3.33 to 3.50 p.m.

Assembly's Further Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the conference managers' report.

House adjourned at 3.53 p.m. (Thursday).