

75 feet in front of the car, and that beam will hit the road long before the possible stopping distance of 167 feet is reached.

This fact is recognised by most people, particularly officials of the R.A.C., who erect warning signs on the roads—cat's eye signals—because they are placed at a greater height than three feet from the ground. Had this not been done, the cat's eye signals would be useless. The regulations of 1936 quoted "the main beam of light," but no definition of the term was given, and, owing to its indefiniteness, a considerable amount of confusion has been created. On the 18th November, 1938, another regulation was promulgated, which altered "the main beam" to "any beam of light." It is known to those who have studied headlighting arrangements that there is not a set of headlights in this State that conforms to the regulations.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: And if they do, they are dangerous.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. They do not conform to the regulations because every lamp sends its rays of light almost vertically. According to the regulations, at 75 feet, with the lights three feet above the ground, it is impossible to keep the beam down because the ray is thrown upwards. Some alteration should be made in the headlighting regulations because a lot of accidents are caused through glaring headlights.

There should be a regulation making compulsory the use of a dipping device, either down or sideways to the left, on every motor vehicle. Quite a number of vehicles have a dipping device, though it is not compulsory, and quite a number have none. In New Zealand, a regulation was promulgated in 1939 requiring a dipping device of four inches in every 10 feet, and that regulation has operated successfully. Most cars in England have a dipping device that I think could well be adopted here. This consists of small mechanical means whereby the headlights may be dipped to the left, thus showing the driver of the vehicle the left side of the road, with which he is particularly concerned, and also deflecting the beam from the eyes of the oncoming driver.

Just before the war, experts introduced a device known as polaroid glass that they thought would eliminate all glare if installed in headlight covers and windscreens. At that time, however, the cost was prohibitive,

and I understand that since then the process of making polaroid glass has become even more expensive. A study of the regulations, I believe, would convince most people that motorists cannot safely travel on country roads at permissible speeds if their lights are adjusted to meet the requirements of the official tests. But what does take place under the present regulations is that the owner has his headlights focussed so that they pass the regulation as far as the metropolitan area is concerned; and he alters the focus, where it is easily adjustable, as soon as he gets out of the metropolitan area if he is going on a long country journey. In effect, that is what takes place. I hope greater study of this headlight trouble will be undertaken by the Traffic Department. As I have said, I believe the police are doing a very good job, particularly in general work, but their control of traffic in the metropolitan area is open to improvement.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.2 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 12th November, 1947.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lient.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Road Districts Act Amendment (No. 1).
- 2, Water Boards Act Amendment.

QUESTIONS.**TRAFFIC.**

As to Obstruction Caused by Latrines.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Does the Minister realise that there have been many accidents in which the latrines situated at the corners of Barrack and William-streets, and St. George's-terrace, have been involved?

(2) Why does one of these extremely dangerous obstructions carry an ironic notice, reading "Safety first, raise a hand and save a life?"

(3) As these latrines are in an area congested by the public using both bus services and the latrines, will the Government take immediate action to have them removed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is known that there have been a number of such accidents but few of them have taken place at a time when traffic is congested.

(2) The Safety First Council requested the Perth City Council to permit the erection of the notice and, after consideration, the Perth City Council agreed.

(3) At the suggestion of the Perth City Council the Government has taken steps to amend the Municipal Corporations Act now before Parliament with a view to enabling the Perth City Council to give consideration to the removal.

STATE GOVERNMENT BOARDS.

As to Number and Remuneration of Members.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) How many boards are operating under the State Government?

(2) How many members of such boards are receiving remuneration?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The attached statement (laid on the Table) sets out the principal boards, trusts, commissions, etc., as at the 30th June, 1947.

(2) This information would require considerable compilation as it would have to be obtained from all departments.

IRON-ORE AND MANGANESE.

As to Treatment, etc.

Hon. H. A. C. DAFFEN (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Will the Government consider the treating of iron ore from Yampi Sound at Geraldton in view of the probable suitability of Eradu coal for dust injection furnaces?

(2) Is the Government aware of the existence of manganese at Tenindewa?

(3) In view of the fact that there is a body of high grade ore at Talling, will the Government take this into consideration also?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Action has been taken to produce Eradu coal for boiler testing and until the result is known consideration regarding the treating of iron ore with this coal must be deferred.

(2) Yes. Reference appears in Mines Department publications.

(3) Yes.

HOUSING.

As to Formula for Determining Fair Rent.

Hon. A. THOMSON (on notice) asked the Minister for Mines:

What is the basis or formula used by the Housing Commission to determine what is a fair rent for the following types of homes:—

- (1) Four-roomed brick?
- (2) Five-roomed brick?
- (3) Four-roomed timber and asbestos?
- (4) Five-roomed timber and asbestos?
- (5) Capital cost of each such home?
- (6) Average cost of land per home?

(7) Average squares of each of the foregoing types of home?

(8) Weekly rent of each home?

The MINISTER replied:

(1), (2), (3) and (4) The economic rent of any dwelling is calculated in accordance with the formula laid down in paragraph 4 of the First Schedule to the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement Act, 1945 (No. 25 of 1945).

(5) The capital cost of houses constructed under the Commonwealth-State Rental Housing Scheme is calculated in accordance with the provisions of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the First Schedule to the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement Act, 1945.

At the present time building costs in the metropolitan area are approximately as follows:—

Brick 4-roomed, £1,100; brick 5-roomed, £1,250; timber 4-roomed, £1,015; timber 5-roomed, £1,150.

(6) £60.

(7) 1. Four-roomed brick, 1,185 square feet, including verandahs; 2. Five-roomed brick, 1,470 square feet, including verandahs; 3. Four-roomed timber, 1,125 square feet, including verandahs; 4. Five-roomed timber, 1,375 square feet, including verandahs.

(8) 1. Four-roomed brick, £1 7s. per week; 2. Five-roomed brick, £1 10s. per week; 3. Four-roomed timber, £1 6s. per week; 4. Five-roomed timber, £1 9s. per week.

BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

1, Companies Act Amendment (No. 2).
Introduced by Hon. A. L. Loton.

2, Dried Fruits.

Introduced by the Honorary Minister.

3, University of Western Australia Act Amendment.

4, Factories and Shops Act Amendment.
Received from the Assembly.

BILLS (4)—REPORTS.

1, Stallions Act Amendment.

2, Municipal Corporations Act Amendment (No. 2).

3, Road Districts Act Amendment (No. 2).

4, Street Photographers.

Adopted.

BILL—CHILD WELFARE.

Recommittal.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clause 62.

In Committee.

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

Clause 62—Penalty for ill-treating ward apprenticed, etc.:

The HONORARY MINISTER: I desire to make an explanation. Yesterday I promised Mr. Latham that I would obtain some information for him, but he has since informed me that he is satisfied with the clause as it stands. Therefore the information is not required. In order to meet the objection raised by Mr. Bolton, I have prepared an amendment which I consider will get over the difficulty. I move an amendment—

That in line 5 after the word "court" the words "acting in co-operation with the Arbitration Court" be inserted.

The Children's Court would thus act in co-operation with the Arbitration Court before a child could be discharged from apprenticeship.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The amendment suits me.

Hon. G. FRASER: I oppose the amendment. It is rather awkward at the moment, as Mr. Davies has an amendment which I consider will meet the situation, but he cannot move it before the Honorary Minister's amendment is disposed of. I suggest that Mr. Davies outline his amendment and then we shall know better what the effect of the Honorary Minister's amendment will be.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have had opinions from lawyers and others and have consulted the Child Welfare Department on this amendment. They all agree that it is eminently suitable as it will provide a safeguard, which is that no apprenticeship can be discharged unless the two courts decide the matter. I can see no objection to that procedure at all and I hope

the Committee will agree to the amendment.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: The suggestion of the Honorary Minister will overcome the difficulty. I have maintained, and still do, that a registered apprentice should only be released through the Arbitration Court. This simply permits of co-operation between the Children's Court and the Arbitration Court. If a case came before the Arbitration Court for discharge, the Child Welfare Department would take it. There can be no objection.

Hon. G. FRASER: The objection I raise is that, notwithstanding the Honorary Minister's addendum, the Children's Court will still have power to cancel the apprenticeship. That power will, therefore, remain in two distinct Acts, even though the Children's Court will have to collaborate with the Arbitration Court. Notwithstanding the addendum, we will still be leaving the right to the Children's Court to discharge a child from his apprenticeship or license.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Subject to the Arbitration Court.

Hon. G. FRASER: But that is the court which will do it. Why give this court power to do it when there is a body already set up for the purpose? We should confine the cancellation of apprenticeships to the Arbitration Court.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I cannot understand Mr. Fraser's objection. Surely the Children's Court would know more about the circumstances of the wards of the State.

Hon. G. Fraser: It would not know more about apprenticeships.

The HONORARY MINISTER: In a way, it would know considerably more. By acting in collaboration with the Arbitration Court, we provide every safeguard. This would not happen unless the foster-parent were put in prison or did something he should not do. Those who would know all about it would be the officers of the Child Welfare Department and the Children's Court. This safeguards the whole position. It has been on the statute-book since 1907, and no difficulties have arisen.

Hon. G. Fraser: The point has never before been raised.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Apprenticeships have been cancelled under Sections

62 and 63 of the Act, and they have been cancelled in consultation with the Arbitration Court. Mr. Bolton is right, and I take back what I said yesterday. At present, the department confers with the Arbitration Court.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I think Mr. Fraser has put up a very strong case. The Child Welfare Department would make a straightforward application to cancel the apprenticeship, and it would only do so where the foster-parent was the employer and the child was apprenticed to him.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am more concerned about the child than any little bit of extra procedure.

The Honorary Minister: So is everyone.

Hon. G. FRASER: If the application is made to the Arbitration Court, there is more chance of the child's being transferred to some other employer, because the Arbitration Court officials, who are handling the whole of the apprenticeship agreements, would have a full knowledge of the position in a particular trade and could make suggestions about a transfer. If the apprenticeship is cancelled, the child loses the whole of the time he has already put in, whether it be one month or three years. It is an entirely different matter with a transfer. By making the Arbitration Court the only authority able to cancel the indenture, there will be a greater opportunity for a ward to be transferred to another employer, and so retain the advantage of the time he has served.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Arbitration Court has nothing to do with finding another apprenticeship for the ward until asked to do so by the Children's Court or the Child Welfare Department. There are other matters to be attended to in connection with such a child. The court sends him back to the institution pending another apprenticeship being found for him. Both courts are necessary to deal with the case in the interests of the child.

Hon. G. FRASER: I want to see that the child gets the best opportunities.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You do not appear to have had much experience in this line.

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not say that the Arbitration Court would fix up the child, but the officials of that court would know

the conditions in the particular trade concerned. I have sufficient confidence in those officials to know that they would pass on the information. When an application for cancellation comes in, the court has to be satisfied that there is no other way out. I want to avoid cancellation, if possible.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: This is not a cancellation. It says "discharge."

Hon. G. FRASER: If it is a discharge, it is a cancellation.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: A transfer would be a discharge.

Hon. G. FRASER: Now we are getting into legal technicalities. Mr. Davies has foreshadowed an amendment dealing with the point I am raising and I hope consideration will be given to it. If this clause is carried, it will automatically rule out the suggestion that will be offered by the hon. member. I am afraid that the proposal of the Honorary Minister will be to the detriment of the child.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The interest of all of us is in the welfare of the child. That is one of the things the department lives for. My amendment has been moved after consultation with the department. My opinion is that the welfare of the child is wrapped up in the two courts. There is more than one job to be done with respect to the child and what is proposed is the best way to do what is necessary.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I can see nothing wrong with the amendment proposed by the Honorary Minister, though I doubt its necessity. It will however clarify the situation as between the Children's Court and the Arbitration Court. The section concerned is designed simply to give the court power to protect the child from some foster parent who is ill-treating it. It also states that the child can be discharged or the court may order it to be discharged from its apprenticeship.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Apprenticeship with the foster parent?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Yes. The Children's Court and the Arbitration Court between them will either discharge or cancel the apprenticeship with the foster parent who is ill-treating it.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Would the court transfer?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Yes. It would prevent him from jeopardising the interests of the child. I support the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Seeing that the amendment of the Honorary Minister has been accepted, no good purpose will be served in moving the amendment I had forecast. I had not time in which to place that amendment on the notice paper last night. My object was to afford protection to the ward of the State who is apprenticed, and to ensure that if an offence had been committed by the employer, the child would not suffer.

Hon. G. FRASER: Would not the Honorary Minister accept some portion of Mr. Davies' proposed amendment?

Hon. A. Thomson: We do not know what it is.

Hon. G. FRASER: The amendment was to provide that arrangements could be made for the child to be taken out of its apprenticeship or licensed elsewhere, or discharged from such apprenticeship. The Bill contains nothing about making arrangements elsewhere; only for the discharge of the child. I should like some provision inserted so that negotiations can be commenced for the child to continue its apprenticeship elsewhere. Arrangements should be made first for the continuance of the apprenticeship or license elsewhere, or failing that, for the child's discharge from its apprenticeship.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I had a talk with the Child Welfare Department this afternoon. In the interests of the child I desire to make this legislation watertight. I am told that every three months a committee reviews the position of every child under the control of the Child Welfare Department in these institutions. Through that committee the child's interests are safeguarded. If a child is sent back to an institution its position will be reviewed by the committee, which consists of two men and two women. The fact of a child entering into an apprenticeship in the first place must signify that it will be sent out again on the first possible occasion. The department does not desire to keep children in institutions.

Hon. E. H. Gray: The proposal would do no harm.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, but it is unnecessary. The department could have no object in keeping a child in an institution. Its desire is to get the children out into some employment.

Hon. G. Fraser: What we are worried about is the cancellation of the apprenticeship and the loss of time.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Everything has been all right in that respect since 1907.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [5.10]: This Bill is long overdue. The Commonwealth regulations superseded the State legislation of 1939 and that was for war purposes only. A grave injustice has been done to many people who during years of thrift and savings had visions of keeping their own homes when they had reached retiring age. Many of them were, by virtue of their employment, sent hither and thither at the will of Government departments. They had retired compulsorily through age after 1939, and found themselves not only compelled to accept the rent based on the 1939 provisions, but unable to live in their own homes.

I wrote to the Attorney General recently drawing attention to a case of grave hardship. A civil servant who had served for 44 years had to retire through old age. After paying into the superannuation fund for a long time, he was able to draw his pension for only two years. His widow received £2 a week from the fund. Unfortunately the woman is losing her eyesight. She is compelled to pay £2 a week for bed and breakfast. It is time the Price Fixing Commissioner inquired into the extortionate prices for bed and breakfast. Those prices are absurd. This couple had by thrift and self-denial got together a home for themselves in which they hoped to en-

joy their declining years. As it was occupied when the Act was passed they were unable to obtain possession of it.

The widow is paying income tax on her superannuation payment and the rent she receives brings in a little under £1 a week. She has to find £16 a year for income tax on the rent. If she were living in her own home she would save that £16 and have the comforts she should be enjoying. If she could get into her own house she would be much happier. She has no relations. It is grossly unfair that State legislation should be over-ridden by the Commonwealth regulations and that this woman has to go to court to obtain what is really hers. Many other people are in the same position. She is compelled to live without a home and at any time she may be called upon to give up the key of her room.

I very much regret that we are not able to go further than is provided in this Bill. I have been endeavouring to secure information about the formula or basis upon which the standard rent is fixed. According to the Act the standard rent is the rent prevailing on the 1st August, 1939. However, when people ask how the standard rent is arrived at, I have been unable to give them the information because I cannot get it. All I can discover is the reference to the rent in 1939. When it comes to court proceedings, we are told that the rent is that which would be charged for a similar type of place in the vicinity. This Bill provides that a rent inspector shall determine a fair rent for a room or rooms. How can the rent inspector decide that question? The Act lays down that the court shall take into consideration the amount being paid for land of similar type in the vicinity.

The object of the Bill, however, is to appoint an inspector to investigate this racketeering, as I term it, under which people who are paying only what may be termed a fair rent for a house are charging extortionately for the rooms they let. As no formula is laid down, there is no basis on which to fix a fair rent. How then can an inspector determine what is a fair rent for rooms which these racketeers have been charging people who had need of a roof over their heads during the last seven or eight years? I believe that the Attorney General, in framing the Bill, was not able

to go as far as he would have desired. I have no wish to see rents mount sky high.

This afternoon I asked the Minister a question with a view to ascertaining the formula, and his reply was that the capital cost of houses constructed under the Commonwealth-State rental scheme is calculated in accordance with the provisions contained in the first schedule to the Act of 1945. According to the Minister's reply, a fair rent is set down as follows for the various types of homes:—

Four-roomed brick house £1 7s. per week

Five-roomed brick house £1 10s. per week

Four-roomed timber house £1 6s. per week

Five-roomed timber house £1 9s. per week

I was surprised to find that a five-roomed brick house is assessed at only 1s. more per week than is a house of timber and asbestos.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Have those homes electric current laid on?

Hon. A. THOMSON: All amenities are provided in those homes. I approve of the proposal in the Bill to empower the inspector to fix a fair rent. We have heard of people who are paying only a very nominal rent and have let a room and derive as much rent from the room as they are paying for the whole house. Thus they have been living rent free and in some instances making a profit, and have been profiteering on the defenceless public. I approve of the provision to prevent the offering or paying of a larger sum in order to obtain a tenancy. Our legislation provided that nobody should be permitted to draw more than a fair rent, but apparently the provision could not be enforced, except where the standard rent had been fixed. This provision should be helpful in enabling the department to deal with those persons who have definitely been robbing tenants by charging extortionate rents either for a house or for the use of a room and conveniences.

When I arrived in Western Australia about 53 years ago, there was a serious shortage of houses. In those days, of course, there were not so many restrictions and regulations, and permits were not required in order to purchase a small quantity of material to build a couple of rooms. There was no Housing Commission to build homes with all modern conveniences. Still, when we read the advertisements inserted by people begging for a room for a married

couple with perhaps one child, we realise how difficult the housing position has become. The Government should seriously consider the question of allowing men to do as I and many others did 50 years ago. We bought a block of land and put up the shell of two rooms and thus got a roof over our heads. Under existing conditions, it is impossible for people to do that. Many people in the metropolitan area are paying as much as 30s. a week for a room with the use of kitchen; some of them are paying as much as £3 a week. The Government should facilitate people building homes for themselves as I and others did 50 years ago.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Some of them still exist. That is the trouble.

Hon. A. THOMSON: But many people will simply be unable to get homes for themselves under existing conditions, and that is the tragedy of it. Scores of homes were built in the way I have described. At the outset we had no roads and water was not laid on; there was no electric light; there were no modern conveniences, but from small beginnings we got a roof over our heads and made homes for ourselves. Hundreds of men in Western Australia, if given a similar opportunity, would be only too ready to erect a couple of rooms for a start and then gradually build extensions.

Presently the workers are to have a 40-hour week. Quite a large number of workers do not want to spend their Saturdays at the races or at S.P. betting shops, though if one takes a trip in a motor car, one will see plenty of men spending their leisure trying to back winners. That is their recreation and probably often their downfall. On the other hand, there are many men who would prefer to devote their leisure to useful work and help their mates to get homes of their own. If something were done along those lines, I am sure it would be effective in easing the housing shortage.

Often I say to myself, "Fifty years ago that place consisted of only two rooms. It is where I made a start." Today it is a nice house. Many people would be satisfied with two rooms provided the property belonged to them. Certainly many would prefer it to being herded in one room with no comfort and no hope of getting a home. Apart from the comfort that a small home would give the occupants, much pleasure

is derived from building up a home in the way I have described. The adoption of this suggestion would meet the needs of many workers, not only in the city, but also in the country areas. I have placed on the notice paper an amendment that I hope members will support when considering the Bill in Committee. I desire to delete certain words in the proposed new Section 6B with a view to re-inserting the provision that was submitted to the Legislative Assembly in the first place by the Attorney General.

It seems to be time that something was done. Wages have ceased to be pegged and are rising, and restrictions have been lifted from other commodities. Members of the Federal Parliament have been gracious enough to increase their salaries by £500 a year and yet we deny the right to a person who has been struggling for years to save and get a home of his own, to obtain possession of it as a result of the unfortunate circumstances which obtained in 1939. This measure was introduced to restrict an increase of rent during wartime and for other relative purposes. The war has been over for several years, yet a gross injustice is being done to a large section of the people by this Act. In my opinion we were stampeded into passing this legislation. If a Bill were introduced now with as many restrictions as this measure contains, it would receive very short shrift, and there would be a much keener appreciation of the difficulties of many people whose interests we have so seriously affected.

I support the second reading, but I would like it to be possible for us to go further. I congratulate the Government on doing what it has done, but the position is that on account of restrictions we have not been able to do justice to a considerable number of people. When we reach the Committee stage, or when he is replying to the debate, I would like the Minister to be good enough to indicate on what basis the inspector who will be appointed will make his valuation of a fair rent. I have inquired from estate agents and from Government officials, and all the information I can obtain is that the standard rent is that which was in force in 1939 and nothing more or less. This is very important, because if we are going to appoint an inspector he should have some basis of arriving at what is a fair rent.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. S. W. Parker—Metropolitan-Suburban—in reply) [5.35]: I do not intend to reply to all the remarks made by Mr. Thomson on housing. I propose to confine my remarks to this measure. I could not quite follow many of the hon. member's arguments. He stated that he quite agreed we should not permit the selling of a key. He agrees, in other words, that there should be no black marketing. At the same time he says we should lift the lid entirely and permit a free-for-all so that people can charge whatever rent they like. I cannot agree with him.

With the extraordinary shortage of housing and materials, it is not possible to remove this measure from the statute-book. What has happened is that an endeavour has been made to prevent profiteers from renting a house and sub-letting the rooms at an enormous profit. I will also apply to have the measure amended to include caravans, in connection with which there has been shocking profiteering. It is obviously impossible to set out a formula for the fixing of rent. If the hon. member can give me one to cover all the extraordinary circumstances and different localities, I shall be only too pleased to submit it.

Hon. A. Thomson: How do you expect the inspector to define a fair rent?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the hon. member will listen, I will endeavour to explain the position. The fact that we cannot get a formula does not mean we must let the present position remain. We will do the next best thing, which is to appoint a man of experience to take evidence. There is nothing new about fixing rents. Such a provision is to be found in the Act at present.

Hon. A. Thomson: A similar type in a similar vicinity.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. There is a provision in the Act at present which is in operation. When a landlord feels that he is not getting sufficient rent, he applies to the court, which, on the evidence, fixes what seems to be a fair rent in all the circumstances.

Hon. A. Thomson: As long as it is not above that of 1939.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, above 1939. Section 6 provides that there shall be taken into consideration—

(iv) the existence of special circumstances which in the opinion of the court make it just and reasonable that the rent shall be in excess of or less than the standard rent.

A person may go to the court at any time he likes and have the rent fixed. We can visualise many instances where the standard rent—that is to say, the rent prevailing in August, 1939—is far too high for the premises now. Take country towns where the population has shifted. In such cases a tenant may apply to have his rent reduced. Then there are those circumstances where, on account of the demand for houses and other considerations, a landlord may feel that the rent should be increased in conformity with those applying elsewhere, and seek a variation.

The only way to obtain a fair rent is by taking all the surrounding circumstances into consideration. If a person is paying £3 a week for a 10-roomed house, is it fair to charge £1 a week for each one of the rooms? Again, can any particular amount be fixed as a general charge for each of the rooms in that house? A rent must be fixed for each particular room. One may be worth 10s. a week and another 30s. It depends on size, position and conveniences. It is impossible to lay down a formula. But by this Bill we appoint an inspector so that applicants may obtain a speedy fixation of a fair rent without the necessity of going to court.

Hon. A. Thomson: I approve that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Well, we cannot do anything better than appoint an inspector who will do his utmost in that direction. The hon. member said he had inquired from land agents and they could not evolve any formula. Neither can I, and I doubt whether any member could.

Hon. A. Thomson: I do not agree.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the hon. member can present any formula, I shall be pleased to consider it.

Hon. A. Thomson: You say it is impossible.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I say it is absolutely and entirely impossible to fix a formula, and I will be only too happy if I can be corrected.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Could it not be based on the valuation of the premises?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is the old, old story. Some of these plates cost a tremendous amount of money to build and they have only four rooms. Another building with eight or 10 rooms may have cost very little to build. What a rush there would be for a room in the larger house in comparison with one in a smaller. If we are going to charge according to a formula based on the cost of the premises, will it be based on the cost when the building was erected many years ago or on the present value? An old house may provide excellent and better accommodation than a new one. In a modern building the roof may leak, whereas in an old building it may not. Every circumstance must be taken into consideration and that can only be done by an inspector who is able to judge what a fair rent would be. Unfortunately it is necessary, in view of the many shortages, for us to continue this measure. The hon. member mentioned that when he came here 53 years ago, people were able to build their own houses.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That was before you were born.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, about 10 years. In those days there was abundance of materials. Now it is not a question of a man having money or land but a question of obtaining supplies.

Hon. A. Thomson: You cannot get materials without a permit.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Materials cannot be obtained with a permit. That is the trouble. There are complaints that people have permits and cannot secure the commodities. We are doing our very best to obtain materials for housing in Collie in order that more men may go there to win more coal and then we might be able to proceed a little further. We cannot build Government hospitals and schools because of lack of materials. So what is the use of the hon. member talking about giving men permits and they will build? Yes, they would, if we let them loose on the black market. But who would derive the benefit? It would be the wealthy and not the poor and needy, those with large families, living in one room.

Hon. A. Thomson: Let people get a couple of rooms erected and they will be much more comfortable to live in.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We are doing our best.

Hon. A. Thomson: I am not saying you are not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We are doing our best. All through his speech the hon. member has implied we are not doing our best. He made a speech on housing, not on this Bill. We are doing what we can.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I am glad to hear him say your Government is not doing its best. The other Government was criticised enough.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There was a certain amount of justification in each instance. We are doing our best to get the materials. I would point out to Mr. Bennetts that the hours of labour are less and hence the time for the production of these necessities is shorter and the matter is becoming more difficult every day. I hope members will see fit to pass this Bill. I am sure they will, because it is an endeavour to prevent black marketing in rents at the expense of poor people who can only get accommodation in one or two rooms or in caravans.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clause 1—Short Title:

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 after the word "and" the figure "5" be inserted.

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

Clause 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 2:

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I move an amendment—

That in line 1 after the word "by" the following words be inserted—

(a) inserting after the word "thereof" in line 2 of the definition of "Land" the words "and includes a caravan while used as a dwelling, and any land and conveniences occupied or enjoyed in any connection therewith."

(b) adding at the end of the definition of "Lease" the words "and includes an agreement for a license for a caravan to occupy land for any period during which the caravan is to be used, or is being used as a dwelling," and by inserting in line 2 before the word "inserting" the letter and parentheses "(c)", and further by adding at the end of the definition of "Share accommodation" the following proviso—

"Provided that 'Share accommodation' shall include a caravan while used as a dwelling and any land and conveniences occupied or enjoyed in connection therewith."

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am glad that this amendment has been moved by the Minister. An employee of the Kalgoorlie Council recently came from Port Pirie. He obtained a block of land but was unable to have a house built, and under the bylaws was not permitted to place the caravan on his block. Consequently he had to live in his caravan in the bush. When the Bill becomes law this provision will allow him to live on his block in the caravan until he can get a home built.

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

Clauses 4 and 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Sections 6A and 6B added:

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That in proposed new Section 6B the words "by leave of the court charge the standard rent aforesaid as from a date to be fixed by the said Court. In the event of an existing lease the lessor shall give two weeks' notice in writing of his intention to apply to the Court for leave charge the standard rent as aforesaid," be struck out and the following words inserted in lieu—

"at any time charge the standard rent aforesaid without committing any breach of this Act. In the event of an existing lease the lessor shall, without terminating the tenancy, give two weeks' notice in writing of intention to return to the standard rent and at the expiration of such notice the rent for such premises shall be the standard rent and the lessee shall be liable to pay the lessor, and the lessor shall be entitled to recover from the lessee, such standard rent notwithstanding any provisions of the lease to the contrary."

I think this will be a decided improvement on the present provision. I have a copy of the original Bill as first submitted in the Legislative Assembly, and I find that I prefer this provision, which was in the original Act and was submitted by the Attorney General. Why should an

owner have to go to the court to get ordinary justice?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: When the Bill was in Committee in another place it was amended to its present form, which was accepted by the Attorney General. As the Bill stands it looks as though the landlord will have to go to the court before he can raise the rent, and it might be more reasonable that the tenant, who will derive benefit, should appeal to the court. If rents are raised to the standard rent, I do not think there will be one appeal among hundreds of cases. Perhaps we should give the tenant the right of appeal.

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

Clauses 7 to 13, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—INDUSTRY (ADVANCES).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [6.0]: The main features of the Bill evidently are intended to extend the powers of the Commissioners of the Rural and Industries Bank. When the original Act regarding that institution was passed, it contained certain limitations. Under the amending Bill now before the House, the Treasurer is to have the right to render financial assistance to the mining and other industries that he considers deserve aid. This measure will have far-reaching effects and if it is implemented in the correct way, the benefits accruing to the State must be very great. When one contemplates the possibilities of industries such as the Chamberlain factory, the opening of the iron ore deposits at Yampi Sound and coal mining operations at Eradu, all of which would come within the purview of this legislation and could be granted financial assistance, one realises that obviously the State must derive considerable benefit in consequence. That is practically the objective of the Bill, and I will be interested as the debate proceeds to note whether other points arise. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. G. B. Wood—East) [6.3] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to amend the Rural and Industries Bank Act and, with safeguards, to give the Commissioners of the bank wider powers than they possess at present. Under the parent Act which was passed two or three years ago, the Commissioners were restricted to a maximum of £10,000 for advances. Section 58 of the Rural and Industries Bank Act restricts those advances. I will read that section to make it quite clear to hon. members—

Subject as in this paragraph hereafter provided, no such loan shall be of less amount than fifty pounds or more than ten thousand pounds to any one person.

Provided that, where the applicant is already indebted to the Bank by virtue of any security given to or held by the Agricultural Bank and by this Act transferred to and vested in the Bank, the amount of the loan which may be made to the applicant may be equal to the amount (if any) by which the sum of ten thousand pounds exceeds the amount of his said indebtedness and such further amount in excess of such ten thousand pounds as the Commissioners are of the opinion is necessary to enable a borrower already indebted to the Bank in the manner aforesaid to do any of the following things namely:—

It then goes on to say what they can do. This amending Bill seeks to eliminate that section and make the amount to be advanced almost without limit.

Hon. L. Craig: As with an ordinary trading bank.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is so. The reason is that with the impending possibility of the nationalisation of the banks—in fact, we must assume it is more than a possibility, but rather a certainty—

Hon. G. Fraser: You are pretty right there.

The HONORARY MINISTER:—we must anticipate that the business of the Rural and Industries Bank will increase enormously. It is hard to visualise at the moment the possible extent of that increased business. No matter what people may think of a State bank or a Commonwealth bank, we in Western Australia will be inclined to patronise the State bank. I know I will; I shall have no hesitation about it.

Hon. E. M. Davies: We had a State Savings Bank once. What happened to it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Particularly in view of the proposals that are being implemented to bring about the nationalisation of banking, I have no hesitation in that respect. I believe people here have very strong views on the matter as they have in Victoria, and will not patronise the Commonwealth Bank if there is another with which to transact their business. I believe this Bill will make it possible for the Rural and Industries Bank to take over all the business which will come to it.

Hon. E. M. Davies: It will be a State bank.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I can see a great future and great success for the Rural and Industries Bank. It is desirable that the Commissioners shall have the powers contained in the amending Bill to meet all contingencies.

Hon. G. Fraser: You will not give it away like you did the State Savings Bank?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Our Government was forced to do so by your crowd.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not think we will go into that question at the moment. Mr. Fraser may have been too young to remember the terrible conditions during the depression, when we did not have very much say in Western Australia as to whether we would hold the State Savings Bank or whether the Commonwealth Government would take it over. The Government of the day had its hand forced and had no option in the matter.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: And the agitation was fostered by Labour members.

Hon. L. Craig: And the Commonwealth Bank.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not think this is an opportune moment to bring up the question of the handing over of the State Savings Bank.

Hon. G. Fraser: You brought it up.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You did, by interjection.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If the Government can possibly avoid it, no matter what Party is in power, the State Rural and Industries Bank will not be handed over to the Commonwealth.

Hon. G. Fraser: Our Party would not do that, but yours did.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not think that interjection is worth answering. We are dealing with the State Rural and Industries Bank and I do not think that position will arise.

Hon. G. Fraser: We hope not.

Hon. G. W. Miles: At any rate, interjections are highly disorderly.

Hon. G. Fraser: Then what about yours?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Bill contains another amendment to Section 46 which is consequential upon the other. That section further empowers the Commissioners to do certain things. They can grant overdrafts payable on demand to persons who are depositors of money in the bank whether carrying on any rural industry or other industry or not, on the security of land, crops, wool, livestock, plant or machinery, personal security, guarantees, promissory notes, bills of exchange or any other security approved of by the Commissioners. The amending section removes the restriction, in that the Commissioners will no longer be limited to a maximum advance of £10,000 but will be required to keep within the limit of 70 per cent. of the bank's value of the security.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That is very generous.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I think so too. The Bank of New South Wales has a limit of 60 per cent.

Hon. G. Fraser: Most of them allow 60 per cent.; some allow 50 per cent.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Only in some cases where good cause is shown, may a greater amount than 70 per cent. be allowed and I will enumerate some of those good causes. Sometimes we have what are known as guilt-edged securities, and I think the Commissioners should have the right to grant a higher amount.

Hon. L. Craig: Who will determine what is a guilt-edged security?

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Commissioners. Why not? If I came in to the bank with £10,000 worth of Commonwealth bonds and wished to raise a loan rather than sell them, surely I would

get more than 70 per cent. of their value. That would be subject to the safeguards provided in the Bill. I need say no more about the measure, but if any further information is desired I will gladly make it available to members. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. G. B. Wood—East): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday the 18th November, 1947.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 12th November, 1947.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Road Districts Act Amendment (No. 1).
- 2, Water Boards Act Amendment.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. Ackland and Minister for Education.

MR. ACKLAND: I wish to make a personal explanation. Certain personal references made by me last evening concerning the Minister for Education were made, I find, under a misapprehension regarding certain of the facts. I desire to withdraw such personal references, although I do not in any way modify the views I expressed in connection with the subject under discussion at that time, namely, Communism.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Feeble!

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Native Administration Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Native Affairs.

- 2, Royal Style and Titles.

- 3, Licensing (Provisional Certificate).

Introduced by the Attorney General.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, University of Western Australia Act Amendment.

- 2, Factories and Shops Act Amendment. Transmitted to the Council.

MOTION—GOLDFIELDS WATER SCHEME, ORIGINATORS.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

MR. GRAYDEN (Middle Swan) [4.37]: I move—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the question of the authenticity of the statements appearing in the school books, used by the Education Department, that the Engineer-in-Chief (Mr. C. Y. O'Connor) and Lord Forrest were the originators of the scheme for the supply of water to the Goldfields.

Having regard to the lateness of the session, I regret having to introduce the subject at this juncture. However, it is most necessary that this question be cleared up before it is too late. In my remarks I intend to be as brief as possible. When I spoke on this matter last week, my point was that the school history books used by the Education Department contained statements in connection with the origin of the Goldfields Water Scheme that were inaccurate. They