Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 8th November, 1950.

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

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

As to Timber Supplied to Commission.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) How many loads of timber has each of the following:—

(a) The Kauri Timber Co.;

(b) Bunning Bros.;

(c) State Saw Mills;

(d) Millars Timber & Trading Co.; supplied to the Housing Commission for each of the years 1947, 1948 and 1949?

(2) What percentage is this to their total output?

The MINISTER replied:

All work for the State Housing Commission is carried out by private contractors and Public Works Department who make their own arrangements direct with merchants for timber supplies.

Information relating to timber supplied to State Housing Commission contractors is, therefore, not available.

HOSPITALS.

As to Priority for Geraldton.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What effect will the Government's recent announcements that they intend to build new hospitals at Midland Junction and Carnarvon have on the priority already established for the Geraldton hospital?

(2) What progress has been made in the preparation of the plans for the Geraldton hospital?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) None.

(2) A private architect is working on the layout.

BILL—STATE HOUSING ACT AMENDMENT.

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly notifying that it had disagreed to the amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

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

Clause 4.—Insert a new paragraph after paragraph (b), to stand as paragraph (c), as follows:—

(c) deleting all words after the word "authority" in line six down to and including the word "Commission" in line ten.

The CHAIRMAN: The Assembly's reason for disagreeing is—

In the event of the Legislative Council's amendment being agreed to, it is considered that the additional cost so incurred would be necessarily borne by the person taking possession of the premises so constructed on any such land.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: This question was comprehensively debated when the Bill was previously before us and it was shown that the Housing Commission had made a move towards meeting the rates to local authorities. The Bill proceeded still further by providing for the payment of rates on subdivided land. The local authorities desired to charge rates on the full value, though that value had been created by the activities of the Commission in building homes, providing roads, transport, light, etc., in the area, and it was argued that the Commission should not be called upon to pay extra rates on land when it had created the increased values. The rates so paid must be absorbed in the value of the land and charged against the eventual owner of the house and land. I move—

That the amendment be not insisted on.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The amendment should be insisted on; otherwise the local authority could only collect rates equivalent to the amount payable at the time the property was acquired by the Commission. Although the rates might have become considerably higher than they were in, say, 1945, the lower amount would be

all that the local authority could collect. That would be unfair and would make unnecessary work for the local authority and create an anomaly, inasmuch as an area owned by a private individual would be paying certain rates and an adjoining area owned by the Commission and of precisely the same value would be paying rates on a considerably lower scale. If a subdivisional land expert like T. M. Burke subdivided land, the value would be increased and the rates would automatically be increased. When a person buys a block of land from a company, the price he pays includes the prime cost of the land plus the local authority rates up to the time of the purchase by him. If the amendment is not insisted upon, the final purchasers of such land will have been granted concessional rates at the expense of other ratepayers.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Not often do I find myself in agreement with Mr. Watson, but this is one of the rare occasions. We have to consider the local authorities and the work they are doing and, in this respect, the Commission should be treated the same as a private individual. I cannot follow the argument advanced by the Minister. This question has been a burning one with local authorities for a long time and now we have an opportunity to do them justice.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Strange as it may seem, I am in agreement with the two preceding speakers. But for the amendment, purchasers of homes built by subdivisional people like T. M. Burke and of homes built by the Housing Commission would be on different planes. Why should the purchaser of a home built on land that had been acquired by the Housing Commission have the advantage of lower rate charges over the purchaser of a home on land bought from T. M. Burke? Another place says that if the amendment is carried the purchaser will have to be burdened with the extra cost of the land. My answer to that is, "why not?" The people who purchase homes from the State Housing Commission are housed cheaply enough, and I do not see why they should purchase land at a price lower than that at which anyone else could buy it on the open market. We should insist on the amendment.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: This matter has been going on for many years, and has been a burning question with a number of local authorities. It has considerably affected the finances of some because of the number of houses built by the Housing Commission in some areas. If the position is allowed to continue it will grow into something bigger. It is only fair that the Housing Commission should pay the same rates on these properties as would anybody else. The local authorities have to maintain streets and so on. It is unfair to ask them to carry out that work when these people are not contributing.

The Minister for Transport: They do.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: When a subdivision takes place, does the State Housing Commision or the local authority make the roads?

The Minister for Transport: The local authority, with money made available by the State Housing Commission.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I think the argument is illogical. I understand this is intended for only two years.

The Minister for Transport: That was the original Act.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Does this amendment make it permanent?

The Minister for Transport: No. When the land is subdivided it bears rates immediately on the basis that they were paid prior to the land being taken up. When the building is constructed, the occupier immediately pays the full rates.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I have letters from local authorities asking me to support the amendment made in another place, which was defeated by the casting vote of the Chairman of Committees and which is now the subject matter of the discussion. As they are interested bodies, I am practically forced to oppose the Minister in this matter. We cannot have a differentiation in values. My argument has been that there can be only one true value, and if that is so, we cannot have a variation in rates.

Hon. H. HEARN: I trust the amendment will be insisted on. The State Housing Commission, as Mr. Bennetts would say, is big business. We were told earlier in the session the acreage it held. This matter is serious for the local governing bodies. Also, I still think that everybody should be on the same level. It is grossly unfair that a man who goes to the Government for a house and pays, possibly £5 deposit, should buy the land at a price lower than a man who goes elsewhere and pays £300. That is illogical. I trust the Committee will insist on the amendment.

Hon. G. FRASER: I cannot see the Minister high and dry on the matter. I think the request is quite reasonable. If I remember correctly, the local authorities got nothing from this land until of recent years, and now they want 100 per cent. We desire the land to be handed over to the individual at the lowest possible cost.

Hon. H. Hearn: Why?

Hon. G. FRASER: Because we have gone out of our way to put legislation on the statute book to assist people who are not in the best of circumstances. This measure is to preserve that state of affairs.

Hon. L. Craig: At the expense of their neighbours in similar circumstances.

Hon. G. FRASER: Not at all, because until recent years the local authorities got nothing.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They collected rates.

Hon. G. FRASER: They got nothing until the lands were subdivided.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Of course they did.

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member can point out where I am wrong.

Hon. H. Hearn: Even if that were true, it would not be right.

Hon. G. FRASER: Some three or four years ago an alteration was made whereby some rates were paid. Some of this land will be held by the State Housing Commission for a period of 20 years.

Hon. L. Craig: This will stop that from being done.

Hon. G. FRASER: No, because the Commission must always have sufficient land to meet its requirements for many years ahead.

Hon. L. Craig: So this Government building is to go on forever.

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope so; particularly under the State Housing Act.

Hon. L. Craig: Would you say I should buy land in the same circumstances?

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member is in an entirely different position from that of the person for whom this land is purchased.

Hon. L. Craig: Supposing I wanted to start a building scheme?

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member would need to have the capital beforehand. If we insist upon our amendment it will affect people to whom we have given consideration in other Acts because of their financial position. Therefore, I ask the Committee to support the Minister.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am a little boxed in my mind as to just what we are voting for. On one hand we hear somebody saying that areas of country are being held by the Housing Commission and at the time when the subdivision is made it is called upon to pay the full rate. On the other hand, we hear somebody else say that people living on properties built by the Housing Commission should not be entitled to enjoy a cheaper rate than the person living across the street.

The Minister for Transport: They do not. They pay the full rate straightaway.

Hon. A. R. JONES: As I understand the position, once the land is subdivided and houses are built the person occupying a house would not occupy it at a cheaper rate than a person living across the road.

Hon. H. Hearn: The fellow across the road has to pay.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Yes, but he would not pay a greater rate than a person occupying a house built by the State Housing Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I suggest that the hon. member address the Chair and not hold personal conversations.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I would like the Minister to explain the position fully and that will enable me to make up my mind.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I think we should insist upon the amendment. Mr. Fraser said that no rates had been collected on this type of property before, but I think he lost sight of the fact that the local governing authorities have to pay thousands of pounds in providing roads in subdivided areas. These authorities want every penny they can get.

Hon. G. Fraser: They get it when the area is subdivided.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The Housing Commission lends them the money and they have to pay interest on it.

Hon. G. Fraser: The person who occupies a house pays extra.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: In most cases they pay only rent.

Hon. G. Fraser: No.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I do not think two per cent. of these houses will be purchased. That has been the experience in New South Wales, and the added cost of additional rates will not be borne by many purchasers.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I want to clear up a few of the points raised. Prior to the passing of the 1946 amendment, Crown land was not ratable. The original Housing Act did provide for payment of rates after the expiration of two years at the rate existing when that land was resumed. This Bill attempts to be more generous and says that when the land is subdivided, whether the two years have elapsed or not, that subdivided land will immediately become ratable. I do not agree with members who say that it is not fair that the Housing Commission should be entitled to be rated at the old rate whereas those alongside have to pay the new rate created by increased values.

The Housing Commission, by reason of its housing programme, has added to the value of land and properties in the vicinity. I will instance the Manning Park area. Prior to the Housing Commission scheme in that locality I understand the rate was 5s. per acre. Under the new scheme occupied houses, whether built by the Housing Commission or not, are rated at 30s. per quarter acre—that is a rate of £6 per acre. That permits the local authorities to collect an increased rating from all the other landowners roundabout. I do not think there is any hardship on those who are called upon, under those circumstances, to pay extra rates because there is an added value on their properties. The road boards realise, in most instances, that they are much better off when the Housing Commission does resume an area in their locali-

ties for the purpose of building groups of houses. Therefore, I hope the amendment will not be insisted upon.

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

Ayes	13
Noes	14
Majority against	1

Ayes.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. R. J. Boylen
Hon. L. A. Logan	*(Teller.)*

Noes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. Sir Chas. Latham
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. J. M. Thomson
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. E. M. Heenan	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. H. L. Roche
	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived; the Council's amendment insisted on.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Assembly with amendments.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Vermin Act Amendment.

2, Public Works Act Amendment.

3, Noxious Weeds.

Received from the Assembly.

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

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. H. K. Watson, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clause 3.

In Committee.

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

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 9:

The CHAIRMAN: Clause 3 was amended at a previous Committee.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I move an amendment—

> That after paragraph (a), inserted at a previous Committee, a paragraph, to stand as paragraph (b), be inserted as follows:—
>
> > Deleting from paragraph (e) of Subsection (2) the word "fifty" in line 9 and substituting the words "one hundred and fifty".

The effect of the amendment will be to increase the amount for repairs or additions that a person may make to his private residence from the present figure of £50 to £150. At a previous Committee an endeavour was made to increase the amount to £200 but members appeared to regard that as too high. It will be agreed that owners of homes who have been precluded from effecting repairs for the last five years or more should now at least be entitled to carry out necessary expenditure at a cost not exceeding £150.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Following upon the Committee's acceptance of Mr. Watson's amendment dealing with private residences, it is logical to increase the provision as affecting industrial buildings, the amount in respect of which should be increased by the same ratio. The Act provides for additions or repairs to industrial or religious buildings amounting to £100 whereas it limited the expenditure on private residences to £50. We have raised the £50 to £150 and I hope to have the amount for industrial buildings increased from £100 to £300. I move an amendment—

> That a new paragraph be inserted as follows:—
>
> > (c) Deleting from paragraph (f) of Subsection (2) the word "one" in line 6 and substituting the word "three."

The effect of the amendment will be to provide an amount represented by the value of £100 three years ago. This afternoon two instances were reported to me regarding the disposal of buildings. One valued at £800 for probate purposes less than a year ago was sold yesterday for £1,800, which shows the enormous increase in property values during the last 12 months.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That is profiteering —£1,000 for vacant possession!

Hon. L. CRAIG: Another house that was bought and paid for in 1938 at £1,100 brought at auction yesterday £5,600. In view of these instances, it is not asking too much that the £100 allowed for maintenance be raised to £300.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I regard the amendment as too dangerous. To hear Mr. Craig talk one would think there was no possible chance of obtaining a permit for such work. If the amendment were agreed to it would lead to extravagance and big undertakings that would be resorted to by firms to cover up excess profits. Any urgent work required for industrial purposes would be dealt with by the Housing Commission on a sympathetic basis and a permit would be issued.

Hon. L. Craig: You are a trimmer!

Hon. E. H. GRAY: That is a fact.

Hon. L. Craig: The increase is merely on the same basis as that applied to private residences.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I move—

> That the amendment be amended by striking out the word "three" and inserting the word "two" in lieu.

I agree with Mr. Gray that the amendment is dangerous, which contention Mr. Craig seems to dispute. Once we agree to the wide difference between the original figure and that proposed in the amendment, we will encourage people to go in for unessential building operations, and the Housing Commission will have no opportunity to control the situation. The Commission is prepared to accept an increase to £200 because of added building costs, but it is not prepared to agree that those costs have increased to the extent some members have suggested. If that were so, the cost of new buildings would be far greater than it is today. I should say that according to the Commission's figures, the increased costs would approach something like 100 per cent. If building operations were necessary as suggested, the case could be represented to the Housing Commission and if it were proved essential no difficulty would be experienced in obtaining a permit. If we were to agree to the amendment, materials would be absorbed in the erection of non-essential buildings with the result that supplies would not be available for essential housing requirements.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: No member desires to be unreasonable, but a long time I was under the impression that we were more or less to do away with controls. Many people in the country districts in particular are in a better position today to carry out necessary building requirements.

The Minister for Transport: The whole idea behind the legislation is to ease controls.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: To what extent?

The Minister for Transport: As far as we can.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: The process seems too slow to some people. I know of scores of farms on which there are dilapidated buildings because in the past the farmers had not the money with which to carry out necessary work. Today they are better off and are in the position to catch up with arrears of maintenance so urgently needed.

The Minister for Transport: They could get a permit for that.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: This applies to machinery sheds, shearing sheds and other farm buildings. I know some people who have difficulty in carrying out shearing because of lack of room. I myself have not the accommodation I require. I badly need extra room for machinery. People who are developing the country should receive some consideration. I have been of the opinion that quite a number of the materials required for such work are in reasonable supply, and that there is no need for such restrictions. We have been told for some time that certain controls will be abolished, and I think the Committee should endeavour to see that that promise is carried out, and that controls of this kind are reduced as far as possible. We know that quite a lot of material is still under control; and if one is allowed to do work of this kind, one can only obtain materials that are plentiful. I do not see that there would be any harm in the Government's granting this request.

Hon. H. HEARN: I am afraid that the Minister has not had much experience in applying for permission to spend money on industrial buildings, because he said that one has only to apply to the Housing Commission and a permit will be granted. I wish I could believe that, and could feel that if one applied to the Commission it was fairly certain that one would obtain such a permit. That has not been my own experience or that of a lot of my constituents.

The Minister for Transport: You will find it will be very much harder if you raise the limit.

Hon. H. HEARN: I have a lot of sympathy for the Minister in his endeavour to compromise on the amount, but I feel that it could not be any more difficult for industry if the limit were raised than it has been during the last 18 months. Notwithstanding that at present there is a shortage of labour, I believe the time will come when—unless we recognise that money must be spent in keeping industrial buildings up to date so that businesses may thrive and prosper—in any slight recession of trade there will be very great difficulty on the part of establishments in the metropolitan area in keeping men employed.

Hon. G. FRASER: To hear some members speak, one would think there was an unlimited supply of materials in this State. If we are going to allow expenditure up to £300, we will reduce the quantity of materials available for essential work. The Housing Commission does not treat business people as ordinary applicants. There is a special industrial committee to which the whole of the applications from industrial concerns are sent. That committee assesses the most worthy needs. The more this amount is increased, the greater the number of unauthorised jobs that will be done, and the fewer materials there will be available for authorised work.

Hon. L. Craig: No-one would suggest that people do this for fun.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not suggest it. I realise as well as the hon. member that, from the point of view of the individual,

every one of them is an urgent job. But when the appropriate committee examines all the applications, it is found that one person's need is not as urgent as somebody else's. The materials should be made available to those whose need is most pressing.

Hon. L. Craig: To those who tell the best story, you mean.

Hon. G. FRASER: No.

Hon. H. Hearn: That is what it means.

Hon. G. FRASER: I will not say it is easy to get a permit; but if one has a good case, one receives consideration according to the degree of urgency. While materials are short, that is the only method that can be adopted in order that justice may be applied to all. I hope the Minister's amendment will be carried, because it is reasonable in comparison with the £300 suggested.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I support the amendment. In view of the fact that work of this kind can be done each 12 months, it will be possible for someone to obtain materials at the end of one year and the building could be proceeded with at the beginning of the following financial year, with the result that as much as £600 could be spent. If there is sufficient work to be done to entail the expenditure of that amount of money, the people concerned should go to the right authorities for a permit.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I support the Minister. I see many business premises being repaired in the metropolitan area to a considerable extent. That has been taking place for some time. Mr. Hearn said that he had a lot of trouble regarding permits. Perhaps the committee thought that the amount of work he considered should be done was not required. Inspectors are employed, and they know what work is necessary. They must have believed that the hon. member had had enough work done on his premises. While we continue to be liberal in the provision of supplies for business people, we will deprive young married couples of the opportunity to obtain materials to build homes in which to rear their families. In places like Norseman, there is a lack of materials for houses. Such homes are required for people engaged in extracting sulphur from pyrites for the production of super. The business section of the community is well catered for, and there is no doubt that if the Commission considers it necessary for extensions to business premises to be made, permission is given. Foy's and Harris Scarfe & Sandover's have completed fairly extensive construction programmes.

Hon. H. Hearn: This does not apply to the city only.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Westralian Farmers have also undertaken similar work. I consider that £200 is a sufficient amount. Reference was made to the agricultural industry. I do not think farmers have any need to worry. If they require to undertake any building, they will receive permission, so long as their case is genuine, because they are the people who are providing food for the country.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: The Minister's compromise is fair. I do not know of anyone here who does not recognise that it is necessary for industry to have buildings in which to carry on. At the same time, it is also necessary to have labour for those industries. In my province at the moment, several factories are being erected in a new industrial area, and one of the usual inquiries is about the condition of the labour market. If no labour is available, people do not feel disposed to erect factories. Particularly round Fremantle, at present, the housing position is acute.

Many people have received permits but, owing to the shortage of materials, will not be able to build until perhaps next year. That has an effect on the labour market because, if homes are not available, people will not come to a district to work in industry. I think the Minister has made a fair compromise. If extensions to industrial buildings and plant are necessary, the advisory committee will make allowance for those requirements. The amendment will allow industries to expend up to £200 without a permit and, if greater expenditure is required, the industrial committee of the State Housing Commission will view applications sympathetically. I trust the Committee will agree to the amendment.

Hon. H. HEARN: I object to the suggestion of Mr. Bennets that possibly the member to whom he was referring had not put up a justifiable case to the Housing Commission. I resent the imputation and give the following facts. My firm's factory in Victoria Park was serviced by the old-fashioned pan system and the installation of sewerage involved an expenditure of £5,000. It took us twelve months to get a permit to do that work, which is just being completed. I trust that Mr. Bennetts will be more careful in making veiled references in future, as I take definite exception to them.

Amendment on amendment put and passed; amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Clause, as further amended, put and passed.

Bill again reported with further amendments.

BILL—RESERVE FUNDS (LOCAL AUTHORITIES).

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [5.50]: This measure is a disappointment to me in a number of ways, but at the

same time it provides for some increased control by the Commissioner of Police. The thing that distresses me is that in an amendment of this sort no real effort has been made to curb the drunken driver effectively or to lay down any test for drunkenness when in charge of a vehicle. The Bill does give the Commissioner of Police power to cancel or suspend a license, or to refuse to grant a license or review the possession of a license, in a way that he has not previously been able to do those things, but I feel we should go further. I doubt whether giving the Commissioner this power and then allowing the motorist to appeal against his decision provides sufficient protection.

I believe that if possible we should in this measure provide the magistrate with further powers in regard to the drunken driver. It is ridiculous that one who is known to be a chronic alcoholic may be charged with drunken driving, found guilty and have his license suspended for a given period and, at the end of that period, have his license returned to him. The Minister may say that under the provisions contained in the Bill such a position would be covered, but I doubt whether it is covered sufficiently by placing the onus of decision on the Commissioner. I believe it would be wiser to give the magistrate power to call for evidence, in certain cases, as to whether the individual charged with drunken driving was a chronic alcoholic. The services of the district medical officer could be made available to the court so that a person found guilty of being drunk when in charge of a vehicle could be submitted for medical examination.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: What would be the definition of "drunk"?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I am taking the word to be self-explanatory, as meaning under the influence of alcohol. I think that is what the word conveys to the ordinary individual.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: No.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I think the meaning commonly ascribed to the words "drunk while in charge of a vehicle" would be that the person concerned was unable, because of alcohol, so to conduct himself as to drive the vehicle of which he was in charge with safety to the public. It seems that some definition of the term is necessary in legislation of this nature. I do not think that an individual who is a known alcoholic should under any circumstances obtain his license back again whilst he is still a chronic alcoholic, because it is likely that for the greater portion of the day he will not be capable of driving his vehicle in a manner safe to the public.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Can a medical man, by examination, tell whether a person is a chronic alcoholic?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: In some cases he can definitely reach that conclusion from the condition of the individual. A person may be known to members of the medical profession who may from time to time have had to advise him in this regard. It is often possible to obtain from an individual statements, in answer to questions, which would enable one to reach a decision in regard to his habits in the use of alcohol. These things can be cleared up to a certain extent, and I am disappointed that a more vigorous move to deal with this subject has not been made in the Bill now before us. In order to give the House a clearer picture of this problem, I approached the District Medical Officer this afternoon and, with his consent, I will read to the House an article by him, entitled "Was the Driver Drunk?" It will explain the difficulties of dealing with the question. The article gives suggestions as to how the problem may be approached. In it Dr. Pearson states—

> This is a very difficult question to answer in some cases. There is no one test which by itself can give the answer but by a combination of clinical observations and tests and an estimation of the blood or urine alcohol content one can usually get close to the answer in most cases.

The Clinical Observations and Tests. These are as follows:—

1. General demeanour.
2. State of clothing.
3. Appearance of eyes.
4. Smell of breath.
5. Character of speech.
6. Manner of walking, turning sharply, sitting.
7. Memory of incidents within the last few hours.
8. Estimation of time.
9. Reaction of pupils.
10. Character of breathing, especially in regard to hiccough.
11. State of tongue.

The following tests taken by themselves should not be used to decide whether or not a person is under the influence of alcohol—

1. Presence of rapid pulse rate.
2. Repetition of set words and phrases.
3. Character of handwriting.
4. Walking along a straight line.
5. Failure of convergence of the eyes.

Members will note those items that are laid down as tests which should not be taken as a guide to the question of alcoholism or of a person being under the influence of alcohol, and will see that they are those that have commonly been taken more or less as proof that the individual is under the influence of alcohol. The article continues—

It appears there is the need in Perth for a definite set of observations and tests such as the above to be used in each case of suspected drunken driving. Perhaps a printed form which could be used by either doctor or policeman and which could be presented in court. This would mean that everyone would be subjected to the same tests and observations.

One must realise that when it is suggested that a person is under the influence of alcohol whoever is examining the individual may use a test that is far from being standard. While we must make laws to control this sort of thing we should at the same time endeavour to see that those laws are fair to the individual who is charged with being under the influence of liquor. There are, today, means by which the amount of alcohol in the bloodstream of the individual can be used to estimate the amount of alcohol that has been ingested by him.

I do not think it would be out of place, in a measure such as this, to suggest that the individual charged with driving whilst under the influence of alcohol should be given an opportunity of having a sample of his blood taken, under strict conditions, at a public hospital. We could add there the proviso "wherever it is practicable." Then, if the individual denied being under the influence of alcohol a blood test could be made as means of proof. I take it that if the individual was given an opportunity of presenting himself at a hospital for this purpose and refused, that would be accepted as added evidence of his guilt. If the person is not guilty of being under the influence of alcohol he will be only too glad of the opportunity to have something definite as proof. I will quote some facts supplied by Dr. Pearson which, I think, will be of interest to members. These facts are—

The test: 5-10 ccs. of blood are taken from the arm with a syringe and needle which must be free of all traces of alcohol, transferred to a glass-stoppered bottle and sealed. This can be sent to the Government Analyst or private pathologist. Always the permission of the person must be obtained.

Interpretation of results:

(1) 0-50 mgms. per millilitres of blood or 5.05 per cent. can be regarded as sober. Roughly this corresponds to the minimum ingestion, with an average man of 11 stone in weight of a double whisky or one pint of beer.

(2) 100 mgms. or .1 per cent. Still sober, but inclined to be somewhat reckless. Would pass a sobriety test with ease.

(3) 150 mgms. or .15 per cent. Borderline cases. There are quite a few individuals who could not stand six whiskies or three pints of beer without showing some signs and he could easily be a menace on the road.

(4) 200 mgms. or .2 per cent. At this concentration most people would be clinically drunk and not capable of skilful handling of a motor vehicle, especially in an emergency. To get this concentration, a minimum of eight whiskies or four pints of beer (10 schooners) are required.

(5) 300 mgms.—Very drunk.
400 mgms.—Comatose.
500 to 600 mgms.—Death.

(6) The urine alcohol is higher than the blood alcohol in the proportion of 1.3 : 1.

We all know that certain individuals can take much more alcohol than others, and it is for these reasons that the blood test for alcohol and the standard clinical examination should always be used, because with the clinical test alone it is not always possible to accept its results as proof that an individual is under the influence of alcohol. We would need both the blood test and the standard clinical observation by a policeman or a trained man to substantiate the charge. If that were done, the courts would have more concrete evidence upon which to rely and the accused would have a better opportunity of proving, if he were not guilty, that he had not been under the influence of alcohol at the time he was driving his car. I trust the Minister will give thought to this matter because it should be quite simple, in regard to these cases, to include this proposal in the Bill.

Under the Standing Orders I doubt whether a private member could add clauses to this Bill because the way it is worded its object is merely to give more power to the Commissioner of Police. Therefore, I take it that additions to the Bill would have to be moved by one of the Ministers. However, I believe we can be fair to the individual charged; we can supply more evidence to the courts and assist them as a result, and I think we can then save the public from the happenings which we have observed recently. If a man or woman is known as a chronic alcoholic, then that person should not be allowed, under any conditions, to drive a motorcar while suffering from that condition.

Hon. G. Fraser: Why not put the amendments on the notice paper and so let the House consider them?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I could do that, but from my reading of the Bill I take it that any addition of clauses to that effect would not be permitted. I will obtain a ruling from the President later, and if his ruling is in my favour then I will attempt to move these amendments. I felt it was my duty to draw attention to the facts. I do not think that the suggested alterations and

amendments in this Bill are sufficient to attain the objective desired and overcome the difficulty.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Suburban) [6.5]: The Bill goes a long way towards improving matters, but not far enough. I agree with Dr. Hislop that we ought to do more to protect the public against the drunken driver. One remedy which might be given consideration and I think will be more effective than imprisonment or a fine, namely, that as a penalty, the vehicle should be impounded. If a man is charged with drunken driving, the impounding of his vehicle would act as a great deterrent to committing any future offences of a similar nature. However, I can quite realise that, if a driver is charged with being under the influence of liquor and he is driving a borrowed vehicle, the penalty I suggest might, in some instances, be rather hard on the owner.

That difficulty could be overcome by making the borrower of the vehicle pay compensation to the owner if he desires his vehicle returned to him. If the driver of the vehicle is also the owner, or, if his wife is the owner, then I think the vehicle should be impounded unless the vehicle was driven without the permission of the husband or the wife as the case may be.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Would the impounding be for all time?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No, only for a period. The penalty could be, say, three or six months for a first offence and six or 12 months for a second offence.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: That penalty would be rather harsh if an employee was charged with being drunk whilst driving his employer's vehicle, would it not?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: After all is said and done, my suggestion is merely to protect the public. It may be that the employer is not careful whom he employs. I regret to say there are many such instances, although I am not speaking of reputable firms but of smaller firms whose principals do not care whether the men driving their vehicles are drunk or otherwise, and also allow their employees to take their trucks or car home for the week-end. I agree it is a matter that requires close consideration.

Hon. W. R. Hall: You would not find two cases alike.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If I may, I will give members an analogy as to how it works in another field, that is, on the race tracks. According to the rules of racing, the common practice is that if there is any serious breach of the rules, often the owner, trainer, jockey and the horse are all disqualified. Very often the owner is not disqualified but the horse is banned for life.

Hon. W. R. Hall: What about if the horse is in the bag?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Then the owner is disqualified for life and never gets out of it. It might be thought that such penalties are rather drastic, but they have a very beneficial effect in keeping racing clean. If people who were charged with drunken driving were to lose their vehicles for a period, I think that such a penalty would have a very beneficial effect in deterring them from committing similar offences in the future. Also, there is no pecuniary loss to the family, no expense to the public in keeping the offender in gaol, and it is protecting the people who use the highways.

Hon. L. Craig: If the vehicle were impounded it would probably be left out in the sun for days or even longer.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Perhaps some arrangement could be made for the owner to buy it out.

Hon. L. Craig: That would then become a fine.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Of course it would, but I am seeking a deterrent and protection for the public. I agree there are all sorts of anomalies and the proposal would have to be considered carefully.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Why not have prohibition and then we will not have any drunken driving at all?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If we fail to do something about this matter, we will have prohibition, because the prohibitionists will say, "I will vote for prohibition if it will stop drunken driving." I am offering this suggestion to prevent or reduce the number of charges of drunken driving. I should say that on a second offence the owner should lose his vehicle altogether. That would be part of the penalty. A motor vehicle is a dangerous engine. It is a well-known legal fact that if one has a dangerous animal it has to be kept at one's own risk, and it is liable to get away.

Hon. L. Craig: Are you treating cars as dangerous animals?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Most decidedly! It is one of the most dangerous things on the road. So much so that in former times a man was employed to go ahead of a motor vehicle waving a red flag. It is a tremendously powerful instrument in the hands of an individual who does not properly control it. I would, therefore, like to see my suggestion adopted with a view to preventing all these accidents caused by drunken drivers. If we can only do something to curb drivers of motor vehicles in the drinking of alcohol, we will go a long way towards preventing prohibition and making the roads quite safe.

On motion by Hon. L. A. Logan, debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [7.30]: I consider this one of the most important Bills that has come before the House this session and admittedly it is very important and difficult legislation to draft. Many members, of course, are not very conversant with bush conditions, fire control and so on, and it seems to me that not many are prepared to speak on the subject. It has always been a very difficult problem right back to the time when the local authorities more or less controlled their own districts.

Years ago, of course, there was no bushfire control advisory committee and it was left to local authorities to arrange their own prohibited periods, subject to approval by the Minister. This meant that a large number of local authorities—round about 100 road boards—arranged dates for their respective districts. That did not work out too well because it meant that districts close to each other had dates that did not correspond and very often they found that one district wanted a date that did not suit its neighbour yet, as a matter of fact, their circumstances and conditions were very similar.

When the advisory committee was established it did away with the different burning-off periods and the first legislation introduced provided for a zoning system whereby instead of having say, approximately 100 boards trying to arrange their own dates it was resolved to have six or seven zones. Each zone represented a group of boards where similar conditions applied, and that meant they did not have to arrange so many different prohibited periods. I can remember years ago that it was very difficult indeed to handle this problem because there was such a conflict of opinion.

I discovered that when a body put forward a proposal for an amendment to the Act, after that amendment had become law it would not be long before there was another suggestion as the result of somebody being burnt out or something else happening. One can understand that, and I think it will go on to some extent in the future, too, because we always find somebody who knows more about bushfires than the next person, particularly when there is an outbreak. Therefore, it is a pretty difficult matter. When the first advisory committee was appointed by the Government it comprised men in high positions who could be relied upon to do a good job. The chairman of the committee was the Under Secretary for Lands and the members were the Conservator of Forests, a representative of the Railway Department, a representative of the Underwriters' Association, a representative of the Agricultural Department and two representatives of the Road Board Association.

That was a fairly large and representative body to receive suggestions and to make recommendations to the Government regarding legislation. When the committee made an inquiry and came to a conclusion regarding an amendment, its recommendation went forward to the Minister and, as far as I can remember, only on one occasion was one vetoed or objected to. On that occasion the Minister retained the right to veto any motion or proposal put forward. At that time the members of the Road Board Association secured sufficient support from the other members of the committee to get a motion through that did not altogether suit the Government. So when that happened, the Minister for Lands, of course, struck it off the list and vetoed it.

That is roughly the set up of the early arrangement for carrying on this legislation. I have not been closely associated with it now for three or four years but I understand that a more or less similar policy is adopted today. I do not know how that committee could be improved upon. The representatives of the Road Board Association are men very well versed in local government and have considerable experience in bushfire control and know the danger of bushfires in the hot season. It seems to me therefore that the set up is quite good, but, as I said a while ago, the great difficulty is to arrive at a solution that will cope with all conditions and circumstances.

We can pass a law or regulation that will provide for extinguishing a fire when the wind is against it. It might look very well on paper and certain things can be carried out. But it is an entirely different thing when conditions change and we have adverse circumstances. Of course when it happens in particularly extreme and adverse conditions, somebody must get the blame and somebody must be able to tell the local authorities what to do to overcome the weakness, which is not so easy. I will give a rough idea of how the zoning system works. The prohibited periods are as follows:—

	From	To
Zone 1—Wheat Belt . . .	22nd October	15th February
Zone 3—Jarrah forest and coastal plain from Gingin to Dardanup	22nd October	15th March
Zone 3A—Capel, Busselton and Balingup	15th December	7th March
Zone 4A—Margaret River to Pemberton along south coast	22nd December	25th February
Zone 5—Around Perth . . .	15th December	31st March

Those are some of them, and that is how they are grouped. Groups of boards or districts closely associated and with similar conditions are put in these various zones, and by that means the prohibited periods are reduced to a minimum instead of having so many conflicting dates. Under the local authorities arrangement whereby they arrange their own dates there is great difficulty.

Take the case of the Murray Road Board and a district like Pinjarra. It would be more difficult today because of increased topdressing, but their conditions are very similar to Drakebrook which is only 16 miles away. It would be silly to continue to have those dates separated by two or three weeks because one district would probably be burning the other out or causing considerable damage. For this reason, a much larger area is covered. Although it is difficult to satisfy all concerned, it seems to me that that is the only reasonable and sensible method of dealing with the whole matter.

We have to take into consideration that should a fire get well established these days, conditions are very much worse than they were, say, 10 or 12 years ago. It is necessary to take every precaution in the prohibited periods to see there is no let up in the application of the law and that fires are prevented. Like other members I can show where over miles of country that had been extensively topdressed, say, in February or March, a fire started with a favourable wind behind it and nothing would stop it—neither firebreaks, fire equipment nor anything else. What we have to do in a case like that is to see that a fire does not start.

It is possibly just as bad or worse in other districts where there is a dense undergrowth as in some of the forest country where the trees are very thick. When a fire gets going in an area like that on a favourable hot, windy day, it would be futile to attempt to do anything with it. I have seen some of these fires and the great amount of damage they cause is not generally appreciated. I saw one that extended from just beyond Nannup down to Pemberton, 40 miles further south, where there is an extensive timber belt of mostly jarrah. If people could see the damage that one fire could cause they would realise how important it is to protect the forests and to have these laws properly carried out. I discussed that fire with forestry employees who said that without equipment they would not have been able to get near it, much less to extinguish it. They simply had to get out of the way in order to protect their own lives.

When I was going through the country from Nannup to Pemberton after that fire, I saw not a green tree. The tragedy of it is that such a fire completely destroys the small jarrah saplings. They were burnt off and nothing but the stumps were left. Large trees, too, were destroyed, but the fire was so hot that in places, carried by the wind, it raced through the tree-tops and the tops were more or less the first portions to be burnt. It is very bad for the economy of the State for these fires to be lighted and to cause the damage they do.

On another occasion, a similar fire occurred between Mornington and Collie in very thick bush. I saw that country after the fire and there again the conditions were very similar. Last year there was a huge fire east of Dwellingup where thousands of acres of country were burnt. All these serious and damaging fires occur in the hottest season of the year and, do what we will, it seems that we cannot prevent somebody from dropping a match or letting a fire get away and, of course, once it gets away, provided the conditions are favourable to its spreading, it will race through the forest and burn the great bulk of the timber.

As to grass fires, one can readily understand why the fire hazard is much greater in such areas than it was 20 years ago. The farmers know that the use of superphosphate has increased very considerably the area that produces dry grass in the summer-time. Let me illustrate my point by giving some figures of the output of superphosphate over a period. In 1938, the output was 287,000 tons, and in 1950 it was 420,000 tons or nearly double the quantity of 12 years before. Most of the super. has been used for top-dressing, and that is why we get the extensive growth of clover and other grasses.

Why I say most of this super. has been used in top-dressing is because the figures, which I obtained from a reliable quarter, indicated that in 1930, the year in which we were asked to grow more wheat, the area put under crop was 4,000,000 acres. Last year the area cropped was only 3,000,000 acres or 75 per cent. of what it was in 1930. Thus in spite of this reduction of 1,000,000 acres in the area cropped, we have had an increased output of superphosphate of over 100,000 tons. This in itself explains why extreme precautions are necessary to prevent the outbreak of bushfires. When these fires once get started, it is practically impossible to control them.

This legislation, I hope, will be improved from time to time. It has already been greatly improved. The men who know most about the subject and who are most likely to assist are those from the country who have farms in the areas where it is necessary for them to protect their properties. They have seen the destruction caused by fires and have had to deal with fires, and they are best qualified to express an opinion. I am not prepared to say that they would always find the best solution, but I would rather have the opinion of one of those men than that of a man who had never been on the job.

I have referred to a few of the serious bushfires in the timber country and to the destruction that they caused. Last year we had small but very serious fires in the Upper Blackwood district and the Upper Ferguson area. Those fires did a terrific amount of damage, and there again it was demonstrated that once a fire gets a hold, there is little chance of stopping it. To have a 6ft. fire-break or a truck with a

water tank is not a bit of use. What we should aim at is ensuring that fires do not get away.

While I propose to support the second reading, there is one clause that I feel I must oppose in the Committee stage. I am not satisfied with the provision that seeks to eliminate the defining of the prohibited period. It has always been regarded as vital that there should be a prohibited period during the hottest part of the year when the fire hazard is greatest.

The Minister for Agriculture: To which clause are you referring?

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Clause 9. Under the Bill, it is proposed to do away with the restrictive date and leave the matter to the Minister. I have not yet known of a local authority, a Minister or anyone else who could tell ahead what would be a safe time for burning, and it only needs a mistake to be made or the Minister to be persuaded to enable someone to burn under the excuse that it is necessary to clear up debris and prevent the possibility of a fire, for trouble to occur. Such burning should be undertaken, but not in the prohibited period. If a man wishes to burn, let him do it earlier in the season and not during the hottest months of the summer.

The Bill proposes to repeal the relevant section of the Act and make it possible for the Minister to alter the prohibited period for a local authority or for other people. To do that, in my opinion, would be quite wrong. It is all very well to say that we can trust the Minister. Where is the Minister that could tell us today what the conditions will be tomorrow? One might be satisfied in his own mind that, during the ensuing two or three days, the weather would be suitable for controlling fires, and the Minister might be asked to suspend the provisions of the Act so that a fire might be lighted, but it is possible that by midday on the morrow, a hot northerly wind will have sprung up, lasting for perhaps two or three days, and what earthly chance would anyone have to deal with a big fire under those conditions?

There would be no hope at all. If adverse conditions set in after the ministerial authority had been granted and a fire got away, it could sweep miles of country and do thousands of pounds worth of damage. I do not say that this is likely to happen, but we want to make this measure foolproof and ensure that it cannot happen. In many cases it might be quite satisfactory to leave something in the hands of the Minister, but this is a matter about which he would know nothing.

The Minister for Agriculture: He would act only on the recommendation of the advisory committee.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: But the advisory committee might act on the advice of a local authority because of pressure being brought to bear or some extreme excuse being advanced. I have not had that experience and I do not recall such a request having been made in my time—and that has extended over many years—but the existing Act does not permit this to be done. Under the Bill, however, that section of the Act will be repealed, and it will be possible for an application to be made to the Minister and for him to grant permission to burn. I must oppose that provision and I shall certainly speak against it in Committee. I hope that other members will agree with me in my desire that we should impose an embargo upon the lighting of fires for at least a few weeks in the hottest part of the year.

Under the Act, it was unlawful to burn after the 15th January. Even the Railway Department could not get authority to burn its land after that date. The committee considered that to be the latest possible date when it would be safe to light a fire in any part of the South-West Land Division, and I say that, after that date, nobody should be permitted to do any burning. The Forests Department has remarkable organisation and hundreds of pounds worth of the best equipment, as well as fire gangs stationed in various parts of the forest, but I say that even the Forests Department should not be permitted to burn after the 15th January. We should retain the present provision in the Act.

The Minister for Agriculture: Permission would be granted only in special cases in green country and there would be no danger in 99 cases out of 100.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I have a map of these zones in colours and could show the Minister that a lot of the green patches contain dry patches, and that has been the difficulty.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is why we want to burn them.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Well, let them be burnt before the 15th January.

The Minister for Agriculture: The trouble is that they will not burn before then.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I do not hold with that idea. If they will not burn during that period, there will be no danger and we need not worry about those patches. If they are to be burnt, let provision be made so that there is no clash with the prohibited period, which extends over only a few weeks in the year. It should be a firm principle to respect it, and not depart from what we have done in past years. There may be one or two other clauses in connection with which I shall assist other members to effect alterations. I hope the matters I have brought forward will be

given serious consideration. There is no local authority, or Minister, that is infallible. I shall support the second reading.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South) [8.1]: Whilst I support the second reading of the Bill, I think some amendments could be made to improve its practical application. The Act was introduced as an experiment, and it is still to some extent in the experimental stage. The amendments that have been passed have gradually brought it more into line with realities and improved its usefulness.

I do not think we can over-emphasise the fact that, whilst the legislation is useful as a co-ordinating factor, and is necessary to afford a measure of control to the authorities when fires take place, the basic principle of fire-fighting in country districts must continue to be the co-operation of the people concerned with respect to their helping each other. Once we get away from the principle that any man's fire is every man's fire, and that every man must be prepared to lend a hand, we shall get into serious trouble. It is that principle that is going to result in dealing successfully with bushfires in Western Australia.

Hon. G. Fraser: Do you mean under the amending Bill?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Under the legislation generally. Some portions of the Bill could be improved. The Minister dealt with the proposed repeal of Subsection (4) of Section 8 by Clause 4, paragraph (c). Some of the provisions, I take it, are covered by proposed new Section 47 in the Bill, but the Minister made no reference to Section 11, Subsections (3) and (4) of the Act. I just wonder whether the proposed new Section 47 will adequately replace those subsections. I hope that one of our legal members will interest himself in that point sufficiently to let us know just what the position is.

It would be a fatal departure from the present practice if the legislation eliminated the responsibility of the individual for creating a fire. No matter whether it is done under certain provisions, or for safety reasons, there must always be a measure of responsibility if there is to be proper control. Whilst protection can be afforded under the legislation as it now stands, we cannot free people entirely from responsibility; otherwise I am afraid we would have a chaotic condition developing whereby some individuals would light fires under the protection of the subparagraph in the parent Act, and then wash their hands of any responsibility. Those of us who have had practical experience know that it is not just from the immediate lighting of a fire that the trouble results, but from lack of attention some time later.

Hon. G. Fraser: Do not you think there are any exceptions to a fire getting away?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: No; I would still retain the responsibility with some safeguard for the individual if he had complied with all the conditions, or a control officer had approved whatever he had done. I have had considerable experience in this matter, and some of the worst occasions that I have had to deal with have occurred not on the day the fire was lit. Adequate precautions are taken at the time of lighting a fire, and it is then left for two or three days, a week. Subsequently if a bad wind comes along, unless attention is given to the fire, sparks from a burning log or stump are blown across a break and a first-class fire results. That has occurred more than once to my knowledge, and it is a source of many damaging fires.

So we must leave a measure of responsibility resting on the shoulders of the man on whose property a fire is lit. Obviously, we cannot have a team of men and the control officer neglecting their affairs just to sit and watch a fire. The responsibility must be on the owner of the land. In that regard there appears to be a weakness in Section 11 of the original Act—we might say an absurdity. I think this provision has been in the Act since 1937, and it was only a few days ago that it was brought to the notice of some members representing country areas. Paragraph (d) of Subsection (1) of that section provides—

> He has himself arranged for and provided at least three men to be constantly in attendance at the fire from the time it is lighted until it is completely extinguished to assist in keeping the fire under control and prevent it from spreading beyond the land on which the burning is to take place.

That provision is in respect of burning bush, or burning off country. To anyone who knows what takes place when burning, it is absurd to ask that these precautions be taken until the fire is completely extinguished.

A fire is put through with a view to burning off everything possible, and it might be a couple of months before the land is cleared of timber. I understand that one member will be moving an amendment with a view to making that a little more rational in its application. One portion of the Bill which could come out altogether, is proposed new Section 31B which prohibits or forbids the lighting of a fire break to assist in stopping any fire by anyone other than a control officer, or if the bushfire control officer is not present, the captain, or in his absence the next senior officer of a bushfire brigade. I cannot understand how the Bush Fires Advisory Committee, if it is responsible for suggesting the amendment, came to do so if those who attended the meeting had any practical knowledge of the conditions that prevail.

It will occur time and again that the best way to stop a fire is to burn a break, but there might not be an officer of the brigade available. We experienced that state of affairs within a few miles of my property last year. On that occasion we had three fires on our hands. We did not see a control officer until nightfall, but we had to burn breaks. Under that provision, we would have been carrying the whole responsibility. Although some of us were members of the local brigade, not one of us was an officer. If we provide that it shall be a member of the brigade, I can contemplate circumstances arising where the obvious thing to do is to burn a break, but there will be no member of the brigade present.

The Minister for Agriculture: I do not think it refers to those cases. It refers to Section 24 of the parent Act. However, I shall have a look at it. If you are right, I agree that it should go out.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: In the circumstances, who is going to take the responsibility of saying that a break shall be burnt? We all do it today, and I do not mind continuing that practice, but I am not going to do it unless it is on my own property, or to save my property, if the clause is agreed to as printed. Even in the circumstances I have just referred to, while we were fighting the fire on one side, we anticipated a neighbour further on would be in bother, but as it happened, he went down and burnt along a ploughbreak that he had, and the fire stopped there. That is the only thing that saved a couple of thousand acres of land. In those circumstances, he would be rendering himself liable. It might not be the farmer himself but only some of his employees and they would not be members of any brigade. So, I hope the Minister will reconsider that clause and if, after consideration, he has no objection, we can remove it from the Bill.

Whilst forestry officers, in the main, do a good job in the fire season, I doubt very much, from what I am informed and from what I can see for myself, whether the policy of the department is as helpful as it should be. It is no use having thousands of acres of bush country not covered by what is called protective burning. If that country is allowed to collect rubbish, leaves, limbs, undergrowth and so on every ten or fifteen years, then it is almost certain that at some time it will catch fire.

Hon. W. J. Mann: And that will be the finish.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: A fire will start and then it will be absolutely uncontrollable. That is another reason why I do not want to see this legislation tightened up unduly. There is still a lot of bush country in the Great Southern—land that has been alienated but not yet cleared. In the interests of settlers, that type of country should have a fire put through it every now and again, otherwise when a fire does go through, it becomes uncontrollable. There was a most disastrous fire down that way this year. I think it occurred just outside the South Province, probably in the South-West Province so perhaps some members know of it.

Hon. L. Craig: If it was a bad fire it would not be in my province.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Maybe the hon member would not know but I am quite sure that he has heard of it. If some of the people concerned had burnt their bush country at least once every five or six years, that fire would not have been as disastrous at it was. Whilst the legislation is helpful, it must be such as to afford some control and facilitate co-ordination. I hope that we will never see this legislation becoming so tight and rigidly policed as to make it difficult for people handling that type of country.

Hon. L. Craig: If it is too difficult it will be ignored, as it has been in the past.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Exactly. Maybe the hon. member has done what a lot of us have done in the circumstances. That country catches fire anywhere and it very often leads to serious trouble and a lot of effort before the fire is put out. The essential thing in bushfire protection in country areas is co-operation. To the extent that we can help with legislation Parliament should be ready to assist. To date this legislation has proved that it is well worthwhile and it will be the same with this Bill, provided some small amendments can be made to it. With those remarks, I support the second reading.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [8.20]: At the risk of reiteration, I wish to add my support to most parts of the Bill. I endorse Mr. Roche's remarks that we have to be careful that the spirit of co-operation, and the responsibility of men in particular districts, are not interfered with. Every man in a district should endeavour to turn up and check an outbreak when it occurs. That has been the spirit in the past and I am sure it has been one of the factors that has reduced fires to a minimum. We cannot afford to break down that spirit. It is up to us to see that this co-operation is not lessened in the future.

One would have thought, from the remarks and suggestions made in the South-West last year, after the disastrous fires in that area, that there was a lot wrong with the Bush Fires Act. Apparently this is not so, and I do not know whether people expect an Act of Parliament to put out a bushfire or not, but apparently that seems to be the idea. Probably the main amendment is that giving fire control officers the right to stop irresponsible people from starting fires on unsuitable days. It is all right for the owner of a property to have a good clean burn on such days, but it is

dangerous if the fire gets away. Although this amendment might appear to be harsh, I think it is in the interests of the whole of the community and the fire control officer should have that particular power.

A couple of years ago a Bill was introduced by a private member which dealt with a 25 per cent. reduction in premiums for those areas where an efficient bushfire brigade was established. The Bill was rather ridiculed by some members of this House but I am proud to say that today that measure has a big bearing on making people in those areas fire-conscious and they are continually endeavouring to improve their firefighting methods. I am sure that measure has gone a long way towards preventing fires in many areas and the fact that they get a 25 per cent. reduction has spurred them on to purchase the necessary equipment and see that all their wards have the plant required. The Minister did give a reason why Subsection (4) of Section 8 is being repealed but unfortunately neither the Minister in this House nor the Minister in another place, gave the reason why Subsections (3) and (4) of Section 11 are being repealed.

The Minister for Agriculture: I said that it is contained in another new section.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If it is contained in proposed new Section 47, which deals with Subsection (4) of Section 8, it is all right, but we want to know the reason why, and it is up to the Minister to let us have that information if it is available. I will agree that no Minister can understand every Bill he introduces, especially one coming from another place.

Hon. G. Fraser: If he cannot, how can we?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I agree, but coming from another place makes it a little awkward for the Minister in this House. At the same time, it is up to him to give us the information if he possibly can. I must agree also with members who have spoken about Section 31 (b). As has already been stated, a fire can break out and be fought on four or five different sides. It would be impossible for a fire control officer, or the head of a brigade, to be at all those firefronts at the same time. Therefore, somebody must have the right to know when and where a firebreak shall be lit. I will admit there is a certain amount of danger in it, especially if somebody without much knowledge of the area, or of firefighting, comes along and wants to burn a break in the wrong place. If it is lit in the wrong place it can frequently cause more damage than if that area were left alone. We have to be very careful in that regard. I am not too sure that Mr. Loton's amendment will cover the aspect but I think it probably will. I suppose the reason for the clause in the Bill is to stop irresponsibles coming along and saying, "We will burn a break here."

The Minister for Agriculture: Mr. Roche wants to throw it out altogether.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not think that is right. I think we must have a safeguard because it is always possible to have irresponsibles around.

Hon. H. L. Roche: You have not had that safeguard in the past and you have not had any abuses.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I think that we may have had some. It is not possible for the hon. member to go around to every fire to find out that information. Therefore, we do not know. I happened to be in a position not long ago where a town fire brigade was out fighting a fire. Naturally all the brigade men had some responsibility but they were not within half a mile of one section of the fire; they were at the back of it. This fire was not in the town area but in scrub country. There was one particularly dangerous spot and had the fire been able to cross the road it would have gone through three or four houses. If the fire had been left to go straight through, no road in the world would have stopped it, especially if the fire had a breeze behind it. There was nobody there to take the responsibility of lighting a break so we had to take the responsibility ourselves. That is one of the reasons why the Act must be elastic enough to allow somebody to take that authority. I think other parts of the Bill have been covered by various speakers and I will support the second reading with the proviso that in Committee I will assist other members in the amendments that have been referred to.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 to 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Section 9, amended:

Hon. H. TUCKEY: This is the clause to which I took exception when speaking on the second reading. It takes away the prohibited period and places the whole matter in the hands of the Minister to suspend the provisions of the Act and declare some other period. I am definitely opposed to this clause and I intend to vote against it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Only the other night Mr. Tuckey, when dealing with another measure, advocated the granting of greater powers to local authorities. Part of the clause under discussion will enable local authorities to request the Minister, in special circumstances, to extend the time for burning. The latter portion of the clause sets out the special purposes for which applications may be made by a local authorities. It is

an accepted principle that the more controlled fires we have, the fewer uncontrolled fires there will be. The clause will enable the period to be extended only when special circumstances apply. I explained the whole position regarding railway property during my second reading speech, and here again the applications will be for specified reasons only. The whole object of the clause is to reduce the fire hazard.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I do not object to the Minister being permitted to alter the burning period because that has been done in the past and will continue to be done in the future. My contention, however, is that no-one should be allowed to light fires after the middle of January because at that period of the year the fire hazard is at its highest. I complain about the position being left wide open, without any restrictions whatever. The period already allowed from the 15th December to the 15th January is ample to allow for give and take regarding fires. The Act with its present provisions in this respect has operated successfully, and they should be retained.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If more burning had taken place, some of the big fires that occurred in the South-West recently would not have reached such proportions. At present the Forests Department can be granted permission to light fires outside the prohibited period and in special circumstances that is desirable. It is not proposed to authorise any general burning on railway property after the 15th January, but only in special and unusual circumstances.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I support the attitude of the Minister. The application would be made by a local authority for controlled burning under unusual circumstances. In the Plantagenet district some of the country will not burn until early in the year. Members saw the position in the Rocky Gully area where controlled burning will have to be carried out and it is proposed to burn off the country in 500-acre blocks so as to protect the area as a whole. They are taking all the precautions required, but it will be necessary even now in certain areas to have controlled burning. The Plantagenet Road Board, for instance, will request the Minister to grant an extended period and they will then be able to burn and make the area safe. Then we have the Denmark area, where there is land clearing being done in heavy undergrowth country, and it will be February or March before that country burns under normal conditions.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Do you propose to do burning off in February or March?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I think it is necessary in certain areas.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I have certain sympathy with Mr. Tuckey's desire to remove this clause, although I hope the Committee will not agree to do so. I should say that his desire in this matter arises from the feeling which many of us have that Ministers naturally have to depend on their departmental officers for advice, and departmental officers are not always conversant with or very mindful at times of any other circumstances but the affairs of their departments.

Before many years have passed, I think there will be sufficient pressure brought to bear for Parliament to be asked to alter the constitution of the Bush Fires Advisory Committee for that very reason. At the moment there are six departmental officers and only three representatives of country local authorities on the committee. I can understand how Mr. Tuckey feels, and I know that the feeling is, with some justification, fairly widely held. But in view of the circumstances surrounding the measure, and the peculiar circumstances of much of the lower southern country, I hope that the Committee will not delete the clause.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think it matters whether this clause is agreed to or not. Since I have been in Parliament we have dealt with this Act many times but I do not think it makes the slightest difference to the control of bushfires. I have found that the only way to keep bushfires out of a district is for every farmer to look after his own property and plough breaks. I was in the midst of the last fires, which were within five miles of my property. Some of the farmers had taken precautions and others had not done much. The fires that burnt out the whole of the Ferguson area started more than a mile away. The forest had been alight for four or five days. Suddenly there was a howling wind, and a friend of mine was sitting on his verandah when the fire was within three-quarters of a mile of his outer boundary. Within half an hour he was burnt right out, and nothing that anyone could have done could have prevented it.

If conditions of burning are made too difficult, people will not obey the law. They are not doing so properly today. There are provisions in the measure for the officer in charge to notify people that it is a bad day for burning and they must not start fires. These men are not paid. A man may have made application a fortnight before and he may live eight to 10 miles away from the officer in charge. Moreover, he may not be on the telephone. Such an officer is not going to get into a car or jump on a horse and travel several miles to tell his neighbour not to light a fire.

Hon. H. L. Roche: That is not true of all districts.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It is true of a good many districts. Last year, the day before the burning season opened there was not

a fire to be seen anywhere from my farm. The next day there were 20 fires. Everybody waited for the opening day and lit fires. One or two out of the 20 got away. I have noticed that the day after the burning season opens fires begin.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Under this Bill that could be prevented.

Hon. L. CRAIG: How?

Hon. H. L. Roche: The number that can be lit each day can be regulated.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I have known a man who was refused permission and who hopped on his horse, rode through the bush and dropped a few matches here and there. That happens every year. I consider that where a local authority made application to the Minister, it would do so for some good reason and the clause should be agreed to because it will put the onus on the local authority if anything happens.

Hon. H. Tuckey: There is power under the existing Act. All my proposal would do would be to tie it up for a couple of months in the year—the worst time.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Does that mean there should not be power to extend beyond the 15th January?

Hon. H. Tuckey: That is right.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think that matters. I do not know that they have burnt as late as that. An attempt has been made to burn on the railway property in my area, but it is like trying to burn water, because in December that country will not burn. They will have to wait until January if they want to burn the area where I live. This about the fourth time we have amended the Act, and I do not think it has had any real effect in stopping bushfires. It may have had the effect of encouraging road boards to acquire equipment enabling them to extinguish fires, but that is about all.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The difficulty about this legislation is the great extent of country to which it applies. If I understand Mr. Tuckey aright, he is afraid that circumstances will be permitted under the Bill that will enable the burning period to be extended into February or March, which are extremely dangerous months, particularly in the northern part of the South-West Province. Further south, however, the hazard is not so great. I do not know that we should oppose this provision. Circumstances could arise in which the Minister might desire to do something which it should be open to him to do. I have here a letter from one part of the South-West which reads—

> At a bushfire brigades conference held on the 22nd instant I was directed to request your strongest support of the amendment of the Act at present before Parliament.

It was suggested to me that probably those attending the conference had not seen this measure so I made inquiries from a member in another place who was conversant with the matter, and he assured me they had all the facts before them and a copy of the Bill. In the circumstances I shall support the clause.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If there are definite prohibited dates and farmers see a fire within 20 or 25 miles of them, they will feel it their duty to go out and assist to extinguish it. But if this clause is retained and certain people are granted the right to burn during a prohibited period, everybody will not know who has been given that permission and eventually, having attended fires for the starting of which permission has been given, men will decline to go out when a fire occurs and that will break down the spirit of co-operation which we want to ensure.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am afraid you do not understand this.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I think I do. If we give permission to one or two persons to burn—

The Minister for Agriculture: We are not giving permission to any persons.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Well, the Railway Department and local authorities. If that is done, anything can happen.

Hon. H. Tuckey: I do not want to stop controlled burning, but surely 10 out of 12 months is sufficient!

Hon. G. FRASER: As a metropolitan member I do not profess to know much about bushfires, but I am trying to learn from country members. I appeal to them to deal with the points raised in the clauses and amendments. The point at issue here is whether there should be a stipulated date —the 15th January—or not. If members will debate that and that alone, I will be able to give an intelligent vote, but at present I cannot do so because almost every speaker has dealt with the whole ramifications of the Bill and the amendment before us has been clouded.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: The stipulated date is the 15th January but this amendment would give the Minister power to override that.

Hon. G. Fraser: I would ask country members to debate that point alone—the danger of altering that date.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I hope country members will heed Mr. Fraser's advice. The point is that at the request of the Railway Department the date can be varied in special circumstances. A number of local authorities have also asked for this concession, and it is thought that some controlled burning of breaks should be allowed. This deals only with permission to burn breaks and would apply to the greener country in southern districts.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The Bill provides that the Minister may grant local authorities permission to burn off after the 15th January, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed or as he thinks fit and specifies. I do not think the Minister would give such permission without laying down that residents must be advised of the date of burning.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: If 10 months or so is not sufficient time in which to do necessary burning, surely that which is not finished can stand over for a couple of months. I would remind members that it is often necessary only to drop a lighted match in the grass and, with a sudden gust of wind, the fire gets away. Some members have said that the legislation is no good, but we must do our best with it and I think we should retain the prohibited period that has been part of the law for a considerable time. If the Committee will not agree to that, then we should do away with the prohibited period.

The Minister for Agriculture: Nothing of the sort.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: If the provision is not agreed to, the Act will still provide that the prohibited period may be altered, but not after the 15th January.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Section 11 amended:

Hon. J. M. THOMSON: I intend to move an amendment to add after paragraph (d) a new paragraph as follows:—"(e) deleting the words 'it is completely extinguished' in lines 4 and 5 of paragraph (d) of Subsection (1) and inserting the words 'the fire has abated' in lieu." It is not necessary that three men should remain in attendance until the fire is completely extinguished, because they might have to remain there for days, or even weeks.

Progress reported.

BILL—PRICES CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the previous day of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

MOTION—MINING.

As to Government Advance to Prospectors.

Debate resumed from the 1st November on the following motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan:—

This House is of the opinion—

(a) that the weekly amount of 30s. per week advanced to prospectors under the Government Prospecting Scheme is quite inadequate for present day requirements; and

(b) that with a view to assisting bona fide prospectors and reviving interest in prospecting, the scheme generally should be revised and in particular the weekly advance of 30s. should be substantially increased.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [9.16]: I support the motion. I have heard the Minister paint a rosy picture of what has been done for prospectors. His statements regarding the difference between prospecting today and that which obtained in former years, are quite correct. However, I happen to be one of those who have been acquainted with prospecting activities ever since the commencement of the Goldfields, which is approximately 55 years ago. I know the value of prospectors to the State, and appreciate the good work they have done.

When one realises the benefits of the work performed by Paddy Hannan, who discovered the Golden Mile, we must give credit to that man and those like him who discovered the various goldfields, many of whom perished as a result of their endeavours. I will support the Minister in what he has said regarding the work of experts in locating various mineral lodes, but we still must have prospectors. As members will recollect, the Coolgardie field has been practically extinct for some considerable time but, as a result of the activities of two prospectors, the Baker brothers, who worked in that district, two mines have been discovered. The first show they worked was eventually sold to the Western Mining Corporation, which now employs many men on the mine which they had developed. The Baker brothers then went further afield, and discovered another mine.

That proves that a prospector still has a place in mining, apart from the experts who operate in these times because, as a result of his activities, the large companies are able to move in and take his show over. The Ora Banda district has faded into the background, and during the past two years it has been carrying on only a hand-to-mouth existence. On a visit to that centre recently, I found that many shows have been re-opened by some of these old prospectors, and as a result some extremely good crushings are going through the Ora Banda State battery.

It is true that prospectors seeking Government assistance are supplied with much material, but the other day I inspected

the tools available to prospectors. A certain number of them are quite all right, but pounds' worth of equipment is absolutely useless. The Minister stated he was doubtful whether many men would be attracted to the Goldfields at the present time, but I think it must be admitted that the amount of assistance granted to an intending prospector today is not very encouraging. Many old prospectors would not be able to exist on it, and those are the men we want to encourage to re-enter the industry. A young man can obtain employment of a better class than prospecting, which offers only a small amount for sustenance. That amount would not be adequate for his requirements in the bush and would give him a very poor standard of living on the Goldfields.

The further one goes from the metropolitan area, the more prices increase. The other day, while in a prospector's home at Higginsville, I learned that he was paying 9d. a loaf for bread railed to him from Norseman, a distance of 17 or 20 miles. A similar state of affairs exists with prospectors on the other line. That loaf is costing initially 8½d., which, plus 9d. in freight, brings the cost near enough to 1s. 6d. a loaf. In the remote Goldfields areas, 30s. is of little use with the present high cost of living. I suggest that nothing under £2 10s. or £3 would be an inducement to those men whom we need to attract into the bush to discover further mines which will be of assistance in keeping this State going.

At present, the man on the land is doing a good job by producing wool in an industry which has very attractive prospects. But the price of wool may eventually drop, as it has done in the past, and we shall have again to rely on the mining industry to develop the State, so it must be realised that now is the time to encourage prospectors to venture into new mining fields. I sincerely hope that some consideration will be given to these men. We have many State batteries, but the Minister must agree that they are only old stamp batteries which have been in existence as long as I can remember. Although not modern, they are doing a good job, but there is quite a deal of gold lost in treatment.

I suggest that the Minister should consider the provision of sulphide treatment plants on the Goldfields. In the Widgiemooltha district there is a great deal of sulphide ore which also exists in the Southern Cross area and on the Golden Mile. If sulphide treatment plants were available, it would be of great assistance to prospectors and the State generally. I repeat that men whom I have known over a period of years would go into the bush if the prospecting assistance were increased to a reasonable amount. If that were done, it would certainly encourage them to recommence prospecting activities.

HON. R. J. BOYLEN (South-East) [9.24]: I also support the motion. I do not consider that the 30s. per week allowance to prospectors is adequate today. Mr. Jones has stated that probably if the allowance were increased it would act as an inducement to older men to go prospecting instead of depending on the pensions they are receiving. Whilst there may be a certain amount of truth in that statement, I do not think that is the way to overcome the difficulty. As these men have been paying their social services tax they are justly entitled to their pensions and such a step would only be the means of allowing the State to avoid its responsibilities to these men. They should still receive their pensions in order that they might be encouraged to re-engage in prospecting because their experience would be invaluable to younger men who would follow in their footsteps.

The Minister for Transport: You are not overlooking all the other assistance that is given, are you?

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: No, I will mention that later. After the war ceased many of the young returned ex-servicemen decided that, with the savings they had, they would try their hand at prospecting. However, they found it a costly business because many of them had dependants to support and they did not have the luck they anticipated. They were forced to relinquish their occupation and take up work either on the Golden Mile or in various parts of the State. A great majority of the mines operating in Western Australia today owe their initial existence to prospectors who went out seeking this elusive metal in the early years of the present century.

By reason of the fact that mines were discovered by prospectors, companies were able to establish themselves and produce and mine a great quantity of gold. After these mines had been established, towns which began to grow around them were eventually served by railways and in turn other centres developed along the railway line which passed through agricultural and pastoral districts. Today, although many of the goldmining towns are defunct, the railways which had been built to serve them initially still exist for the benefit of many agricultural centres. When the prospecting scheme was initiated the allowance was £1 as against the 30s. granted today, but when one makes a comparison between the value of the £ in those days and its value today, one must admit that 30s. a week is not even a reasonable base to compare the value of the £ in earlier years.

It must be realised that when a prospector ventures out in search of gold, even if he is fortunate enough to discover it quickly, there are many expenses associated with the development of the show he has discovered. As the Minister has mentioned by interjection, certain other forms

of assistance are granted to a prospector apart from the 30s. monetary allowance, but nevertheless, he has many commitments to meet, in relation to his domestic affairs, for which no allowance is made available and if he cannot produce gold promptly enough, he is forced to abandon the show he may be working, and someone else is then left to reap the benefit of what should have been his good fortune.

If the allowance were increased, there would be many men eager to try their hand at prospecting, particularly in view of the high price of gold at present, and by so doing they would probably discover many new mining fields which could be developed by the larger mining companies operating in this State. It is not the big companies, in the majority of cases, that discover new fields, but the prospector who is prepared to venture out into unknown country with the hope of striking it lucky. As the Minister has mentioned, I too realise that we are depending today more on geological surveys and deep drilling than we did in the past; but for all that, those services are generally available in close proximity to areas already developed to some extent, and are utilised in the hope of finding gold which may have been missed in the past.

If it had not been for prospectors, centres such as Norseman would never have been discovered, and I think Norseman is one town that is of paramount importance to Western Australia, because of the existence in the surrounding district of pyrites on which the State will probably depend for the manufacture of superphosphate. It is doubtful whether that ore would have been discovered had it not been for the development of the mining industry. At that time it was a secondary phase of the industry but I am sure it will become of major importance now that we are unable to obtain brimstone and sulphur from oversea. The Government is giving considerable thought to using pyrites from Norseman, which is the sole source of supply to carry on with the manufacture of super, for farming operations in this State.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East—in reply) [9.32]: In concluding the debate, I would first of all like to thank members who have spoken to the motion. It is particularly gratifying that it has received the unanimous support of members representing Goldfields districts. I am also grateful to Mr. Mann who many years ago had experience on the fields, and whose sympathies are still with the people who are working and living in that part of the State. The contribution by Mr. Jones to the debate was also most welcome and, finally, I was gratified with the remarks made by the Minister himself.

As I said when moving the motion, the Minister has already indicated that he is vitally interested in the welfare of that important department of which he is in charge, and I am confident that during his regime the mining industry will recover from the rather doubtful position in which it is situated today. It would be interesting to direct members' attention to this rather important fact: Although the price of gold has been increased from £10 15s. 3d. an ounce to £15 9s. 10d. an ounce, and although the total value of gold production during the past 12 months exceeded that of the previous 12 months, over the last financial year this State produced 76,000 ounces less than it did in 1948-49. That figure should, I think, cause some alarm. If it is possible to prevent that drift, we must do so.

Hon. G. Bennetts: That is on account of the housing shortage on the Goldfields.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: It is not easy to trace this to one particular cause, but it is a trend which should be regarded with some concern. As I said when moving the motion, the outlook in our far distant mining centres is also bordering on the alarming. We know how the city is going ahead by leaps and bounds; housing schemes are in full operation, and the population here must be growing to a very great extent. In my opinion, this is not a healthy outlook. What we want in Australia is to populate the country and the far distant portions of the State, particularly the Eastern Goldfields. A number of towns which have been household names for 50 years are now almost going out of existence.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Look at the price of water there! It is 7s. 6d. a thousand gallons compared with 1s. here.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: The task of living and working in these places is difficult, and people have to be induced to reside there. We do not want them all coming to the larger centres, and particularly to the city, and I am sure the Minister and every member of this House is full seized of that position. I think it is a problem of which we need to remind ourselves frequently, and it is one of the reasons, I am sure, which has induced so many members to support the motion. We feel that prospecting is still a very important angle of the goldmining industry in spite of the advances which have been made in scientific mining, which we respect and appreciate.

Most of the people who live on the Goldfields feel that the day of the prospector is not passed. They feel that he is still an important factor in the goldmining industry and that new mines will be discovered, and must be discovered. We have not come to the end of our mineral resources in this vast State. History is sure to repeat itself, and it will be the prospector, the man who has years of experience, who has that bent and response to the lure of the outback which were so pronounced in the pioneers of years gone

by, who will be responsible for finding the new gold mines which will, we hope, be opened up in the years that lie ahead. We feel that the finding of those new mines will rehabilitate a number of these towns which are now having such a hard struggle; we believe that if our hopes are realised the whole State will benefit.

The railway which is now running up to Laverton must be running at an enormous loss because it is passing through a number of towns that are dying out, and if the present trend continues the time will assuredly arrive inside a few years when the Commissioner of Railways will be telling us that this line is not justified. I hope that sorry condition will not be realised. I am sure that the present Minister will do all he can to avoid that unhappy state, and that he will give encouragement to the prospecting industry and to the type of men who are still prepared to go into the outback. If he does so, he will be making a great contribution to mining.

In the course of his remarks, the Minister said he realised that 30s. a week today could not be compared in value with that sum pre-war. He also went on to say that if the House agreed to this motion, his Government would give sympathetic consideration to it. I sincerely hope the motion will be carried unanimously. It will be an encouragement to the Minister himself, and it will be an encouragement to people on the Goldfields. Although I do not think it would be a complete answer to all our problems, if it has the effect I believe it will of encouraging a number of good prospectors to go out and giving them the means of sustaining themselves while in search of new mines, a valuable contribution will have been made to the welfare of this State and the Goldfields in particular.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

BILL—COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [9.43] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to facilitate the administration of the parent Act by authorising the Minister for Water Supply to delegate his powers under the Act to officers of the Water Supply Department. This power of delegation is included in the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, and the Country Towns Sewerage Act, and it is desirable in the interests of the administration of the department that it be attached to the Country Areas Water Supply Act.

This object is achieved in the Bill by amending Section 7 of the Act, which states that the Act shall be administered by the Minister through the department. The Bill sets out that the Minister may delegate, in writing, his powers and functions under the Act, its bylaws and regulations, in respect to the whole or any particular part of the State. This will permit the officer nominated in the delegation to exercise the powers of the Minister, as set out in the Act, bylaws or regulations, in regard to that area of the State and those matters or classes of matters that are specified in the delegation. There are many functions set out in the Act that may be carried out only by ministerial authority, such as the opening or breaking up of roads, the raising, sinking or alteration in situation of pipes, electric lines, etc., the attachment of meters, the levying of service charges, etc.

These are all matters that should be authorised by the responsible officer in any area, thereby saving a great deal of time and work, and calls upon the Minister's time. Authority is given in the Bill for the revocation of any delegation at any time, and for any person delegated by the Minister, to possess the immunities from personal liability enjoyed by the Minister. The Act, in several places, gives the Minister discretionary powers in regard to certain matters, such as the necessity to alter the situation of water pipes, the erection of stand pipes or other prescribed fittings. The Bill provides that these discretionary powers will be possessed by the officer holding the Minister's delegation.

The Bill also provides that any delegation made by the Minister in the past shall be ratified. This is a protective provision only, inserted by the draftsman, and I understand that there is no record of the Minister having delegated his authority in the past, as he had no statutory power to do so. It will be seen, therefore, that the provisions in the Bill are similar to those included in other Acts administered by the Minister for Water Supply, and that they will assist to expedite and simplify the work of the department in rural areas, and will leave the Minister free to concentrate on matters of policy and major importance. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—MEDICAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [9.47] in moving the second reading said: This Bill proposes to amend Section 11 of the principal Act and to insert a new section to be known as Section 12A. Section 11 provides that a person may be registered as a medical practitioner in this State if he proves to the satisfaction of the Medical

Board, which is constituted under the Act, that he is the holder of a degree, obtained after due examination, in medicine and surgery of any legally constituted and recognised university in the Commonwealth of Australia or the Dominion of New Zealand, which is legally authorised to grant such degree.

Section 11 also provides that a person may be registered to practise in this State if he is registered or possesses a qualification entitling him to be registered under the Medical Acts of the Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland or any Act amending or substituted for those Acts or any of them. It is proposed by the Bill to delete this provision allowing a person to practise in this State if he is registered or possesses a qualification entitling him to be registered in Great Britain or Northern Ireland. The reason for this is that, after the last war, certain doctors with eastern European qualifications, who had served with the British Forces expressed wishes to remain permanently in Great Britain.

Normally their qualifications were not such as would permit them to practise in Great Britain. However, it was considered that their war services entitled them to special consideration, and the British legislation was amended to allow them to be registered to practise in Great Britain, provided "they were resident there other than for a temporary purpose"; in other words, that they intended to reside permanently in Britain. The intention of this proviso was that they should be registered to practise in Great Britain only, as it was realised that they did not possess the qualifications required in the Dominions. The provision in the parent Act that the Bill proposes to delete entitles any person to be registered in this State if he is registrable in the United Kingdom. The Medical Board considers that the group of foreign doctors to whom I have referred should not be entitled to be registered in Western Australia, as they might not have achieved the standard of professional training required in this State. The only reason they were registered in Great Britain was their war service and the fact they could not return to their own countries, and intended to reside permanently in the United Kingdom.

Action to exclude these persons from practising has been taken in the other States of the Commonwealth, and it is desirable that Western Australia follow suit. It so happens that one of these foreign doctors advised the Medical Board in this State that he intended to emigrate to Western Australia to practise medicine. His letter was dated 18 days prior to his registration to practise in Great Britain. This was regarded as an indication that he obtained British registration for the purpose of enabling himself automatically to register in Western Australia, the only State in Australia in which he could do so. This would have been a flagrant evasion of the provisions and intentions of the Brtish legislation.

So that graduates of universities in Great Britain and Northern Ireland will not be debarred by the amendment from practising in this State, the Bill gives them the same rights of registration as holders of Australian and New Zealand degrees. Obviously the amendment is desirable. It will not affect the original intention of the Act that duly qualified persons from the United Kingdom may practise in this State, but it will prevent foreign doctors with inferior qualifications from evading the intention of the British legislation and gaining automatic registration in Western Australia. In this regard, this State is only following the example of the other States.

It might be suggested that if these persons were allowed to practise in Western Australia, they might be willing to serve in country districts where doctors are needed. However, the amendment is unlikely to have such an effect. The problem in Western Australia is not a shortage of doctors but a difficulty in encouraging doctors to take up practice in our sparsely settled country districts. The output from Australian universities is ample to provide for the needs of Australia, but young practitioners are not attracted to country areas for the following reasons:—

1. A country practitioner in an area with a population of under 1,500 persons finds it difficult, if not impossible, to make an adequate living unless he is subsidised. Even then the terms offering are unlikely to attract the best men in the profession as the opportunity of making an independent and higher income in the city and larger country centres under better conditions is far more attractive.

2. It is bad to overwork a doctor; it is far worse to employ one in conditions in which he will be underworked. These positions would be filled by either the incompetent or the inert.

Last year 79 graduates applied for 16 vacancies at the Royal Perth Hospital, and it is surmised that the same position will arise this year. These men are trained to Australian standards, and while there are sufficient available to meet the needs of the State, there should be no provision to admit persons of inferior training. If in any area the need for local practitioners cannot be met from registered doctors, there is provision in the Act for the appointment by the Medical Board of regional practitioners. This enables the board to select the best alien doctors available from those who have the qualifications that are set out in the Act for regional doctors.

In dealing with the proposal to incorporate a new Section 12A in the Act, I should like to explain that, in 1940, the Act was amended to provide that, where any portion of the State or any hospital was not

sufficiently provided with the services of a medical practitioner and a qualified practioner was not available, the Governor could proclaim such area or hospital as a region. When this was done, the Medical Board could appoint to the region a person holding medical qualifications not registrable in this State. This person would be allowed to practise only within the boundaries of the region and his certificate of regional registration would be subject to review each year. Any person giving satisfactory regional service for seven years can be granted full registration as a medical practitioner by the Minister on the recommendation of the Medical Board.

There are some fields of medical practice which have no definable boundaries and which cannot be declared as a region in the event of there being a shortage of medical practitioners. One of these is the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service, a service which covers the whole State, and to which a permanent medical officer was attached. Unfortunately, this doctor resigned, and for some time the service was without a medical officer. A doctor is serving in the position at present, but it is not anticipated that he will remain permanently. Another example is that of the North-West Medical Service, which covers that part of the State north of Carnarvon. Doctors engaged in this area are liable to be transferred to any part of the area and are required to make urgent plane journeys over long distances.

The Bill seeks to provide that, where any medical service not limited by definable boundaries is unable to obtain the services of a registered doctor, the Governor may declare by proclamation that the service is an "auxiliary service." On this being done, it may be treated similarly to a region, and a doctor who has not qualifications required under the Act for general practice in Western Australia may be appointed by the Medical Board. No service would be declared for this purpose until exhaustive and unsuccessful efforts had been made to secure a registered doctor.

At present, there are eight foreign doctors practising in regions. In addition, four foreign doctors have served satisfactorily in regions for seven years and have been accorded full registration under the Act. In the event of Parliament agreeing to the establishment of auxiliary services, the assistance of four more alien doctors may be necessary. These would not be difficult to find as there are at least 20 alien doctors in this State who would be available for appointment.

Members will be interested to know that, by the end of this month, new graduates in medicine from Eastern States universities will be available in such numbers that all resident appointments in Western Australian hospitals will be filled. As a matter of fact, all vacancies have been booked and there is a waiting list of surplus names. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [9.58]: There are parts of this Bill that I can applaud. Firstly, there is the amendment to Section 11 of the Act proposing a change which is a good one. It is essential that the standard of medicine in the State should be protected, and it is equally essential that the door should be closed against individuals who, by registration in Great Britain, could automatically claim registration here. During the war I had an opportunity to see men of this type, because I held the position of Deputy Chairman and Executive Officer of the Medical Co-ordination Committee, and we had to deal with alien medical men who had come to this country as refugees just prior to or in the early stages of the war.

We were faced with some curious situations, such as one in which a man who had a Japanese degree was able to practise in this State during the war, although we were at war with Japan, because during peacetime Tokio degrees were reciprocal with those of the Medical Council of Great Britain, and no alteration had been made during the war. We had considerable difficulty in arranging for this medical man to practise in a defined area of the State. Eventually he chose an area for himself. We found that our regulations, even under war conditions, were difficult to carry out. We realised quite early in the piece that some alteration to our Medical Act, in regard to the registration of medical men was essential. I think this alteration to Section 11 will fill the bill.

I am not so happy about the second portion of the measure where there seems to be an attempt to mould a peacetime condition to fit into a war measure; or, shall I say, the reverse, making a wartime measure to fit peacetime conditions. The position would be much better if reviewed in the light of present conditions rather than that we should attempt to mould something on pre-existing legislation. During the war it was impossible to find general practitioners who would go into certain of our country areas.

The Minister for Transport: It is not easy now sometimes.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: That is so. It was due to two factors, firstly, that men were being called up in ever increasing numbers and, secondly, it was difficult for medical men to practise in certain areas under these conditions and gain either a sufficient livelihood or form a large enough practice to keep them occupied. As a result the regional registration was adopted,

and men who did not measure up to the registration qualifications were submitted to tests at the hospital and, if found satisfactory, were, after a certain amount of tuition both in medicine and in the language, allowed to practise in these regional areas.

I would like to say this about the regional scheme of those days, that we paid those people a miserable salary. Because they did not measure up to the standards that we laid down for registration, we accepted them to render service at a very low salary. If I remember rightly we guaranteed them a gross income of only £750 per annum which had to cover the whole of the expenses of running the practice and their own remuneration. One or two appeals were made because the persons concerned did not have gross takings equal to the guaranteed amount, small as it was. The measure does not mention the salary to be paid. Even when introducing the Bill in another place the Minister for Health did not give any idea of what salary would be paid. It would be of interest if the Minister would let us know what is contemplated in that regard. We are now attempting to do much the same thing in peacetime as was done in wartime, by simply changing the name from a regional to an auxiliary service. We are attempting to place alien doctors in auxiliary service areas.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: Where are those areas?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: An area can be declared for any part in respect of which a medical practitioner, with qualifications enabling him to secure a general registration and practice in the State, cannot be found.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: Have any been defined?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I think there are about seven regions now.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: Are they outlying districts?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Yes. During the war we had them at Nannup, Kondinin, Kununoppin, Derby, and one or two other places.

The Minister for Transport: Was the Flying Doctor one of them?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: He may have been for temporary periods. The ones I have given were the earlier regions. Unless we can make this scheme attractive in respect of conditions and salary we will not tempt our medical practitioners to join it when they can find work elsewhere. As a result we shall ask the alien doctors to go into these areas. Is that facing the situation as we should? My opinion is that the war emergency is over, and the men who are coming here as migrants are either capable of practising medicine or incapable. I do not believe that we should say to some alien doctor, "You have not got the qualifications for registration, but you can practise in the auxiliary service."

One of the auxiliary services suggested is a Red Cross blood transfusion service to which an expert must be appointed. It is not a question there of aliens in general. There would be aliens in some parts and experts in others. I feel we should look into the medical qualifications of men coming from abroad, and, if the doctors can stand up to the necessary requirements, register them. I do not think any member of the association wants to keep a man out of practice if he is capable of doing the work. I mention this because in another place, when the Bill was introduced, there seemed to be an idea that the British Medical Association laid down the conditions under which these men practise. Nothing is further from the truth.

During the war the Commonwealth Government set up the conditions under which the alien doctors could practise, because it was left to the Medical Co-ordination Committee of Australia, with its branches in the States, to hold examinations and go into the questions generally of whether these men were fit to practise. Our experience of the alien doctors, during the war and prior to it, was that only a small proportion of them could measure up to the qualifications essential for registration in Australia. There was no question of keeping them out at that time.

That was the only reason why the regional registration scheme was adopted here, and why men were sent to distant areas. It was felt that it would be grossly unfair to a man who had been called up for service and was going abroad, to return and find that an alien doctor had become established in his district during his absence. That is one of the bases on which the regional registration was commenced. Since then, in our own State, over 50 per cent. of the men who were appointed to regional registration have come to practise in the city itself. One man has done very well in his regional work, and is at present in the North-West where he will build up a large practice.

If the conditions are attractive enough we will get men. In the House just recently I paid a compliment to a British medical officer—Dr. Saint—for having been able to do post-graduate study whilst in practice in the North-West and, as a result, obtain a Membership of the Royal College of Physicians by examination. Have we in peacetime the right to establish a service to which we will appoint medical men who cannot measure up to the standard required for registration? This clause needs a good deal of thought before we pass it.

I make quite plain the fact that if a man can conform to our standards he can practise alongside of and compete with me. I would be in favour of reviewing the

whole question of professional men as migrants, and of saying that if they could do the work they could join with us; but if they could not and were unable to measure up to the standard required for the treatment of patients in Australia, they should not practise.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You would have to amend the legislation to admit them.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: That is so, but I do not see why it should not be done. The Minister is really trying to find men to go into our outback areas. We want men of great versatility, broadness of vision and wide training, and not men whose work is under standard. Therefore, we should approach the problem by altering the conditions rather than by looking for men who will accept these jobs because they cannot gain full registration. The answer lies in a reorganisation of medical services in those areas. One way to attract men to go to the North-West is to allow them to come together so that they can intermingle and consult with each other.

We should make the flying service such that they shall have contiguous areas and be able to consult together, and so that one man can give an anaesthetic for another if necessary. At times we should allow them to have spells of post-graduate work. In other words, we should provide a really true service. When it comes to the question of the more distant country areas, I am sure that the grouping of the country centres, as I suggested in the report I submitted to the Government, would produce results. The isolation of men in the country is not right because they can only maintain their professional standards while they come in contact, at least from time to time, with their fellow practitioners. The introduction of a post-graduate medical school in the State will go a long way towards solving this problem.

I am quite convinced that it does not matter whether we call it a regional service or an auxiliary service; it will not make the slightest bit of difference to the calibre of the men that we get in the service. But the alteration of conditions and an appreciation of the need to alter conditions in our outlying areas, will be the true answer to supplying a service to the people in those areas. The Minister might well hesitate before changing this to see whether some more active review—by calling to the aid of the department people who know what modern medical service is—can be made and some suggestions advanced so as to attract into our country areas some of our younger graduates, if only for a short period of time.

There is no doubt that the training and the resource, which grows with practice in the country areas, are of tremendous benefit to a man who is going to be a general practitioner in the metropolitan area. It is a training which few can despise. I had only a short time of country practice because I was always determined to specialise in medicine, but there are a large number of general practitioners who look back favourably on the days they spent in country districts. The drift of medical practitioners from the country is growing steadily and changing the name of the service will not alter it; changing the conditions may do so.

Therefore, it is essential that an investigation be made into the possible changes in the service rather than to changing its name. I trust that I have made the position quite clear and I have no real objection to what appears here but I consider it futile. It is just playing with the question and the whole subject of our outback and country areas must be reorganised and looked at in the light of modern medical service. We should have a changed attitude to those professional men who have come here from other parts of the world. Unfortunately many of those men have specialised in some small branch of medicine which is not happily looked upon in this country, but there are many men who could still be of real service if they were given further training and if the conditions under which they were trained were such as to attract them.

Then, if we feel they are qualified, let us give them a general registration throughout the State, but let us get rid, once and for all, of the idea that we can admit into this country, under certain conditions, men who do not measure up to standards and then ask them to go out and take part in the medical service in the outback and country districts. Men of resource and training are needed in those areas and are essential if the service to the people of this State is to be improved.

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

House adjourned at 10.19 p.m.