

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 18th October, 1951.

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

PRIVILEGE.

Mr. Rodoreda and Press Reports of Debates.

Mr. RODORED A: I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday afternoon I asked the Premier a specific question to which, incidentally, he did not reply, though that is by the way. A report of that question and answer appeared in this morning's issue of "The West Australian," and gave a totally wrong impression as to what had actually happened here. It did not quote the question that I asked. I asked the Premier would he use his best endeavours to see whether planes from the Air Force could be obtained to run an emergency service to the towns in the North-West which had previously been served by the Dove aircraft, now grounded. The Premier replied as to the emergency services that were being put into operation. I already knew about that, and had, earlier in the afternoon, told the Premier what the position was. It was in that way that I knew that the emergency services would be totally inadequate, and that was why I asked that specific question.

I contend that if a question and answer—or anything that happens in this Parliament—are judged to be of sufficient interest to be published, at least we should have a correct interpretation in the Press of what goes on here. If a question is of sufficient importance or interest to the public to warrant its being published, at least the member who initiates the question should be mentioned in the Press report.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. RODORED A: We know this omission of mention of members is a petty act of reprisal by the Press—too petty for any person of commonsense to give any thought to it at all—and private members, particularly, are being injured by this reprisal. We know what caused it and, as I know that the House Committee has written to the managing editor of "The West Australian" pointing this out and asking that the practice cease and that members be mentioned by name, I hope you, Mr. Speaker, will take some action if that is not done. We look upon you as the guardian of the privileges of private members in this House and, if the practice to which I have referred does not cease, I do not think it would be too harsh an action on your part to refuse admittance of Press reporters of "The West Australian" to the gallery until they come to their senses.

QUESTIONS.

HEALTH.

As to Anaemia Amongst School Children.

Mr. HOAR asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Fears have been expressed in the Manjimup-Pemberton area that a recent examination of school children disclosed a high percentage of anaemia. Is this true?

(2) If so, what are the causes attributed to such a decline in health, and what steps are being taken to remedy the matter?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Investigations carried out in 1949 by highly trained officers of the Commonwealth Department of Health, and more recently by a school medical officer of the staff of the State Public Health Department, have shown that there is no truth in the statement that there is a high percentage of anaemia in school children in the South-West part of the State.

(2) Answered by (1).

BUTTERFAT.

As to Increased Price to Producers.

Mr. BOVELL asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware that the producers concerned have not yet received any increase in the price of butterfat?

(2) In view of the report in "The West Australian" of the 17th October, 1951, that the Queensland and New South Wales Governments have decided to lift the price of butter to the level ruling in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania, will he take positive action to assure that butterfat producers receive forthwith the increased remuneration due to them?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The position has been closely watched, but it is not a matter for State determination. It is, however, one which is being dealt with by the Commonwealth Government and the Commonwealth Dairy Produce Equalisation Committee Ltd.

It is expected that the producers will get any increase that will be accrued from the butter at higher prices, and such payments will be made in the near future.

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND.

(a) *As to Committee's Visit to Australia.*

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Treasurer:

In view of the provision embodied in the Bretton Woods Agreement that the International Monetary Fund will have jurisdiction to appoint a committee to visit, investigate and act in any country which has been successful in securing a loan through the medium of the International Monetary Fund, and in view of the fact that a statement appeared in the Press of recent date that this committee was to visit Australia to make investigation as to the one hundred million dollar loan, can he inform the House the approximate date of the arrival of this committee?

The TREASURER replied:

No, I have no information as to when the committee will visit Australia.

(b) *As to Treasurer's Reply.*

Mr. MARSHALL (without notice) asked the Treasurer:

Following on the above question and the answer given by the Treasurer, did I understand him aright, and did his question indicate that he had no knowledge of the visit of the committee or of the contents contained in the Bretton-Woods Agreement?

The TREASURER replied:

No, that was not the question asked by the hon. member. He asked me when the committee would be visiting the Commonwealth, and I replied that I had no knowledge of when the visit would take place.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

(a) *As to Declaration of "Shopping Area."*

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Local Government:

(1) Can the Perth City Council or any other local governing body declare and enforce a "shopping area" for new buildings within their respective districts?

(2) If so, under which Statute is this provided for?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Section 6 (1) and the First Schedule of the Town Planning and Development Act, 1928-1947, or section 30 of the said Act and the Second Schedule thereof.

(b) *As to Discount on Rates Paid in Advance.*

Mr. STYANTS asked the Minister for Local Government:

Is it compulsory for all local governing authorities to give a discount of not more than 5 per cent. to ratepayers who pay their rate accounts in advance, i.e., at the commencement of the current rating period?

The MINISTER replied:

No, it is optional.

WATER PIPING.

As to Transport by Road Instead of Sea.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Supply and Shipping:

(1) Was she consulted by the Housing Commission or any other Government department concerning the possibility of arranging transport by sea for large quantities of water piping which ultimately was transported by road at a cost exceeding ten thousand pounds?

(2) Why was she unable to arrange sea transport?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The Minister is always in contact with the Housing Commission regarding supplies of piping and other housing requirements. Whilst large quantities of piping were brought in by sea, the demand far exceeds the supply available, whichever way it is brought to the State.

(2) Transport by sea was arranged for within the capacity of the shipping available.

OIL REFINERY.

As to Site at Bunbury.

Mr. GUTHRIE (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Was Bunbury considered during the recent discussions on the oil refinery plant?

(2) Has any decision yet been reached regarding the site for same?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

LAPSED BILLS—TO RESTORE TO NOTICE PAPER.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council requesting the restoration to the notice paper of certain Bills, now considered.

The PREMIER: I move—

That, as requested by the Legislative Council in Message No. 2, this House resumes the consideration of the Bills enumerated therein; and that accordingly, the "Feeding Stuffs Act Amendment Bill," the "Marketing of Eggs Act Amendment Bill," and the "Agriculture Protection Board Act Amendment Bill" be restored to the notice paper at the stages which they had reached in the previous session of Parliament.

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

BILL—COAL MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. G. P. Wild—Dale) [4.42] in moving the second reading said: The Coal Mines Regulation Act is one which provides for the safe workings of the coalmines in Western Australia. During recent years there have been many changes and advances at Collie which have necessitated close scrutiny of the Act with a view to bringing it more up-to-date. Many conferences have been held at Collie presided over by the State Coal Mining Engineer and at these conferences representatives of the coalmining unions, craft unions, coalmine owners and the Mines Department have been present. One could say that this Bill is the result of those conferences and embodies a considerable number of small amendments, many of which are only incidental. However, I think it would be to the benefit of members if the majority of these were to be more fully explained in Committee.

I understand that all of these amendments have been agreed to by all parties concerned and therefore I anticipate that when the member for Collie rises to speak on the Bill he will endorse what I have said, indicating that the coalmining and

craft unions at Collie agree to the amendments contained in this measure. There has been greatly increased activity at Collie in recent months, including a considerable amount of mechanisation which was unknown in that district pre-war. Consequently some of these amendments are most vital to bring the Act up to present day conditions and standards.

Actually there is no special principle contained in any of these amendments, but I will touch roughly on two or three of those that appear to be the most vital. Clause 4 covers the alterations in status in Western Australia of the term, "State Mining Engineer." In the old days the State Mining Engineer controlled all mining activities in Western Australia, but a year or so ago the Government appointed a State Coal Mining Engineer and as a result it is necessary to alter the term in the parent Act.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You are not allowed to mention clauses.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The original Act permitted an inspector, nominated by the Minister, to launch a prosecution. In the old days, as I have already stated, there was only a State Mining Engineer and, because of his frequent absences either at the Goldfields or somewhere else on State business, he could not take the full responsibility of initiating prosecutions and so the parent Act provided that a nominated inspector could initiate necessary prosecutions. Now that we have a State Coal Mining Engineer, who spends most of his time at Collie—and when not at Collie he is at Perth—an amendment is provided which permits only the State Coal Mining Engineer to initiate a prosecution.

A further amendment deals with the making of reports by workmen's inspectors. The policy in the past has been that the workmen's inspector would make a report of something that he saw in a mine, and he would place his report in a minute book kept in the manager's office. The amendment provides that the workmen's inspector shall make out his report in triplicate and one copy shall go to the manager, one to the coalminers' union and the other shall be displayed in a prominent place adjacent to the shaft.

Another amendment deals with the authorisation of the Minister to call upon any person to enter and inspect any mine. There have been certain tightening up provisions in this Bill which specify that only people with certain qualifications will be permitted to make those inspections. A further amendment makes provision for a substitute for the manager who may be away on leave or sick. A further amendment has reference to accidents in mines. At present if there is an accident in a mine the Act provides that the area concerned must be completely fenced off. The intention, under the amendment, is to pro-

vide that that need only be done in the case of a serious accident, when the particular section of the coalmine concerned will be fenced off.

A further amendment provides that a foreigner who may enter the industry must be able to understand and speak English intelligently. I think members will agree that that is a most desirable amendment. The Bill also provides for the working plan as well as the main plan of the mine to be exhibited at the mine itself. At present only the working plan is kept at the mine, the main plan being held at the main office. This amendment will make it possible for anyone who wishes to do so to peruse both the working plan and the main plan at the principal shaft.

The final clause, which I think is of some moment, proposes that the Coal Mines Regulation Act shall override the powers of inspection included in the legislation governing the State Electricity Commission. In the past the practice has been that only State Electricity Commission officers were allowed to enter a mine and decide whether the electrical installations were up to standard, needed repair or had to be replaced. The Mines Department and the officials at Collie feel that the amendment is highly desirable because it is considered that only those who work in a mine are in a position to know what is safe and what is not safe.

Mr. May: That will be underground, of course?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes. There is no principle involved in the amendment, but when the Bill goes into Committee I shall deal with each clause separately and explain it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. May, debate adjourned.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Message.

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

BILL—FARMERS' DEBTS ADJUSTMENT ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Message.

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

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. HOAR (Warren) [4.54]: I do not think there is any doubt that the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act of 1930 has proved of great benefit to Western Australian farmers who met with misfortune. Prior to

the Act being passed the law of bankruptcy was the only legislation governing the affairs of those people who could not meet their debts. Three methods were provided. The first, of course, was that the farmer debtor could become bankrupt. The second was that he could assign his estate to a trustee to act on behalf of his creditors, and the final method provided that he could enter into a deed of assignment, which was similar to the second method. However, all of those three statutory methods had as their object the winding up of the estate, the liquidating of assets and the payment of debts, and not one provided an opportunity for a good class farmer, who met with temporary bad luck, to carry on with the operations of his farm. Such provisions were never designed to give a farmer a second chance.

In the years of 1930 to 1933 and, to some extent, for some years following, I think it will be agreed that everybody went through bad times, including the farmers, and in the main farmers were embarrassed financially, but in most instances such embarrassment was only temporary and, in fact, some thousands of farmers, if they could have been given another chance, or a breathing space, would have been able to carry on and rehabilitate themselves financially. This Act, together with the Rural Relief Fund Act, was designed for that very purpose, namely, to give a good class farmer who had met with temporary bad luck another chance and permit him to make, in agreement with his creditors, complete financial recovery, whereas under the old bankruptcy laws he would have been compelled to vacate his property.

The Bill is merely a continuance measure. Since the Act was first passed in 1930, up to 1947, excluding the war years, this Parliament has been in the habit of introducing a Bill annually to continue the operations of the Act. The Minister, by this Bill, seeks to extend the life of the Act from 1952 to 1957. I remember, in 1949, when speaking to a similar measure, advocating that the Government should give some thought to making this legislation less of a temporary measure and extending its life for not less than five years and, if necessary, for even a greater period.

At the time I made the recommendation, which the Minister has apparently followed in this Bill, I had an idea that most farmers, who had suffered hardships and tribulations during the terrible depression years, would welcome the opportunity to pay their debts in more prosperous times but, in fact, many of them have done nothing of the kind. They have had that opportunity of so doing because, in 1947, this Parliament passed an amending Bill which made it necessary for a farmer to pay only 20 per cent. of his total indebtedness. So the farmers have been given ample opportunity and encouragement, by way of legis-

lation, easily to overcome their financial obligations. However, according to the Minister, they have not done so.

When introducing the Bill I think he said that 1,651 farmers only had taken advantage of the 1947 Act and paid 20 per cent of their indebtedness. The total sum of these payments came to £107,514 and if we accept that figure as being equal to 20 per cent. of the total indebtedness we find that not less than £430,000 has been written off under the provisions of the 1947 Act, which has been made possible, through a Commonwealth grant, by money found from taxpayers, amounting to something over £1,250,000. Excluding the dairy farmers, who are still struggling and do not usually come under the provisions of this Act, I do not think farmers are giving the Government a fair go under this legislation.

I think that the increased prices over recent years, namely, since 1947 to date, which have been obtained by most farmers in the wheat and sheep areas, and by the pastoralists, have brought them such income as to ensure that it would be no hardship whatsoever for them to liquidate 20 per cent. of their total indebtedness. But, according to the Minister, there are still a great many farmers who have not met their obligations in this regard.

Mr. Yates: Has the Government the power to force them to do so?

Mr. HOAR: Yes, I believe the Government has, and before I am actually prepared to vote for this Bill—even though I do approve of the five-year extension if the farmers are willing to play ball—I want to know from the Minister what the Government has been doing over recent years in an endeavour to get farmers to pay this 20 per cent. I think that is a very fair question. It is not enough for the Minister to bring down a continuance Bill, and expect members to vote for it without knowing whether the Government has lived up to its obligations under the Act over the last few years.

At this moment I do not feel disposed to vote for the Bill unless the Minister can give an assurance that some effort has been made and is indeed today being made to get the farmers—wheat and sheep farmers particularly—to meet their obligations under the Act. That is only fair, because the 1947 Act, which made it necessary for them to pay only 20 per cent. of their full indebtedness, was a most generous action on behalf of Parliament; it was in fact favoured treatment, because one could not find another section of the community anywhere in the State in the year 1947, that had come through the war years and everything that they meant, in a similar position to that of the wheat and sheep farmers.

There was no room for comparison between the conditions of the other sections of the community, and the opulence of the wheat and sheep farmers, as obtaining

over recent years. Yet it was with particular regard to wheat and sheep farmers and pastoralists that we gave this favoured treatment in 1947. I cannot see any sense in this, and I have not heard anything from the Minister to lead me to believe that this fund ought to be carried on unless the farmer, who is in a better position today, is willing to accept his full responsibility in this matter and do everything he can to meet his obligations. I feel that is fair enough, and I think members ought to look at it from that point of view. It is not sufficient for a person by means of a pressure group perhaps to bring influence to bear on a Government of a particular colour in order to achieve the result favourable to him, and then back down on it.

It is only reasonable to suggest that these people should give their Government—and this is their Government because a great many of them voted for it—the support which, in my opinion, the 1947 Act placed as an obligation on them to give. I am anxious to hear what the Minister has to say in this regard. My own view is that the five-year period under normal circumstances, when everyone is pulling his weight, would not be too long because the payment of even the 20 per cent. which is now coming back into the fund, is building up over the years a substantial emergency fund against some other year which might occur and provide a recurrence of those distressing circumstances that we previously experienced.

I think farmers ought to look at it from that point of view; that every time they pay their 20 per cent., and meet their financial obligation in this regard, they are contributing to a fund which as the years go by they in turn might need for their own personal use. So I hope the Minister will tell us a little more about the operations of this fund and of the attempts of the trustees to get payments from those who are now financially able, one would expect to make payments.

I would like to know what has been done to build up this fund to the amount that one should expect, particularly bearing in mind that the Commonwealth Government in giving something over £1,250,000 to this fund gave it as a grant. That amount was never expected to be repaid, and I think, from that point of view, that the farmers have had a wonderful service, not only from the Commonwealth Government but also from this Parliament which, in 1947, made it so easy for them to meet their obligations.

MR. ACKLAND (Moore) [5.5]: I do not intend to take up much of the time of the House on this occasion. Naturally I support the Bill, and I think it a wise move that the Act should be extended until 1957. Whilst agreeing in the main with what the member for Warren has had to say, I should like to mention one other aspect of the workings of the Act. During the

depression years I came in very close contact with the effects it had not only on the secured creditors, but also on the unsecured creditors. I happened to be on the committee of a road board where at least 30 per cent.—possibly 40 per cent.—of the ratepayers came under the Act and I saw some very great hardships experienced by unsecured creditors.

We found that the Act made it possible for all the secured creditors to receive their payment in full and in many instances the unsecured creditors—particularly the country storekeepers—who were responsible for keeping these people on their properties long after the secured creditors had wiped their hands of them, were left receiving as little as 2s. 6d. in the £.

Mr. May: Some of them did much better than that.

Mr. ACKLAND: Certainly some of them did.

Mr. May: I'll say they did.

Mr. ACKLAND: I am firmly convinced that if we find ourselves in another depression in which people will have difficulties in meeting their commitments, Parliament will be thoroughly justified in seeing that the unsecured creditor receives much greater consideration than he did under the provisions of this Act. In some instances banking institutions and financial institutions had for some years stopped giving men financial support. We found that machinery firms for years had received interest on un-made payments. They had the right to and did demand the full pound of flesh on the whole of their indebtedness. Yet other people, who in so many instances were responsible for keeping the farmers on their properties, were sent bankrupt because of the workings of this Act. While supporting the Bill and having no intention at present of suggesting an amendment to it, it is a matter, I think, which should be given consideration in this House because we might find ourselves in a similar position to that which arose when the passing of this legislation became necessary.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [5.9]: Like the member for Moore, I do not intend to keep the House very long on this Bill. It is becoming a little monotonous that year after year we should have a continuance Bill coming up dealing with farmers' debts adjustment. Now we are going to extend the Act for another five years. I think if the farmers cannot pay their debts at the present time, with the prices they are receiving for their produce, they will never be able to pay them. But I remember a time when things were bad and prices were bad and they were getting 9d. a bushel for their wheat. I think we should do all we can to help farmers. In view of the high prices for wheat and wool that farmers have received, the time

has arrived when we should say to them: "If you cannot pay your debts you should get off your properties and let someone else take them over."

The other night we learnt, when the Premier delivered his Budget speech, that last year the farmers were provided with £240,000 for the transport of their super by road. Cannot the farmers pay for the cartage of their super in view of the prices they have received for their products? If the situation were different and prices and conditions were bad, I would be the first to approve of help being rendered to ease the position, but in view of prices that have ruled for some time, a different attitude is warranted at present.

On the other hand, we are asked to renew the consideration that the Act allows and to extend their debts for a longer period. What would the debts of the farmers amount to now? The man whose indebtedness amounted to £500 a few years ago should have a very small debt in these days. Personally, I hope the House will not extend the provisions of the Act for a further five years. Many more important matters come before us and the legislation in that respect is merely extended from year to year. We should extend the application of the Act for one year and let the farmers know that we expect them to pay their debts.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay—in reply) [5.12]: Dealing first with the remarks of the member for Fremantle, I would tell him that he is under a wrong impression. The intention underlying the retention of much legislation on the statute book is that it should be available in the event of bad times coming once more. That, of course, is quite necessary.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do you say this Act is necessary now?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Secondly, I would point out to the member for Fremantle—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Is it necessary now?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The point is that the Act provides the machinery by which we are enabled to collect outstanding debts. The hon. member asks me if I think the legislation is necessary now. I will be frank with him and say that I do not think it is necessary now. Notwithstanding that fact, we have plenty of legislation on the statute book that is available to meet circumstances that could arise.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Two wrongs do not make a right.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But in this instance it is not wrong at all. It is not wrong to have on the statute book legislation to meet an emergency.

Mr. W. Hegney: What will you do if the Legislative Council throws the Bill out?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That has nothing to do with me in the sense that it is none of my business. Of course, it really would be my business, but I am trying to explain the situation.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: If the Act provides the machinery for the collection of outstanding debts, it is necessary.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course it is, but with regard to the point the member for Fremantle stressed, it is quite possible that the farmers do not require the assistance at the present moment. I quite agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the legislation is necessary to enable outstanding debts to be collected. In reply to the member for Warren, I admit he raised a very interesting point when he asked why the farmers should not pay the money back. I agree with him that they are in the position to pay their debts and they are doing so. He also asked what methods were being adopted to see that the outstanding amounts were collected. To my knowledge the farmers have been circularised, informing them of the conditions under the Act and pointing out that if they meet their commitments they will be required to pay off only 20 per cent. of the total indebtedness. They have been informed that until they do so, the full amount of the debt stands as a debit against them and that they are liable for the repayment of the full amount.

In that regard the Commonwealth and the State are protected. Members who were in the Chamber at the time this legislation was first introduced will remember that the funds were made available by the Commonwealth on the understanding that the money would be repaid and used in the form of a revolving fund. That is still the position today. Many of the farmers paid off their debts even before the more prosperous times of recent date. That money came back into the fund and was redistributed to necessitous cases.

Hon. E. Nulsen: What is the position with regard to farmers who reached the statutory limit?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some have repaid their indebtedness. Others became bankrupt and went out of farming. In those instances the money was lost and the indebtedness was written off. I know of instances where farmers disposed of their properties and paid off their debts. There are also instances of farmers writing to me and asking to be supplied with a full statement of account of their indebtedness. Although their debts had been extended and they had been relieved of

the obligation to pay the full amount owing to their creditors, those men paid off their indebtedness in full. That speaks very well for those farmers.

Mr. Totterdell: How many were there who did that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know off-hand how many there were.

Mr. Ackland: Some farmers whose debts were written down to 2s. 6d. in the £ paid the full 20s. in the £.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. There are conscientious farmers just as there are conscientious people in other sections of the community.

Mr. Totterdell: And there are conscientious builders.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Do not draw me out on the question of builders! However, that is the reply to the member for Warren. I will certainly make further inquiries. He raised a point that interests me, and I will see whether we cannot exercise a little more pressure so that we may collect more of the outstanding indebtedness.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 19:

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: In view of what the Minister has said, I do not think there is any necessity to extend the application of the Act for a further five years until 1957. As other more important measures are extended merely from year to year, I do not think it necessary to extend the Act as is proposed. The conscientious farmer does not require this for he has paid his debts long ago. All we are asked to do is to protect the unscrupulous farmer who, notwithstanding the high prices that have prevailed, has not paid his debts. I move an amendment—

That in line 3 the word "seven" be struck out and the word "three" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—OPTOMETRISTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. A. M. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [5.21]: This Bill, like many others that are introduced from time to time, is

designed to improve the existing Act. As time goes on, most legislation is found to have weaknesses, and it is necessary to rectify them. I have closely studied the proposals in the Bill and am in accord with them.

Section 17 of the Act provides for the board to make rules for prescribing the course of study and training, including practical experience, for persons desiring to be registered as optometrists, and for prescribing and holding examinations, and doing all things necessary to permit of a young optometrist's qualifying and becoming a registered practitioner. Unfortunately, no provision was made in the Act for an authority to issue a diploma to a successful trainee, and the Bill proposes to give this authority to the Optometrists Board, which will assume all the responsibility for training, setting the examinations and issuing diplomas to successful candidates. Members will agree that some authority must be empowered to issue diplomas to candidates who have completed the course of training and have qualified.

The second proposal is purely a domestic affair of the board, the desire being to increase the fee from three guineas up to but not exceeding six guineas. I have made inquiries, and find that those people interested argue that the cost of stationery and other requisites necessary to conduct the board's affairs has increased and that no exception has been taken by trainees to the proposal to charge higher fees. As there is no objection on the part of those most concerned, I offer no objection, and support the second reading of the Bill. It is only right that young men, after having completed their training and passed their examinations, should have a diploma issued to them to show that they are qualified optometrists.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—LIBRARY BOARD OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 10th October.

MR. MAY (Collie) [5.28]: This Bill represents the second attempt by the Government to put into effect the scheme for a library board. The idea contained in the measure can and probably will have a far-reaching effect in the State, and no doubt will prove of great benefit to the people, particularly those living in country areas who, under existing conditions, do not have the same library opportunities available to them as are enjoyed by residents of the metropolitan area.

The object of the measure is to empower the board to co-ordinate and develop library services throughout the State, by which means the people generally will be afforded greater opportunities to follow their literary desires. The measure indicates that there is no intention to absorb or include the Perth Public Library. This means, in effect, that when the measure is in operation there will be two bodies operating a library system. Whether that is desirable or not, I am not prepared to say at this stage, but I think that the Perth Public Library could have been made the basis of the Bill. By that, I do not mean to say that all those who are administering the Perth Public Library should be responsible for administering this measure or the free public libraries. But it seems to me that we will have two sets of administration.

The Minister for Education: The Perth Public Library is more in the nature of a reference than a lending library.

Mr. MAY: May be; but the fact remains that it is a library, and I have no doubt it will develop into something of that kind also.

The Minister for Education: It is substantially lending libraries that the board will attend to.

Mr. MAY: I think it will be a much wider basis than that on which these free libraries will operate. I feel they will develop eventually along the same lines as the Perth Public Library, but to a much lesser degree.

The Minister for Education: If that happens it will be time to talk about going on with the Perth Public Library.

Mr. MAY: I think the people in the country have been starved so long for means of indulging their literary desires that they will develop this business much quicker than the Minister imagines or I anticipate. I notice that the measure proposes that the chairman of the Perth Public Library shall be a member of the board. There we have the connecting link between the two bodies; but at this stage, with the time I have been able to give to studying the Bill, it seems to me that we will create two sets of administration where possibly one would have sufficed.

However, I am quite prepared to abide by the Minister's opinion that it will be some time before the Perth Public Library can be made the basis for the administration of this measure. I have no doubt that these libraries will embody people who will have many different lines of thought in regard to literary requirements, and the libraries will be able to cover a very wide field. I have in mind that the system may, and I hope it will, cover our industrial economy by providing for books dealing with that subject.

I would go further and suggest that the Minister give consideration, when the libraries are founded, to having one of them meet the requirements of trade unions. Up to the present, trade unions have not been in a position to set up a bureau of research, which I know the whole body of trade unions is desirous of doing. The Bill has led me to believe that it could be possible and would be desirable for one of the free libraries to meet the literary requirements of trade unions.

The Bill contains provisions for the appointment of representatives of bodies, not being local governing authorities such as road boards and municipal councils. For that reason I consider it is possible for the Minister to give consideration, if so requested, to setting up a library for the purpose I have mentioned. There is also the position of the free libraries which are operating at present. I do not know how many there are; but I know there is one at Collie, which is not extensive, owing to the lack of finance. I take it that such free libraries could be incorporated with the libraries which are to be set up under the Bill.

The Minister for Education: They could become approved bodies.

Mr. MAY: That is what I mean. In regard to the constitution of the board, I notice there are to be four permanent nominees—the Under Treasurer, the Director of Education, the Director of Adult Education, and the Chairman of Trustees of the Perth Public Library. There is also to be on the board a member representing the City of Perth. Would it not be possible for the chairman of the Perth Public Library to represent the City of Perth?

The Minister for Education: You will find that same principle adopted in Tasmania.

Mr. MAY: That does not necessarily mean that it is correct.

The Minister for Education: Not necessarily, but I think the principle is sound in all the circumstances.

Mr. MAY: That is so. But I have in mind other bodies that could be represented. That is why I doubt whether it is wise for the City of Perth to be represented on the board in addition to the chairman of the Perth Public Library. Provision is made for the Country Municipal Councils' Association to be represented, together with the Road Board Association of Western Australia, the Local Government Association, and three nominees of the Library Association of Australia (W.A. Branch). I take it that the three nominees who will be appointed by the Minister will not represent any particular organisations, but I think that the trade union movement could be represented. I suggest that this be achieved by increasing the nominee members to four,

or omitting the representative of the City of Perth and substituting a representative of the trade unions.

Mr. Read: Nearly all local government representatives are members of trade unions.

Mr. MAY: That may be. But I am talking about the centralised authority of all the trade unions in the State. If the unions had a representative on the board they could make representations to it concerning any literary matter in which they were interested.

Mr. J. Hegney: There would not be too many trade unionists on the City Council.

Mr. MAY: I do not think I am entitled to argue that point in the present circumstances. There is nothing in the Bill about it. I say that the Perth City Council representation could possibly be deleted and the trade unions represented instead, and I ask the Minister to give consideration to the point. I have a reason for suggesting this.

As members know, much time is spent by trade union secretaries in handling cases before the State Arbitration Court, and on many occasions the President of the Court has referred to the fact that, through lack of knowledge or opportunity to take advantage of library facilities, the unions have not presented their cases as concisely and as well as they should have. What I have suggested would, I think, help the court, the trade unions and also the employers. I have commented on the main provisions of the Bill. The balance of it consists mostly of machinery clauses which need not be argued as I feel they are necessary. I hope the Bill will be passed and that it will ultimately prove of value to the people of the State, as I anticipate it will.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [5.42]: The Minister for Education is to be heartily commended for introducing this legislation. I recall that three years ago he endeavoured to place the Public Library, and associated institutions, on a more satisfactory basis than they are at present.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: He started off on the wrong foot.

Mr. GRAHAM: That may be a matter of opinion, but in any event I prefer what the Bill set out to do then to what is occurring in the present circumstances. To my mind, the measure before us hardly goes far enough, because whilst it establishes an authority that will have considerable powers, it can function only if local governing authorities or others elect to come within the ambit of the proposed new board. Accordingly, a situation could arise where the board is established but nobody is prepared to be associated with

it. Personally I feel that the library facilities in Western Australia are at such a low ebb that it is the bounden duty—and long overdue, might I say—of the Government to force certain things to be done; to press forward with library facilities not only in the metropolitan area but, so far as is possible, in the more remote parts of the State.

Speaking particularly of the Perth Public Library, I am aware that a number of estimable gentlemen comprise the trustees of that institution. To my mind, there are far too many of them—fourteen. As a matter of fact, possibly the number envisaged in the Bill—eleven—is greater than is necessary to deal reasonably with the situation. Contrary to the opinion of some other members of this Chamber, I feel that in matters of primary public interest and concern, the Minister, and through him, of course, Parliament, should have more jurisdiction and say than is given at the moment. Members probably realise that so far as the Perth Public Library is concerned—if one overlooks the fact of certain sums of money being made available to it annually—the Government has practically no say or influence whatsoever.

I now wish to speak of one who is, and has been, a grand old gentleman, and has rendered to a certain extent most valuable service, namely, Dr. J. S. Battye. It would probably surprise most members to know that Dr. Battye will attain the age of 80 years on the 14th of next month. Under the terms of the existing Public Library Act it is impossible for the Minister to do anything about the present position. Dr. Battye became the principal librarian of the institution in 1894, some 57 years ago, and of course the whole concept of library service has undergone radical changes in in many respects since his appointment.

Mr. Read: There are other eminent men on the board.

Mr. GRAHAM: That is so; eminent men who are exceedingly busy in filling the important positions they occupy. For instance, the Chief Justice has, I should say, a most responsible job and one which fully occupies his time, apart altogether from the functions he carries out at the moment as Administrator. I feel that the Government should be clothed with the power, if the trustees will not take action, to deal with the situation under which there is a person 80 years of age in charge of an important instrumentality such as the Perth Public Library.

I ask: How many members have, in the year 1951, even entered the library? I have to confess that in recent years I have not patronised it as frequently as I previously did. It is a most depressing building. A most shocking spectacle, to my mind, confronts anyone who goes into the place for the purpose of carrying out some sort of research. The place

is cold, bare and uninviting. I do not know when it was erected, but let us deal with a few of its features. It has a concrete or cement floor so that in the wintertime to enter there is as though one enters a refrigerator. On the last occasion—a couple of months ago—when I was in the library, there was a shaft of sunshine coming from one window.

An old gentleman was wrapped in an overcoat and had his chair in the middle of the library hall endeavouring to keep himself a little bit warmer than he would otherwise have been from this one ray of sunshine. It is terribly cold in that building. Surely there is no reason why there should not be carpets on the floor in order to afford a touch of homeliness and comfort to those who make use of the facilities that are available there. The whole of the premises should be made more inviting, and I am unable to understand why smoking is not permitted in the Public Library when it is allowed in our own building here, in the foyers of theatres where there are heavy carpets and curtains, in hotel lounges, and so on. Apparently the fire danger is not very great.

All that is sought is that members of the public should be attracted to the library and should be made to feel at home and comfortable there while making use of it. In many other public libraries there are set aside compartments in which it is possible for people making use of the library to hold conversations with their associates or discuss questions of interest. Twenty years ago, when I used to participate regularly in debating competitions, three of us who were members of a team used to go to the public library. It was impossible then, as it still is, for members of such a group to consult one another there or to discuss various points as they were brought forward from the references.

The reforms I have mentioned obtain in other places and surely the time is long overdue for them to be introduced in this State. Although I have no authoritative figures I am given to understand that the number of persons patronising the Perth Public Library is in the vicinity of only 20 per day, excluding pensioners and others who go there merely to pass the time or to see whether there are late copies of various journals available. The Perth Public Library is falling lamentably in the purpose for which it was established, simply because it is not made attractive to the public. It is only when one endeavours to carry out some intensive research there that one realises how restricted the facilities and records are.

I believe the recording system in operation there is so hopelessly antiquated that it is by no means suited to present-day conditions. The members of the library staff are given no particular encouragement. Apart from the public lavatories, the staff, who are expected to take a keen interest in the work they are performing, have only an enamel basin, on a galvan-

ised-iron stand, in which to wash themselves. There is no running water available, the water supply for that basin being a jug which is placed underneath the stand. Some member of the staff has to go out into the garden or into the lavatory to fill that jug—or a bucket that I saw being used—in order to get the water necessary for ablutionary operations. Such, from what I have seen and inquiries I have made, is the pitiable condition of the Perth Public Library.

I do not desire to point an accusing finger at anyone, and therefore I have merely mentioned that the 14 trustees must surely be aware of what is transpiring at the library. The principal librarian, as I have said, will be 80 years of age in about three weeks' time. I have stated the facts, though I hesitate to say that the trustees are in any way responsible for the appalling conditions obtaining at the library. The position is obvious from the fact that so few people are making use of the institution. I have put forward my suggestions in an endeavour to have the library premises made a little more homely and attractive to the public.

A further suggestion is that in the existing building there should be provided some sort of refreshment service, such as I understand is available at the public library in Melbourne. In that institution there is a shop, facing the street, to which access may be had from the library hall itself, with the result that anyone patronising the library for the purpose of carrying out research, for instance, is able to obtain either hot or cold refreshments, according to the season. Our Public Library building and the volumes contained within it are worth many thousands of pounds and I think it is a shocking state of affairs that all those books are not being made available to the public under decent conditions.

There are in the suburbs of Perth many small libraries run by private enterprise. The proprietors have to pay rent and meet other overhead charges, but it is apparently possible for them to make a handsome living by the letting out of books at the nominal figure of 3d. each, after the payment of a deposit of 5s. or 10s., depending on the library concerned. It is difficult for anyone, except members of Parliament and a few other privileged persons, to get permission to take books away from the Perth Public Library, yet the thousands of volumes held there should be available to members of the public to take home and read in comfortable surroundings, in their own time, according to the amount of leisure they have. Judging from the experience of the suburban lending libraries our Public Library, if run on similar lines, would be a revenue producer. That would be so particularly if depots were opened in Perth, Fremantle, Midland Junction and some of the other larger suburbs.

I realise that if a shop or other suitable premises was obtained for such a depot in all probability it would not house any vast number of books, but every month or so the stock could be changed over, using the Perth Public Library as a central depot or source of supply. Under present circumstances the people are not taking advantage of either the books or the library building that have been provided at the expense of the taxpayer. Members will notice that, according to the Estimates, approximately £25,000 is to be spent on the Public Library in the current financial year, though how much of that sum is to be devoted to the Museum and Art Gallery and how much to the Library, I do not know.

The Minister for Education: I understand about £14,000 is to be spent on the library.

Mr. GRAHAM: Members can work it out for themselves. As I have said, only in the vicinity of 150 people per week or approximately 20 per day are actually using the Perth Public Library, so how much is it costing per head of its patrons? The authority proposed to be established under the Bill will have a tremendous job in front of it. I only hope and trust that the board will be able to take over the Perth Public Library as it now exists. I do not know whether I am amiss in my reading of the Bill, but I have some doubts because of the observations of the member for Collie. He said that from his point of view it would appear that the Perth Public Library has been excluded but, from my reading of the measure I would say that the Perth Public Library could be one of the approved bodies in the same way as other libraries.

The Minister for Education: Exactly!

Mr. GRAHAM: If that be the case, I notice from a later portion of the Bill that the board may provide, control and manage libraries and library services.

The Minister for Education: The approved body comes in if it agrees.

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes. In other words, if the Perth Public Library elects to be associated with this board then it would appear that the board could control and manage that library.

The Minister for Education: It could exercise its authority once the approved body was created.

Mr. GRAHAM: Then it makes me wonder whether there might not be some conflict between the trustees of the Perth Public Library and the members of the board proposed to be set up under this Bill.

The Minister for Education: There is no possibility of it because there are absolutely no enforcement or compulsion provisions.

Mr. GRAHAM: Then, harking back to what I stated at the outset, that to my mind is the greatest weakness in the Bill. I feel that something revolutionary needs to be done to put the Perth Public Library—which after all is the headquarters, as it were, in Western Australia—on an entirely new basis. It is hopelessly unsuitable for its task at the moment and that is reflected by the very poor patronage that it receives.

The Minister for Education: I think we want to hasten slowly in this matter.

Mr. GRAHAM: I hope that the Minister, by his remarks, did not mean that he actually got ahead of himself three years ago. But the Minister has, by interjection, said practically what I intend to say as my final remark. Irrespective of my viewpoint that the Bill does not go quite far enough, it is at least heartening to see a tangible step in what I consider to be the right direction.

MR. SEWELL (Geraldton) [6.3]: I wish to support the second reading of the Bill and to commend the Minister for bringing it forward. I consider this measure long overdue and it will fulfil the wants of many people, particularly those in the country areas. Libraries are required in country districts and the Minister will have done a great service to the people of this State particularly if, as I hope it does, the Bill embraces libraries for reading matter for children. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [6.4]: It appears to me that this Bill will meet a long felt need in the country districts and for that reason I support it. Some three or four years ago when the Minister introduced a Bill, which was not similar in one respect—and that was in regard to the trustees of the Perth Public Library—I expressed my opposition to it for the sole reason that I felt that the services and advice of one who has rendered so much to library work in Western Australia may be excluded under the provisions of the Bill of that time. When saying that, I refer to Dr. J. S. Battye. But now that we have the Minister's assurance, and the interpretation of the member for Collie—which corresponds with my interpretation—it appears that the existing trustees of the Perth Public Library will not be interfered with.

Although the member for East Perth has referred to the advanced years of this honoured gentleman of letters, Dr. J. S. Battye, I wish to pay a tribute to the work he has done in the interests of the library world in Western Australia. For many years he has been Librarian of the Perth Public Library and, despite his advanced years, his mental faculties are still equal to those of a much younger man. I trust that Dr. Battye will live some years longer to be the Librarian at the Perth Public

Library, and that when he reaches his 80th milestone he will continue to enjoy good health and serve the State as he has served it for many years past.

I support the second reading of the Bill mainly because I believe it will provide a great impetus to libraries in the country centres. I wish to commend the member for Geraldton for making reference to literature for children, and perhaps through the medium of this Bill children's libraries will be established and provide a long felt want for children in our country areas.

MR. HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe) [6.7]: It is an admirable thing that the library movement in this State is to receive at least some official recognition and be assisted by the Government through the operation of the Bill. The Minister, too, is to be congratulated for having brought the measure before us because it represents a most progressive step. It will be the means of bringing libraries and good literature, not necessarily educational publications, before the people. Too often people will not go to libraries and, like Mahomet who went to the mountain because the mountain would not come to him, libraries will, under this measure be brought to the people. The Bill will be the means of enabling the whole community to profit intellectually from the reading of good books, during their leisure hours.

It is quite likely that the success of the scheme will depend greatly upon the manner in which the board functions. By that I mean that its members will have to possess a continuing enthusiasm. They will need to adopt a progressive, modern and even a bold approach to the scheme and the methods by which they will foster it throughout the State. Also, there will have to be a great deal of publicity given to the work of the board in order to acquaint the people with the opportunities and facilities which it will offer to them. I think, too, it will be an essential part of the board's work to circulate entertaining propaganda and publicity with the object of making a living appeal to all those sections of the community who consider that libraries are places frequented by long-haired intellectuals, or by those who have passed the first flush of youth and have nothing better to do.

Whilst making such suggestions, I do not suppose that the board will not exhibit enthusiasm, but I do consider that it will be a necessary part of its approach to the plan. The formation of the board will materially assist in enriching the leisure time of our community. I think I shall have the complete agreement of members when I say that much has been said about leisure time, and that many people deplore that quite a considerable portion of our community do not intelligently use such time. In part, I agree that this is so, but I consider that the fault lies possibly at

the doors of our educational, social and political leaders. That applies more to the past, but I cannot excuse entirely the present leaders in these fields.

I see in this Bill an effort being made to approach the ideal of the community being given an opportunity to enrich its leisure hours in an intelligent and entertaining fashion. I was able to glean a fact or two recently from "The West Australian" which published a statement to the effect that we have been falling sadly behind the Tasmanian authorities in regard to library schemes in our State. It is interesting to note that in 1949-50 our library grant was only £17,867, whilst in Tasmania, £46,338 was provided and, in Queensland, £40,000. The Bill is an attempt to bring before the people those facilities which have already been made available in those States.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [6.14]: I intend to support the Bill. There is no doubt that the creation of such an authority will fill a long-felt want. We know that with the development of education in the schools in recent years, great care is taken to encourage children to become readers at any early age. Because of this fact, of course, they become hungry for literature, but the difficulty, in the great majority of instances, is that they are unable to obtain books and, if there are no libraries in their districts, they are suffering a great disadvantage.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: Before the tea suspension I had commenced to make a few observations on the Bill. There is no question but that it is a very sincere attempt to try to establish free library systems on a much better basis than exists at present. In the schools today children are encouraged to read even more so than we were in our days. We know that parents and citizens' associations develop, and help to develop, libraries attached to schools, and parents are induced to give contributions for the development of school libraries with a view to helping children to become good readers.

In the district I have the honour to represent I know that the libraries are totally inadequate for the avid readers there are in the school. All the children read a great deal, both those who are very young and those who are about to leave school. We also know that the school-leaving age has been raised to 15 years in order to encourage parents to keep their children at school till that age; and we know that most parents do that. Most parents are alive to the benefits of up-to-date education, and consequently a number of children continue their education to a much later stage than was the case many years ago.

To become proficient in their particular subjects those children, for the most part, have to be good readers and they are encouraged to read as much as possible. Consequently, as they grow to adulthood they will continue their reading and do so for the rest of their days. If the libraries did not keep pace with the developments taking place in that direction it certainly would be a great loss to the persons concerned. We know, too, that there has been a great development of private lending libraries and, as has been mentioned by a previous speaker, some people make a little out of these private lending libraries. As a matter of fact in lower Inglewood, where I live, there are two such libraries, and when I come further into town I see others.

This Bill is, of course, to help to develop the free library system in Western Australia with a view to extending that service to both the metropolitan area and the country districts. There is a system under which books go out to various portions of the country for the use of people who require them and this has been developed to a fairly large extent, indicating that there is a demand for the Bill we are now considering. The fundamentals of the Bill are the constitution of the board and the methods of finance. I have no doubt that the Minister has given very thoughtful consideration to the constitution of the board, but like another member I doubt whether it is necessary to have a representative of the Perth City Council on it, when provision is made under another clause for the City Council to be on the board as representing the Municipal Associations and, therefore, they would get representation there.

When the Minister referred to the question of deputies he pointed out that he was not wedded to the inclusion of the provision of deputies in place of the Under Treasurer, the Director of Education, the Director of Adult Education and the other person referred to in the Bill, who form part of the board. I think the important thing is that if the Director of Education is going to be a representative he should attend the meetings of that board regularly so that he will be conversant with what happens from time to time. He should not attend one or two meetings and after that send along a deputy in his place.

If the provision for deputies is to remain in the Bill, the deputies so appointed ought to continue to be representative of the appointed head as set out in the measure. If he is representing the Under Treasurer, the deputy should be an officer keenly interested in this work and should be one who would take a keen interest in the Bill. I feel that the success or failure of the measure will depend upon the enthusiasm of

those who constitute the board. They will be responsible for its either becoming a very live and active organisation throughout Western Australia, or for its not so doing. In the case of representatives of the various associations, we can only hope that they will elect members to this board who are keenly interested in their work because, if they are not interested, they will merely become a drag on the board itself. A board like this will require a considerable amount of enthusiasm from the persons who constitute it at the beginning of its life.

I have no doubt that the Minister has given very forceful consideration to all those aspects, but I do hope it may be possible to eliminate representatives of the Perth City Council and even possibly a member of the Library Association, allowing the Minister himself to appoint persons to the board because of their particular keenness in library work. As I have already emphasised the success or failure of the board will depend upon the enthusiasm of its personnel, and I hope that in his reply the Minister will indicate whether or not he would be prepared to consider an amendment along these lines.

With regard to the financial aspect, provision is made in the Bill for rating on the basis of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ on unimproved capital values. The Minister has provided the House with no figures. If he had submitted figures based on values in the metropolitan area and possibly in major country towns—he may provide these particulars when the Bill is dealt with in Committee—showing the amount of revenue likely to be derivable from that source, members would be more fully informed as to whether sufficient finance is likely to be available to enable the activities of the board to be carried out adequately. I understand that in New South Wales the rating is on a per capita basis.

I realise that the participation of local authorities in the work contemplated is purely voluntary and, if they do not desire to take part, they can remain apart from it. I appreciate that the basis of rating proposed is no doubt included for the purpose of inducing the local authorities to participate. However, I am informed that a rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ will not provide adequate revenue for the purposes of such a board.

Mr. Graham: It is better than nothing.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I admit that, but it is the maximum and I think it should be raised. It should not be encumbent on the board to impose the maximum rating applicable from the inception. It is only by experience that we can find out what maximum rating should be levied, and that will be influenced by the enthusiasm and approval of the ratepayers of road districts and municipalities and by the general interest taken in the movement.

Mr. Hutchinson: Local authorities could easily inform you how much money could be raised.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: Yes, but if we fix the amount in the Act and the rating is applied on that basis from the start, and it is found that the revenue derivable is inadequate, it will be necessary to amend the provision. If we lay down a reasonable maximum, it need not necessarily be levied from the start. If it were found that a lower amount provided an inadequate return, the rating could be raised until the maximum was reached. I hope the Minister will give us some indication as to the financial return likely to be derived in respect of localities such as South Perth, Melville or some of the other larger districts, to indicate how it will operate, and the amount derivable from the respective districts. I hope, too, that he will take steps to ascertain whether rating on a per capita basis might not be a more satisfactory course to follow. I appreciate that the Minister has introduced the Bill, which I support, with the object of putting libraries on a sound and proper footing and to encourage their development, so that they will be of great value to the people of Western Australia today and to generations to come. It is essential to make a start with the project and to develop it as time goes on. I support the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Hon A. F. Watts—(Stirling—in reply) [7.45]: I thank members who have spoken to this measure for the support they have given to it. I would refer at this stage to the remarks of the member for Middle Swan. I have not the figures that would provide him with the information he asked for, but I am given to understand that, in respect of the metropolitan area, a rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ on the annual value basis would raise a sum of £8,000. If those figures are correct, and I believe they are, and if we were to receive support from local authorities, that method at a 2d. rate would raise a total sum of about £32,000. I presume, therefore, that the figure would be doubled in respect of the rural local governing authorities were the same action to take place with them. I am further given to understand that the amount to be raised on the basis of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £ on the unimproved capital values is not very much less than would be derived from a rate of 2d. in the £ on the capital or annual values.

Although the matter is somewhat uncertain, there are evident signs that a very considerable sum of money can be raised. If it is found that the operations of the approved authorities are such that greater revenue-raising powers are needed, then, of course, as the member for Middle Swan suggested, it would be necessary to amend the law. I think that would be the time to do it. One must, I think, in these

times have a certain amount of trepidation in suggesting to local authorities that they should raise a very considerable amount, because of the extreme difficulty they are experiencing in maintaining their normal functions.

The idea of this Bill, as the hon. member himself indicated, is to make a start along the lines desired. It will also be obvious that the measure of its success will depend on the co-operation and encouragement received from the public and from local governing bodies, as well as on the enthusiasm of the board. Nevertheless, I anticipate that this board will meet with an appreciable measure of success and that the movement will develop very considerably in the years to come. While I have also received some communications which indicate that in the belief of the writers the figures, as stated in the Bill, are inadequate, I would suggest to them, as I do now to the House, that it would be well to leave those figures as they stand. They will provide a considerable amount of money if the local authorities participate, as I believe many of them will. It will be in the discretion of the board to match their contributions by a similar sum from the board's resources from time to time. This should provide a very considerable contribution towards this worthy object. I propose, therefore, that we should leave it at that.

I have noted the remarks of the member for Middle Swan regarding deputies. I am in some measure of agreement with him that ex officio members of the board should be expected to attend. Their duties enable them, I should say, to have very considerable knowledge of the work the board is expected to undertake and of the problems—educational, academic and financial—that will face it. I think there is no harm, when we consider the matter closely, in leaving the provision for deputies in the Bill because it is a matter for the Governor-in-Council to appoint deputies, and there is no compulsion for that to be done. As I understand the position, it is purely a question of discretion. Obviously in every case a deputy would not be appointed, but I can visualise the time when a member of the board might be absent for a considerable period for quite legitimate reasons and it would be undesirable that his seat should not be filled. In those circumstances, I feel that discretion would be exercised wisely and not widely.

The member for East Perth regretted that the measure did not impose upon the Government some obligation to enforce participation. At this stage it would be rather unwise to do that, and I do not know that it is done anywhere else in the manner suggested by him. There is, however, one type of enforcement that could be applied and that is public opinion on the part of the ratepayers of local authorities as provided in the Bill. If,

by a poll, the ratepayers decided that the local authority should go into the scheme, it must do so, and I think they are the people entitled to exercise what authority is necessary to require that action should be taken in their interests.

There must be a two-fold desire—one to have the facility and the other to be willing to help to pay for it. Those are the two things that affect ratepayers and local authorities and I anticipate that, if a local authority failed to elect to join the scheme and the ratepayers desired to join, they would express their opinion in the majority of cases in the affirmative, and so there should not be much difficulty in bringing local authorities within the scope of the measure.

One of the main duties of the board will be to encourage participation in this scheme. I should say that one of its greater activities would be to employ propaganda—for lack of a better word—indicating to the people who ought to be interested the reasons why they should be interested and impressing upon them the advantages of participation. If such propaganda were wisely used, as no doubt the board would use it, I believe that good results must ensue.

It is true, as the member for East Perth said, that the Perth Public Library could elect to come under the measure, but there is nothing in the Bill to require it to do so. If members look at the definition of an "approved body," they will find that it means an organisation which is not a local authority and which, pursuant to the provisions of this measure, elects and is declared by the Governor to be a body approved as suitable for participation.

In another part of the Bill, provision is made that a local authority or approved body shall become a participating body if and when the Governor makes a declaration to that effect, but such declaration shall not be made unless the governing body of a local authority or an approved authority elects by resolution to become a participating body. Consequently it is quite clear to me—and I think it will be to all members—that there is nothing to prevent such a body as the Perth Public Library from seeking to come within the four corners of the measure and becoming an approved body, and assisting the betterment of library conditions along the lines suggested by the member for East Perth, assuming, as I do, that those lines are desirable.

I wish to make it clear that, just as with a local authority or any other body, it is a matter for its decision whether it shall come in or not, but I suggest that the time is not ripe for the Perth Library Board to come under the scheme, though I believe that in the course of a few years it might be deemed desirable to do so. The liaison to be established right from the start between the board and the Public Library Board by the inclusion of the

chairman of that body will doubtless make clear to each of them the difficulties and obligations of the other, or help in that direction, and I have no doubt that the closest co-operation will ensue.

The member for Collie and one other speaker directed attention to the fact that a nominee of the Perth City Council has been included. There are 600,000 people in Western Australia and approximately 105,000 of them reside within the boundaries of the City of Perth.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Too many.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Maybe it is too many, but facts are facts, and it is clear that at least one-sixth of the demand that will ensue in regard to free libraries should be in the metropolitan area in the city itself.

Mr. May: And will continue unless people are encouraged to go into the country.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is quite a separate consideration. The people are here, whether one likes it or not, and I think that the City of Perth, concerned as it is with such a large proportion of the people within its municipal boundaries, is entitled to one-eleventh of the representation on the board, particularly as one might assume that a great deal of assistance and co-operation will be expected from an enlightened body like the Perth City Council.

I suggest that there will be fairly ample representation on the board of rural districts or those interested in rural districts. As a matter of fact, the idea in not stating any actual amount of assistance the board could give, but merely prescribing a limit within which to work when it comes to assisting an approved body or a local authority, was because of a belief in the minds of those who drafted the Bill and considered its provisions that the board might find it necessary to subsidise local authorities or approved bodies disproportionately. There is no obligation whatever to subsidise any authority anywhere to any fixed amount. It will be at the board's discretion whether it pays half-a-crown for each pound raised in one centre and pound-for-pound in another centre.

If the board views the matter as I believe it will do, a centre like Bencubbin, for instance, would find it almost impossible to provide the facilities for its people in comparison with such a town as Bunbury, because the populations and means of raising revenue in the two places are vastly different. These are matters that must be left entirely to the board's discretion. The aim and objective of the measure is to provide a scheme for greater reading, better literature and more culture, not in any particular section of the State, but in all those sections of it that are prepared to participate and co-operate in obtaining those advantages. So I leave the Bill in the hands of members.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Hill in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Participating bodies:

Mr. GRAHAM: I think the Minister will agree that there has been a drafting error in paragraph (a) of Subclause (2). In line 2 the word "authority" following the word "approved" should read "body." In the definition and elsewhere, the words "approved body" are used. I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of paragraph (a) of Subclause (2) after the word "approved" the word "authority" be struck out and the word "body" inserted in lieu.

The Minister for Education: I agree.

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

Clause 5—The board:

Mr. GRAHAM: Subclause (5) provides that nominee members shall hold office for a term of three years from the date of appointment and shall be eligible for re-appointment. Subclause (8) provides in the case of the filling of an extraordinary vacancy for the person appointed to hold office for the remainder of the term of office of the person in whose place he is appointed. I think there is some conflict there, and at the beginning of Subclause (5) the words "Subject to Subsection (8)" should be inserted.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not think there is any conflict. Subclause (8) refers to a person appointed to fill an extraordinary vacancy, which is, of course, a vacancy created under Subclause (7). A person appointed to fill such a vacancy, which can only arise under the terms of Subclause (7), will hold office for the remainder of the term of the person in whose place he was appointed. I do not think that Subclause (5) is subject to Subclause (8).

Mr. GRAHAM: The reason I raised the point is that members will recall that there was a certain amount of difficulty in this connection so far as the Transport Board was concerned. If I were a member of this proposed board I could point to Subclause (5) as being clear and unambiguous and providing that nominee members shall hold office for a term of three years from the date of their appointment, and because there is a departure from that in Subclause (8), I feel there could be some conflict. I think it is necessary for us to remove any doubt.

The Minister for Education: Have an amendment accepted and I will take advice and, if necessary, we can have the amendment removed in another place.

Mr. GRAHAM: I move an amendment—

That before the word "Nominee" in line 1 of Subclause (5) the words "Subject to Subsection (8) of this section" be inserted.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I will not press my objection; but if I find the matter is as I think, I will seek to have the words removed in another place, after talking it over with the hon. member.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I can see nothing wrong with the subclause, which provides that nominee members are to hold office for three years, and then be eligible for re-appointment. Subclause (8) deals with persons who are appointed to fill extraordinary vacancies. I oppose the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 6 to 19—agreed to.

Clause 20—Rating powers of local authorities:

Mr. MARSHALL: I want the Minister to give us some information with regard to this clause. Apart from the provisions in the Bill, does the Road Districts Act, which gives local authorities power to rate, contain any authority to impose rates for the purpose of establishing a library?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: To the best of my knowledge, the answer is no. It was deemed necessary, for that reason, to make special provision for the purpose here.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 21 and 22, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—MUJA-CENTAUR COAL MINE RAILWAY.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. A. F. Watts—Stirling) [8.13] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to authorise the construction of a railway line for a distance of four miles 14 chains from a siding known as Muja on the railway between Bowelling and Collie to the Centaur Coal Mine, a new coal-mine which has been opened in the vicinity by the Griffin Coal Mining Co. I have here a file on which appears the report of the Transport Board, as required by statute, recommending the construction of this short railway line, estimated to cost approximately £40,000. As I propose to table the file, including the report in question, at the conclusion of my remarks on the second reading, I shall not read the whole of the report but, in order that it may be placed on record that the Transport Board did recommend the construction of the line, I shall read the concluding paragraph, signed by the chairman and two members on the 20th August, 1951. It states—

After considering the various factors involved, including the national importance of coal production, and the needs of the State for economic development, the Transport Board concurs in the recommendations that the work of constructing a spur railway from Muja to the Centaur Mine should be proceeded with without delay.

Also on the file, which will be tabled, is a memorandum from the Under Secretary for Mines. The memorandum, which is addressed to me, is dated the 10th October of this year, and in it the Under Secretary states—

The Under Secretary for Mines advises with regard to coal from the new Griffin coal mine known as the Centaur, that the seam is comparatively close to the surface and in the last two months, while operations have been proceeding, some thousands of tons of coal has been produced which has been found eminently suitable for all purposes.

The mine is being developed by the Griffin Coal Mining Co., and it is expected ultimately to reach a capacity of about 1,000 tons per working day. At the present time, I understand, it is rapidly approaching 300 tons per working day. As the coal is of good quality and will, in consequence, be sought after by the Railways Commission and the State Electricity Commission, the question of suitable transport to the main railway line of the district is one of some importance. Road transport, as everyone knows, for the handling of coal, even over a short distance of something like four and a half miles, is not very satisfactory in that it involves considerable difficulties, whereas experience has proved that handling by rail is a much more satisfactory and somewhat easier process. It is as a consequence of that, therefore, that the idea of constructing the railway originally came forward; and, having been investigated by all concerned, including the Transport Board, has been recommended to Parliament.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Has the editor of "The West Australian" had a look at it?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Not to my knowledge and, I should say, not to anyone's official knowledge. I cannot otherwise answer the hon. member. I do think that the railway in question, while only a small one, will be of considerable importance, and ought to be constructed. A slight amount of land has to be resumed, and an approach was made to the parties concerned. We have on the file letters indicating their close co-operation in the matter of making their land available, even before resumption can officially take place. There is no difficulty in that direction. In all the circumstances, I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. MAY (Collie) [8.18]: I see no reason why the Bill should be delayed. As a matter of fact, in view of the necessity for a line to be built, I feel that Parliament should do its best to pass the legislation at the earliest possible moment.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Or else!

Mr. MAY: I do not think that remark is applicable. This small railway is very necessary, as the Minister explained, for the production of coal. In view of the fact that the administrative officers of the company and the men who are developing the mine have made such a good effort in bringing it to its present state of production, I think the least we can do is to encourage them by authorising the construction of this line. It is anticipated, as the Minister has said, that within a very short time this mine will be producing 1,000 tons of coal a day. It is a great pity that the other deep mines in Collie could not do likewise. The company that is developing this mine has opened it up on modern mechanised lines, and has taken into consideration development in the months to come instead of simply taking the first available coal in order to be able to say that it has established a certain output.

The mine is being developed on sound, modern lines and once it is fully developed a production of 1,000 tons per day will be no trouble at all. That is indeed a desirable objective from the point of view of the State's coal requirements. Unfortunately it is impossible to avoid resuming certain property for the building of this line. Consultations have been held between the property owners concerned, the Minister and myself, and I feel that some satisfactory adjustment will be made to recompense the owners and, in particular, one man who has spent a lifetime developing his property.

This man agrees that it is essential, in the interests of the State, that the line be built and for that reason alone I think he is entitled to some recognition. He owns other land in the vicinity but, in view of the very heavy cost of modern clearing methods, which include the use of bulldozers on virgin country, I think he should be adequately compensated. If the suggestions that have been made are put into effect by the Railway Department while it has machinery on the job in that area, I think something tangible can be done to recompense this settler for the injury that will be caused by the resumption of his property for the purposes of this new railway. I support the second reading.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
(**Hon. A. F. Watts—Stirling—in reply**) [8.25]: I have here the Railway Department file dealing with the Muja-Centaur

railway and the plan and description of the railway in question. I will lay these papers on the Table of the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (**Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay**) [8.27] in moving the second reading said: The necessity for this Bill follows upon a decision from the High Court in December, 1949, that the Commonwealth had no power to enter into an agreement involving the purchase of land for land settlement, as the enabling legislation did not provide for just terms of acquisition as required by Section 51 of the Commonwealth Constitution. As the situation is rather involved, a brief history of the Commonwealth and State legislation under which the soldier settlers' scheme has operated will enable members to be more fully aware of the matters to be adjusted by this Bill.

On 9th November, 1945, the Commonwealth and State agreed upon principles on which land settlement for ex-service-men should be carried out. This agreement was ratified by Commonwealth legislation and also by the passing of an Act by this Parliament, namely, the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act, 1945. The Commonwealth Act authorised the execution of agreements in two forms: Firstly, between the Commonwealth and the more developed States of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, and secondly, between the Commonwealth and the States of South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. In these latter States, owing to the lesser population and their state of development, it was considered impossible for them to rehabilitate and settle men on the land without some financial assistance from the Commonwealth.

An important point of difference between these two forms of agreement was that the enabling legislation with the major States placed limitations upon the value of land to be acquired by the States as that ruling on the 10th February, 1942, while in the case of the States of Western Australia, Tasmania, and South Australia, no such limitation was imposed but provided that land acquired by the States should be at a value approved by the Commonwealth.

Members may be aware that in December 1949, when adjudicating upon the case of *P. J. Magennis Pty. Ltd. versus the Commonwealth*, the High Court ruled that

the Commonwealth had exceeded its powers in acquiring land compulsorily at less than its market value. This decision, while not directly affecting Western Australia, where all properties had been purchased by negotiation and not by compulsory acquisition, did, however, cast doubts upon the effect of the High Court's decision upon the validity of the sections of the Commonwealth Act covering the basis of the agreement with this State.

A serious position has developed, affecting the financial obligations of the State, which were considerable, and also the legal position of men who had been placed on farms and granted leases, the terms of which were based upon the Commonwealth and State legislation. The future of the scheme was also involved. It was unthinkable that the organisation which had been built up in this State should not continue to function and increase in tempo. Approximately 700 ex-servicemen have been allotted farms, and development has proceeded to such a stage on 536 of these properties that lease conditions have been granted to the allottees. The legal position of these men must not remain in doubt. The expenditure which has been incurred in the acquisition and development of farms under the existing 1945 agreement is very considerable, involving £6,393,808 to the 31st August, 1951.

Mr. Marshall: You said that there was no compulsory acquisition of land in Western Australia.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I said that it was by negotiation; there was no compulsory acquisition. In addition to this expenditure, considerable sums have been made available to lessees for the purchase of stock and plant, and working expenses—approximately £2,118,514. The total expenditure, which represents the settlement of about half of the qualified applicants, has been £8,512,322.

To overcome the legal position which has arisen, the Commonwealth view was that it would not be necessary for it to introduce further enabling legislation, as it has power under the Re-establishment and Employment Act to enter into agreements with the State and for the appropriation of Commonwealth funds so that land settlement might be put into practice. For the information of members, I will quote Section 103 of Pt. VII of the Re-establishment and Employment Act, which deals with service settlement and states—

The Commonwealth may, in accordance with any agreement entered into between the Commonwealth and any State, make advances or payments to a State—

(a) to enable that State—

(i) to acquire land for the purpose of settlement by discharged members of the Forces;

(ii) develop or improve land for settlement by discharged members of the Forces; and

(iii) settle discharged members of the Forces on land so acquired, developed or improved; and

(b) for such other purposes relating to the settlement of discharged members of the Forces on land as are prescribed.

The Right Honourable the Prime Minister, relying upon this power, has suggested that the Commonwealth should enter into an agreement with the State by an exchange of letters between himself and the Premier, whereby the Commonwealth would abide by the principles of the existing agreement, with minor amendments which have become evident from the administration during the last five years, after which the Commonwealth would make available the necessary funds. While this arrangement may legally bind the Commonwealth, the Government considers it essential that parliamentary approval should be obtained for the appropriation of the funds as the State is required to meet certain expenses in connection with the scheme, such as the cost of administration and 40 per cent. of any write-offs that may be necessary owing to the cost of development being more than the economic value of the farm. Members will appreciate the fact that the scheme as drawn up, under which our soldier settlers were to operate, was that the economic value of the farm would be arrived at.

It is also necessary, not only to validate things which have been done in the past, including the granting of leases, but also certain consequential amendments to the Land Act which were passed as a result of the War Service Land Settlement Agreement. An important amendment to the agreement included in the Bill is the provision for the freeholding of properties to ex-Servicemen upon conditions acceptable to both the Commonwealth and the State. There can, of course, be no conditions attached to the freeholding of the property after the freehold has been granted. It is considered that provision should be made so that the conversion of the perpetual lease to freehold would not involve the State in additional loss, and that the freehold should be on the basis of the cost of acquiring and developing any property. I feel that members will agree on that point.

I have had the privilege of visiting many of these farms, as have other members. Undoubtedly the returned man from the last war is getting a wonderful start in life as far as land settlement is concerned. He has been most fortunate in that soon after we set out on the scheme the prices of the primary products he was growing were considerably in-

creased. The Australian and world markets for wheat and wool improved considerably.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Do you not think his capital expenditure will hold him for quite a long time?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I have very good evidence to prove that, and I could mention 25 instances to illustrate my point where soldier settlers, in some cases had machinery and building loans to the extent of some £6,500 each. Within two years they forwarded cheques to the firms concerned to cover the full amounts.

Mr. Bovell: They were not dairy farmers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, they were not; they were farmers producing wheat, wool and fat lambs. However, we are all very pleased that they did get such a flying start and that now they find themselves in such a good position.

Hon. E. Nulsen: We are all happy about that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but we do have a responsibility to the taxpayers and I consider that the granting of the freehold should, to some extent, be tied up and that the soldier settlers should not be permitted to trade in these properties immediately they obtain the freehold.

Hon. E. Nulsen: You are quite right there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think I am too. It is up to us to protect the public in that regard and it is proposed that we do so under the terms in this measure. I think, too, that we are giving the returned man a very fair go, but if and when he does sell his property it should be at the cost of the development of that property. It should not be at any economic written-down figure. However, I will deal with that presently.

In the existing lease, the ex-servicemen agrees that in the event of his wishing to leave the property for any reason, and after due compensation for work carried out, the property should be revested in the Minister and become available for allotment to other applicants who may be awaiting farms. This is to prevent farms being traded in by allottees during a period of inflation, and perhaps being purchased by men outside the scheme and not even returned soldiers.

The present agreement provides for advances for stock and plant at a comparatively low rate of interest, namely, 3½ per cent., and repayable over ten years. Other advances for structures are repayable over 30 years at the same rate of interest. The most difficult period in the establishment of an ex-serviceman who has no capital at all is during the first ten years, when the repayment of the short term loans for stock and plant may bear heavily upon him. Until such time

as the ten-year loans are repaid, it would be impossible for an ex-serviceman even to consider the freeholding of his property. For this and other reasons, the Bill provides that the privilege of freeholding a property will not be granted until ten years after the commencement of the lease.

The Bill also provides that where properties have been purchased from the Midland Railway Company, in which the original grant included mineral rights, these mineral rights—

Mr. Marshall: What again?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, I knew the hon. member would say that. These mineral rights may be retained by the company after the sale of the farming land to the Crown.

Mr. Marshall: It should never have been agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A Bill was assented to by Parliament in 1950 granting this protection, but it is invalid as it hinges upon the Commonwealth and State legislation and was not made retrospective to give the protection to those properties for which it was intended, particularly the Tootra Estate purchased from the New Zealand and Australian Land Company Limited. We have made excellent progress in the State of Western Australia with the War Service Land Settlement Scheme. It has presented a marvellous opportunity to develop our lands. I am extremely pleased to be able to say that as a result of economic conditions, through high prices for wheat and wool, we have been able to carry on with the purchase of improved properties and have now reached the stage of being able to develop our virgin country in a big way.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Would it not be better always to develop the virgin country, instead of the applicants changing places with other settlers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I agree with the hon member absolutely, to a certain extent.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What does the Minister mean by "absolutely, to a certain extent"?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member can work it out for himself.

Mr. Marshall: Try it out by the use of algebra.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The point is we would not have made any progress for quite a few years if we had not been able to get the improved properties, because we did not have the machinery to develop the virgin country. I think the member for Eyre will agree, although I concur in his statement as to land settlement, that we have made good progress with large properties such as Tootra.

Hon. E. Nulsen: You have some fine country which needs very little clearing, so you should make good progress.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am merely answering the question put by the hon. member, in that in several instances we have been able to put 14 and 16 men on one property, such as Tootra and the Waddi Forest properties. Recently I had the opportunity of visiting those properties and there is no doubt that the men settled on them have had a wonderful start.

Mr. W. Hegney: All those men placed on the land must pass a test.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, we have an allotment board. The applicant is called before that board of three, and they quietly put the rule over him. The board even insists that he be accompanied by his wife in order that it may get the wife's point of view as to her settling on the land.

Mr. Marshall: You are getting inquisitive.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, we are, because when it is found that the applicant is keen and his wife is keen also it is then that co-operation is achieved.

Mr. Ackland: It is the only way to get success.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, a man on the land on his own, or a man with a discontented wife, does not make for progress so we are extremely careful in that regard. After the board's report on the applicant is received, he is given his priority and when his turn comes round he is allotted his property.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Are there any more developed properties left?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Only one, and practically all our efforts now are on virgin country. We have reached the stage when it is pleasing to me, to the Government, and I feel sure to all members of the House, to say that we are now really doing something in developing the undeveloped portions of our State.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Can you give me any idea when you will be able to get down to Esperance?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know the hon. member is extremely keen on and has great faith in the Esperance country and has pushed hard for its development but I can only say that as soon as we reach the stage when we are able to handle some of that country we will certainly do so. We have been able to assist in the development of ten farms in that area for a start, under the Rural and Industries Bank. I have heard very good reports about the area which the hon. member has mentioned and I am only—

Hon. E. Nulsen: I know you will be receiving an invitation to attend a field day to be held down there very soon and I hope you will be able to accept in order to see what they have done on the research station in that district.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You still have some applicants waiting for dairy farms.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, I am aware that the member for Fremantle has reminded me that some of his electors are waiting for dairy farms. We will have no difficulty in allotting dairy farms to all of the applicants. I have explained to the hon. member, and he will not mind my explaining it to the House, that some of the applicants want a dairy in a certain confined area and that is where the difficulty lies. One of the hon. member's electors wants a dairy between Coolup and Pinjarra.

Mr. Marshall: I thought it would be between the traffic and the railway bridges!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, and just at present we have not a dairy farm there that we could allot him.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He is a good man.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have seen his report and he has a good priority; if he had spread himself a little more he would have a dairy by now.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: What was it that Mr. McKay said about group settlement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot recall.

Hon. A. A. M. Coverley: He was asked what portion of Western Australia he would prefer for group settlement and I think his answer was, "Fair in the middle of Hay-st."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That would be very convenient but I do not think it would be practicable. I thought I should give members what information I have on the scheme, and can assure them that the Many Peaks development is going ahead very well. The reports we have show that the pastures are very thick and successful. South Stirling is also developing apace and we are now well into Rocky Gully, which some members had the advantage of visiting and seeing for themselves a short while ago. I feel sure the Deputy Premier will confirm that this development, which is in his electorate, is going ahead with leaps and bounds.

I feel that we, as a Parliament in Western Australia, can make full use of the opportunities offering today to develop the undeveloped portions of our State, and in doing so we will be fulfilling a great national obligation to our Empire. We all hope and pray that there will be no trouble overseas but, in the event of that occurring, I am sure that Western Australia with other parts of the Commonwealth will play a most important part on the food front. I think that will be one of our obligations to our Empire.

Hon. E. Nulsen: And very, very necessary.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. So in that regard the Government and the Parliament of Western Australia are fulfilling their obligations by carrying on this development. I may be going to Canberra next Saturday week to a conference on the

future of soldier settlement policy and, if I do go, I will be able to give members a further report at a later date, probably on the Estimates, as to what the Commonwealth has in mind.

Mr. W. Hegney: You might be going for the "Cup."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I will not be going for that because I do not like crowds. They worry me. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. T. Tonkin, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.54 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 23rd October, 1951.

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

QUESTION.

NORTH-WEST.

As to Sealed Roads, Carnarvon District.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Is the Minister for Works aware that although the Carnarvon district is the busiest in the North, it has less sealed roadway than most North-West districts?

(2) Having recently travelled over the roads serving the plantation areas, will the Minister agree that sealed all-weather roads are necessary to carry the large volume of traffic if continued heavy maintenance costs are to be avoided and the dust nuisance reduced?

(3) When can the long-suffering community in this district expect to have such roads provided?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. Four years ago the department was made an offer by the Commonwealth of a 50-50 contribution for the surfacing of the access roads to the North-West aerodromes. This was an attractive proposition to the State and was accepted. The Carnarvon aerodrome, of course, is within the precincts of the town and did not benefit to the extent that other centres in the North-West did.

(2) Yes.

(3) Steps have already been taken that provide for an accelerated programme of construction and surfacing.

LAPSED BILLS

Standing Orders Suspension.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (without notice): I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable such of the lapsed Bills as is considered necessary by the Minister and which are referred to in Message No. 1 from the Legislative Assembly, to be taken into consideration during this sitting.

The PRESIDENT: In order that the motion may be carried, it is necessary that there shall be an absolute majority of members present and voting in favour of it. I shall divide the House and will ask the Clerk to ring the bells.

Bells rung.

The PRESIDENT: As there is no dissentient voice and more than a constitutional majority in favour of the motion, I declare the question carried.

Question thus passed.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that, as requested by the Council in Message No. 2, the