Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 19th September, 1950.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Presentation.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to announce that, accompanied by the member for Cottesloe, the member for Darling Range and the member for Canning, I waited upon His Excellency the Governor and presented the Address-in-reply to His Excellency's opening Speech. His Excellency was pleased to reply in the following terms:—

> Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly: I thank you for your expressions of loyalty to His Most Gracious Majesty the King and for your Address-in-reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament.

PRIVILEGE—"THE WEST AUSTRALIAN."

Hon. J. B. Sleeman and Inaccurate Press Statement.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN: On a matter of privilege I desire to direct attention to a statement in "The West Australian" of Saturday, the 16th September. One portion reads—

> One member who did not leave Parliament House when suspended was Mr. (now Sir Charles) Latham when he was Leader of the Opposition. He was suspended about 3 a.m. near the end of the session in 1937. Mr. J. B. Sleeman, the Chairman of Committees, was in the Speaker's Chair while Mr. A. H. Panton was temporarily absent. In a matter of a few minutes, Mr. Panton heard of the suspension and quickly consulted the Premier (Mr. Willcock). He then resumed the Chair. At 3.28 a.m., Mr. Willcock moved "That the House at its rising adjourn until 3.35 a.m." That meant that, seven minutes later, another sitting was begun, and Mr. Latham was in order in taking his place.

I wish to say that that statement leaves a wrong impression and is not exactly a statement of fact. I was certainly in the Chair and had the painful necessity of suspending the then Leader of the Opposition. The report would indicate that the Speaker of that time (Hon. A. H. Panton), hurriedly returned to the House and conferred with the Premier, and that they decided to finish that sitting and start another one. As a matter of fact, the member for Leederville did not hurriedly resume the Chair because I, after having suspended the Leader of the Opposition, remained in the Chair and put through the second reading of the Bill that was under discussion. After that, while Mr. Panton was still out of the Chair, the Bill was taken into Committee. Before the Committee stage had been completed, five divisions were taken.

What happened was that Mr. Willcock came to me and said, "I am very sorry that a thing like this should have happened on the last night because the Leader of the Opposition will be absent when felicitations are exchanged in a few hours' time. Have you any feeling in the matter?" I replied, "None whatever. I have done my job. I do not care what happens." Mr. Willcock asked, "Would you have any objection to finishing the sitting and starting a new one?" I replied, "None whatever." The impression left by this article is that Mr. Panton had a conference with the then Premier, hurriedly resumed the Chair and decided to reinstate the Leader of the Opposition. That is not a fact.

The man responsible for the Leader of the Opposition coming back to the Chamber was the then Deputy Speaker, the member for Fremantle, and had I raised

any objection, the Leader of the Opposition would not have been able to resume his seat. It is as well to keep the newspaper on the straight and narrow path. The next mistake in the article is contained in the following:—

> Mrs. A. F. G. Cardell-Oliver, the present Minister for Health, achieved fame in October, 1941, by becoming the first woman member to be suspended . . . (She) was named by Mr. Sleeman.

That is not a statement of fact. I have the "Hansard" report before me to bear out my assertion that I did not suspend the member for Subiaco in October, 1941. When the writer, "C.M.," next tries to make a historian of himself, he should stick to the facts and give nothing but facts. I say definitely that the member for Subiaco was not suspended by me in October, 1941.

QUESTIONS.

BUSINESS NAMES ACT.

As to Penalty for Contravention.

Mr. RODOREDA asked the Attorney General:

(1) Is it the intention of the Government to amend the Business Names Act so as to impose a penalty on those firms and people who continue to defy Section 11 of that Act?

(2) If not, why not?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

(1) No.

(2) If the member so desires, I shall arrange for him to peruse a memorandum addressed by the Registrar of Companies to the Minister for Justice on the 11th October, 1946.

AVON RIVER.

As to Flow and Safeguards.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Premier:

(1) Is the Government giving any active consideration at the present time to the development of proposals calculated to bring about a much freer flow of water in the Avon River, thereby safeguarding the river and lessening the dangers of soil and salt erosion on land adjacent to the river?

(2) If so, what is the nature of such consideration?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) It is recognised that the agricultural lands in the Avon Valley need soil conservation treatment to retard soil and salt erosion, and this will be given as staff becomes available.

(2) Answered by (1).

EDUCATION.

As to Full-time Technical School for Northam.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister for Education:

In view of the success which has attended the night technical classes at Northam, will he have early consideration given to the advisability of establishing a full-time day technical school at Northam?

The MINISTER replied:

The Superintendent of Technical Education is at present in the Eastern States. On his return I shall discuss the matter with him and the Director of Education.

WIRE.

As to Supplies for Goldfields Market Gardeners.

Mr. McCULLOCH asked the Minister for Supply and Shipping:

(1) Owing to the present acute shortage of fencing wire, barbed and otherwise, could she advise when supplies would be made available for essential purposes to Goldfields market gardeners?

(2) Is she aware that market gardeners on the Goldfields are losing much of their products owing to the prevalence of invading animals, etc.?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The supply of locally manufactured barbed wire and wire is approximately three years behind the demand. But there is imported barbed wire and wire available at the following prices:—

> Barbed wire—73s. 9d. per cwt.
> Plain wire—70s. per cwt.
> In 5 cwt. lots—66s. 9d. per cwt.

(2) No, I am not aware of the damage done by animals at Kalgoorlie.

FISHERIES.

As to Undersized Crabs.

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Fisheries:

(1) What number of persons were interrogated during the 1949-50 crab season for having undersized crabs in their possession?

(2) Is it a fact that on one occasion the names of 18 persons were taken, but that only one prosecution followed, owing to wrong addresses having been given?

(3) How many persons were fined during the 1949-50 season for being in possession of undersized crabs?

(4) What assurance can he give the House that strict adherence will be given during the coming season to policing and enforcing the Act covering minimum carapace measurement?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No record of specific number is kept.

(2) On one occasion 16 names were taken. Three of these were found to be fictitious. No prosecutions eventuated.

(3) Three.

(4) The policing of the Second Schedule to the Fisheries Act in which crabs are included is part of the normal duties of fisheries inspectors.

HOUSING.

(a) As to Letting and Prohibition against Children.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Attorney General:

How many prosecutions each year have been launched against persons who have refused to let a dwelling-house, part of a dwelling-house or a flat to any person on the ground that it was intended that a child would live in such premises?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied:

No prosecutions of the kind referred to have been launched by the Fair Rents inspector during the period 1939 to this date, nor is it known that any such prosecutions have been pursued through the courts.

(b) As to Bank Cut on Loans.

Mr. GRAHAM (without notice) asked the Premier:

Has he any comments to make on the order, as reported in last evening's "Daily News," to Commonwealth Bank managers to cut loans on homes by 10 per cent?

The PREMIER: I did see that announcement in the Press, but no discussions in this regard were held at the Premiers' Conference. As members know, a great deal of discussion took place on the inflationary spiral in which we are now caught. I can only assume that the decision to cut housing loans is part of the plan to prevent further inflation.

PREMIERS' CONFERENCE.

As to Description of Proceedings.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (without notice) asked the Premier:

As it is obvious that the Premiers of all States were batting on a sticky wicket at Canberra, will the Premier give to us what could be described as a ball to ball description of the Premiers' Conference, at the first opportunity?

The PREMIER replied: I think the proceedings of the Premiers' Conference were covered very fully in all the leading dailies throughout the Commonwealth, with the exception of the proceedings in the Loan Council to which, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, the Press is not admitted.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is just as well, perhaps.

The PREMIER: There were also some private conferences with the Prime Minister to which the Press was not admitted. Such private conferences have been a feature of previous Premiers' Conferences. I expect to introduce the Budget at an early date, when I shall endeavour to give all particulars with regard to the financial matters that were discussed at the Premiers' Conference, and also the Loan programme.

BILL—FAUNA PROTECTION.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—Mt. Lawley) [4.42] in moving the second reading said: The Bill proposes to repeal the Game Act of 1912. It will be noticed that the name set out in the Bill for the new Act is the Fauna Protection Act, so that the measure is designed for the conservation and protection of fauna. The Game Act was based upon old English statutes that were passed with a view to preserving wild life, or game, so that certain persons could enjoy hunting. I feel, and I know members do too, that the main theme of any Act in connection with native fauna should be changed, because times have changed. The basis of this measure is not to preserve wild life to enable it to be shot or otherwise hunted, but for the value and interest it has, and will have, to the people of Western Australia.

Hon. E. Nulsen: It is really a protective measure.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. It is to be a fauna protection Act and not a game Act. The old Game Act will be repealed by this measure, if it becomes law, and the whole purpose of the old Act will be discarded.

Mr. Hoar: You are not including rabbits in it, are you?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Rabbits are vermin, and vermin, classified as such, must be destroyed in the interests of the State. In 1944, the then Minister controlling the Game Act appointed an advisory committee to advise him in connection with fauna. This step was taken by executive act. The Game Act contained no provision for any such advisory committee, so that the Governor appointed a number of people to advise the Minister for Fisheries, who also controls the Game Act, in connection with fauna.

On that committee were the following expert persons:—Major Whittell, Mr. Glauert, Dr. Serventy, the Chief Inspector of

Fisheries, and later there was added to it, so that its work could closely be related to that of the necessary destruction of vermin, the Chief Inspector of Vermin. I have reason to believe that the committee did excellent work and from time to time gave good advice to the Minister in charge. Since I have had the responsibility of administering this portfolio, it has furnished me with helpful advice. But it was felt by that committee—and with its view I agree—that it should have some proper legislative authority. In addition, I was advised that the legislation in connection with fauna in Western Australia should be brought up to date and more into line with the laws operating in the other States.

The Bill has been prepared on the advice of that committee and with its help. The measure will come into operation by proclamation, as a suitable date has to be chosen for it to become operative. It will be subject to the provisions of the Vermin Act and other Acts dealing with fauna under special conditions, such as the Fisheries Act, the Whaling Act and the Zoological Gardens Act. The provisions of those measures will, therefore, over-ride any provisions of the Bill, should there be conflict. This is necessary because, although it is desirable, wherever possible, to preserve the fauna of Western Australia, it is more necessary that destructive fauna should be destroyed. As the destruction of fauna and vermin is governed by the Vermin Act, it is only natural and proper that this measure should be subject to that Act.

Mr. Kelly: This would not cover grasshoppers and emus.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Once declared vermin under the Vermin Act such pests no longer have the protection of this proposed Act.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is so. Once they are declared vermin under the Vermin Act they are taken out of the operation of this Bill and are then governed by the Vermin Act. The Bill proposes not only to protect fauna indigenous to Western Australia but also to prevent the importation into the State of fauna from elsewhere which might become dangerous or a pest locally. Fauna is described in the Bill as—

> The vertebrate fauna which is wild by nature and is ordinarily to be found in a condition of natural liberty in the whole or a part or parts of the State, and which is indigenous or introduced, and includes any kind, species, sex and individual member of the fauna, and also includes mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs, and also the whole or any part of the skin, plumage, body, eggs, nests, young and offspring of the fauna.

It will be noted that frogs and reptiles are included in the definition, and that course might be thought unnecessary. But, as I have pointed out, this Bill will not only provide for the protection of natural fauna but also for prohibiting the introduction of any type of fauna which might become a pest, from outside Western Australia. As members are aware, a kind of toad or frog was introduced into Queensland to offset some of the pests infecting the sugar cane. I understand that that particular toad or frog is now itself becoming a serious pest in the canefields. The Leader of the Opposition would probably be better aware of the facts than I am.

Provision is made for the establishment of sanctuaries. A sanctuary is defined as "an area of land vested in the Crown and which the Governor, subject to such conditions and limitations as he thinks fit, reserves to His Majesty or disposes of in such a manner as for the public interest may seem fit for the conservation of fauna"; or an area of land "which is the subject of an agreement made between the Minister and the owner of the land for its use as a sanctuary." It is considered that some owners of lands may care to have holdings belonging to them declared sanctuaries so that fauna living there may have the full protection provided by the Bill to any public sanctuary.

The proposed Act is to be administered by the chief warden of fauna, subject to the direction and control of the Minister. The chief warden is to be appointed by the Governor, and until the Governor otherwise appoints, the office of chief warden of fauna shall be held by the person for the time being holding the office of Chief Inspector of Fisheries. That is the position that operates now because at present the Chief Inspector of Fisheries is the chief warden under the existing Game Act. Provision is also made for the appointment of honorary wardens. The measure will not bind the Crown or any other undertaking carried on by or on behalf of the State. As I have already mentioned, there now exists an advisory committee appointed by executive act.

The Bill provides for the setting up of a committee to be known as the Fauna Protection Advisory Committee of Western Australia and it will consist of five members, including the chairman. Two ex officio members of the committee are to be the persons for the time being occupying the office of chief warden of fauna, who shall be chairman, and the person for the time being occupying the office of Chief Inspector of Vermin under the provisions of the Vermin Act. The appointment of the Inspector of Vermin to that advisory committee is to ensure that the committee has before it the advice and views of the Department of Agriculture on the subject of vermin.

It will be realised that the closest co-operation must be maintained between the officers administering the Vermin Act, under the Department of Agriculture, and the officer administering the Fauna Act under the jurisdiction of the Minister for Fisheries. The remaining three members are to be appointed by the Governor and shall hold office at the pleasure of His Excellency. The duty of the committee is to inquire into and report to the Minister on any matters referred to it by him or by the chief warden of fauna, in relation to the conservation of fauna in this State. Except to the extent which the Governor declares by proclamation, all fauna is protected throughout the State, and power is given to declare closed seasons. As this proposed Act is, however, subject to the Vermin Act, any fauna declared vermin under the Vermin Act will automatically cease to come under the protective provisions of this measure.

Where fauna is protected, the Minister has authority to grant licenses to take some for food or for scientific purposes, or to destroy such as are likely to cause damage, or to take others for sale.

Mr. Kelly: Would a license be required to catch rabbits?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No. They are vermin and therefore come under the Vermin Act; but, where any particular fauna has not been declared vermin under the Act it will automatically come under the provisions of this Bill. It may be necessary to destroy certain fauna and a license to do this may be granted under this measure.

Mr. Styants: Kangaroos can become a pest.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is so. Any person who infringes the protection of fauna conferred by the proposed Act will commit an offence. The Bill prohibits the breeding of fauna for sale without a license and also the bringing into the State of living vertebrate fauna. As members are aware, many wild animals and birds indigenous to other countries, or other States, might become a serious menace if introduced into Western Australia. If I remember rightly, a number of persons have, from time to time, sought permission to introduce Californian quail. I understand that type is much larger than the quail in this State. That permission has been refused because it was thought that the quail might not only become a menace to local fauna but also to agriculturists here. Royalties may be charged in respect of skins of indigenous fauna. These royalties are to be prescribed.

In addition to those who may be especially appointed, all members of the Police Force and forestry officers are ex-officio wardens for the purposes of this legislation. Authority is given to wardens —but not to honorary wardens—to hand over to a police officer any person caught committing an offence; to take possession of any weapon, and to detain any vehicle. Power of search may be given to a warden by a justice of the peace where it is suspected that an offence has been committed and the proceeds are concealed. Honorary wardens can exercise only such authority as the Minister may prescribe. There is a distinction between the authority given to a warden under the Act and that vested in an honorary warden. It will be seen that the Bill provides that all wardens are officers of the Public Service, whereas any person who is considered suitable by the Minister may be appointed an honorary warden, but the latter will not have the same powers and authorities as are given under the Act to wardens.

There are some exemptions from the provisions of the legislation. A native may take fauna from Crown land other than on a sanctuary for the purpose of food for himself and his family, but not for sale.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Supposing a plain turkey attacks a person and he shoots it in self-defence.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Self-defence justifies what otherwise would be a criminal offence.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Are you suggesting we would be justified in shooting the Minister for Prices?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: In self-defence, yes! The maximum penalty prescribed for an offence against the Act is £50 and proceedings are to be taken in a court of petty sessions. The Governor is empowered to make regulations prescribing all matters required or convenient for carrying into operation the provisions of the Act. Those are the main provisions of the Bill. There are other minor matters that can be more appropriately discussed in Committee, and I will leave the matter there. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Kelly, debate adjourned.

BILL—RESERVE FUNDS (LOCAL AUTHORITIES).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 14th September.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [5.4]: This Bill proposes to give municipal councils and road boards in Western Australia the legal right to establish two classes of reserve funds. The first type is to be called the general reserve fund and the second is to be called the particular reserve fund. In his speech the Minister told us that the introduction of legislation containing the principles outlined in the Bill was requested by a number of local authorities, but he did not tell us whether

the organisations which represented the road boards and the municipalities had, in fact, given their approval to those principles. It has been the custom over a long period for these organisations to be contacted, if not conferred with, when legislation so vital to them as this legislation would be if passed, is brought before Parliament. Therefore, I would like the Minister, when replying to the second reading debate, to inform members whether, in fact, the organisation which represents road boards, and the organisation which represents municipal councils have both, or either, asked the Government to introduce this legislation.

The general reserve fund, which this proposed enactment would allow to be instituted, would permit local authorities to establish a reserve fund of a general character for the purposes, in the main, of meeting unforeseen general expenditure. Certain happenings in this State in recent years have had the effect of imposing additional general expenditure upon local authorities, because such authorities have not had any general reserve fund in existence upon which they could draw to meet that unforseen expenditure, as a result of which, they have oft-times been in difficulties. As is usual in such cases they have, in most instances, approached the State Government and asked that money be made available for the purpose of meeting the unforseen expenditure, the necessity to meet which had suddenly arisen.

In principle I think it is desirable that local authorities should have the right to establish a general reserve fund to enable them to meet unforeseen expenditure of a general nature. This particular reserve fund is to be built up by amounts paid to that fund from the ordinary income of the local authority. My experience with a number of local authorities is such as to lead me to believe that only the more progressive local authority will take advantage of this legislation if and when it becomes part of the statutes of the State. Unfortunately, in many local government districts there is a tendency to keep rates down to the absolute minimum often so low as to make it impossible for any such district to make worth-while progress.

The test of a local governing district, in my opinion, is not necessarily the level of rates which it imposes upon its ratepayers, but the degree of progress that the particular local authority is making in connection with the duties imposed upon it by local government legislation in this State. However, there is every reason in the world why more progressive local authorities who wish to establish a reserve fund of this description should be given the opportunity so to act.

The other class of reserve fund is a special or particular one. As far as I have been able to read the Bill, the main source of revenue which will go into this particular reserve fund will be from the sale of assets belonging to any local authority. In the normal course of events, very few local authorities would be selling assets of any magnitude. Therefore, in the ordinary way, these particular or special reserve funds would not be built up to any great extent except possibly over a number of years.

In his speech the Minister told us that some local authorities in recent months had become embarrassed with riches because of the policy and action of the State Electricity Commission in purchasing outright from them the electric power plants which previously the local authorities owned and operated in their respective districts. This has happened at Northam. The State Electricity Commission purchased outright the power plant at Northam which previously belonged to the Northam Municipal Council. That power station was a very substantial one and the municipal council has now come into possession, or will in a comparatively short period, of a very large sum of money.

As I mentioned previously there is a strong tendency in many districts for ratepayers to seek all the time to have the local government rate, or rates, reduced to the lowest possible level. I have no doubt that at Northam there will be a demand from some ratepayers to have rates reduced, and the request or demand will be based upon the fact that the municipal council is now a very wealthy organisation in terms of pounds, shillings and pence. On balance, of course, the municipal council is not one penny better off than it was previously. It might even be conceded it is worse off, because this power station was a considerable source of profit over the years and had been used for a very long period for the purpose of subsidising the rates. In other words, the consumers of electric current in that district had been called upon to pay a price for electric current which was so high as not only to meet the working expenses of the power station but, in addition, to return to the local authority considerable profit, which was applied by the municipality to its ordinary income, thereby making it possible for the general rate in the town to be lower than it otherwise would have been.

The Minister for Local Government: That happens frequently, of course, but not always.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I am very much in favour of giving local authorities power to establish special reserve funds. If the passing of legislation to that effect will encourage a number of local authorities—not all of them—to establish special reserve funds for the purpose of undertaking the special works referred to by the Minister in his speech, Parliament should hasten to give municipalities and road boards the legal power they need to enable

them to establish and maintain funds of that description. There is plenty of room in the local governing world of this State for local governing authorities to undertake more varied activities than most of them have embarked upon in the past. The great bar which I see to very much progress being made with these funds is the one I mentioned previously; namely, the strong inclination of many ratepayers in some districts to have rates kept as low as possible.

I notice that under the provisions of one part of the Bill, certain authorisations or approvals have to be obtained by a local authority before it can collect moneys to go into these funds and also before it can expend in specified ways money from those funds. The Bill lays it down that the approval or authorisation may be obtained from a majority of ratepayers at a meeting specially called for the purpose or, as an alternative to that, from the Minister for Local Government. I would like to know from the Minister why it is proposed to give a local authority the opportunity to ignore—if I might use that word —the local ratepayers, whenever it might suit that local authority to do so, and why it is provided that, instead of seeking approval or authorisation from a meeting of ratepayers, the local authority may go direct to the Minister and seek such authorisation or approval from him.

According to the Bill, the authorisation or approval would be legally complete and binding if it were obtained only from the Minister. Presumably, after that, the local ratepayers would have no say and no right whatever. If the Minister tells me that this is being done to assist the local authorities and can explain why the ratepayers are not to be consulted, or need not be consulted, by their own local authorities I will not be inclined to raise any opposition to that part of the measure. The general principles of the Bill are acceptable to me and I support the second reading.

On motion by Mr. Ackland, debate adjourned.

BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. D. Brand—Greenough) [5.20] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to repeal the regulations in the schedule attached to the Act and to amend the statute to make provision for regulations to be made under the authority of the Act, but independent thereof.

As probably many members realise, the Act operates in the metropolitan area within a radius of 25 miles of the G.P.O., and in the country where scaffolding exceeding 15ft. in height from the horizontal base is used. The Act deals not only with scaffolding but also with all lifting gear and cranes associated with the construction, maintenance and alteration of all buildings and may also apply on ships in the harbour where alterations are necessary for the carriage of cargo, and where structural work involves the use of carpenters and other persons engaged in the building trade. The Act is administered by a sub-branch of the Public Works Department under the direction of the Chief Inspector of Scaffolding, who is the Principal Architect. In the metropolitan area, he has under his immediate direction five inspectors who are engaged exclusively on inspections and the enforcement of the Act within that specific area. In the country the responsibility is that of the architectural supervisors. As will be realised, it would not be an economical proposition, nor would it be necessary, to have a full-time scaffolding inspector carrying out inspections in the country. The work is extremely important because scaffolding must be sound since, unless it is, not only are the lives of the workmen endangered but also those of the public who pass beneath scaffolding along footpaths and sidewalks.

The means of administration of the Act is by regulations. The original statute, in its schedule, provides such regulations, which are part and parcel thereof. Section 27, Subsection (2) gives power to the Governor to make additional regulations not inconsistent with the regulations in the schedule. There is no provision for amendment of the original regulations by the Governor and consequently any such amendments must be the subject of amending legislation. Improvements in connection with scaffolding which are in common use in the Eastern States might readily be adopted in Western Australia. But to permit of these improvements, which are contrary to the present regulations, it is necessary for those regulations to be amended.

For instance, over the past years the need has arisen to improve and to allow for the lengthening of batten ladders. Then we have seen the use of tubular structures for scaffolding. As science effects more improvement in the actual texture of the metal used, it is necessary to provide for the use of tubing of a stipulated calibre superior to that permitted under the existing regulations. There is also need for provision to be made for substituting metal scaffolding for steel scaffolding, since today it is not necessary to have steel in order to obtain strength. Scaffolding of this kind is being used in the Eastern States, and it is considered by those associated with the trade in Western Australia that it would be a progressive move to introduce such scaffolding here. Another desirable improvement is a modification of scaffolding fees payable in respect of construction of groups of houses.

The existing cumbersome method of amending regulations by means of legislation is contrary to the usual procedure in regard to other statutes in which regulations and bylaws are provided for. The proposed amendments, some of which I have quoted, are very strongly advocated, not only by the Chief Inspector of Scaffolding, but also by the Builders' Guild. The Water Boards Act, the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act, the Country Areas Water Supply Act, the Country Towns Sewerage Act and the Land Drainage Act, all make provision for regulations and bylaws to be prescribed, with the approval of the Governor in Council, and for publication in the "Government Gazette" of such regulations and bylaws. Copies of such bylaws and regulations must also be tabled in both Houses of Parliament. Relevant sections in the Acts previously quoted indicate the matters on which bylaws may be framed.

Although the Governor has authority, under Section 27 of the Scaffolding Act, to make regulations, such provision does not cover the whole of the requirements. On several occasions in recent years it has been necessary to amend the Act in order to alter the regulations. It is most desirable that provision should be made for regulations under the Scaffolding Act, on lines similar to the provisions under the statutes I have mentioned. To do this it will be necessary first to repeal the schedule to the Act and to make provision for the Governor to make regulations prescribing all forms, fees and matters which by the Act are required or permitted to be prescribed, and to quote the extent to which such regulations shall apply.

The Parliamentary Draftsman has pointed out a High Court decision that regulations and the power to make regulations must be specific and not general. Tersely, the position is that the Bill seeks to remove the regulations from the Act, as now constituted, and provide authority for the Governor to make independent regulations. Those, briefly, are the provisions of this Bill. This is the first occasion upon which I have introduced legislation in the House, and I feel it is sufficient for me to close on that note. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. W. Hegney, debate adjourned.

BILL—COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY (Hon. D. Brand—Greenough) [5.32] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to effect a minor amendment to the Country Areas Water Supply Act. Its object is to facilitate the administration of the legislation by enabling the Minister for Water Supply to delegate his powers under the Act to officers of the Water Supply Department.

There is no general provision in the present statute to enable officers to act for the Minister in that way and it is thought desirable that the statute be amended by incorporating therein a section somewhat similar to Section 12 of the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act or Section 9 of the Country Towns Sewerage Act, 1948. Section 9 of the Country Towns Sewerage Act, 1948, reads as follows:—

> The Minister may authorise any officer under this Act to do all and any of the acts, matters and things which the Minister is hereby authorised or required to do, and every officer so authorised shall have and enjoy all such and the like powers as are hereby conferred on the Minister enabling him to do all such acts, matters or things respectively, and all such acts, matters and things, when done under such authority, shall be as valid and effectual as if they had been done by the Minister, and every officer so authorised shall have and enjoy in respect of every such act, matter or thing so done by him, all such immunities from personal liability as the Minister would have and enjoy if he had done such act, matter or thing.

This section was taken from, and is identical with, Section 12 of the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act of 1909. It is, however, somewhat out of date and has therefore been improved upon by the Parliamentary Draftsman, who has rendered it more in keeping with the Act and its bylaws and regulations.

Provision is made in the Bill that the Minister may, in writing, delegate all or any of his powers and functions under the Act or under any bylaw or regulation in force by virtue of the Act, so that the delegated powers and functions may be exercised by his nominated departmental officers with respect to matters or classes of matters and for certain localities, as specified in the instrument of delegation. This subclause is an improvement on the powers provided in the Country Towns Sewerage Act or in the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, in that it enables the Minister to delegate his powers under bylaws or regulations—a provision not contained in the statutes referred to.

It will be realised that the amendments contained in the Bill are necessary, because so often the Minister is required to make decisions on matters far removed from his office and the seat of government. The Bill provides that before the Minister opens or breaks up the soil of any road under the control of a local authority he shall give to the local authority at

least seven days' notice in writing of his intention to do so. It further provides that every local authority shall, when requested by the Minister, give particulars of any ascertained levels of any road in which it is proposed to lay any pipe or make any drain.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Would that not tend to give greater power to bureaucracy?

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: The hon. member is a little late in his protest against the power contained in this amendment because, as I have stated, it has existed since 1909 in the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act. Although he may not have been present when that Act was passed in 1909, the hon. member had opportunity of saying something about the provision when it was included in the Country Towns Sewerage Act in 1948. It may tend towards bureaucracy, but I would be pleased to learn from the hon. member in what other way the difficulty might be overcome. If the Minister watches the position closely and delegates his powers carefully, I do not think we need fear the result envisaged by the hon. member.

Mr. May: I take it the powers would be delegated only to certain officers?

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: That is so. It is proposed in the Bill that the Minister be given power to withdraw his authority at any time.

Hon. E. Nulsen: The Minister should take full responsibility.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: He should, but from my brief experience as Minister for Works I feel it would be impossible for any Minister to do all the detailed work, and I think the hon. member will agree with me in that regard. I think more time should be given by Ministers to matters of policy and more authority and responsibility for detail should be delegated to departmental officers. If the Minister was not satisfied with the work of those officers they could be replaced.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Try that out and see how you get on. It is not easy to sack a civil servant.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: That is so, but I do not think it would be necessary to allow things to reach the stage where one would have to talk of sacking any officer. My experience is that civil servants are always ready to cooperate in implementing the policy of the Government.

Hon. A. H. Panton: We are agreed on that.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is not what you stated. It is easier to sack a Minister than to sack a civil servant.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY: The Bill also makes provision for a departmental officer to use discretion where such a provision is made concerning the Minister's authority in the various sections of the principal Act. It is imperative that any officer carrying out delegated powers should have the same protection as the Minister would have against personal liability, and provision in that regard is contained in the Bill. Subclause (6) is protective only and of little significance because, the Minister having no authority in this regard under the existing statute, it is not thought that he has up to date delegated his powers in respect of the principal statute or, if he has so acted, such delegation has been of doubtful validity. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

BILL—WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLY (Hon. D. Brand—Greenough) [5.45] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is one which has been requested by the Crown Law Department to assist in facilitating and clarifying the position in respect of the duties of the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage. The object is to include in the schedule to the Act all statutes, including recent enactments, administered by the Minister. The Country Areas Water Supply Act, 1947, repealed and replaced the Goldfields Water Supply Act, 1902, which was mentioned in the schedule to the Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, No. 67 of 1912. A new statute for inclusion is the Country Towns Sewerage Act.

A similar Bill, I understand, was originally prepared in 1947 as complementary to the Country Areas Water Supply Act of that year. It was intended to introduce it immediately that Act came into operation but, owing to the overcrowding of the notice paper, or some other reason of which I am not aware, this was not done. It was subsequently postponed because other Bills presented to the House would require to be included in the schedule, such Bills being the Country Towns Sewerage Act of 1948 and the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act Amendment Act of 1949.

Sections 3 and 4 of the Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act of 1912 provide for the administration, by the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage, of certain statutes mentioned in the schedule attached thereto, and also vested certain lands in him and gave him certain immunities where boards contemplated in those Acts are not in existence, either because they have not been appointed or because they have been dissolved. The statutes quoted in the schedule each provide, under the definition of "Minister," the following:—

Minister of Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage in his corporate capacity as constituted by the Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, 1912.

The particular advantage of having individual Acts, which the Minister for Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage administers, indicated and established in one statute, namely, the Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, 1912, undoubtedly tends to clarify his position and makes it possible to ascertain at a glance the extent of his administration. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

BILL—BUILDING OPERATIONS AND BUILDING MATERIALS CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. G. P. Wild—Dale) [5.50] in moving the second reading said: This is a small amendment to the parent Act introduced by the Leader of the Opposition in 1945. There is still great necessity for this legislation, and although we feel that the time has arrived when there should be some easing of the position in regard to permits, particularly in view of the expanding building programme, there is still necessity for retaining the existing control. Later, I shall ask the House to deal with legislation which will allow the Minister, by proclamation, to ease or restrict the issuing of permits as he thinks fit.

Before dealing with the provisions of the Bill, I would like to give members a short review of the problems affecting the building industry, and the materials position, in relation to the houses that have been and are being built, the cost of building and the position of the industry generally. There has been evidence, in recent months, of considerable improvement in the effective building rate. Prior to the war, this rate was in the vicinity of 2,000 homes annually, but in the year just closed, which ended on the 30th June, 1950, the building rate had increased to 3,509 homes, and at the commencement of this year there were 5,031 houses in course of construction. The following figures, I think, lend weight to that claim:—

	Homes Completed.
1946-47	1,792
1947-48	2,771
1948-49	3,244
1949-50	3,509

Also, the number of homes commenced is as follows:—

	Total.
1946-47	2,448
1947-48	3,075
1948-49	3,843
1949-50	5,031

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That is, 5,031, but for how long?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The figures for houses built by owner-builders reflect the encouragement given by the Housing Commission to self-help builders and, more latterly, the issuing of permits for up to 12½ squares, and I confidently expect that the issuing of permits up to this squarage in the year 1950-51 will show a steady improvement in the building rate throughout the year.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: There may be permits, but there are no materials.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Admittedly it will increase the number of commencements and houses under construction, but it will also provide an incentive to manufacturers of building materials and builders to produce more materials and to build houses more quickly, because I believe that when the individual is thrown on to his own resources—as were the pioneers in the early days who showed such great initiative, enterprise and courage—the best results are achieved.

I have no doubt that they will, when thrown on their own resources—this applies particularly to the owner-builders—make use of sources of material not previously tapped, and whilst the owner-builder may take longer to build his own home, he is making a contribution to the building programme, as the figures well show. I have every reason to believe that in the year 1950-51 we shall see a building rate something much closer to 6,000 houses than the present figure of 3,059. There is need for a progressive building up of the labour force as material becomes more readily available. There has been a steady increase in the past three years, as follows:—

Tradesmen working on jobs in progress, excluding owner-builders.

At the 30th June, 1948	5,591
At the 30th June, 1949	6,220
At the 30th June, 1950	6,908

In order to augment that force, the State Housing Commission has, in recent months, nominated a further 100 tradesmen from Britain, and I am pleased to say that trade unions are fully appreciative of the need to step up the supply of tradesmen, provided, of course, that there is sufficient material here for them to work with when they arrive. The State Housing Commission, in addition to being the authority for the administration of the

Building Operations and Building Materials Control Act, is also charged, under its own Act, with the obligation to undertake an extensive building programme. I refer to the Workers' Homes Act, which is now embraced by the State Housing Act of Western Australia.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: But the Housing Commission is not building any workers' homes.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I shall tell the hon. member of our intentions in that regard in a few moments. In addition, it is charged with the responsibility of administering the Commonwealth-State rental homes agreement and, further, the building of homes for ex-servicemen under the War Service Homes Act, as agent for the Commonwealth. Both projects have been substantial in the last three to four years, and the total number of houses completed by the Commission in the post-war period, including Commonwealth-State rental and war service homes, are as follows:—

Financial year.	Total.
1945-46	260
1946-47	696
1947-48	1,217
1948-49	1,505
1949-50	1,570

Mr. May: Are they all war service homes?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: No, some are, and the remainder are Commonwealth-State rental homes. At the 30th June, 1950, the Commission had completed 3,653 rental homes, and had under construction 1,016 homes in 25 metropolitan suburbs and 82 country towns. Of the 1,016 under construction, 319 were in country areas. Homes built by the Commission are of two types, brick and timber-frame. The earlier homes were of orthodox construction, generously planned and of varied designs. However, with rising costs and the number of pressing applications, the Commission considers the time has arrived when we should move over, to a certain extent, to build homes under the old Workers' Homes Act, where workers, on payment of £5 deposit, can ultimately hope not only to purchase their homes, but also to own them.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Do you know that the Commission wrote to Fremantle and said that it did not intend to build any workers' homes there?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I can assure the hon. member that we are going to build homes in the Fremantle area. It is also extremely necessary to provide homes for small-unit families, and to this end the Commission has developed the building of pre-cut houses. At present we have one small factory at Welshpool which is in production, and we are hoping, at the end of November, that there will be one operating in the Manjimup district. It is expected that both of these factories, in addition to a third, as to which negotiations are being conducted at present, will be able to provide small pre-cut timber houses, to be built under the Workers' Homes Act, throughout the country.

Tenders were recently called for 750 prefabricated houses from outside Australia. Many tenders were received and these at the moment are being considered by the State Housing Commission. We expect to finalise the negotiations with the successful tenderer in the course of the next few days. A clause in the contract provides that the successful tenderer must bring to Australia the necessary labour force, must erect sufficient homes for his own workers and, in addition, must also bring the material, so we can truthfully say that these 750 homes will be something entirely apart from anything we ourselves may do.

Hon. A. H. Panton: When shall we know the average price of them?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I should say that that will probably be announced by the Government as soon as Cabinet has considered the decision of the Commission. The Commission now proposes fully to reopen its scheme for building for home-ownership under the freehold and leasehold provisions of the State Housing Act. This scheme has benefited many workers in the past, providing, as it does, for home purchase on a low deposit and an extended term for repayment. It has not been opened earlier for general building because of the concentration on group construction for rental purposes and because of the substantial war service programme. The Commission, however, feels that the time has now arrived when encouragement should be given to the applicant desirous of owning his own home. Special consideration will be given in this scheme to the erection of houses in country districts when the pre-cut homes become more readily available and the imported houses commence to arrive.

It may be appropriate at this stage to refer briefly to the vexed question of the cost of homes. Much has been said and published lately on the subject, but I believe it is difficult to draw comparisons because of varying standards, specifications, equipment and other factors which have so great an effect on the final cost of a home. Only the most minute and careful examination of types and specifications could enable a comparison to be made, but I am going to say that Western Australia has held its costs down to a minimum and that they compare favourably with the costs in the Eastern States.

I intend to quote from a return furnished by the Commonwealth in respect of contracts let for homes under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement for

the January-March quarter of this year. The importance of this return is that it deals with costs analysed by a central authority and having a common basis. It is in respect of a standard type of dwelling, with very little variation between the States. The figures do not include the cost of land, charges for utility services to site, architects' fees or administration charges. The following are the costs per square:—

	Brick.		Timber.	
	Lowest.	Highest.	Lowest.	Highest.
	£	£	£	£
New South Wales	173	210	162	193
Victoria (concrete)	180	193	164	190
Queensland	191	194	137	170
W.A.	134	161	131	143

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is a big jump from £87, is it not?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The increase in the population of Western Australia has made an expansion of the home-building programme very necessary. Figures have recently been quoted showing the effect of migrants on the population of the State. These figures are worth mentioning again because of the direct effect they have on the housing position. In the two decades before 1947, there had been an annual increase in population of less than one per cent., but since 1947, the increase has been 3.49 per cent. per annum. The overall increase in Australia during the latter period has been 2.57 per cent. Of the 51,000 people who have come to Western Australia in the last three years, 40,000 have stayed in the metropolitan area.

The natural increase in population in the past couple of years was in the vicinity of 8,500 each year. To this figure must be added migration to the extent of 8,800 people in the year ended the 30th June, 1949, and 15,500 in the year ended the 30th June, 1950. We must support the Commonwealth in its immigration policy realising as we do, the necessity for building up our population for defence purposes. At the same time, it is necessary to look to our resources to ensure that every piece of material is used to the greatest advantage.

The Government is endeavouring to ease the burden by ensuring that a proportion of the incoming migrants are building industry tradesmen who can erect homes, not only for themselves, but also for others. They have to provide homes for themselves. But even the flow of migrant tradesmen must be limited to the materials available. A recent survey indicated that Western Australia will need approximately 30,000 houses by the 30th June, 1955, to cater for its existing population and, I repeat, this is exclusive of the requirements for prospective migrants. If we are going to receive in this State, as we have been told by the Commonwealth we shall admit between 14,000 and 15,000 migrants annually in the next 10 years. We must build at least 8,000 or 9,000 houses a year during the next five years and then in all probability shall have to increase the number to 10,000.

Mr. May: Have you the percentage of homes allocated to migrants?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Those figures, unfortunately, are not available. No record of them is kept by the State Housing Commission. When a man makes an application, he does not have to state his place of birth; he is merely required to state his place of residence.

Mr. J. Hegney: But you would know how long he had been in the country.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Government is giving them preference.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It is of no use bringing these people to Australia if we do not provide the ancillary services to housing. A man has to have a house and he also needs a job and, when he has a job, there must be an industrial undertaking to house him or look after him. With the increase in population, we must have more schools, hospitals, clinics, kindergartens, and so one could go on indefinitely. So it has been the aim of the State Housing Commission to maintain a balanced programme.

While we appreciate that housing must have a great priority, we must take cognisance of the fact that these people also must have a job and be provided with social services. In support of the policy of the State Housing Commission, I should like to quote some figures since 1946-47 showing the effect on the available material. The figures are as follows:—

Building Permits Granted by the State Housing Commission

Type of building—New and including repairs, alterations and additions.	1946-47.		1947-48.	
	No.	£	No.	£
Houses	2,976	1,816,498	2,782	1,997,825
Business premises....	246	193,552	226	180,078
Factories	226	208,651	304	507,489
Social and other buildings	779	161,495	810	397,331
Total	4,227	2,470,196	4,122	3,082,723

Type of building—New and including repairs, alterations and additions.	1948-49.		1949-50.	
	No.	£	No.	£
Houses	3,138	2,511,863	5,667	6,359,308
Business premises	176	239,339	210	255,059
Factories	228	440,427	240	636,947
Social and other buildings	840	328,718	625	817,113
Total	4,382	3,520,347	6,742	8,068,427

Of the £8,068,427 in 1949-50, an amount of £6,359,308 represented housing. Thus a little over 75 per cent. of all available material was devoted to housing. It is not of much use talking of having to double our building rate if we do not make some provision for the requisite material to give us the extra buildings. The first material I shall refer to is bricks.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is where private enterprise let you down.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The production figures are as follows:—

Year ended June,—	
1939	53,000,000 (pre-war)
1944	7,000,000
1945	10,700,000
1946	24,700,000
1947	38,485,000
1948	45,000,000
1949	50,000,000
1950	57,000,000

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: An amazing step-up from the immediate post-war years.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The 57,000,000 bricks will be only sufficient to give us a building programme of approximately 3,500 houses, and if we are going to build between 5,000 and 6,000 homes in 1950-51, obviously we must produce a bigger quota, somewhere in the region of 90,000,000 bricks in order to supply the needs, not only of homes but also of industry.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The Government is establishing more socialist brickyards.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: We are doing everything possible to bridge the gap. Only two years ago the then Minister for Housing, Sir Ross McDonald ordered the early construction of plant to double the face-cut brickworks at Byford. Then a few months ago, the wire-cut brickworks were ordered to be installed at Byford and, as a result, we shall be receiving by Christmas of this year 135,000 bricks a week and we hope by Christmas, 1951, the output of the new brickyards will be 485,000 per week.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I was informing the House how it was hoped to bridge the gap between supply and demand with regard to bricks. During the six months ended the 30th June last we produced 32,000,000 bricks. Provided this rate can be maintained for the balance of the year, together with the quantity to come from the new pressed brickworks to be opened at Armadale, and the wire cuts, which should be coming forward by Christmas of this year, we shall have reached, by the latter part of next year, 90,000,000 bricks per year. In addition, every inducement has been given to those companies producing alternatives such as cement, concrete blocks and board sections. These materials have made a substantial contribution not only with respect to houses, but industrial buildings also.

Whilst at the moment the tile position is a little slow, with the opening of the new works at Welshpool—I understand they will be officially opened one day next week—and the machinery that is on the water for that factory and which will not take very long to install as the drying sheds, etc., are already erected, we should by the end of this year, have nearly 10,250,000 tiles available. At the 30th June 1950, we had just over 8,000,000. When one looks back to 1944, again the last year prior to the cessation of hostilities we find we were producing only 575,000 tiles. In 1947 the production was 4,500,000 tiles. One can see, therefore, that by doubling the output in the last two years very rapid strides have been made in the production of tiles.

In these days of galvanised iron shortages, the roofing position has been helped considerably by the use of cement tiles. These are now contributing a little over 300,000 a month to the total used. That figure could be substantially increased with an improved output of terracotta tiles by means of plant additions and improved technique at the existing works. The prospects for the future, therefore, are very bright.

Cement, so important to the building industry, has been a cause of worry for a considerable time. In 1946 shortages were apparent that necessitated the setting up of a special distribution committee. In recent years the demand has far exceeded the supply necessitating—by the Government and also private enterprise—the importation from abroad of many thousands of tons of cement. The Government recently arranged and financed the Swan Portland Cement Company's works in the purchase of some plant obtained from Wiluna with which it is hoped we will be producing 400 tons per week. This machinery was installed some four or five months ago, but unfortunately a fault developed in the motor, and latterly another became apparent in one of the large pump bearings.

The latest advice I have is that although the plant in the last two weeks has been under test, it will probably be another two or three weeks before it goes into production. The company has made arrangements for the duplication of its plant, but in the meantime supplies will continue to lag far behind the demand. At the moment we are producing 1,250 tons of cement per week at the Swan Portland Cement works and, with the addition of 400 tons from the ex-Wiluna plant, we shall have 1,650 tons, which will give us in the vicinity of 70,000 tons per year.

A recent survey was made by the materials section of the State Housing Commission, and it is estimated that the total requirements of this State in the next five years—and the position would be required to be re-assessed again at the end of that period—will be not less than 115,000 tons per annum. So one can see that the Swan Portland Cement Company will need to do everything it possibly can to double its output in the next 12 months to two years. In the meantime, foreign interests have investigated the possibility of opening another cement works in Western Australia. Although at the moment their investigations are still only in the negotiation stage, we are hoping that they will soon be brought to finality.

The production of fibrous plaster sheeting, used generally for the internal linings, has been in ready supply and has expanded to keep pace with the increased demand. It has not been necessary to make plasterboard the subject of controlled release. The production of asbestos cement sheets shows a marked increase over pre-war figures, output having more than trebled since before the war. Plans have been in hand for some time for the existing works at Rivervale to be moved to Welshpool. I understand that when that move is completed, the company's activities will show an increased output of at least 50 per cent. for flat sheeting, and a little over 15 per cent. for corrugated sheeting.

Further extensions to the plant and buildings, which are now being undertaken, will also double the present output by 1951 which should meet the needs of Western Australia, at least for the next five years. The limiting factor in this regard has been asbestos fibre, but the outlook, I am pleased to say, is now very much brighter than it was. There has been, and will continue to be a big demand for this material which is used extensively for external covering of timber-framed cottages, and for sheeting and roofing industrial buildings. It is assisting, too, as an alternative in bridging the gap between supply and demand for weatherboard. There has been a steady improvement in the supply of porcelain enamelware. Eastern States lines continue in short supply, but the gap has been largely bridged by importations from oversea, the cost of which, fortunately, is not considerably more than the local product.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is still very expensive, nevertheless.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I understand it is approximately 20 per cent. above the local price.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: But the prices of both the local and imported article are very high.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The position with regard to imported galvanised iron and piping continues to be very difficult. Supplies of these materials, so necessary for housing in Western Australia, depend entirely on the Eastern States production. In addition, we have the very difficult shipping position to contend with when trying to bring these much needed materials to Western Australia. Production has been continually interfered with by industrial disputes, and shipping has always been a problem.

In this regard, however, I would like to say that the Minister for Supply and Shipping has always been particularly active in her endeavours to improve the position and, I know, will continue to exert every effort possible. Quite recently we received advice that no less than 10,000 tons of piping were lying on the wharf at Newcastle. Representations were made to the Premier who at that time was in the Eastern States attending the Premiers' Conference, and representations were also made to Senators McBride and McLeay, but the very best we were able to do was to arrange for two shipments of approximately 2,000 tons each. So, in one instance, due to the lack of shipping, we are denied nearly 6,000 tons of much-needed galvanised piping.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What is the Minister for Shipping doing?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The answer to the present steel shortage is increased production at Newcastle and Kembla, and more frequent and improved shipping facilities.

Mr. Fox: One ship could lift 6,000 tons from Newcastle.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I can assure the hon. member that not a stone has been left unturned to try to get shipping, but unfortunately in a telegram I received not long ago the main portion was taken up with asking me what I could do to see that the shipping, if made available, had a quick turn around at Fremantle; and at that time there were 15 ships lying out in the lane waiting to come into the harbour!

Mr. Fox: Why do they not stagger the Eastern States ships?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The amount of timber being made available to the building industry in Western Australia has been causing considerable concern. This can be readily understood when one looks at the figures today because they show that Western Australia is producing less in 1950 than in the year 1937-38. At that time we produced 285,000 loads per annum. In 1938-39 the figure was 248,000 loads, and in the first year after the war, 1946-47, it was 199,000 loads. In 1948-49

we produced 209,000 loads, and, in the year just completed, 216,000 loads, which is approximately 69,000 loads less than we produced in the last full year prior to the war.

Mr. Hoar: Quite right; and when you try to better the conditions of the timber workers, the sawmillers will not give you a hand.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: These figures represent a drop from an average of 21,500 loads a month in the five years prior to January, 1938, to approximately 18,000 loads a month in 1950.

Mr. Rodoreda: Do you think private enterprise has fallen down on the job?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: A considerable amount has been said about the export of timber from Western Australia. Although the figures for both oversea and interstate trade have decreased very considerably, I feel that the time has arrived when we in Western Australia must reorientate our ideas about the exporting of our natural timber. In the five years prior to the war, 46 per cent. of our total timber production was being sent out of the State. This has gradually been reduced until the figures for 1949-50 bring that quantity down to 27.2 per cent. In this regard I feel that the timber industry has to make up its mind about one of two things. It has to say either that the output of timber in Western Australia will be stepped up considerably to allow of any export whatever; or, on the other hand, if the industry is to continue at this low output then something will have to be done about the large mills that are producing only 40 per cent. of their permissible intake. If that is so, we as a Government will have to say, "If you are not going to produce any more timber, then the day of export or interstate trade is finished."

Mr. Guthrie: Then you will not get any galvanised iron.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: In order to increase production in the existing mills, a regulation was recently laid on the Table of the House. That regulation stated that sawmillers now have to cut 75 per cent. of their permissible intake. This in itself should considerably speed up output as several of the largest mills in the State, since the war, have been cutting as low as 40 per cent.

Mr. Rodoreda: Why is that?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: As the mills to which I refer are capable of producing anything from 40 to 50 loads per day, it can be seen that this under-cutting is having a very detrimental effect on the timber output for the whole of Western Australia.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How do the State Sawmills compare with the others?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I realise that the industry has been passing through very difficult times since 1945. We must realise that today—in 1950—jobs are available everywhere. It is difficult to ask a man to shut himself up in a small mill town miles away from the amenities of life such as are available in the city or the larger country towns. As a result we find that two or three of our large mills—well known to the member for Warren—have only 40 or 50 men engaged whereas if those mills were in full production they would each have a labour force of anything up to 150 men. As better amenities and facilities are available in the metropolitan area, is it any wonder that the men will not go down to these outlandish places?

In addition, since the war, many small mills have started up. They are obtaining their timber from Crown lands and private permits and to those small mills, I have no doubt, have gone many of the operatives who normally would be working in the larger mills down south. As well as these labour difficulties we have had disastrous fires over the last two or three years. We lost the complete output of Jarrahdale, Jarrahwood and Jardee; all of which mills have been out of production for very nearly two years. One of them—Jardee—has commenced production and I understand that Jarrahdale is due to commence cutting again at the end of next month.

The Jarrahdale mill, which has recently been rebuilt, will have a capacity of 30 loads. Jardee which, as I said before, has just recommenced, is now cutting approximately 25 loads and Jarrahwood—I understand the mill there will not be in operation until some time next year—will be capable of cutting 20 to 25 loads. So that from these three burnt-out mills—two of which will be cutting jarrah completely—we will have at least 60 to 70 loads of timber per day coming back on to the market. As members know that will mean four to five houses extra per day.

Of the new mills which were given permits in 1946, Northcliffe—which cuts mostly karri—commenced production in a small way a fortnight ago and I understand will be in full production—40 loads per day—by the end of this year. Great attention has also been given to the Shannon River mill—one of the large mills owned by the State Sawmills—so that as much jarrah as possible can be cut. With the co-operation of the W.A.G.R., arrangements have been made for 10 miles of railway line to be sent down there so that we can skirt the immediate karri belt closest to the mill. This will mean that as soon as the mill opens we shall be able to cut jarrah for at least the first eight or 10 years.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Are you using karri in homes?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Only as roofing timber.

Mr. Fox: The white ants will find it there.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The machinery for the Shannon River mill is nearly all on the site. Recently we were due to receive the boiler tubes from the Eastern States but unfortunately, owing to shipping difficulties, the consignments were held up. Thanks to the co-operation of the Kalgoorlie electricity supply concern, we have been loaned a complete set of boiler tubes which were sent down to Shannon River two or three weeks ago. According to the latest reports I have received from the mill, it is definitely expected to be in production by the end of this year. While the mill will commence with only 15 to 20 loads per day, the general manager advises me that by the end of June, 1951—which is only nine months ahead—we will be up to our maximum production of 50 loads per day. A large number of houses has also been erected at this mill and a club is now being built for workers. It is hoped that a license will be granted by the Licensing Court at its next sitting in Manjimup.

At both the Carlisle and Pemberton mills, band saws are being installed. I was informed that this equipment left England on a ship last week, so, all being well, they should be arriving in Western Australia in four or five weeks time. I am advised that both of these saws will be installed and ready for operation by the end of this year. Two of the main shortages in timber have been dried timber and flooring. These two items represent the biggest difficulties confronting the industry at the moment and in order to overcome the shortages we have taken certain firm steps which, I have no doubt, will have the required result early in 1951. Then we will not have builders, as they are today, waiting two or three months for their flooring and dried timber.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Is that the position today?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Quite recently the State Sawmills purchased a large block of land adjacent to the Carlisle yards. As I said earlier, we are installing a band saw there but it is not much use having a band saw if we do not have the other requisites that go with it. As a result this extra land has been purchased and we intend installing a large drying kiln there. Some two months ago an order was placed in England for a Robinson four-sider machine which will have an output of 150 ft. per minute. The State Sawmills is not the only concern that has been worrying about the flooring board and dried timber position. Another large company operating in the metropolitan area, recently installed, with Government assistance, a large drying kiln, and that company has on order one of the Robinson four-sider machines. In addition, negotiations are under way—and I hope they will be brought to fruition in the not too distant future—for a large Eastern States company to open up here in the metropolitan area.

Mr. J. Hegney: How long does it take to dry timber for flooring by the process about which you have been talking?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It all depends upon the timber It depends upon how green it is and when it goes into the kiln. If timber can be sun dried for approximately six months and then placed in the kiln I am advised that sometimes only 54 hours kiln drying is required. Of course, that depends on the size of the timber. If it is small timber used for flooring, or timber suitable for flooring boards, it can be dried out in approximately 54 hours.

Mr. J. Hegney: It must be stacked six months before.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It all depends. It is difficult to say how long it must be stacked because there are many considerations which must be taken into account. There is the moisture content of the timber as well as the size. I have been advised, too, that the period when the timber is cut also has an effect. Timber cut early in the winter does not season as quickly as timber cut in the summer. This is because the timber cut early in the winter is left lying in the stacks for four or five months during the wet weather whereas the timber cut in the summer is stacked in the hot sun and it dries much more quickly. Therefore, that timber does not have to remain in the stack for more than half as long as the other.

At present, approximately 4,000 loads a month are available for housing. As it is hoped to build approximately 5,500 to 6,000 houses in the coming year, it can be seen that a large step-up in the production of timber must be made. I feel sure that the efforts to date will be successful in bridging this gap. It may mean that operating companies, which in the past have largely used the Eastern States and oversea for the disposal of a considerable portion of their output, will have to concentrate more on the local market. That, of course, will ultimately be to the benefit of the building industry and the whole of Western Australia.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: You are not afraid of Section 92, then?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I realise, with the Leader of the Opposition, that Section 92 is a hurdle which has proved impossible to overcome. But, I think that by competition with the existing mills, who are using interstate and oversea trade—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Do not misunderstand me. I do not think it is in the way.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I think that the position, if it cannot be fully obviated, can be largely overcome.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Hear, hear!

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I have endeavoured to give a brief summary of the general position as it affects the building industry. While there are encouraging signs of increased production, and some industries have already considerably increased production, there is still an urgent need for more and more materials to meet the increasing demands of housing and industry. To meet the position the Government has imported considerable quantities of materials from oversea, including galvanised iron, water piping, cement and asbestos. Though these shipments have contributed largely towards easing the position, the shipments have been costly and their continuity cannot now be ensured due to the unsettled conditions oversea. So, it behoves us all to work and strive to improve local production and I, as a responsible Minister, will not let up until we have a stock pile of materials upon which we can draw.

Before passing to the legislation I cannot let this opportunity pass without saying a word or two about the State Housing Commission. Without fear of successful contradiction I say that in the past two or three years the Housing Commission has been—certainly, only by a vociferous section of the community—a much-maligned department of the Public Service. I feel sure that if some of these arm-chair critics, some of these people who fly to the Press when they cannot get what they want, would go down to the Housing Commission and get behind the counter for three or four hours, they would not have anything more to say.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: They would be driven nuts!

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: From the first thing in the morning to last thing at night the officers of the Housing Commission have to listen to people suffering from hardship. It is not easy, with all the cases that are presented to them from day to day, to determine who are entitled to houses out of the many applicants. At the moment we have Mr. R. W. Brownlie as the chairman and Mr. R. J. Bond, who has been with the Commission since its inception, as secretary, and I would say there are no two more hard-working civil servants in Western Australia.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: How would the Minister know?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: He would know because he appreciates that the chairman and the secretary, and many other men, are there night after night, and if they are not there they are in and about the road board around Perth.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: But the Minister does not know every other departmen

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: He may not know every othe department, but he has a very good ide of what has been going on in the Housin Commission in the last few months. am sure that neither the member fo Northam nor I would like to swap place with the men at the Housing Commissio and accept the responsibilities that the have today.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I quite agree, bu I do not think they are the hardest work ers in the Public Service.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: On the one hand more produc tion, and on the other, the huge tas ahead of us, come within the provision of this Bill. The present Act provides tha any person desiring to build shall obtai a permit if the work is to cost more tha £50 in the case of a dwellinghouse, o more than £100 in the case of a business The Act is divided into two parts. I addition to the part providing for th necessity of issuing permits, there is an other relating to the necessity for a licens or a release of certain materials in shor supply. These materials are set out in th schedule which is subject to alteration b the Governor-in-Council. Since the 1s July the Commission has seen fit to issue permits automatically for houses up t 12½ squares.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Has the schedul been varied much since the inception o the parent Act?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I do not think so, although the Commission has, with its power under the Act, from time to time made it mandatory for a person desiring materials referred to in the schedule, to obtain a permit. A considerable number of permits have been issued under this heading for houses up to 12½ squares, and up to last week a total of 2,500 permits had been granted It is felt that not only is the freedom from delay and close investigation appreciated by the applicant, but that the pressure placed directly on materials production will prove an incentive to produce more material and also to gather in additional labour.

A clause has been included in the Bill which gives the Governor power by proclamation to declare that the restrictive provisions of the Act shall not apply to certain classes of persons or certain classes of building operation. This has been provided for in order to give the flexibility so necessary in the administration of an Act of this nature.

Mr. Graham: Has the Minister anything specific in mind at the moment?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes. The first proclamation to be issued would be one making legal the lifting of permits up to 12½ squares and also, possibly, a proclamation to increase the amount now allowed to a man in any one year—which is £50—to £100. I have no doubt that members will agree that today one can do very little for £50.

Mr. Fox: It is very hard to get £50 worth of stuff!

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: In that event, the Commission would exercise control through the material release system which would only be applied to materials in short supply, and it would bring Western Australia into line with all the other States of the Commonwealth. Whilst the amendment places the responsibility on the Governor, there is need for some elasticity so that advantage can be taken from time to time of any opportunity to improve the material supply position or, if need be, to tighten up matters in view of the fact that the position oversea is not looking as bright as it could be. All will agree as to the necessity of the retention of some control, but we all look forward to the day when we can, by removing these restrictions, get back to a basis of free and uncontrolled building. Whilst giving power to adjust the restrictions according to the current supply position through the operation of Clause 4, this amendment will give Parliament that overall control which is so necessary and which is its right. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Graham, debate adjourned.

BILL—STATE HOUSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. G. P. Wild—Dale) [8.10] in moving the second reading said: This amending legislation is brought forward to generally re-open the building programme under the home-ownership provisions of the State Housing Act. It is necessitated by the increasing basic wage and margin to workers which exclude many workers from being eligible for benefits under the provisions of the measure. At present a "worker" is one who is not in receipt of salary, wages or income exceeding £500 per annum at the time of his application but such figure is increased by £25 for each child.

When the original Workers' Homes Act was passed in 1912, the income limit was £300 per annum. At that time there was no declared basic wage but the minimum wage approximated £2 14s. per week. This limit remained until 1929, when it was increased to £400 per annum. In 1942 the Act was amended to read "£400 per annum, plus £25 for each child under 16," and in 1946 it was amended to read "£500 per annum, plus £25 for each child under 16." The basic wage in 1929 was £4 7s. per week and by 1946 it had risen to £5 1s. 1d.

We now find that the basic wage today is £7 3s. 6d. weekly and that margins for skill are proportionately higher. The tradesman of today is earning much more than the limit imposed by the Act and he is therefore debarred from obtaining the benefits which were designed for him. Here are some of the rates being paid to tradesmen today—

	Per week. £	s.	d.
Carpenters	10	11	3
Bricklayers	10	9	9
Plasterers	10	9	9
Tile Fixers	9	4	6
Labourers	8	5	4
	to		
	9	3	2

So it can be seen that with the exception of the labourers, all the tradesmen today are outside the ambit of the Act. The Bill in Clause 3 provides for increasing the income to £750, which it is thought will cover the earnings of most workers wherever they may be.

Clause 4 deals with the matter of payments to local authorities in respect of land acquired by the State Housing Commission and held for a lengthy period before being built upon. Existing legislation provides that the Commission may make payments in special cases, at the direction and with the approval of the Minister, in respect of vacant subdivided land, of an amount annually equivalent to the rate previously levied, but in no case shall payment be made until the land has been held for two years.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What would you regard as a special case?

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I have not had any experience yet of these special cases. I do know that since I have been at the Housing Commission there have been many complaints from local authorities about the Commission holding land for considerable periods without paying rates.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There must be something in mind.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You are bringing down an amendment.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: It should be very obvious to members that the first essential of any big building programme must be to have a considerable area of land well in advance of the programme being put into operation.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I remember buying many thousands of blocks.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The land has to be developed, services have to be laid, and subdivisions have to be made. The Commission feels that the local authorities have been suffering hardship through the State Housing Commission not paying any rates until it has owned the land for two years. The amending Bill provides that the Commission shall pay rates on land the moment it is subdivided, or if it is vacant for two years after that period.

The Commission appreciates the position of local authorities and is aware of the great financial strain under which they are working. Funds are urgently needed for road construction, and general servicing of the areas in which the Commission is building. The amendment is therefore submitted to make it mandatory for the Commission to make payment of the equivalent of rates on vacant land from the date of acquisition, with the proviso that, in respect of vacant unsubdivided land, no payment shall be made until the land has been held vacant for a period of at least two years. The amendment will certainly assist the finances of local authorities and at the same time provide an incentive to the Commission to utilise vacant land as soon as possible.

Another amendment has reference to the amount of the advance and cost of home, both in respect of leasehold applications and mortgage advances. Rising costs have necessitated the amendment; and, while generally it is intended as far as possible to keep the costs within the present limit of £1,500, there will be occasions when this figure will be exceeded. For example, extra expenses are experienced in building in remote centres; the use of imported materials may mean higher costs; and the slope and size of the block certainly plays a big part in the cost.

On the freehold side, homes erected to the requirements of an individual client are more costly than those erected by group construction, and invariably incorporate features not provided in the standard types. The cost of a Commission-built home of two-bedroom brick type ranges between £1,260 and £1,654, with an average of £1,365. The cost of a three-bedroom type in brick ranges between £1,467 and £1,814, with an average of £1,546. These figures do not include cost of land and development charges for utility services to the site, architectural fees and administration charges. These would total upwards of £200, so that the limit of £2,000, whilst adequate in some instances, will be barely sufficient in others. In the latter cases, however, the client will be expected to lodge a larger deposit.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It will take a working man a long time to pay that off.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He will never pay it off.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The increase in the advance to £2,000 will bring the State Act on a par with the War Service Homes Act, which already authorises advances up to this figure. I confidently put the amendments forward, knowing the benefits they will extend to those desirous of building under the provisions of the State Housing Act. The conditions are generous, with deposits as low as £5, and terms extending over 40 years at an interest rate of 4¼ per cent. The Commission at present holds 392 leasehold and 391 freehold securities on its books; but in the past few years, with the exception of a few houses in country districts, particularly the Goldfields, and in Fremantle, it has not undertaken any building of homes for purchase under the State Act.

Mr. J. Hegney: How are they raising funds—by loan?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Your Government promised to do that in 1947.

The HONORARY MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The Commission feels the time is now ripe to reduce the programme of rental homes and direct its effort to building under the leasehold and freehold provisions of the Act. It will give special attention to applications from country districts and develop a pre-cut timber-framed home suitable for such districts and one which can be erected quickly at a cost within reach of the worker. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [8.21] in moving the second reading said: In introducing this amending Bill, I propose to make a brief explanation of several aspects of fire prevention respecting which there appears to be some misunderstanding. The existing bush fires legislation has been built around an Act passed in 1937. It set up an advisory committee which included three representatives of the Road Board Association. The measure was drafted in close collaboration with the association and was a considerable improvement on the previous Act, but it proved to be inadequate. From time to time, quite a number of amendments have been made to the 1937 Act; but, in the main, they dealt with small points which experience indicated were required for the better operation of the Act.

One of the important changes made by the 1937 Act was the fixing of prohibited times on a State-wide basis. Prior to 1937, local authorities were able to fix the prohibited time for their respective districts; but, owing to the conflicting interests of various areas, this resulted in chaotic conditions, and some of the effects were disastrous. While the great majority of local authorities support the principle of these times being fixed on the basis of zones throughout the State, there are still occasional requests to revert to the old system. However, the authorities concerned in fire prevention agree that such a step would be undesirable.

I will give an illustration. There may be a district in which a considerable amount of development has still to be undertaken, and the simplest and cheapest method of developing virgin country has involved the use of fire. There are quite a number of such districts in the State, and it is their general desire that the prohibited burning time should be curtailed as much as possible. The adjoining districts, however, may have passed through their period of primary development and may consist almost entirely of well-developed agricultural properties. These districts desire the maximum fire protection. Unfortunately, fires do not recognise boundaries, and unrestricted burning off in one district can result in fires spreading to another and causing very severe losses.

The advisory committee has endeavoured to preserve some balance between these conflicting needs, and provision has been made in this Bill to enable the operation of the prohibited times to be more elastic. When several small amendments were before this House last year, members were informed that the Government intended to carry out a comprehensive review of the Bush Fires Act. Proposals which have been submitted from time to time to amend the Act were listed and circulated to all local authorities, with an invitation to comment and submit suggestions considered likely to improve the operation of the Act. All suggestions were considered by the advisory committee which, for this purpose, was enlarged by the appointment of an additional representative of the Road Board Association, so that each of the association's four wards should have a member on the committee. In this Bill, provision has been included to make this representation of the Road Board Association a permanent feature of the advisory committee.

There is one point dealt with in the Bill on which the committee did not submit a recommendation; but I will deal with that matter at a later stage. Members are aware of the disastrous fires of last summer, and the heavy losses sustained by many settlers. Those fires have stimulated interest in fire prevention, and much attention has been drawn to the Bush Fires Act. A good deal of this interest has been in the form of criticism, with recommendations for all sorts of amendments to the Act. Some are quite sound, but others would be of little assistance and possibly of great danger, if incorporated in the Act. Many proposals arise from a mistaken idea that deficiencies in the Bush Fires Act were responsible for the serious fires that occurred.

This attitude can be quite a threat to the fire prevention campaign, as it tends to encourage the idea that amendments to the Bush Fires Act will be an insurance against a repetition of the fires which occurred last summer. Certainly it is hoped that the Act, as amended, will result in some improvement in fire prevention measures; but the lesson to be learned from recent experience is that when unusual climatic conditions give rise to a greater fire hazard than normal, it is then too late to take effective action. When conditions similar to those of last summer occur and a fire gets a hold, it is impossible for any brigade to control it unless there is a change in conditions, or the fire reaches less hazardous country. The brigades do excellent work; but, without the co-operation of everyone throughout the country in ensuring that every possible fire hazard is removed before the height of the dry season, severe losses are certain to occur, no matter how efficient the brigades.

As I mentioned previously, the Bill seeks to increase the number of members of the advisory committee by one, in order that the Road Board Association may have four members, each representing a different area, with different problems. Throughout the Act, certain provisions have been inserted in various sections and, while having much the same meaning, the wording varies slightly, and in several instances doubt has arisen as to whether the intention has been achieved. Instead of these items being dealt with in a number of sections, they have now been included in a general provision which applies to the whole Act. An important subject which has been dealt with in this manner is in relation to claims for damages against which it is not a defence that there was compliance with the Bush Fires Act. This, of course, does not mean that any such claim would necessarily succeed but, generally speaking, the provisions of the Act are based on average climatic conditions.

Unusual weather, however, is always liable to render burning permitted by the Act to be dangerous, and conditions may be so bad that any attempt to burn off would obviously cause a serious fire. The provision is intended to act as a deterrent in these circumstances. If some deterrent were not provided in the Act, it would be necessary to make the legislation more restrictive. This proposal has been strongly supported by local authorities,

only two opposing the principle; and it has received strong support from farmers' organisations.

The Act provides that the Minister may suspend operation of the prohibited times to enable firebreaks to be burned on railway land for any period expiring not later than the 15th January in any yearly period. This power is necessary because of the extent of the railway reserves and the impossibility of completing the burning of firebreaks before the prohibited times commence. It has been found that the 15th January is quite late enough to cover general burning, but there are many low-lying or swampy areas in the lower South-West carrying a heavy growth of grass, which remain too green to be burned by this date. These small spots are a dangerous hazard when they eventually dry off, and many fires have commenced and extended from these sources.

It is proposed to delete the references to a specified date and leave the question of these extensions to the discretion of the Minister. The Forests Department is in much the same position and this Bill will bring it into line with the railways. It is not intended that any general burning shall be permitted after the 15th January, but the amendment will give flexibility to enable essential burning to be undertaken.

A similar provision has been inserted to enable the Minister to permit a local authority to carry out burning during the prohibited times for the purpose of reducing a fire hazard which cannot be done otherwise. The Minister may impose any conditions considered to be necessary. Many local authorities have requested amendments regarding the times during which burning may be undertaken for the purposes of making a firebreak to protect a dwelling house, or to clear adjoining road reserves. Changes have also been requested in connection with the burning of clover for the purpose of collecting seed. Amendments to cover these matters are in the Bill, and it has also been provided that local authorities which issue permits to burn clover shall have particulars of all permits published in the newspaper circulated in their particular districts.

The notice required to be given to adjoining holders of their intention to burn is at present a period of two days. The Bill requires that four days' notice shall be given. The Act makes it compulsory for a tractor to carry a knapsack spray and be fitted with a spark arrester. Some difficulties have arisen in connection with the fitting of spark arresters on certain types of tractors.

Mr. W. Hegney: What are they?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the hon. member will wait a second, I shall tell him, as I am most anxious to do so. These have been most apparent in regard to diesel tractors used for log-hauling in the timber industry. Unfortunately, a spark arrester, when fitted to certain diesel tractors makes it difficult to start the machines and also results in loss of power in operation. The tractors referred to are not as powerful as the industry would like them to be and any factor that reduces their power has serious results and causes a loss in timber production. For these reasons, the advisory committee has recommended that diesel tractors used for log hauling in the timber industry be exempt from the operation of the section concerned.

The Bill proposes quite a number of amendments to that part of the Act which deals with the compulsory provision of firebreaks. One of the main reasons for these amendments is to enable the provisions of the section to be applied to the burning of firebreaks on land adjoining railway reserves. In an endeavour to reduce the danger of fires caused by railway locomotives, the Railway Department has instituted a scheme involving co-operation in the burning of firebreaks as between local authorities, bush fire brigades, the Railway Department and those persons whose land adjoins the railway.

In most districts the scheme has worked well, but, naturally, a number of difficulties have been encountered. Most have been overcome but the major problem is in regard to adjoining holders who will not co-operate and on whose land no firebreak is provided. These unprotected lands tend to nullify the advantage of any firebreaks, as a fire starting in an unprotected holding naturally gets behind the breaks established on adjoining properties. The proposed provisions enable a local authority to order these firebreaks to be burned, whereas the Act only permits them to order breaks to be cleared. The power to order burning does not extend to the prohibited times, except in regard to the burning of railway firebreaks.

Probably the most important provision in the Bill is the one which empowers a bush fire control officer to prohibit or order the postponement of the lighting of a fire when he considers that the fire, if lit, would become a source of danger. This amendment has been considered on a number of occasions over the last two years, but earlier it was opposed by the Road Board Association, which considered it a very extensive power and a big responsibility for the bush fire control officer. However, after the experiences of last summer, the proposal has now been supported by a majority of local authorities as well as by the Road Board Association.

Such a decision, to be effective, must rest in the hand of someone on the spot. The only person in a position to give such a decision is the bush fire control officer. It is interesting to note that quite a num-

ber of bush fire control officers desire this power. After practical experience of the operation of this proposal it may be possible to permit some change in the prohibited times, and a shortening of the prohibited periods. However, this is a matter which will have to be dealt with in the light of experience. There is no doubt that the proposal would enable greater elasticity in regard to burning-off operations.

Provision is made for the exercise of power to burn back, for the purpose of making a firebreak to control a bush fire which is burning, to be limited to the bush fire control officer or, in his absence, the officer in charge of a bush fire brigade. Burning back is sometimes most effective in controlling a fire, but it is a dangerous procedure unless directed by someone who is expert and experienced in fire control. The indiscriminate lighting of fires to burn back frequently results in spreading fires instead of controlling them.

Under the Act, a local authority is entitled to one-half of any penalty imposed for offences against the Act. It is proposed to add to this section authority to pay the whole of any penalty in cases where the proceedings are brought or directed by any particular local authority. There are a number of other small provisions contained in the Bill, the purposes of which are to correct some minor deficiencies which have been found from time to time in the Act. Finally, I come to the one matter dealt with in the Bill on which the advisory committee did not desire to make a recommendation. That is in connection with the sections dealing with the declaration of approved areas in which certain conditions apply regarding crop insurance premiums. These sections remain in operation only until the 31st December of this year.

Thirty-nine local authorities applied for the declaration of their districts, and of these 21 have been approved. No applications have been dealt with without a forest officer's report, which has been submitted under uniform headings. It was found in practice that each district had to be considered on its merits, as there were so many variable factors involved. The Government considers that these provisions have been of value in improving the standard of equipment of bush fire brigades. Last season was the first time these provisions operated, and although there has been insufficient time to sum up the position correctly, they appear to be satisfactory.

Mr. Perkins: Why did not the advisory committee make a recommendation in that regard?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have not that information. I suppose they felt they would rather not take part in anything that would have the effect of reducing premiums in a particular area.

Mr. Perkins: I am certain that the representatives of the local authorities on the advisory committee raised the point and I was wondering why the other members of the committee would not make any recommendation in that regard.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have not that information. Provision has been made in the Bill to extend the operation of these sections for a further two years. After this time has elapsed it should be possible to form an opinion as to whether they should become a permanent feature of the Act. I submit these amendments for consideration and sincerely hope that they will materially assist the organisation which has been built up in this State to prevent a repetition of last summer's disastrous fires. I move—

> That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Hoar, debate adjourned.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. V. Doney—Narrogin) [8.45] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to amend seven sections of the Traffic Act and it can be claimed to be of considerable interest to the people of the State as a whole. I am certain it is of special interest to the motoring public, the police and local governing bodies throughout the State.

The first section of which amendment is sought is one that at present provides that any person causing or permitting the use of an unregistered vehicle shall be guilty of an offence and be liable to a penalty. The penalties laid down in the parent Act are as follows:—

> (1) Where the annual license fee is £1 or less than £1 the penalty shall be not less than the annual license fee.
>
> (2) Where the annual license fee is greater than £1 the penalty shall be £1 or not less than one-half of the annual license fee, whichever is the greater.
>
> (3) A maximum penalty of £20.

It can be seen that under that provision in the parent Act a person committing a breach of the regulations for the first time would, if the annual license fee was £30, be liable to a fine of £15. I think most members will agree that that is entirely unreasonable and any first offender would be entitled to think such a penalty unjust in the extreme.

As members know, the general rule in this State and, I think, throughout the world, is to be lenient in respect of first offenders and increase the punishment for subsequent breaches of the law. This is probably because the first offence may arise from ignorance of the law or simply from

carelessness. It is proposed, by means of this amendment, to provide that the penalty for the first offence shall be £1 only and for the second and subsequent offences to allow the present rates of penalty to apply. I think there is a public demand for an amendment of this type which, apart from that, I feel is quite a proper one.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The penalties prescribed would be pretty severe in the case of minor breaches.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I am endeavouring to make provision for the lessening of the harshness of the law in the case of first offenders. I feel that this amendment will be popular and will be appreciated by the drivers of cars, although there are not many members here who would be driving a car for the first time.

I deal next with that portion of the principal Act which concerns itself with the apportionment of fees between local authorities where a vehicle is licensed with one authority but travels substantially in the district of another local authority. One of the difficulties in arriving at a fair basis as between local authorities has been caused by the fact that although a vehicle may be run substantially outside the district in which it was licensed, it may have been used mainly on roads built and kept in repair by the Main Roads Department. Consequently, as members can see, it would not be right for a local authority other than the authority that licensed the vehicles to take advantage of this position in order to collect portion of the fees to which, in the circumstances, it would not be entitled. Therefore, there should not be any hesitation in members' minds about the desirability of supporting that particular amendment.

The amendment of Sections 23 and 24 is to permit the Commissioner of Police to refuse to issue a license if he has grounds for suspecting that the person requiring a license is unfit to hold it because of mental or physical disability. In a case such as this it is obvious there should be a right of appeal. The right of appeal, on the part of the allegedly unfit person, is being protected. Recently a case of this type came under notice where a person was disqualified by the court from holding a license. At the end of the period of disqualification it was found that the license had expired. At the hearing of the charge against the person—at the time he was disqualified by the court from holding the license—medical evidence was produced which showed that he was not a fit person to hold a driver's license by reason of his physical condition. At the end of the period of disqualification, this unfit person made application for the issue and return of his license, and despite the medical evidence given at the hearing, the Commissioner had no power to refuse to renew that license.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That section does not matter very much when a Minister gives back a license after a judge has taken it away from a person who has been convicted and has had her license taken away for life.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: No, but it leaves the Commissioner of Police without authority to deny the issue of a license. Certainly, the Commissioner would be able to rectify the position later.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He is sure to question the Minister's action!

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: He might.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Especially when the Executive Council gave it back to her.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: As I understand the position, the only thing the Commissioner can do is to issue a license and then take action to suspend it. The procedure, while it is the only means possible with the law as it stands now, is not satisfactory. If members are complaining about the present situation, then I am entirely in agreement with them, and that is the reason why I am seeking to amend the Act. The proposed amendment will give the Commissioner power to refuse to issue a license but, as in the former case, protects the right of appeal by the person concerned.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: We will hear about the case of Mrs. Dargie later.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: The amendment will clean up satisfactorily, for all time, the position as it has existed in the past. Another section in the Act provides for a penalty against any person driving a motor vehicle whilst under the influence of liquor.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is the heading she came under.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I do not think that section would touch the hon. member. The point here is that there are many potentially dangerous vehicles that are certainly not classified as motor vehicles. Although there are many of them, the bicycle is the one I shall use for the purposes of illustration. A drunken cyclist can be just as great a menace to the public, in certain circumstances, as a drunken motorist. There can be no two opinions on that point. A bicycle is not a motor vehicle so far as Section 32 of the Traffic Act is concerned, but by Section 4 of the same Act it is a "vehicle".

It will be agreed that any vehicle requiring a driver or rider, and forming part of what is collectively known as traffic, is a public menace, since any vehicle can run amok unless it is effectively controlled. By removing the word "motor" from in front of the word "vehicle"—which leaves it "vehicle" instead of "motor vehicle"—the

danger from bicycles, when forming part of the general traffic, can be sensibly lessened.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: A drunken pedestrian can be very dangerous, too.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: If, by any stretch of imagination, the hon. member can call a pedestrian a vehicle, then a pedestrian will come under this amendment. I hope that the hon. member will put up something a little more sensible than he has done up to date.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Some of them need a tail-light.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I am not dealing with interjections at the moment but I am endeavouring to point out that the most sensible way to correct the position of which I am complaining is to remove the word "motor" so that bicycles and other vehicles, which are not motor vehicles, can be brought under the penalty.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Would trotters with spiders come under the definition?

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: There is no doubt that they will. Did the hon. member want them particularly mentioned in the Bill?

Hon. A. H. Panton: Yes, they make a lot of noise going past my place at all hours of the night.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: The next amendment is to authorise the making of regulations to cover the width of vehicles up to 8 feet. This is another necessary amendment so that existing regulations may be brought into conformity with the Act. I am given to understand that for a number of years past it has been customary to allow the width of vehicles on the road to be as much as 8 ft., although the Act makes provision for nothing wider than 7ft. 6ins. I do not know with whom the blame lies, but a fault certainly did exist when I took over from my colleague. However, the offence is quite a pardonable one and I am suggesting that the Act be amended in order that the 7ft. 6in. width now specified be amended to 8ft.

The final amendment to Section 49 provides that where bylaws imposing penalties have been made by the local authorities, and where the law does not specifically delegate such power to the local authorities, such bylaws shall be validated in order that the penalty provisions can be made operative. That, of course, is merely correcting a wrong, as with the previous amendment.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Is it intended to increase the penalties for drunken driving?

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I would be happy to consider an amendment from any hon. member to that effect, but just at the moment that is not provided for in the Bill. I am quite prepared to admit that the rapid growth of casualties, in many cases resulting from drunken driving, not only throughout the metropolitan area and the State generally but also in every part of the world, certainly justifies the tightening up of the regulations and the statute in order to secure a lessening of such accidents.

Mr. Marshall: What did you say the prescribed width of the vehicles was to be as compared with the width laid down in the Act?

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: The hon. member could not have been listening as keenly as he usually does when I mentioned the width. I said that the Act provides for a width of 7ft. 6in., but in the past the habit has been to allow a width of 8ft.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You are increasing it.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: The habit in the past had been to allow a width of 8ft. and not only the present Government, but also its predecessors recognised that. I will admit that the practice has grown gradually and certain local authorities, by and large, have semi-officially recognised the new width of 8ft.

Mr. Marshall: That would operate in contradistinction to the parent Act and would be ultra vires.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I am admitting that, but I am also admitting, nevertheless, that by the laxity of local governing bodies and the Local Government Department, one might just as well say that this departure has been officially permitted to creep in. The mistake exists but it plainly needs to be rectified, and I am taking the only feasible way of doing it.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Why restrict the width to 8ft.?

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: The fixing of that width would mean that all those vehicles which have been coaxed on to the road with a width of 8ft., and which has been officially permitted, become our responsibility and we must therefore carry the blame. Other factors have entered into the question and a width of 8ft. is not now considered to be as dangerous as it once was.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: By whom?

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I have not heard of anybody here complaining about the 8ft. width.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Oh, yes!

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: If the width of 8ft. had been as dangerous as was first considered, then more accidents would have been caused on the road, but because no objections have been raised to it, it is apparently because none could have been raised. For several years many local authorities—and

this has a bearing on the same question—have made bylaws for traffic control within their respective districts and have provided in them a penalty without authority. The proposed amendment will overcome that difficulty. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Marshall, debate adjourned.

BILL—PUBLIC TRUSTEE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 13th September.

HON. E. NULSEN (Eyre) [9.7]: This amendment was introduced by the Attorney General on Thursday night and was clearly explained to the House. The amendment is a necessary consequential one to the Public Trustee Act, the original of which was assented to on the 8th December, 1941, when the 1912-39 Workers' Compensation Act was in operation. Under the latter Act the magistrate of the local court had jurisdiction in regard to workers' compensation. However, in 1949 it was amended to pass the administration of the Act over to a board. Now, after the introduction of that Act, it is necessary to amend only one section of the Public Trustee Act, No. 37, to make it comply with the Workers' Compensation Act. The amendment does not give the Public Trustee any more or any less power than he had under the former Act; it merely brings it into alignment with the Workers' Compensation Act. I therefore support the Bill and I hope it will be agreed to.

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—ACTS AMENDMENT (INCREASE IN NUMBER OF MINISTERS OF THE CROWN).

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray) [9.13] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to provide for an increase in the number of Ministers—that is, of the principal executive officers of the Crown—from eight to ten. The Constitution Act Amendment Act of 1899 provided that there should be six principal executive officers, and in 1927 Parliament decided that this number should be increased to eight. For the last 23 years the number has remained unaltered at eight, although in that time the functions of government have greatly expanded.

The work of practically all the then existing departments has been substantially increased, and new departments have been created. As we all know, the population of the State has grown and our industries and production have been extended. For the last three years, Cabinet has had the assistance of two Honorary Ministers. The persons occupying these positions have been fully engaged and have accepted actually, if not constitutionally, responsibility for the administration of the departments under their jurisdiction. Administratively, the present position gives rise to difficulty.

While the Honorary Ministers do the work, many documents requiring signatures under Acts of Parliament must be attended to by the nominal Ministers. This causes a duplication of work, and in these circumstances it is considered that Honorary Ministers are really carrying out the duties of Ministers, and they are therefore entitled to full ministerial status. I feel sure that all members have a pretty clear indication of what ministerial work entails and of the extent to which it has increased. Several departments that were not thought of a few years ago have become very important in affairs of State. I might mention a few of them. We know in the case of electricity, for instance, that great expansion is taking place.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Socialisation!

The PREMIER: Call it what members like, it is still expansion. While I may not be able to class the Department of Industrial Development as something new, its importance grows from year to year, and I feel certain that it is only a matter of a short time when this department will be able to claim the attention of one Minister. At the present time, the department is administered by the Deputy Premier, who also has another very important portfolio, that of Education. Here again, with all the expansion taking place in Western Australia in that department, the Minister for Education would find scope in that portfolio alone for his activities. We have heard a good deal about housing tonight. In days gone by, this department was not thought to be a very important one—not nearly so important as it is today. Here again, there is full scope for a Minister's abilities and energies, which are required by the housing position. So one could go on.

Civil defence is likely to loom much more largely in the future than it has in the past. The member for Leederville no doubt has some idea of the work that it entails. It is quite apparent that the Commonwealth is going to treat civil de-

fence as a very important matter in the future, and there will have to be a Minister to deal with the department, although I do not suggest that the Minister should take civil defence only as a portfolio. Nevertheless, whoever administers civil defence will have a very considerable amount of his time taken up with it.

Those are some of the new departments which have sprung up during recent years and which will take a great deal of the Ministers' time. If we consider the major portfolios, we will find that there is no doubt that the activities of these departments are rapidly increasing. I have already referred to the Departments of Education and Industrial Development. Another example is that of the Department of Works, which carries with it country water supplies, electricity and main roads. There, a Minister will be more than fully occupied.

Mr. Ackland: How much control has the Minister over main roads expenditure?

The PREMIER: As the hon. member knows, the Commissioner for Main Roads administers the fund in connection with main roads—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He is a law unto himself.

The PREMIER: —but still the Minister has some say. Fortunately for us, it has been agreed that the Commissioner for Main Roads, or the Main Roads Department, will have more say with regard to spending money than hitherto has been case.

Mr. Needham: The Minister has the final say.

The PREMIER: The Government has the final say. Water supply is a matter that will occupy a great deal of the Minister's time in future. If this country is to expand as it should and carry the population it will be expected to maintain, a great deal of consideration will have to be given to water supplies.

Hon. E. Nulsen: It will be one of the most important portfolios.

The PREMIER: I do not think there is any doubt about that, but all are becoming more important. Take Lands: I think the Leader of the Opposition will agree that the Minister for Lands in this State could find ample work to occupy his time. I would say that the portfolio of Lands is sufficient for one Minister. He would want to see the State from one end to the other and should be conversant with all land matters and with the general development that is taking place. This portfolio is becoming more important every year. So I could go on. The present Minister for Lands is also Minister for Immigration, and we know the effect of migration on the life of the State. He also controls the Department of Labour, a very important department.

Hon. A. H. Panton: A very easy one at the moment.

The PREMIER: Yes, we are getting along very well with that department. Now take Agriculture: Here the Leader of the Opposition will agree with me that this portfolio is one of the most interesting as well as one of the most important.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I had also Agriculture, Education and the North-West.

The PREMIER: Then the hon. member had very interesting portfolios, and I am sure that he did not find time hanging heavily on his hands. The Department of Agriculture is a growing one, and there is no question that the Minister for Agriculture could be and should be a very busy man. Coming to other departments, the Attorney General always has plenty of work to occupy his attention. He also controls Fisheries and Prices.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The PREMIER: I cannot understand the hilarity of members at my reference to prices. These departments are in the same category. We believe that the fishing industry is capable of great expansion. It is expanding, and I believe it will become one of our great industries, certainly far greater than it is today. Despite the fact that members laughed when I referred to prices, this is a department that entails a vast amount of thought and work on the part of the Minister. Any Minister who is charged with the responsibility of controlling prices is certainly not to be envied.

Mr. Oliver: Apparently it is most ineffective work.

The PREMIER: I could not catch what the member for Boulder said, but I suppose it does not matter. I have referred to the importance of housing. Health is another growing department.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Growing! It has grown out of all knowledge.

The PREMIER: That is so. I am not overlooking the importance of local government. Members will agree that this department is growing in importance every day. It includes town planning, which necessitates a great deal of thought being given to this portfolio. The same Minister also controls another department—the Department of Native Affairs. I believe it will be only a matter of time before we shall have a Minister responsible for native affairs alone; the problem is becoming such an important one.

Hon. E. Nulsen: There is also the Public Works Department.

The PREMIER: I mentioned that.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: When you have a Minister for Native Affairs, the member for Avon Valley might get a chance.

The PREMIER: I have not said anything about mines and railways because members appreciate just what they mean

to the economy of the State. I could speak at length about the North-West and its development—a matter that will cause the State much more concern in future than it has done in the past, irrespective of what party might be in power.

Mr. Rodoreda: How about giving us a Minister for the North-West.

The PREMIER: The North-West has one.

Mr. Needham: Then what is he doing?

Mr. Rodoreda: I did not realise it.

The PREMIER: Perhaps that is an argument why the member for Pilbara should agree to an increase in the number of Ministers as proposed by the Bill. For many years all Governments have agreed to the principle of appointing at least one Honorary Minister. I assume—and I think I am correct—that an Honorary Minister was appointed because the full Ministers were overworked.

Hon. A. H. Panton: You might tell the House how the Honorary Minister was paid, too.

The PREMIER: I think members are aware of the circumstances. The time has certainly arrived when both the Minister and the Honorary Minister in another place should be paid. The work is divided between them. In this House we considered it necessary to appoint an Honorary Minister, who controls a most important department—that of Housing.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: If he is doing the job, he is worthy of the pay.

The PREMIER: I believe he is doing the job and is worthy of the pay. He is certainly trying to do the job, and the same remark applies to the Honorary Minister for Agriculture in another place. If we accept the principle that Honorary Ministers are necessary and that to all intents and purposes they have full control of the departments they administer, it is only fair that we should approve of their appointment as full Ministers.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Can you tell us the revenue of other States and the number of Ministers they have?

The PREMIER: I have not particulars of the revenue, but I can give the number of Ministers, which is as follows:—

New South Wales, 15 full, one honorary.
Victoria, 12 full.
Queensland, 11 full.
South Australia, 6 full.
Tasmania, 6 full.
Western Australia, 8 full, two honorary.

Hon. A. H. Panton: And in Victoria there are only 13 in the party!

The PREMIER: It may be that the Leader of the Opposition intends to use these figures in order to show that some of the States have fewer Ministers than has Western Australia.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: You have a lot of faith in Mr. Playford.

The PREMIER: Ministers in other States have not the travelling to do that is necessary here. They have not such huge areas with which to make themselves conversant, and I am sure the Leader of the Opposition will agree that it is necessary for Ministers to make themselves conversant with the State generally.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: They know the South-West Land Division all right; they do not know the rest of the State.

The PREMIER: Well, that is a very large division in itself, but they should be conversant with the whole of the State. I feel that there is ample work and responsibility in this State to warrant an increase in the number of Ministers to 10. I hope the House will agree to the provisions of the Bill and I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TRAMWAYS AND FERRIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. A. F. Watts—Stirling) [9.32] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is necessary because of the change which took place in the administration of the Tramways and Ferries Department last year or the year before. When the tramways and ferries were governed by the Government Railways Act, the provisions regarding lost property and its disposal which are contained in this measure were to be found in that Act, with the result that the tramways and ferries had the benefit of the provisions which appear in this Bill.

It must be realised that much property is left in trams and buses by the travelling public. While members of the travelling public do not pay a fare to have their parcels carried or their umbrellas transported, they have a bad habit of leaving these things behind when they vacate the vehicle at their destination. So some provision has to be made for the tramway and ferry authorities to dispose of such lost property.

The provisions in this Bill are similar to those which operate under the Government Railways Act, from which the tramways and ferries are now severed. The measure provides that when an article is left in a Government tramway or ferry, if it is perishable or gives offence or creates a nuisance it may be destroyed at the expense of the owner, if he can be found, and that can be done without notice to the owner. In the case of other things—that is things that are not perishable or

of an offensive or obnoxious character—the general manager has to give notice, in the manner prescribed by the regulations, that on a certain day and at a certain time those things will be sold unless the owner removes them and pays the expense involved. If he does not remove such articles, they will be sold and from the proceeds there will be deducted the costs of and incidental to the sale and the storage and handling of the articles, the balance, if any, being paid to the credit of the tramways or ferries revenue as the case may require.

Hon. E. Nulsen: What has been done in the past?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The position was covered by the Government Railways Act and the provisions of that Act applied. Those provisions are similar—in fact, almost identical—to what is in this measure. But when the tramways and ferries were severed from the Railway Department, no action was taken to incorporate the provisions of the Government Railways Act in the Tramways and Ferries Act. Hence the necessity for this measure. For those reasons I ask the support of the House and move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Marshall, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.35 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 20th September, 1950.

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

MOTION—ADVERTISING COSTS.

As to Action to Restrain.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [4.33]: I move—

> That the Legislative Council views with alarm the very high aggregate value of costs, including prizes in "Quiz" and similar contests given by manufacturers, and requests the Government to confer with other States and the Commonwealth Government in an endeavour to exercise some restraining influence over these high advertising costs.

I bring this motion forward in order to give members an opportunity to state their views on this particular form of advertising. I have been waiting patiently for a long time for some move to be made by either a State Government or the Commonwealth Government to exercise a restraining influence over these activities, but so far nothing has been done. This matter now appears to be reaching such alarming proportions that something should be done.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Alarming in what way?

Hon. G. FRASER: With regard to high costs, and so forth. Failing a move by any Government department, I thought the least I could do was to allow members of this Chamber to state their views. I have in mind that in past years we have stated definitely our attitude towards the giving away of prizes in order to promote the sale of some goods. I find on research that as far back as 1902 a measure called an Act to Prevent the Use of Trading Stamps was passed. The object was to deal with the position that arose when trading stamps were given to the purchasers of certain goods and, on receipt by the vendor of a certain number of these stamps, other goods were given in return.

As far back as 1902 it was considered by the Western Australian Parliament that some steps should be taken to stop that type of transaction. We find also that as recently as 1948 an Act repealing the 1902 legislation was passed. While based on the same principle as the previous measure, the later enactment went much further in carrying on what the 1902 legislation sought to achieve. Members will recall that when the 1948 Act was passed the manufacturers concerned were mostly in the soap trade, and peculiarly enough, they are mostly the ones about whom I am at present concerned. The 1902 and 1948 legislation was passed mainly, I presume, with the idea of protecting industries in this State. It is not necessary for me to emphasise the fact that with unlimited competition, from a price cutting point of view, by Eastern States industries, not many of our local enterprises could survive.