Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 28th August, 1958.

CONTENTS

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE.

HIGH SCHOOLS.

Classes and Enrolments.

1. Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) How many classes are there in the State in—

(a) 1st year high school;
(b) 2nd year high school;
(c) 3rd year high school;

with an enrolment of—

(a) less than 30;
(b) 30-35;
(c) 36-40;
(d) 41-45;
(e) 46-50;
(f) over 50?

(2) How many classes are there in the State in—

(a) 4th year high school;
(b) 5th year high school;

with an enrolment of—

(a) less than 20;
(b) 20-25;
(c) 26-30;
(d) 31-35;
(e) over 35?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Primary school—grade 7.

Enrolment	classes
under 40	45
40-45	49
46-50	57
51-55	17
56-60	Nil
above 60	Nil

(2) Grade 7 taught by deputy headmasters.

Enrolment	classes
under 40	13
40-45	22
45-50	24
51-55	6
56-60	Nil
above 60	Nil

(3) The department's ultimate objective is to reduce class loads to an average of 40. When this is achieved it will be possible to allocate smaller numbers to the deputy headmaster. In the meantime the size of the class taught by the deputy headmaster is governed by the general distribution of pupils and the accommodation available.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

Enrolments and Categories of Teachers.

2. Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

(1) How many classes are there in the State in Grade 7 primary schools with an enrolment of—

(a) from 40-45;
(b) from 46-50;
(c) from 51-55;
(d) from 56-60;
(e) above 60?

(2) How many of these classes in each of the above categories are taught by deputy headmasters?

(3) In regard to Grade 7, what is considered to be a fair and reasonable enrolment (from the teacher's and the child's point of view) for classes taught by—

(a) deputy headmasters;

(b) other teachers?

The MINISTER replied:

The figures requested are not immediately available. The following sets of figures are the most accurate that can be given at the moment.

(1) Size of classes in high schools, 1st-3rd year inclusive:

Enrolments.	Year: 1	2	3
Less than 30	54	30	36
31-40	78	69	61
41-50	113	79	12
51 and over	5	4	0

(2) Size of classes in high schools, 4th-5th year inclusive:

Enrolments.	Year: 4	5
Less than 30	28	32
31-40	10	2
41-50	1	0
51 and over	0	0

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: What are the figures in respect of enrolments of less than 20?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: These are the most accurate figures available. I shall be pleased to reply later regarding the point raised.

DRAINAGE.

Cost of Installation in Caledonian Avenue.

3. Mr. TOMS asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) When were the drainage works for Caledonian Avenue first costed; and—

(a) what was the estimated cost at that time;

(b) what is the estimated cost now?

(2) In view of the development in this area, and the need of such scheme to permit the local authority to connect subsidiary drains, will he give urgent attention to the same, and advise when the works are likely to be put in hand?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Water Supplies) replied:

(1) May, 1952.

(a) £33,000.

(b) The cost would be approximately £40,000.

(2) Construction of main drainage is governed by loan funds made available from year to year and the relative urgency of the numerous demands for drainage.

The drainage requirement in question will be kept under review, but it cannot be stated at this stage when it will be possible to undertake the work.

SALE OF PETROL.

Rostering in Bunbury.

4. Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Is he aware of the great inconvenience which will be caused to motorists in Bunbury, when the only rostered petrol station in the Bunbury zone from the 29th September, 1958, to the 5th October, 1958, will be the Waterloo service station, situated approximately nine miles from Bunbury?

(2) Will he take action to rectify the anomaly occasioned by this demand on the motoring public of Bunbury, to travel excessive and unnecessary mileage to obtain emergency supplies of petrol?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. It is not admitted that any great inconvenience will be caused.

(2) It is considered that there is no anomaly.

COAT OF ARMS.

Design for State.

5. Mr. ROBERTS asked the Premier: Has Cabinet yet reached a decision on the design of a coat of arms for the State?

The PREMIER replied:

No.

CIVIL SERVANTS.

Government Scheme for Motorcar Purchase.

6. Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Premier:

(1) Is a method available to members of the Civil Service by means of which they can purchase motorcars on extended terms?

(2) If so, what is the rate of interest and is it a flat rate per anuum?

(3) Has anyone who avails himself of this scheme the right to insure a vehicle purchased with any insurance company of his own choosing?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) 4½ per cent. per annum, monthly rests. I understand that "monthly rests" is a technical term which means on a reducing basis. I wish it read that way.

(3) Yes, but approximately 80 per cent. of the purchasers elect to insure with the State Government Insurance Office.

GLENORCHY SCHOOL.

Withdrawal of Allocation for Septic System.

7. Mr. W. A. MANNING asked the Minister for Education:

(1) Is it a fact that £930 expected to provide a septic system for Glenorchy school, as per the letter from the Premier of the 29th April, has been withdrawn from proposed loan fund allocations?

(2) If so, why?

(3) If so, when will funds be provided?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The letter of the 29th April from the Premier indicated that it was hoped that the work could be proceeded with in the 1958-59 programme. This hope cannot now be fulfilled during the current year.

(2) Insufficient loan money to meet classroom needs.

(3) Unknown.

No. 8. This question was postponed.

ROTTNEST ISLAND.

Board of Control Meetings.

9. Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Fisheries:

(1) Who are the present members of the Rottnest Island Board of Control?

(2) What was the respective number of board meetings attended by each member in the last two years?

(3) What was the number of meetings possible to each member during the same period?

The MINISTER replied:

	Meetings Attended in last 2 years.	Number of Meetings Possible.
Hon. L. F. Kelly, M.L.A. (Chairman)	19	23 (Absent in United States for 3 meetings)
Messrs.		
E. Le B. Henderson	22	23
Roland Smith	14	23 (Overseas for 7 meetings)
J. W. Young	18	23 (Overseas for 4 meetings)
T. Sten	22	23
Hon. A. V. R. Abbott	15	23 (In Eastern States for 4 meetings)
Mr. R. P. Rodriguez	11	11 (Appointed 8th Nov., 1957)

Mr. Young was in America during the period of these four meetings; and Mr. Parker (Acting Commissioner of Works) deputised for him.

No. 10. This question was postponed.

SWANBOURNE BEACH.

Improvement and Development on Commonwealth Land.

11. Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Premier:

(1) What steps has the Government taken in regard to supporting the Nedlands Council's request to the Commonwealth Government for seven acres of army land fronting the ocean for the purpose of improving and developing Swanbourne beach?

(2) If nothing has been done, will he give immediate consideration to trying to assist in every way possible the request that has been made?

(3) What action, if any, has been taken in regard to approaching the Commonwealth Government with a view to the ultimate removal of the army camp and rifle range from the Swanbourne beach area?

(4) If no favourable decision has yet been reached, will he take steps to press the Commonwealth Government in effecting a change of land?

The PREMIER replied:

(1), (2), (3) and (4) There appears to be no information officially before the Government in connection with this matter. The Government, on request from the Nedlands Municipal Council, would be pleased to make representations to the Commonwealth Government.

FLOUR EXPORTS.

State's Share to Ceylon.

12. Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Have representations been made to ensure that Western Australia receives a substantial share of the flour imports to Ceylon following the trade arrangement made by the Commonwealth Government with Ceylon and announced on the 17th July, 1958?

The MINISTER replied:

Bulk sales of flour such as that made by the Commonwealth Government with Ceylon in July last—20,000 tons plus a gift of 7,500 tons—are allocated between the States by the Federal Council of Flour Mill Owners of Australia.

The allocations are based on the milling capacity of each State and on the export sales already made during the particular flourmilling year.

It is expected that of the quantity quoted, Western Australia, Victoria, and South Australia will each provide one full cargo for the Ceylon contract.

CANING OF STUDENTS.

Approval of Power for Teachers.

13. Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

In view of apparent trouble with school discipline, has he any intention of approving that all teachers be given the power to cane students?

The MINISTER replied:

I have no knowledge of any "apparent trouble with school discipline." If such trouble is real, consideration will be given as to what steps should be taken to improve the situation.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

IRON ORE.

Agreements, Royalties, etc.

1. Mr. COURT asked the Premier:

(1) What agreements were entered into for the sale and use of W.A. iron ore before the current B.H.P. agreement?

(2) What royalties were payable?

(3) What tonnage limitations were provided?

(4) (a) What provisions existed for use of the iron ore within W.A. or within Australia?

(b) If none, what was the anticipated country of destination?

(5) What years were the agreements entered into and what Government was in power in W.A.?

(6) How were the agreements terminated?

(7) Had these agreements continued instead of the B.H.P. agreement and had they used W.A. iron ore at the same annual rate as B.H.P. is now using it, what would be the loss to W.A. from the commencement of the agreements to now, using the same basis of calculation as used in the answer to questions yesterday re B.H.P. agreement; namely, £6 per ton f.o.b. with a £2 per ton charge for placing the ore into ships?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) No agreement.

(2) and (3) See answer to No. (1).

(4) (a) This question is not clearly understood.

(b) See answer to No. (4) (a).

(5), (6) and (7) See answer to No. (1).

Mr. COURT: Arising from the answers to my previous question, was there not an agreement which is commonly known as Brasserts Agreement, or some arrangement or contract in some form or other which is generally referred to as an agreement or arrangement with Brasserts?

The PREMIER: I know of no agreement, but some negotiations took place several years ago. The negotiations never reached the stage where an agreement could be made, because the Commonwealth Government would not at the time agree to the proposal that iron ore should at that time be exported from Australia.

Mr. COURT: Would the Premier be good enough to examine the matter further and acquaint the House with the exact nature of the agreement or arrangement or discussions with Brasserts, because my understanding was that the Government which preceded him in office had to break that contract or find some legal means of terminating the agreement which enabled them to avoid the iron ore being shipped to Japan and made available for manufacture of steel in Australia?

The PREMIER replied:

Well, obviously, no iron ore from Australia could have been shipped to Japan without a licence first being granted by the Commonwealth Government. However, the information which was given by me in reply to question No. 1—that is, without notice—was supplied to me by the Mines Department. I will have some further inquiries made to ascertain the stage finally reached in the negotiations which went on at the time between the then Government and the Brasserts company and will make the information available next week.

SPECIAL GRANT TO KIMBERLEYS.

Expenditure.

2. Mr. RHATIGAN asked the Premier:

With reference to the statement in this morning's issue of "The West Australian" attributed to Senator Spooner regarding the expenditure of £2,500,000 special grant to the Kimberleys, has the Premier received any information on this matter from the Prime Minister?

The PREMIER replied:

No.

SWANBOURNE BEACH.

Improvement and Development on Commonwealth Land.

3. Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Premier:

With regard to the answer to my question No. 11, I feel that perhaps the Premier replied only to the first two parts of the four-pointed question. Parts (3) and (4) were as follows:—

(3) What action, if any, has been taken in regard to approaching the Commonwealth Government with a view to the ultimate removal of the army camp and rifle range from the Swanbourne beach area?

(4) If no favourable decisions has yet been reached, will he take steps to press the Commonwealth Government in effecting a change of land?

With regard to these questions, would he take it as a request from the member for Cottesloe that we should seek permission from the Commonwealth Government to effect an exchange of land, and would he give that matter consideration and make the approach?

The PREMIER replied:

I would suggest to the member for Cottesloe that, if it would be acceptable to him, he write to me, as member for that district, or on behalf of the local authority, along the lines of those two questions.

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE.

Position in Western Australia.

4. Mr. COURT asked the Speaker:

To clarify the position both for members of Parliament and the general public, will he give a ruling as to whether there is

any extension of parliamentary privilege in Western Australia, such as was unsuccessfully claimed in the Strauss case in the United Kingdom recently, to cover anything which a member of this Parliament may write in a letter to a Minister?

The SPEAKER replied:

I have given careful consideration to the question submitted to me by the member for Nedlands, arising from what is now known as the Strauss case. This case was debated and decided in the British House of Commons on the 8th July, 1958, and is of considerable importance to members.

Apart from brief Press reports, and until the arrival of the House of Commons Hansard, reporting the case, there is little authoritative information available. A few days ago, the Clerk of the Assembly received from his counterpart in the House of Commons a script containing a brief history of the case. An extract from this information is as follows:—

> The Strauss Privilege Case and its Effect upon Questions.
>
> During last session, 1956-57, a member (the Right Hon. George Strauss) claimed the protection of privilege to cover a letter sent by him to a Minister criticising the board of a nationalised industry, who were threatening proceedings for libel. The matter was referred to the Committee of Privileges and, at a later stage, it became necessary for the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to be consulted on a point of law. The Committee of Privileges made two reports on this matter to the House upholding Mr. Strauss's claim to be protected by privilege. These reports, together with the report of the Judicial Committee, were considered by the House on the 8th July. On a free vote the House disagreed with the Committee of Privileges by a majority of five votes, and resolved, "That this House does not consider that Mr. Strauss's letter of the 8th February, 1957, was 'a proceeding in Parliament' and is of opinion therefore that the letters from the Chairman of the London Electricity Board and the Board's Solicitors constituted no breach of privilege". This decision directly affected our work in the Table Office for the following reasons.

The Table Office constitutes clerks who receive questions; and who, in accordance with Standing Orders, have them placed subsequently on the notice paper. Continuing—

> Questions about the nationalised industries (e.g. the British Transport Commission, the National Coal Board, etc.) are allowed if they concern matters for which the Minister has statutory responsibility. The Minister's responsibility is broadly limited to his power to give the board of the industry concerned a general direction in the national interest, and the power to ask for certain information. All other questions fall under the heading of day to day administration, on which successive Ministers have refused to answer. It has been our practice to advise members whose questions fall into the latter category to take up the matter by writing to the Minister concerned. As a result of the House's recent decision, however, such letters may lay the writers open to proceedings for libel and we can no longer give such advice to members. Another repercussion has been a slight increase in the number of questions because matters containing allegations, previously raised in correspondence between members and Ministers, are now tabled as questions—which still enjoy absolute privilege, because they constitute a "proceeding in Parliament". A motion has now been tabled, signed by more than a hundred members, asking for question time to be extended by half an hour "so that hon. members may lay grievances before Ministers in the form of Parliamentary questions which they are now prevented from doing by correspondence under the changed circumstances created by the said decision (of the 8th July)".

This is my statement from the Speaker's Chair—

> If any member of this Assembly sought a privilege in similar circumstances to the Strauss case, then the rights, privileges and immunities which he enjoys as a member of Parliament would be subject to the provisions of the Parliamentary Privileges Act. That Act was assented to on the 26th February, 1891.

The Act is to be found on page 201 of the Standing Orders. I say that for the benefit of the back-benchers; because often when I have sat in those seats I have not known from what publication a Speaker was quoting. I give this information as to where the Act can be found, so that new members may be able to follow this matter which is of considerable interest. Continuing my statement—

> Sections 1 and 2 are the relevant sections. Inter alia: Section 1 defines "the powers, immunities and privileges enjoyed by the Parliament and its members to be the same as are at the passing of this Act, or shall hereafter for the time being be held enjoyed and exercised by the Commons House of Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland and by the Committees and members thereof, so far as the same are not inconsistent with the said recited Act, or this Act, whether such privileges, or immunities, or powers are or shall be, held, possessed, or enjoyed by custom, statute, or otherwise

Provided always, that with respect to the powers hereinafter more particularly defined by this Act, the provisions of this Act shall prevail."

I do not intend to give a ruling, because no member has appealed to Parliament, as in the Strauss case, claiming privilege. In any case, my ruling would be subject to the ultimate decision of the House.

MIDLAND JUNCTION ABATTOIR.

Appointment of Chairman.

5. The Hon. D. BRAND asked the Minisster for Agriculture:

(1) Who is the present Chairman of the Midland Junction Abattoir Board?

(2) When was he appointed and for how long?

(3) How was he advised of his appointment? If by letter, under what date and by what Minister?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Mr. Hayes, public accountant.

(2) A period of five years. However, the Act provides that members retire at the age of 65 years.

(3) He was advised by myself, but at this short notice I cannot remember the exact date.

The Hon. D. BRAND: Do you know the age of Mr. Hayes at this particular time?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. Subsequent to Mr. Hayes's appointment he, after having had a look at the Act, advised me of his age, and informed me, at that time, that he would be 65 on the 17th December this year.

CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th August.

THE HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [2.41]: As pointed out by the Premier, the proposed amendment to the Constitution Act is a desirable one, and it is one which I feel will be supported by all members of the House. There have been a number of occasions, I understand, on which private members—and even Speakers of this House or Presidents of another place—have, because of their official position, had to attend conferences, not only overseas but also in the Eastern States of Australia; and I think it is only fair that their expenses should be met, either by the Parliamentary Association or by the Government.

In order to put the whole matter right, I feel that Parliament should agree to this measure without hesitation. One query has been raised, however, and it is hoped that in the event of private members of Parliament going overseas from time to time, either holidaying or on some special business purpose of their own, they will not take undue advantage of this amendment to the Act in order to approach the Government to assist them with expenses, perhaps on the pretence of representing the Government or Parliament on some particular issue whilst overseas.

I would not think that the Premier or the Government had that problem in mind, but dealt with the matter from the angle of the private member who goes from this Parliament representing the Western Australian Parliamentary Association, or a member in a position such as yours, Mr. Speaker, attending conferences or other matters outside this State. It is only fair that the Government should assist with the expenses in the same way as it assists in the case of ministerial or other representation in similar circumstances, and I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Question put.

The SPEAKER: I have counted the House. There is an absolute majority present and voting and, there being no dissentient voice, I declare the question carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th August.

THE HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [2.47]: This Bill contains four proposals to amend the principal Act. The first of them seeks to confirm, beyond doubt, the fact that the Barristers' Board is to have control of the Law Library. As the Minister indicated, it has been pretty well established that that is the control now; but apparently there are some legal doubts as to the exact position under the existing law—doubts which the Minister desires to be cleared up—and in consequence, the passages in the Bill are designed to remove those doubts and place the management of this library, beyond doubt, under the control of that board.

I understand, now, that the library is insured for something like £50,000, and therefore it is desirable that this management should be quite clear and effective, if for no other reason than that the library may be duly insured and preserved against risk of loss.

The second proposition is to simplify the position of law students who have qualified for the Bachelor of Laws degree at the University of Western Australia. It is

to enable them to enter upon the two-years articles to a practitioner which is required over and above the obtaining of that degree, by the principal Act before they actually receive their graduation at the graduation ceremony, which usually takes place in March.

In other words, it is to validate a proceeding which has been going on, I understand, for quite a time, whereby these law students have been given their law degrees three months before the normal time, in most cases, in order to enable their articles to be registered and so obviate the waste of three months before they can apply for admission, as practitioners, to the Full Court.

There can, I think, be no objection to that proposition, especially in the terms of the Bill; because it is provided that if the degree is not taken within six months of entering upon the articles, the time of the articles shall be extended accordingly, so that the full two years must obviously be served.

The third proposition is to relieve persons who are law students in Western Australia and who apply, after complying with the provisions of the Act, for admission to the Bar, from the obligation to pay the sum of 30 guineas. It does not relieve persons who apply for admission having qualified outside of Western Australia or who, having been struck off the roll, apply for readmission and are to be readmitted. It applies only to the first application of a person who has qualified as a law student in Western Australia.

In my opinion it is a great pity this was not done years ago, because I heartily agree with what I think the Minister said—that it has been in many cases a severe strain on law students and their parents, when one bears in mind that the period of study is at least five years. In consequence, in many instances a student has to be largely, if not entirely, maintained by his family during the whole of that period. Then there is the burden of having to pay 30 guineas for admission. In many instances that has occasioned considerable difficulty, and I heartily agree that in the circumstances mentioned in this Bill the payment should not be enforced.

The last provision in the measure is to simplify a situation which exists under the principal Act—that no practitioner who has been struck off the roll or suspended from practice shall be employed in a legal practitioner's office. As Section 79 of the principal Act stands at present, and has stood for many years, it apparently completely prevents any practitioner from lawfully employing such a person. This measure proposes to modify that to the extent that the Barristers' Board may give its written consent to such employment for such a period and subject to such conditions as it thinks fit.

In my view this is a step in the righ direction; because once again, as the Min ister observed, there would be circum stances when the person in question woul have virtually no other occupation t which he could turn. Absolute prohibitio against his employment would not b entirely justified in all cases. Under thi Bill it is proposed to leave the matter t the discretion of the Barristers' Board and I would suggest that in the mai that discretion will be wisely exercise Although I do not propose to attempt t make any amendment to the clause i question, I think it might have been de sirable to go a little further in this matte

A practitioner can be suspended for de lay in carrying out his client's work. I one looks at the relevant section of th Legal Practitioners Act one finds that person can be struck off the roll, sus pended, or fined for unprofessional con duct, fraudulent conduct, and also fo negligence or delay in the carrying out o a client's business. I think there is considerable difference between the two.

In the former case—that is, in regar to fraud or unprofessional conduct— would suggest, unquestionably, that th consent of the Barristers' Board woul be thoroughly desirable before any practi tioner would be able to employ such person who had been disbarred or sus pended from practice.

But I question whether it is really neces sary to have the consent of the Barriste Board in a case where the offence that ha been committed, and which has led t the suspension of the person concerne has merely been one where there has bee a delay in carrying out a client's busines I say that because being employed unde supervision in somebody else's office suc an offence does not carry with it th stigma or opprobrium that unprofessiona conduct, or fraudulent conduct would.

So it seems to me that it would hav been more desirable if the provisions o this law had been such that the consen of the Barristers' Board had to b given in the first-mentioned cases; but i the second, such consent could be dis pensed with. However, as I have sai I place considerable reliance on the dis cretion of the Barristers' Board; and have no doubt that in such cases as thos second mentioned, it is unlikely that ap proval will not be granted to any reason able proposition

Therefore I do not propose to offer an amendment; and as I can see nothing i this measure that is objectionable—in m opinion it has a considerable amount in i which is good—I propose to support th 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.

RECIPROCAL ENFORCEMENT OF MAINTENANCE ORDERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th August.

THE HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [2.58]: This little Bill merely proposes to take notice of changing circumstances and changing times. It proposes to deal with the question of the change from dominion status to other types of status which has occurred in regard to the various countries which have formed part of the British Dominions in the past and which, in many cases, still form part of the British Commonwealth.

It must be realised that if it is passed this measure will apply to other countries. It must also be realised that in its application to other countries there must be reciprocity. The very title of the Act indicates that, and the Bill cannot be effective in any other country unless it is made effective by some reciprocity or arrangement with those other countries. Hence it seems to be entirely desirable that as the last paragraph of the Bill proposes, the Governor may by order-in-council extend the Act to any other country with such modification, if any as the Governor may by the same or any other order-in-council declare, because it may be necessary, in order to effect the reciprocal arrangements, to make some other modification in procedure or method, to suit the circumstances of the particular case.

Of course, it is highly desirable, in all cases where it is practicable to do so, that orders made—particularly maintenance orders that have been made—should be enforced against a person who, in order to escape his obligations, leaves this country. That is the basis on which the Reciprocal Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Act is founded. It is with a desire to ensure that, if such a person does leave this country with the object of escaping his obligations, steps be taken against him for reciprocal enforcement in the other country to enforce the order that was made against him here.

So the necessity to amend the Act in the light of present circumstances is very clear because the Bill seeks only to carry out what is necessary, so far as I can understand it, and I support it accordingly.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

HOUSING LOAN GUARANTEE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th August.

MR. WILD (Dale) [3.5]: In introducing this Bill the other evening, the Minister said that his remarks comprised the shortest second reading speech he had ever made. I can reciprocate, and say that this is the shortest comment I will have ever made on a second reading speech; because the Bill is only to tidy up an error that was made in another place when a similar measure was before it. As I have perused Hansard, I can see where the words were taken out in error. Therefore, I support 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.

STATE HOUSING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th August.

MR. WILD (Dale) [3.8]: The other evening, the Minister, in introducing this Bill, indicated that this measure was to tidy up errors that had occurred when a similar measure was before the House in 1954. He indicated that the Crown Law Department, on the advice of the officers of his department, had pointed out that the words, "where a worker desires to build a dwelling-house" are restrictive.

In view of this amending Bill, I cannot help but make this observation: It seems to me that the Parliamentary Draftsman must be overworked when measures such as this come before laymen like myself—if one looks around the Chamber one realises that there is only one legal practitioner amongst us—because it is practically impossible for us in the short time that we have at our disposal, to look into these things and to be able to discover any errors. I have frequently thought that some assistance should be given to the officers of the Crown Law Department; because too often, in the years I have been in Parliament, I have seen this sort of thing happening: That is, we get a sort of half-baked measure brought before us; and the next year, when the Minister finds a mistake, in putting the measure into practice, he has to again bring forward an amending Bill to correct the error.

I am not casting any reflection on the Parliamentary Draftsman, because he has a gigantic task, particularly during some sessions when we have over 90 bills to consider. Also, everybody is in a hurry, and

Bills get left until the last minute, the result being that the poor Parliamentary Draftsman has to do the job by himself when there should be two or three carrying out this onerous duty.

In perusing this proposed amendment, which is necessary to bring the measure into line with what the legislature intended, one point comes to mind, particularly after having read the Minister's introductory speech of 1954. The point to which I refer is the great part that self-helpers have played in this State, in getting us out of our housing difficulties in the postwar period.

The Minister made a considerable amount of play on this matter on that occasion, and I think he will agree that it also applies today. While the State Housing Commission has done a gigantic job, there is no doubt that it has been assisted greatly by people who are prepared to work hard at the week-ends, and in the evenings after they have finished their daily chores, and to do all they can with the little finance available to them.

There is one example in particular which I am always proud to quote. It concerns a family whose activities, to my mind, are typical of the wonderful job that is being done by migrants in this field of self-help building. The family consists of a father, two sons, a daughter and a son-in-law. Only one of them is a tradesman—the son is a carpenter. In the five years they have been in Australia they have completed four houses, in regard to the last of which they have been assisted by the State Housing Commission under the provisions of the measure we are discussing today.

There is another point to which I would like to draw the Minister's attention. Like myself he is, of course, only a layman, and will therefore appreciate the position in which I find myself. I can see the possibility of a further error creeping in; and if I am permitted to do so, I would like to refer to paragraph (c) of Clause 2 which reads as follows:—

> purchase a new house built at a cost not exceeding three thousand pounds exclusive of the value of the land upon which it is built.

That refers to people who were in occupation of a newly-built house for a period up to six months, being given the right to approach the State Housing Commission and avail themselves of this money under a second mortgage.

I would draw the attention of the Minister to the particular wording, "purchase a new house built at a cost not exceeding . . . ." At whose cost would it be? If it were not self-help, and if it were built by a contractor, I would say, as a layman, it means the actual cost of building a house. On the other hand, the builder would obviously put a profit on it, which means it would not be built at cost. It is a point that has come to my mind, and I would like the Minister to have a look at it. There appear to be two different costs. The actual cost to the builder could be £3,000, but the price to the buyer could be possibly £3,300 or £3,400. We could therefore again find ourselves in difficulties with regard to the particular provision to which I have preferred.

I had that pointed out to me; and, on looking at it, and thinking about it, it seemed there could be a flaw. I would therefore again ask the Minister to give the matter some thought. Apart from this, I cannot see very much wrong with the measure. I agree that it would have been better if the interpretation of "new house," which comes within the ambit of the Housing Loan Guarantee Act, were placed in this measure; because we all know that on occasion it is necessary for us to look through a huge stack of books in order to find the particular provision we are seeking. Apart from the objections I have mentioned, I support the second reading.

THE HON. H. E. GRAHAM (Minister for Housing—East Perth—in reply) [3.15]: Some consideration has been given to the point raised by the member for Dale, for the very good reason that there could be a difference of interpretation regarding cost. Is the cost a valuation of what the expense of having such a structure erected would be, or is the cost to be interpreted as being the financial outlay of the individual concerned?

I can inform the member for Dale, and the House, that the State Housing Commission has interpreted those few words in the broader sense. So if a self-helper, by doing a great amount of work himself, is able to save money, it is not regarded as the cost pertaining to the house. In other words, it would be possible for a person doing a great amount of the work himself, and with the assistance of some friends, to build a house the actual value of which was £4,000.

It will be seen therefore that the most generous interpretation possible has been made. If that interpretation is used—and that of course is at the discretion of the Housing Commission, and I do not think there is any suggestion of its being varied—it would mean in fact the financial outlay on the part of the applicant. So, if it were a contractor doing the job, it would not be the expenses of that contractor, but the price he demanded of the applicant. On the other hand, as I said before, if it were a self-helper, or one able to get materials at bargain prices, then the financial outlay would be the figure used in connection with this. I think that meets the position quite comfortably and conveniently.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

PLANT DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th August.

MR. OWEN (Darling Range) [3.20]: This Bill, as explained by the Minister, makes very minor alterations to the Plant Diseases Act, and only refers to that section dealing with the registration of orchards. This part of the Act was first introduced in 1935 for the purpose of establishing a fund to be set aside for the control and eradication of fruit-fly.

I think the registration fee first imposed was 2s. an acre. It was later amended to a fee of 1s. for backyard orchardists with a single tree or more. The commercial registration fee was at one time reduced; but was later on increased to 2s. an acre, at which it now stands. The main point is that the money was collected and paid into a trust fund for the purpose of fruit-fly eradication. The annual payment of registration fees by the owners of orchards was treated in that way.

There has been, particularly over the past few years, some public interest taken in this matter, and requests from certain quarters, particularly from the backyard orchardists, have been made for a provision to enable the registration fee to be paid some years in advance. They felt that instead of paying 2s. per annum, which method was a bit of a nuisance to them as well as to the department because of the troublesome book work entailed in collecting 2s. annually, provision should be made to pay the fee in advance.

This Bill proposes to make that position possible and to enable registration fees to be paid in advance so as to minimise the inconvenience of paying them annually, and give some relief to the department by not having to collect the registration fees every year. From that angle the Bill is a very good measure.

The Minister did not explain what steps would be adopted towards the trust fund where the registration fee was paid five years in advance. He did not say whether the money so collected would be set aside and only the relevant amount spent each year. Presumably that will be done so as to give a regular income to the trust fund, and so that a regular sum, more or less, will be available each year.

Another question crosses my mind in regard to people who pay the fee five years in advance but who decide to sell their properties before that time is up. The question is, will that registration fee be credited to the property or will a refund be made to the person who registered the property? Will the new owner take up the unexpired portion of the registration period, or will provision be made for the transfer of registration from one owner to another? Those are some of the matters which should be explained by the Minister.

All in all, the Bill will be of advantage to the department. It will certainly be of advantage to the orchard owner who wishes to pay in advance and thus obviate the now recurring worry of having to register his orchard every year. It is not a question of the amount of money involved. I do not think any person—even one with a single tree—will quibble about paying 2s. annually, but the problem is having to pay it annually. If payment is overlooked, a person is liable to a penalty which, incidentally, is quite severe, particularly as it is a recurring penalty of a fixed amount per day for every day during which the orchard is not registered. This could lead to a backyard fruit-tree owner being involved in a severe penalty.

I would ask the Minister to give the House some enlightenment on the matters I have raised; namely, whether registration goes with the property; whether the new owner of a registered property will be able to obtain a transfer of the registration; whether he will have to wait until the registration fee period is up; and what steps will be taken by the department to ascertain the amount of the five-year registration fee to be spent each year so as to ensure a regular income for the trust fund over the years. I support the second reading.

MR. WILD (Dale) [3.25]: I join with the member for Darling Range in supporting this measure. It is a step which we on this side of the House have propounded for some considerable time. Great inconvenience has been caused to the person with one or two fruit trees in his backyard. He has suffered inconvenience by having to go, year after year, to the department to pay the registration fee, or else to sit down and write a letter enclosing the 2s. The inconvenience has been great. Whenever I paid my 2s. registration fee I always ventured the opinion that the cost to the department of collecting the registration fee was more than 2s.

I want to make this observation: Whilst I agree entirely with a five-year registration period, which I consider to be long overdue, and that this period will give much relief not only to the department but also to people registering fruit trees, there is another section of the Act I would like to tackle, although I am aware this is not the appropriate occasion because the subject is not under discussion. I want to say that we are playing with a gigantic problem. Without fear of contradiction I would point out that last year

in the Dale electorate the incidence of fruit-fly was greater than it had ever been in the past in this State.

A commercial fruit grower, like the member for Darling Range, spends large sums of money in fruit-fly baiting schemes. If the owner of the adjacent property does not adopt a similar method of eradication, the fruit-flies just hop over the fence—and there is no policeman to stop them—so the efforts of the first person in spending large sums to keep out fruit-flies go overboard. I hope on behalf of the industry that the experiments with wasps in the Eastern States to eradicate fruit-fly will prove successful.

Last year, or early this year, when some members of Parliament visited South Australia, I could not help but be impressed by the remarks of Sir Thomas Playford, who referred to vast sums of money spent, while we were there, to eradicate an outbreak of fruit-fly at Port Augusta. I am not blaming the present Government, but the Governments of the past few years for shelving their responsibility in this matter. In my view the steps taken so far merely toy with the problem. Whether the fruit-fly menace has advanced too far I cannot say, because I am neither a scientist nor a botanist. All I can do is to use my own powers of observation, listen to the remarks of the fruit growers, and see the returns they receive from the markets, showing condemned fruit. Without doubt all we are now doing is playing with a big problem.

I only hope that the new Minister for Agriculture, having been an agriculturist himself, will recognise that what I am putting forward is correct. Let us go forward and do something positive in regard to this problem. The business of tinkering with the problem is merely playing with fire and we will get nowhere.

MR. NALDER (Katanning) [3.30]: I support this measure; but there are a few points which I would like to raise, some with a view to securing clarification. I will also ask the Minister for some consideration to be given to the country districts where fruit is not being grown commercially. I refer to the Great Southern.

First of all, I have had some correspondence with the Minister with reference to the lifting of the ban which applies to certain country districts on the importation of fruit from the metropolitan area. This matter has almost reached a ridiculous position. Fruit can be consigned from the metropolitan area to Dumbleyung and Lake Grace, and it has to go through Wagin. However, Wagin is not allowed to receive fruit from the metropolitan area, but has to get it from what is termed a "clean" area. Despite this, the fruit that is sent to Dumbleyung and Lake Grace remains at the Wagin station for any period of time waiting to be placed on trains to take it on; yet the people in Wagin cannot have the fruit sent to them. It seems ridiculous.

Last year, as the member for Dale has said, fruit-fly was definitely on the increase. We have it in practically every backyard orchard in all the towns on the Great Southern. I have had a number of letters from people in Katanning asking me to see if the Minister could do something about the position which exists there. If the fruit-fly is already in the towns which I have mentioned, why have this ban on people getting their fruit from the metropolitan area? At present, the fruit passes through those towns to go to other towns that are supposed to be free. I think the whole fruit-fly problem should be looked into again.

The people in the country areas who have one or two trees in their backyards register them and make a small contribution towards the fund, but so far as I know there has never been a fruit-fly inspector in the districts concerned. These people would like help and advice as they like to have fruit trees in their backyards. Last year practically all of them had fruit-fly and lost the whole of their fruit. One man mentioned to me that he had some Granny Smith apples and the fruit-fly was so bad in them—they might have been peaches—that he had to throw away about three cases of fruit.

Mr. Hawke: Very likely they were peaches rather than Granny Smith apples.

Mr. NALDER: It was a tree laden with fruit and he had to dispose of the fruit.

Mr. Owen: It could have been peaches or Granny Smiths.

Mr. NALDER: The person in this instance happened to be the postmaster at Wagin. He is a keen gardener and likes to have trees in his backyard. The complaints are general. They are not isolated, and come from both Wagin and Katanning. I think that these people who register their orchards contribute in some small way to the department's fund and are entitled to have the advice of an officer of the department. If this were arranged, I am sure he would receive cooperation from the various organisations, the local authorities, and agricultural societies in every way. Therefore, I hope the Minister will give consideration to this aspect and see if it is possible to have an officer visit the country districts and offer advice.

I feel sure that it is important to reach the people in these areas; otherwise we will have the incidence of fruit-fly reflecting back to the metropolitan area. At present these areas are banned from receiving fruit by rail; yet we have dozens of motorists travelling day by day bringing fruit from the metropolitan area to the country. Hazarding a guess, I would say there would be as much fruit carted by travellers from the metropolitan area

to the country as would be sent by rail for commercial purposes to tradesmen and so on. It is ridiculous to have a regulation which is enforced in some regards and not in others. I hope the Minister will give consideration to this aspect and review the whole situation.

I understand that under this Bill the Minister is going to allow the fee to be paid not only annually, but up to five years. Can the money be paid for one year, two years, three, four or five years?

Mr. Kelly: One year or five, whichever you like.

Mr. NALDER: One cannot pay for three, four or five years?

Mr. Kelly: There is no provision for that.

Mr. NALDER: Then it is one year or five years. That is one point which I wanted cleared up. I suggest that when a grower elects to pay the five-year period, and that period has expired, he receives a notification to that effect; otherwise many people will forget. Seeing that the department will have the advantage of receiving the money in advance and the cost of postage to send a notice will be small, the suggestion can be regarded as a reasonable one; and I hope the Minister will give consideration to this aspect.

I know that many growers will be happy about the five-year period rather than having to register annually. I hope the department will agree that a notice be forwarded to growers about a month in advance before the payment is due on the 30th June in the particular year.

I hope the Minister will give consideration to the points which I have raised. I support the second reading.

MR. I. W. MANNING (Harvey) [3.38]: I propose to support the second reading, but I express surprise at the Minister bringing down a Bill dealing only with the registration of orchards when the subject of fruit-fly is being so widely discussed at the present time. Quite a number of people in this community are vigorously advocating that a much larger scheme should be evolved for the control of fruit-fly, and that the overall picture should be completely changed.

I am one of those people who have a backyard orchard, and I have many commercial orchards in my electorate. Therefore, I am able to see the picture from two angles. The present is the time to get busy and expand the existing scheme and give some support to methods of combating fruit-fly. The suggestions that have been made in one or two quarters have a good deal of merit in them—that is, that the Agricultural Department should take over completely the spraying of backyard orchards; and that the registration fee should be substantially increased from the present 2s. per backyard orchard or 2s. per acre.

There are many people in this community who take an interest in their backyard orchards, to the extent that they carry out regular spraying, and make some effort to control fruit-fly. There are those who do not appear to take any interest whatever in their fruit trees or the fruit which the trees bear; and these people, of course, in this way, are quite a menace to the fruit-growing industry.

Therefore, I think that at this stage we should look at the position and take every opportunity of controlling the fruit-fly. I put forward the suggestion that at this stage, when the subject has been raised in a minor way, we should go deeper into the question and the Minister should present a Bill of a much wider and more far-reaching nature with a resultant greater control of the fruit-fly.

However, I have no objection to registering my backyard orchard for five years instead of one year, and from that point of view I think the Bill will meet with general approval.

MR. W. A. MANNING (Narrogin) [3.43]: I would like to add a brief word at this stage. The use to which this money is put is a vital factor. It is only over the last two years that the fruit-fly menace has been serious in the Great Southern, and I feel the department must really take the matter in hand. There are those who do not bother about the fruit trees which are growing in their yards. They have taken over a property that has fruit trees on it, and they are not at all concerned, but let them grow wild. The fruit ripens and falls, and they take no notice whatever.

The department should take more notice of this fact. Under the Act the department has power to go on to such properties and remove the offending fruit or the trees at the expense of the occupier, and I feel that some of that power has to be exercised. We do not want to exercise power like that, but it concerns people other than those who are allowing these trees to be a harbour for fruit-flies.

I really feel that some definite public notice should be given that the department intends to do that sort of thing in order to control this menace. We have to be active, or the fruit-fly will take possession of us in a very short time, and we must do something very smartly. The department has power to do these things and they should be done. It may be that some people want to do something about the fruit-fly but do not know what to do, or how to find out what to do. Some instructors should go around and provide such information.

I would like to support, too, the contention that those who pay their fee five years in advance should receive a notice, by post, at the expiration of that term. I think that if it were worked out, it

would be found that the interest on their payments in advance would more than pay the postage on the advice from the department, so that the department would not be out of pocket in that regard. I feel that after five years, one would need some sort of notice. I would urge upon the Minister that the funds provided under this Act be used immediately to seek to eliminate the menace of the fruit-fly.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.3 p.m.

MR. NORTON (Gascoyne) [4.3]: I wish to make a few comments on this measure. I feel it is a good idea that orchardists and others wishing to support fruit-fly control should be given opportunity of paying in advance for a number of years the prescribed fee for the service. However, I do not think the Bill goes far enough in this regard.

Whilst I understand that the Act appertains to fruit trees and orchards, I think it should be extended to embrace market gardens and the like. If we allow the Act to refer only to orchards, we will have alongside them market gardens, which produce as much fruit-fly as, if not more than, many orchards do. Not only that, but the whole fruit-fly baiting scheme should be made compulsory, as it is in South Australia.

It is hardly fair that one orchardist should be able to sit down and watch the man next door doing all the fruit-fly control and spending his money on it, while menaced the whole time by his neighbour's inactivity. I would suggest that the department look closely at the whole fruit-fly control problem and extend the scheme in a compulsory form to cover all fruits or vegetables which are hosts of the fruit-fly. I support the second reading.

THE HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [4.5]: I also wish to make a few remarks in regard to this measure. Judging from the interest which the Bill has aroused, and the number of members who have spoken to the debate, the problem of fruit-fly control is widely recognised. I support the Bill because it is a step in the right direction; but I think it is insufficient to ask orchardists, large or small, to register and pay their fees annually at the department, as I believe they should be able to pay them in advance for a period of at least five years, if not longer.

The principle underlying this legislation is that an orchard should be registered; so that the Department of Agriculture, when action is ultimately taken, may know of the existence of all orchards and have them included in the scheme. I feel that we may have been a little off the track in the debate this afternoon; and I therefore trust, Mr. Speaker, that you will bear with me while I detour for a little while.

The problem of fruit-fly is one that has been with us for many years, not only in respect of the metropolitan area and the main fruit-growing districts, but also in relation to places such as Dongara and Geraldton. It seems to me that it is no use registering backyard orchards, even if 100 per cent. of them are registered, with the situation as it is at present; and I feel that the time has arrived when large sums of money will have to be set aside to establish means of enforcing a full control scheme.

I believe we should endeavour to set up a department or organisation large enough and efficient enough to deal with this problem in the more closely settled areas, while still having regard for smaller centres such as I have mentioned. Dongara, situated on a main highway, is noted for figs and other fruits, which prove very attractive to the fruit-fly; and which, in the course of a good season, often find their way, per medium of travellers, to the metropolitan area and perhaps all over the State.

If this problem is really to be tackled—it seems to me that it is reaching serious proportions—any scheme, to be effective, must be a comprehensive one which will involve Government subsidy to some degree and, I believe, a good deal of co-operation, not only on the part of backyard orchardists, but also on the part of the fruit growers and, indeed, those associated with the transport of fruit.

I have a few fruit trees in my own backyard, and I would be glad to see a law introduced forcing me to pull up those trees, as that would be far cheaper for me than it is to water the trees, in order to keep them alive, and take measures to combat the fruit-fly.

Mr. Kelly: There is no law to stop you. You can pull them up if you like.

Mr. BRAND. Yes, but I have other complications at home, as the Minister would know. For some strange reason or other, womenfolk like to have a few trees in the backyard, even if it is only to attract the fruit-fly. I mention that because I understand that in South Australia from time to time orders are issued to the backyard orchardist to remove his trees in order to deal with or eliminate the fruit-fly menace. No doubt such people would be compensated by the Government

My colleague, the member for Dale, mentioned that during the recent tour of hon. members of the Western Australian Parliament to South Australia, they were advised that a sum of £200,000 was made available to deal with one particular district because of a problem that arose there. Bearing that in mind, we must appreciate how important this matter appears to the Premier of South Australia.

While in that State I paid a visit to Renmark, and I found that the people of that fruit-growing area were most concerned at the possibility of an invasion of the particular type of fruit-fly which frequents Western Australia. I am sure that the people of that State would co-operate to the fullest on any measure that the Government of South Australia might take in order to keep out fruit-fly; because if they did have an invasion of the fly which frequents this State it would mean large losses to their fruit-growing industry.

Now that you have allowed me to express those opinions, Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest to the Minister that as well as making it convenient for people to register their orchards, and encouraging them to register, he should get down to the kernel of the trouble and have action taken on a comprehensive basis all over the State in order to cope with this pest. I support the second reading.

MR. ROBERTS (Bunbury) [4.12]: Like previous speakers, I agree with the provisions of this Bill which is to amend the Plant Diseases Act, because the incidence of fruit-fly is increasing year by year in this State. I understand that something like £18,000 per annum is spent in attempting to eradicate fruit-fly in Western Australia; but that sum is by no means sufficient to do the job thoroughly. I also understand that in South Australia a sum of £250,000 was expended on the eradication of fruit-fly.

Unless something is done very soon in this State I am confident that the fly will have a detrimental effect on our export trade, and on the fruit-canning industry which we have in this State. It could also have a very big effect on the establishment of further fruit-canning concerns in Western Australia.

I shall not delay the House very long on this measure, but I would like to draw the Minister's attention to a speech delivered in another place on the 20th August, 1958; it is recorded at pages 253 to 255 of Hansard. The hon. member concerned made a very good suggestion in his speech—possibly the Minister has already studied it—and I think that suggestion should receive serious consideration by the Government. I feel confident that the people throughout Western Australia would appreciate it if such a scheme as that hon. member put forward were put into effect in the very near future. I am in favour of anything that can be done to eradicate fruit-fly. Probably, as most hon. members are aware, export fruit was condemned because of the incidence of fruit-fly last year; it was so bad that grapes were condemned. It is a most serious matter and I trust that the Government will do something about it in the near future.

THE HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [4.15]: When I first heard that notice had been given for leave to introduce a Bill to amend the principal Act, I was hopeful that something was being done which would be of benefit to those people who are engaged in a most valuable industry in this State, and who are so seriously troubled by the presence of pests. As far as I can see, the provisions in the parent Act, which this Bill proposes to amend, are virtually valueless except in so far as they produce a certain sum of money.

As I understand the position, it is a very rare circumstance for a registered orchard, that comes under the generic heading of "backyard orchard", to see the service of an inspector, or for any activity to take place unless such activity is completely controlled by the person who owns the backyard. There are endless numbers of such places about, and a tremendous number of people who own such orchards, who have not the faintest idea whether their trees are infested with fruit-fly, or any other pest; or, if they do know they have a pest, very few of them know what it is. Therefore, as a general rule, nothing is done; and, in consequence, to what extent these pests can be extended from these backyard orchards they are being extended ad lib.

As far as I can see, the money which is collected adds to the general fund that is available; but it does not do anything towards correcting the trouble which, to an extent anyway, is at the bottom of our difficulties in this matter. The proposal in the Bill is harmless enough; in fact it could be said to be desirable. It appears to me to mean that a person can register for five years, or he can still register for one year—it appears to be optional. If I have read it aright, that is the position; and if I am wrong, perhaps the hon. gentleman will correct me.

However, I am interested in one aspect of it. Who will remind the person who registers for five years that that period is coming to an end? Because if he is not to be reminded I am afraid there will be more trouble about re-registering than there is now, with the annual basis of registration. With the present system, there is some prospect of a person remembering that he has to register each year because of the notices, etc. that one sees in the newspapers; but it is going to be very difficult to recollect whether it was four or five years ago that one made one's last application. Therefore, I think there is a weakness in the measure there.

There is no question that the incidence of the Mediterranean fruit-fly—which, I understand, is the one which is pestering us in this State—has not been diminished in recent years. In fact, there are some areas in this State—even some associated with my own electorate—where it has been virtually unknown in the past but where, today, it is causing considerable concern in certain parts.

It seems to me that there is evidence, in those areas—and that was why I asked certain questions yesterday—that the development of the pest has been occasioned by possible breaches of the Act in that fruit, which has been grown in and purchased near areas where the fruit-fly exists, has been transported to those areas contrary to the regulations—not contrary to the transport regulations, but contrary to the regulations under the principal Act, the amendment of which we are now discussing.

So it seems to me, without any question whatsoever, that this is just a tinkering with a very serious proposition. I would have hoped that the legislation which was going to come down under the title of this Bill would have been something which would have made a substantial contribution to the better management and control —at the very least—of the pest that is troubling us so very seriously; but there is nothing about that in the Bill. From my reading of it, it will not even contribute any greater sum of revenue. It will only contribute money in a different period. Nor will it make the slightest difference in control or betterment of the position in regard to what we call the backyard orchard.

It is not going to give anyone any advice that one has not now—which is highly desirable—nor is it going to give any inspection that one has not now; which also, in many cases, is highly desirable. The whole situation has now reached the stage where it should be very closely examined and some steps taken to amend the legislation along the lines whereby we would achieve the greatest result not only in controlling the pest—which I understand has been the position—but also in taking steps for the eradication of the pest so far as it can be done.

I admit, of course, that there are difficulties in the way of expending further moneys on this work. Doubtless, the first thought that entered the mind of the Treasurer was how to raise more money with the object of setting about it. That would carry in its train substantial objections from persons who were obliged to pay those amounts into Consolidated Revenue. But the situation seems to be that, as in the case of the Argentine ant, it might be better to make one bite at the cherry and to incur considerable expense —to be recouped by some reasonable method of collection over a period of years —than to go on tinkering as we are, indefinitely— and it will be indefinitely so far as one can see in the present circumstances—without achieving any satisfactory result.

I would like to assure the Minister that I do not underestimate the difficulty of his problem. I do not want him or his departmental officers to imagine that it will provide the cure-all in five minutes or in any short space of time like that. However, I think we would like an assurance from the Minister that some definite and further action is likely to be taken so that we can allay the fears of the people in those parts which are perhaps not yet seriously affected, and also give some comfort to those in the districts which are, and have been for a long time, seriously affected.

In other words, the whole of the present set-up, which has been in existence for many years, should be given close and careful examination with a view to getting some betterment. If we can get that assurance it will be very helpful, not only to others but also to the Minister himself; because I venture to say that if he has not had many up to date, he is going to have many and considerable representations made to him on that and allied subjects. So I commend the idea to the hon. gentleman, and without wishing in any way to oppose this measure, I support the second reading.

MR. JAMIESON (Beeloo) [4.25]: Having had some experience with fruit-fly complaints in the suburban area, I feel I have to agree with the previous speaker that some drastic measures must be taken to eradicate this pest.

Mr. Roberts: It is imperative.

Mr. JAMIESON: Most people do not seem to appreciate just how bad the fruit-fly infestation has become. To cite an example of the incidence of the disease, I would like to mention an experience I had last summer in the territory which is represented by the member for Victoria Park. Whilst visiting a house in that area, I saw an apricot tree which appeared to be laden with ripe fruit; but, on my walking up to it and grasping one of the fruit, it crumpled in my hand because it was absolutely full of fruit-fly maggots. This indicated that the owner of the tree had no idea how to control the fruit-fly, and no desire to do so.

At the risk of having many householders on my neck, I would go so far as to advocate a complete prohibition of the growing of fruit in any built-up area for a period of five years. This may sound drastic; but I think, in the interests of the fruit industry, it would be extremely desirable. Some members have mentioned the efforts that have been made in South Australia to prevent fruit-fly spreading in that State. When I was on a visit to that State early this year, I had the experience of twice running a blockade that departmental officers there had put across the road in order to investigate the possibility of fruit-fly infestation. I think that the money they are expending in South Australia is well worth while.

Nevertheless, they are fighting a losing battle if they are not able to improve the methods—drastic as they have been—which they have employed in past years.

It is a fact that the South Australian officers of the Department of Agriculture have visited certain districts where some mild infestation has been noticed or reported, following which they have completely removed all kinds of fruit from the trees, plus tomato bushes from the gardens of all people in the district or within a square mile of the source of the infestation.

That has been done at considerable cost, because the Government, at that stage and in its wisdom, has seen fit to institute a system to compensate the people for the fruit that has been removed from their infested trees. However, I feel that whether compensation be paid or not, the Government of a country or State is justified in protecting the commercial producers of fruit by taking drastic action against those people who disregard or who may disregard the fundamental means of preventing the spread of fruit-fly infestation. Therefore, as I have said before, I consider that there is no other way the Government can effectively control fruit-fly than to take drastic steps to combat its spread.

Whilst some people go to a great deal of trouble with their backyard orchards to prevent the spread of fruit-fly, not all are capable of doing so. In a further effort to show how bad fruit-fly infestation has become, and mentioning things that are nearer to home, I refer to the orchard in the Parliament House reserve.

The loquat tree outside Parliament House is registered, and I have never found it to be infested with fruit-fly on any occasion. Along the path leading down to the Public Works, we have a flowering peach tree; and strangely enough, this tree, no doubt due to cross pollination by bees, on one occasion bore half a dozen or so peaches. The temptation of seeing this early fruit was too much for me; but when I reached up to pluck one of the peaches off the tree I found it was affected by fruit-fly.

So it is not altogether the fault of the individual. As some hon. members have said, they do not know they are furthering the incidence of this pest by neglecting their trees. For instance, I am sure our gardener or the comptroller would not like to be associated with any charge of carelessness. But, because these pests find a harbour, they multiply, as was the case in the example of the stray peach I have just mentioned.

I suggest to the Government that rather than tinker with this business, further consideration should be given by the department to the adoption of drastic measures in this State—not only in the metropolitan area, but also in the urban areas where the effect of this pest has been known to be severe. Action should be taken along the lines I have mentioned. I recall a tree that was severely affected in the yard of a house in Victoria Park. This tree received considerable attention from Argentine ants, particularly when the fruit-fly larvae had matured and dropped to the ground.

We all know the Argentine ants have, of course, been controlled. We also know that the incidence of the fruit-fly pest would not be controlled to any extent by a natural pest. The Government has done a great job in controlling the Argentine ant because we all know just what a pest it was. But in some ways it had some value, and I would suggest that at all costs, over the next few years, we must do something more drastic and more realistic than has been undertaken in the past, to completely eradicate the fruit-fly from the the metropolitan area, and the other affected areas of the State.

THE HON. L. F. KELLY (Minister for Agriculture—Merredin-Yilgarn—in reply) [4.34]: First I wish to thank hon. members for their second reading speeches on this very small Bill. I have always been under the impression that matters on which they have spoken are generally raised during the debate on the Address-in-reply, or at some other suitable time.

Mr. Watts: There is no time like the present.

Mr. KELLY: Never have I known a Bill with such a simple amendment to receive so much attention. Most hon. members have roamed not only to the Argentine, but to many other parts of the world, with the result that it is necessary for me to speak in reply. The member for Darling Range asked for some assurance regarding the matter of registration in the event of a property changing hands. I can assure him that whatever applies on a 12-monthly basis, would also apply on a five-yearly basis.

If there is a clause at present in existence providing the incoming owner with certain privileges, or imposing certain obligations on the outgoing owner, this would apply equally in any new move. The same would be the case in the matter of collections. The principles in regard to collections of money would naturally remain as they are at present. Even if it were necessary to pay into general revenue the amounts collected, they would of course be available if and when the various seasons demanded expenditure of a like amount.

The member for Dale made his customary plea. I have not heard him address the House on any Bill without saying that we are playing with a gigantic problem; indeed, I had just those words written down before he even uttered them —so thoroughly did I anticipate his remark.

Mr. Wild : It is true, nevertheless.

Mr. KELLY: The hon. member drew right away from the subject under discussion in mentioning the fruit-fly. I can

assure him that the seriousness of the fruit-fly pest is fully appreciated by the department. I would also like to assure all other hon. members who have spoken to this Bill, that a full and thorough investigation is being made; this has already proceeded some distance. Only this morning I was on the line to one of our chief fruit inspectors in connection with measures I had contemplated as being necessary.

With the exception of the member for Darling Range, not many of those who have spoken to the Bill are orchardists. The member for Darling Range would know, as would any orchardist, that the incidence of fruit-fly this year is worse than it has been over a period of years, and to a limited degree the infection has been more extensive than in past times. This is mainly due to drier conditions that were experienced during the fruit-growing period.

There is no doubt that this circumstance, which is mainly attributed to the dry conditions, is not nearly as serious as we have been led to believe this afternoon. We are fully aware that the fruit-fly has extended its operations to other areas; but the extent to which it has done so does not warrant the amount of debate that has ensued in that regard. I visited one particular area a short while ago; and, naturally, this being a new portfolio to me, I endeavoured to delve into all matters which I thought would be of interest to the people in the various centres I was about to visit.

There had appeared a Press statement in an Albany paper; and as the member for Albany had written to me about the matter, before I went to the area in question—and it was not Albany—I made it my business to call for the file, in order to see the departmental angle on the incidence of fly in some of these areas. At a function which I attended on behalf of the Premier—and incidentally I think I did a very good job for him—one of the leading citizens said to me during the course of the afternoon, "How are you getting on about the fruit-fly?" I had read up this particular district's history concerning fruit-fly before going there. I said to him, "I think we would be up with the field." He said, "Oh no! It is getting very bad." I said, "Perhaps I can see you later." We were rounding off the ceremony. I said, "Give me some details so that I will know where I am heading."

Eventually we met in the main street. He started to "ear-bash" me regarding fruit-fly. I said, "I understand it is reasonably clean here at the present time." He said, "Oh no! I can name half a dozen affected by fruit-fly." I said to him, "Name two or three. That will be enough." He said to me after he had been to see two or three persons on the other side of the street and they all came over, "Tell the Minister all about the fruit-fly." The spokesman for the three said, "What fruit-fly?" He then said to the spokesman, "You have fruit-fly all over the place." The spokesman said, "I have nothing of the kind. Where did you get that information from?" That was a very definite case of people spreading abroad the idea that the problem was urgent.

I do not minimise the urgent need to control fruit-fly; and I am getting ahead of the member for Cottesloe, because he was attempting to have a shot at me. I realise how very necessary it is to treat this matter with a full degree of seriousness—the matter of the fruit-fly getting away from a controlled area, from supervision, or even from the point of view of not being regarded as eradication. Eradication is naturally the goal.

We have had the menace of fruit-fly with us for very many years. In some years we have experienced very many outbreaks, and the problem was more of a danger than it is at present. Let us see what the department has done. I have not the report with me, but I have had an opportunity of looking into the steps taken by the department.

I think the amount spent annually is in the vicinity of £18,000 to £20,000 for the eradication of fruit fly. Registrations number about 8,000 odd in respect of commercial registration. There are 82,000 backyarders who register annually. It could be that there are more who have not registered annually. Seventeen inspectors are appointed to cover the whole of the State. The mileage covered in the last 12 months was 42,000 in respect of fruit-fly alone, so for any hon. member to get up in this House and say that nothing is being done and no property is being visited is so much eye-wash and "ballyhoo". If every other person receives as much attention from the fruit-fly control officers as I have, they will be visited at least once or twice a year, because these officers never fail to come to my property and inspect.

If they treat me with that amount of suspicion and attention, I would be very surprised if they do not treat other hon. members of this House in the same manner. Hon. members will bear in mind that I took over the portfolio of Minister for Agriculture very recently. The responsibility was, perhaps, in the first instance, thrown on me to take all sorts of precautions. I feel sure that those precautions are either being taken, or have been provided for.

There is a distinct responsibility on each and every person who owns a garden of any kind—whether it has one or 20 trees, or whether it is owned in a private capacity or commercially—to take preventive measures, because in both cases the responsibility is just as great.

Regarding the incidence of fruit-fly and the difficulty experienced by the department in eradication or control, 99 out of 100 cases of fruit-fly infestation concern the backyarder and not the commercial grower. We then come to the point that the person paying the most in fees gets the most attention.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: How many backyarders are there?

Mr. KELLY: There are 82,000 registered.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That shows you the number of instances concerning the depredation of the fruit-fly is greater by far in the case of backyard orchards than commercial orchards.

Mr. KELLY: Not necessarily. Although 82,000 are registered, many of the registrations cover only one tree. As the member for Beeloo said, it may be a plum tree, an ornamental one. The number of trees which are commercially owned would, of course, be far in excess of the number of trees privately owned. There is no doubt about that.

Let me come back to this point: Instead of harping in this House on what the department should do and how much extra money the Government should find, hon. members should realise that the responsibility rests on each and every one representing a district to keep the people up to scratch, and not lose an opportunity of telling them what they should do in this regard. They should advise the people.

Mr. Brand: How is the problem at Northam and Canning Bridge?

Mr. KELLY: I do not know who is making this speech.

The SPEAKER: I think hon. members have had a fair go.

Mr. KELLY: I did not make one interjection when listening to this barrage. The member for Katanning, who always contributes something worth while, suggests there was difficulty about fruit-fly going into his district because of the existence of some ban. I do not know a great deal about the ban that exists in his district, but I do know this: All the fruit which goes through the Metropolitan Markets, and which after all is the fruit over which control can be exercised, is subject to close scrutiny.

Undoubtedly the examination that takes place is on a severe scale, perhaps more severe than I, as a layman, care to comment on, because I have seen fruit with a very slight degree of imperfection, from a layman's point of view, being rejected. All the fruit that goes out from the Metropolitan Markets is so closely scrutinised that no fruit going out to Katanning or any other district is in a bad state, unless it goes through other retailing sources where it is kept for some considerable time and becomes contaminated.

There are instances of fruit-fly being spread from one private property to another, the very trouble being experienced in New South Wales and other States where at present a great deal of tightening up of control is taking place in regard to shifting fruit from one area to another. Those are the matters which the inspectors find difficulty in controlling.

Only recently I saw a person packing fruit into an ordinary valise travelling from the Eastern States to Western Australia. I asked him what the idea was. He said, "Just taking a few home to the kiddies". When I informed him of the restriction that applied to fruit being moved from one State to another he said that he did not know people were subject to any restrictions of that kind when fruit was taken out of a State. The fruit was done up in celophane paper; but still this action was a contravention of the legislation.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Was that person travelling by train?

Mr. KELLY: By plane. Regarding the question of stationing officers in country districts, there are, as I have explained, 17 inspectors carrying out this work all the time, irrespective of whether they are in the country, the metropolitan area, or the near metropolitan area. If I understood the suggestion put forward by one hon. member, to have officers detailed for duty in the separate districts would be a step beyond the present finances available to this section of the department.

Another point, mentioned by the member for Katanning and several others concerned was notice to individual growers. No individual grower gets a notice now when his registration is due. It is due every 12 months. Notices to this effect appear in the Press. Other notices are posted up, and this method has always been quite satisfactory.

A privilege is now being extended to people enabling them to register only once every five years to suit their convenience —there is nothing compulsory about it. What is wrong with the present method where notifications are made in the Press? That it is satisfactory is evidenced by the fact that 82,000 register. I would say undoubtedly that the five-year period will be closely watched.

Mr. Brand: The Minister for Transport did not think that in regard to drivers' licences.

Mr. KELLY: That is his business. Whether he would think the same if he were Minister for Lands I do not know. I think it is quite unnecessary for the department to send out notices, as it would create a tremendous amount of work, quite apart from the fourpenny stamp which would have to be placed on

each letter. It has been quite satisfactory on a one-year basis, and I do not see any difference in a five-year basis.

Mr. Nalder: There is quite a bit of difference in five years.

Mr. KELLY: The difference is that there is now a concession to the person who is paying on a five-year basis instead of being obliged to pay every 12 months.

Mr. Brand: Why not make them register permanently for a full period?

Mr. KELLY: The member for Harvey said he was surprised—really surprised—that a matter being so widely discussed was not being given much more attention. Of course, he roamed very far from the Bill. I would say to the member for Harvey that instead of indulging in a lot of discussion, he should engage in a lot of action; we would then get better results. We want action from an individual point of view rather than people relying on the Government to do everything for everybody. We want a little practical co-operation—a little swimming with the tide instead of swimming against it, as many backyarders do, because they have to pay 2s.

Quite a lot of backyarders treasure the trees they have and look after them, and when the inspector calls there is nothing about which he can complain as the trees, are in good order. On his second visit when the fruit is ready to be picked, the same good state exists. However, a lot of people have eight, 10, 12 or 20 trees who do not give a hang about them and wish they were pulled out. Why do not they pull them out? The Leader of the Opposition said something about his. If he feels any danger of being hounded by an inspector he should pull the trees out.

Mr. Roberts: I do not think he is worried about the inspector.

Mr. Brand. Why was it necessary to have a comprehensive scheme to deal with argentine ants rather than rely on the private individual?

Mr. KELLY: I have a bill coming on very shortly dealing with argentine ants; and if members want to know more about that subject I will tell them after introducing that Bill.

The member for Gascoyne put forward one or two worth-while suggestions. He asked that consideration be given to the extension of this Act to cover market gardeners. Where market gardeners are growing fruit trees, naturally they come under the same legislation as any other backyarder; but there are times when we know that there is some neglect in some gardens, and when that neglect takes place there is very frequently an appearance of fruit-fly. I think the suggestion that market gardeners be included is worth looking into.

A second point raised by the member for Gascoyne concerned an extension of the scheme on a compulsory basis. I think that has a lot of merit; because we are only human, after all, with human frailties, and do no more than we have to when left to our own devices. A large percentage of people will not comply with the requirements of the law when they are on a voluntary basis. Therefore some consideration should be given to the matter of a compulsory basis.

The Leader of the Opposition covered much the same ground as previous speakers. He mentioned quite a lot about argentine ants; and, as I have said, I will be able to give more information on that subject—so long as I do not weary the House by the length of the information—at a later stage of the session. He spoke of the problem and its serious proportions. I think I have replied in a general sense in regard to that matter and shown the concern we have for the seriousness of the subject.

Mr. Brand: Listening to you, I would imagine your speech could be described as "everything in the garden is lovely."

Mr. KELLY: No, no! I said I did not minimise the incidence of fruit-fly in any shape or form.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: If you had not said it, it would have been true.

Mr. KELLY: I have just been reminded that had the previous Government done more, fruit-fly might not be doing the harm it is today.

Mr. Brand. Rot!

Mr. KELLY: The Leader of the Country Party said that inspectors were never seen. I do not know what they do with themselves unless we have an inspector to inspect the inspectors. From what I have read, and from the districts I have visited. I would say that they have been very busy.

Mr. Watts: I do not doubt that for a minute. I am talking about the large proportion of backyard orchards. I am not suggesting that they do not do work in districts where fruit is commercially grown and adjacent thereto.

Mr. KELLY: I would say to the hon. member that he should read a file dealing with the visits and reports of a fruit-fly inspector in various districts where the Government has expended money available to it. I am not saying that the money is nearly enough; and I hope the Treasurer is listening, because I think we could, with safety, and every good sense, spend a lot more if we were satisfied that the fruit-fly position was likely to get out of hand. When the moment arrives to put a case to the Treasurer, he will no doubt, as always, make money available.

Mr. Hawke: No comment!

Mr. KELLY: I will now deal with remarks made by the member for Beeloo. He is not in his seat, but he spoke on similar lines to several other hon. members. He made rather a revolutionary statement in regard to a complete prohibition for five years of anybody growing fruit. I presume he was talking of the backyarder, and would remind him that I am a Minister and not a dictator. To do something of that nature would require someone with a lot more courage than I possess.

In any case, I do not think that that is the right approach. Everybody is entitled to grow a few fruit trees in order to provide fruit for his family or as a hobby; and I think a better approach to the problem would be for those who are wanting trees and who are prepared to look after them to perhaps pay a little more in order to help eradicate fruit-fly on adjacent properties. If the fee for an individual grower were doubled—or perhaps, better still, a fee per tree were paid —I think those who did not treasure their trees would pull them up. In that way, something would be achieved. I am always reminded that the things you pay most for are the things you treasure. I have often heard it said about the proverbial penny for a packet of salts. If it were a guinea, you would buy them most readily.

Mr. Hawke: Who would?

Mr. KELLY: Most people. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think you have allowed me just as much latitude as the rest, and I appreciate the gesture and thank you.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

JUNIOR FARMERS' MOVEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE HON. W. HEGNEY (Minister for Education—Mt. Hawthorn) [5.4] in moving the second reading said: I think that it can be truly said that this Bill will not cause a great amount of debate, and a lesser amount of contention. Last year an amendment was made to enable the employees of the staff of the Junior Farmers' Movement Council to become contributors to the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act and thereby enjoy the benefits of that Act.

The Superannuation Board found that in the Junior Farmers' Movement Act there was a section which precluded the members of the staff from legally contributing to the fund established under the superannuation and Family Benefits Act. For the benefit of the House, I will read the section which now appears in the Act—

> The Council of the Junior Farmers' Movement Act is not an agency or instrumentality of the Crown.

And that is where it fell short of enabling the members of the staff to become contributors to the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act fund. All that this Bill seeks to do is to amend Section 7, to modify the provisions of that section, so that the members of the staff will be entitled to contribute to the fund established under the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act and enjoy the provisions of the Act.

Mr. Brand: Members of the council as well, or only the staff?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The staff. It is known as the Junior Farmers' Movement Council. As a matter of fact, there has been a secondment from the Agricultural Department, and it is thought that there should be no bar to the members of the staff becoming contributors and being legally qualified to contribute to the fund I mentioned. I move—

> That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Hon. D. Brand, debate adjourned.

BROKEN HILL PROPRIETARY STEEL INDUSTRY AGREEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th August.

THE HON. D. BRAND (Greenough) [5.7]: This is, I suppose, considered to be a small Bill; but it could involve a great deal of discussion in connection with the proposed amendment put forward by the Minister for Industrial Development. The original Act—that is, the Broken Hill Proprietary Steel Industry Agreement Act, is the measure which covers the agreement which was made between B.H.P. and the State Government in 1952; but included in that particular agreement, was the provision which limited—or placed a limitation upon—the amount of iron ore which could be taken from Koolyanobbing by the authorities at Wundowie, for the processing and production of pig iron.

I would imagine that this should be a separate subject; and it might have been to the general benefit, and lead to a better understanding of this situation by all, if it had been made the subject of a separate statute.

Mr. Hawke: I quite agree.

Mr. BRAND: However, I am not a lawyer —far from it—and it was on the recommendation of the Crown Law Department at that time, I would imagine, that it was included in the Bill which ultimately became the Act under which the B.H.P. became established at Kwinana. As the Premier has pointed out, the limitation is 50,000 tons and it was placed there to ensure—on the advice given to the Government at that time—that sufficient iron ore was available to enable the industry at Wundowie to keep going at a certain level of production. We are all aware that the plant at Wundowie was, indeed, a pilot plant, as was explained to this House originally, but since then and particularly over the last two years, great expansion has taken place and the Treasurer of this State has authorised some £800,000 of Loan money to be expended in that expansion.

I do not know what increase in the output of Wundowie is proposed, but I think it would have to be substantial for the spending of that amount of money to be justified. It can therefore be readily understood by the House that a tonnage in excess of 50,000 tons annually would be required by the industry at Wundowie. Whether we agree with the expansion that has taken place, or not, is beside the point at this time. As the Premier has said, a great deal of discussion has already taken place on these matters and I have no doubt that, before this session is concluded, a great deal more will be said about the wisdom of the expansion of Wundowie and the various decisions that have been made in connection with iron ore, export licences and the like.

The Premier also pointed out that, even at the time referred to, Wundowie was taking in excess of 50,000 tons of iron ore annually and was, to that extent, breaking the law of the country. This measure is now brought forward, not only to ratify what has already been done, but also to remove the limitations which exist in the Act at the present time. In lieu of the 50,000 tons limitation at present contained in the Act, the Bill proposes that the provisions shall be "such amount of ore as is required for the purposes of producing charcoal iron and steel under the Wood Distillation and Charcoal Iron and Steel Industry Act, 1943"; in short, to allow the industry to take all the iron ore it requires.

The Minister for Industrial Development also emphasised, however, that he did not intend that Parliament should agree to iron ore being taken in large enough quantities to enable the establishment of a large charcoal iron industry in the South-West of the State. In short, he was suggesting that, in the event of such a decision being made—it would involve the expenditure of millions of pounds and no one has been able yet reasonably to assess the cost of such an industry, although all sorts of figures have been given us from time to time—Parliament should require of the Government of the day that it come back to this House for approval, just as we had to come here with the B.H.P. agreement and the Kwinana agreement to seek the approval of the House for the setting up of an industry involving huge sums of public money.

Taking a further look at the amendment contained in this Bill, it would appear that if the Government of the day desired to do so under the provisions of the measure, it could take ore for the establishment of a charcoal iron industry anywhere in the State—

Mr. Sleeman: I hope you are right.

Mr. BRAND: I did recall the interjection of the member for Fremantle, who suggested that we should not take two bites at this cherry. But I think that, if we look through the pages of Hansard, we will find where he has expressed himself in favour of the Government coming to this House for general approval for the expenditure of large sums of money on huge public undertakings.

I refer the House to Section 5 of the Wood Distillation and Charcoal Iron and Steel Industry Act, 1943, which states—

> Subject to this Act, the Minister acting for and on behalf of the Government of the State should be and is hereby authorised—
>
> (a) At any time and from time to time and in any part or parts of the State as he shall think fit, to establish, maintain, and carry on works, plant, and undertakings upon any lands dedicated to the purposes of this Act for the purpose of producing charcoal and other products by any process of wood distillation, and of producing charcoal iron and steel; and
>
> (b) To carry on in or about such works, plant, and undertakings the business of producing charcoal and other products—

and so on. But I wish particularly to refer to the words "at any time and from time to time and in any part or parts of the State." It would seem to me that, as the Premier has drawn the attention of the House to the fact that he does not desire that such a work should proceed without the right of members of Parliament to debate it and the House to approve it, it would be in our interests to provide some safeguard to tie it down to Wundowie, as we know the charcoal iron plant there, and to that particular site. When the Bill is in Committee I propose to move to insert such words as will ensure that, apart from the increased demand resulting from the expansion at Wundowie, the Government of the day

will have to come to Parliament for the approval of the establishment of any major charcoal iron industry over and above that which already exists.

I think it is only fair to remind the House that originally the present Premier, as Minister for Works and Industrial Development, established this pilot plant at Wundowie for two main reasons; firstly, that timber was available there to meet the charcoal requirements; and, secondly, that it was then believed that sufficient iron ore existed in the immediate vicinity for at least some worth-while experiment to be carried out.

However, it was quickly found that there was not sufficient iron ore in that vicinity; that the ore there was costly to use; and that it was not of the quality available from Koolyanobbing; and so the Government of that day—when that measure was before the House—provided for the taking of iron ore from Koolyanobbing. I want to make it clear that Koolyanobbing, as referred to in the Act dealing with the agreement with B.H.P., was set aside not for further use by B.H.P., but in order to be available to the Government of the day for negotiations with any outside interest or company that might be desirous of setting up an integrated steel industry in this State.

Since then it has been found that there are millions of tons of iron ore available, beyond that which we believed at that time to be there; and that there is sufficient iron ore at that site on which to base an integrated steel industry in Western Australia. I would rather that we did not meddle with the Act at all, but that we kept this iron ore, which is more readily accessible than a lot of other ore that has been discovered in recent years—available and ready for any interest that might desire to use it in connection with a steel industry which is so necessary for this State. Having said that, I have pleasure—or at least I have no opposition to offer to it—in supporting the second reading of this Bill, bearing in mind that I intend to make some addition to the wording of the Bill in Committee.

THE HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [5.20]: I cannot say the same as the Leader of the Opposition—that I am very pleased to support the Bill as it stands.

Mr. Brand: Why not?

Mr. SLEEMAN: The hon. member has just said that he is very pleased to be able to support the Bill. I do not think it goes half far enough. As far as it goes, it is quite all right; but I think the measure should go a lot further. I think the illegitimate parent Act of this measure should be scrapped so that the property of the State can be returned to the people to whom it belongs. There is no doubt that these big companies got away with a lot when our friends opposite were in Government. One big company got away with an oil agreement.

Mr. Brand: That was disastrous, wasn't it!

Mr. SLEEMAN: Everyone was agreeable to going a long way towards helping the company; but our friends opposite went a long way further. They said, "If you come here we will give you the whole world." This company cannot only bring crude oil into this country, but it can also bring in refined oil without the payment of pilotage, wharfage or any other dues.

Mr. Brand: Why didn't you oppose the Bill at the time?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Why did I not see it at the time? Why did not the Crown Law Department see what was happening at the time? The hon. member was one of those Ministers who were supposed to be among the brains of his party. Why did he not see it? I will admit that we had a certain amount of responsibility in regard to it; and we missed it. But when the Harbour Trust sent a bill to this company the company simply sent it back and said, "No, we do not have to pay you for this." So the Harbour Trust referred the matter to the Government, and the Government referred it to the Crown Law Department. Officers of the Crown Law Department had a look at it, scatched their heads, and said, "That was never intended."

It does not matter whether it was intended or not. That is the position at present. It seems to me that B.H.P. are doing the same thing. That company seems to get everything it wants and seems to be prepared to beat the Government and the country at all times for a few lousy bob. Let me tell hon. members something that I just discovered the other day. I should like to quote from the report of the Fremantle Harbour Trust. It states—

> During the year a quantity of pig iron consigned to the Wundowie charcoal iron and steel industry was discharged ex "Iron Derby" at the steelworks jetty. As the Trust considered this pig iron was not goods of the Broken Hill Pty. Co. Ltd. as provided in Clause 3 (f) of the agreement under the Broken Hill Pty. Steel Industry Agreement Act, 1952, the consignee was required to pay the full wharfage charge of 13s. 6d. per ton. This claim was rejected on the grounds that all charges had been paid by the consignee to the Broken Hill Pty. Co. Ltd. to whom the Trust should look for payment. The Broken Hill Pty. Co. Ltd. in its turn argued that the words "goods of the company and any subsidiary company" as contained in Clause 3 (f) of the agreement were meant to include products of the company sold to customers in this State on a c.i.f. basis.

How much do hon. members think the company paid? I quote further—

> And therefore only the wharfage rate of 1s. 4d. per ton specified in the agreement was payable.

The Harbour Trust sent the company a bill for 13s. 6d. a ton and all the company paid was 1s. 4d. a ton wharfage rate. So the poor old Harbour Trust got beaten for its money once more!

Mr. Brand: The poor old Harbour Trust! They ought to put the money towards building the No. 10 berth.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I suppose the Harbour Trust will refer the matter to the Crown Law Department, and the officers of the department, after having a look at it, will have another scratch of their heads and say, "That was never intended." So hon. members can see how these big companies get away with it.

I well remember when the Act was passed, the present Premier calling the agreement an iniquitous one. The member for Fremantle said that even Judas, when he betrayed our Master, had the decency to go and hang himself, and that the then Government had betrayed the people when it transferred those big deposits at Kooyanobbing to B.H.P.

Mr. Hawke: Hear, hear!

Mr. SLEEMAN: That agreement allows the Government to take 50,000 tons of ore per annum, but no more—not an ounce more—which enables only a small mill to operate. Under this measure the Government wants to take enough iron ore to keep one mill operating. Why not make one job of it and return to the people of this State what rightly belongs to them, and tell B.H.P. that if it is prepared to start a mill in this State the Government will be prepared to do business with it?

Mr. Brand: Wundowie is taking more than 50,000 tons per annum now. Had it been a private company you would have been on your feet squealing about it for breaking the law.

Mr. SLEEMAN: No.

Mr. Brand: The Government breaks the law and then comes to Parliament to ratify it.

Mr. SLEEMAN: If the B.H.P. had been prepared to do something about building a big steelworks here it might have been a different matter. But that company is holding the deposits and not doing anything about an iron and steel industry.

Mr. Brand: It is nothing to do with B.H.P. Get back to the Bill.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I do not think B.H.P. intends to build an iron works here. Let us do the job properly instead of doing it by dribs and drabs. The other evening the Premier said that it may be necessary, some time later, to ask Parliament to take further action. Never mind about Parliament taking action in the future; let us do the job properly now and give back to the people what they own. The iron ore is the property of the people, and yet the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues handed it over to a private company when they were in government.

I hope that, even at this stage, the Premier will be able to alter the Bill so that the State will be able to take not only what it wants for Wundowie, but as much as it wants for anything else. Iron ore belongs to the people and B.H.P. should have to come to the Government whenever it wants ore for use in its mills, or if it wants to start a new industry in this State.

THE HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Minister for Industrial Development—Northam—in reply) [5.28]: I think it should be pointed out that the section of the Act with which this Bill deals lays down a limited control over the iron ore deposits of Koolyanobbing. That section of the Act reserves those deposits for the State exclusively.

Mr. Brand: That is right.

Mr. HAWKE: But, there is a qualification that no more than 50,000 tons per annum shall be taken from the deposits for a period of ten years, from the year 1952, unless, of course, the approval of Parliament is first obtained. Under the provisions of that Act Wundowie has been taking, until recently, 50,000 tons per annum, or up to that figure, and more recently considerably more.

In view of the fact that Wundowie's requirements are now more than 50,000 tons per annum, and will remain so for as long as the plant continues to operate at full capacity, it is necessary legally for the approval of Parliament to be obtained to alter that section of the Act so that the present maximum of 50,000 tons per annum might be exceeded. That is the purpose of the Bill.

The Leader of the Opposition has raised the point that this measure, if it were to become law, could possibly be legally interpreted to give to the board of management of the Wundowie charcoal iron and steel industry the right to take an unlimited quantity of iron ore each year if the board of management required far greater quantities than would actually be needed at Wundowie.

In other words, he suggests that the board of management can establish the much-talked-about large-scale charcoal iron industry in the South-West, for which iron ore to a quantity of perhaps 100,000 tons per year might be needed. That would mean putting the Wundowie needs, together with the needs of the industry in the South-West, at perhaps a quantity of iron ore from Koolyanobbing to the total of 200,000 tons. Possibly that might be a correct legal interpretation in

the event of this amendment becoming law. I am quite prepared therefore, to look carefully at any amendment which the Leader of the Opposition might present in regard to this matter.

However, at this stage I would point out that any proposal by the Wundowie board of management to establish a large-scale charcoal iron industry in the South-West would naturally have to be looked at by the Government first, and approved by it; and any loan funds required by the board of management for the purpose of establishing a suggested industry in the South-West would, of course, have to be approved by Parliament.

In order that the Leader of the Opposition might have an opportunity either of putting his suggested amendments on the notice paper, or at least having a number of typewritten copies made available to members so that they may have a look at them before they are considered, I would agree to the Committee stages of this Bill being held over until next week.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE HON. W. HEGNEY (Minister for Labour—Mt. Hawthorn) [5.34] in moving the second reading said: On this question it is not my intention to go into a great amount of detail in explaining the provisions of the measure; because, as members know, this is the sixth occasion on which a Bill of this character has been introduced into Parliament.

Mr. Brand: The sixth edition.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Yes, the sixth edition. In 1953, for the information of the Leader of the Opposition, the first edition was introduced. On that occasion the Government included provision for life assurance.

Mr. Brand: I knew it was not 1952.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Well—

The SPEAKER: Order, please! I must insist on members allowing the mover of a motion or a Minister introducing a Bill to proceed without their making frivolous interjections at the outset. The Minister may proceed.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The year 1953 was an historic one because it followed 1952, in which year there was a State election. Immediately after the election, and during the first session of Parliament, the Government, in the course of endeavouring to implement its policy, introduced a Bill to extend the activities of the State Government Insurance Office; and, as I said previously, it included provision for life assurance.

During that year the Opposition suggested a series of amendments; and subsequently those amendments and the comments of members of the Opposition were closely examined. As a result, in the Bills that followed, provision was made to act on the comments and suggested amendments that had been made by the Opposition, and they were incorporated in the measure.

Mr. Court: You are not suggesting we gave the Bill qualified support, are you? If you are, it is not correct.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Unlike the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I am not suggesting anything. At this stage, all I am stating is a number of facts by way of recapitulation.

Mr. Court: You are implying qualified support.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is trying to insinuate—quite unjustifiably—that I am suggesting that the Opposition gave qualified support to the State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment Bill that was introduced previously. I am not suggesting anything of the kind—

Mr. Court: So long as that is clear!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: —because the records will show that it took very strong objections to every one of the five Bills that have been introduced in the past. So that we will know what the true position is, let me mention this: The criticisms offered by members of the Opposition, after being examined, were met by way of amendments to the original provisions, and I think I would be correct in saying that now the matter resolves itself into one of policy.

It is the definite policy of the Government, without any apology whatsoever, to have a measure passed which will enable the State Government Insurance Office to engage in all forms of insurance, and up to date, it has, with one exception, been the policy of the Opposition to oppose the objective of the Government.

Mr. Lapham: How would they be!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: How would I be?

Mr. Kelly: How would they be, he said.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The one exception is this: In 1955 I think it was—or, 1956—the non-Labour members in another place, at the second reading of a measure similar to this, passed it and it went through the

Committee stages. However, something happened between the progress of the Committee stages and the third reading, and the Bill was defeated on the third reading by members in another place. Yesterday evening we heard an effusion from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He talked a great deal about democracy and democratic institutions; about the rights of the people—the rights of the minorities and the rights of the majorities.

Mr. Hawke: How would he be?

Mr. Court: You must have been listening.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: This is a very important point, and, it is one which can stand reiteration. Since this Bill was first introduced in 1953—and it was introduced in each successive year after—there was a general election in 1956.

Mr. Brand: So there was after the last.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: At the election which took place in 1956, the Government was returned with an increased majority; not on the franchise just implied by the Leader of the Opposition but on the adult franchise of Western Australia. If there is anything in this alleged principle of government by a majority and the implementation of the objectives of our democratic institutions then there should be no hesitation on the part of any hon. member of Parliament whether he be in this House or in another place, in the way he should vote in order to pass a bill which has received the approval of a Chamber elected by the majority of the people in this State.

I am not going into a mass of detail at this stage, but I would like to mention once more that there is no basis whatever for any criticism on the ground that the State Government Insurance Office would not be able to meet a major claim, or catastrophe, without calling on the assistance of the State Treasury. That point has been mentioned on previous occasions, and I am advised that no such position could arise, because very careful and very thorough reinsurance arrangements have been made to ensure that with the aid of the reserves built up from its past trading, the office would be able to meet any such claim without asking the State Treasury to pay one penny—and that should certainly please the Premier!

As I mentioned previously, the position is rather in reverse, because it is the State Treasury that benefits by the activities of the State Insurance Office, and I will later provide the House with figures to substantiate this statement. Figures will also be given to show the nature of the reserves that have been accumulated and the manner in which these reserves have been invested. As a matter of fact, it might not be inopportune to quote a few of those figures now. Since the inception of the office, Consolidated Revenue has benefited to the extent of £897,000. The investments are as follows:—

Commonwealth Inscribed Stock	£659,094
Loans to Local Authorities	66,800
Loans to Private Industry	188,000

And it is this Government that has been accused of trying to stifle Western Australian industry! Members opposite should take note of the loans that have been made to private industry. These have been made by what members opposite are pleased to call a socialistic institution.

Labour members: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Further investments are—

Semi-Government Loans	£953,714
Investments in land and buildings:	
Buildings	523,000
Land	48,463

In passing, I would mention, with particular reference to the £188,000 loaned to private industry, that I was advised of a certain firm in Perth—and I do not propose to mention its name, but it is in operation less than two miles from here—which sought accommodation from the private banks to carry on its industry. This firm received a most unfavourable hearing from more than one of the members of the associated banks, and eventually it approached the manager of the State Government Insurance Office who, after discussing the proposals with me, and in due course with the Premier, loaned on mortgage a sum of £80,000 to the firm in question.

That is just another indication which adds weight to the brilliant exposition the Premier gave us last Thursday evening in connection with the State Government's effort to aid and expand local industry.

Mr. Court: You'll get on!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: It certainly gives the lie direct to members of the Opposition when they adopt a policy of trying to mislead the people as to the attitude of the State Government. Payment made to the Treasurer for the financial year 1956-57 in respect to the equivalent of taxation on trading surpluses amounted to £49,014.

Mr. Brand: What happened to that?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I would like to briefly outline the position with regard to motor-vehicle insurance, because it is rather interesting. New motor-vehicle comprehensive policies issued monthly averaged 400, representing a net increase, after deleting lapses, of 250. During the last 12 months, the gross number of new policies issued was 4,647, representing a net increase, after deducting lapses, of 3,018.

Now we come to the matter of the Local Authorities Pools. That has been mentioned quite a few times here and on each occasion the position has been explained.

The figures concerning the Local Authorities Pools are that the aggregate rebates made to authorities, including the year 1957-58, which have not yet been paid, are—

	£
Pool No. 1	33,209
Pool No. 2 (Bushfire)	1,666
	34,875

The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it, and these figures will indicate the popularity, efficiency and satisfactory service provided by the State Government Insurance Office in regard to Local Authority Pools. Of the 147 local authorities—that is, the municipal councils and road boards—no less than 134 are members of the Local Authorities Pools administered by the State Government Insurance Office. Perhaps I should have said 148, because Peppermint Grove has not yet amalgamated with Nedlands. The policy of the office is to invest more and more of its funds in local authorities loans, advances to private industry in this State, semi-Government loans and, more recently, thanks to the Minister for Housing and other members of the Government—

Mr. Court: You'll be right!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: This is not a one-man show; this is teamwork.

Labour members: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: This ensures that all these investments benefit the State as distinct from previous policy when the bulk of the money was invested in Commonwealth inscribed stock which, although of course assisting this State, is also available for use in other States of the Commonwealth. The Government is seeking every means possible to raise more revenue in order to endeavour to balance the budget. If this measure is passed it can be said that the State Insurance Office will thereby be enabled to make further substantial contributions to State revenue, not only by direct but by indirect methods.

In regard to the local authorities insurance pool, I would like to mention that it is dealt with in the same manner as the ordinary insurance business of the Government insurance office; that is to say, the office retains the amount of risk which it considers it can safely handle, and reinsures the balance.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: With whom do you reinsure?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: We shall deal with that later on. The State Government Insurance Office does reinsure.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: You will tell us about that later?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The hon. member can get all appropriate information.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: By putting the question on the notice paper?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Not only by putting questions on the notice paper. If questions are asked, or if given prior notice, I can arrange for the hon. member to have a frank discussion with the manager of the State Insurance Office. There is no self insurance involved in the scheme. If in any one year there is a surplus it is divided amongst the participants. If in any one year there is a loss, that loss is borne by the State Insurance Office and is not carried forward to the next year. So local authorities, at the worst, obtain their insurance at a reduced premium, and at the best, they obtain a substantial bonus.

I have discussed this matter with a few local authorities' representatives but I have not heard any violent criticism against the State Insurance Office in regard to the Local Authorities Pool. I know that some time back the number of local authorities participating in the pool increased progressively. A couple of years ago I quoted the figure at 120 local authorities; today there are 134 out of 147 local authorities participating. That is a fair percentage.

In regard to housing loan—which is a new activity of the State Insurance Office—when the Housing Loan Guarantee Act was passed last year, the State Insurance Office decided to invest £50,000 out of its funds in the provision of private homes for persons eligible under the terms of that Act. Although this facility was not advertised in any way, 150 applications have been received to date, this number being far in excess of the number which can be assisted without exceeding £50,000. A number of the applications have been investigated and some are still pending.

Unfortunately, when this amount of £50,000 is expended, applications which have been lodged with the State Insurance Office will have to wait until a further allocation is made. I do not know how much the private insurance companies, other than the life insurance companies, are making available for homes. I am open to correction, but the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Spooner which appeared in "The West Australian" dated the 21st July were not very favourable towards the insurance companies.

Mr. Court: He was referring to life insurance companies, was he not?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: He was referring to life insurance companies.

Mr. Court: And not to the general insurance companies, if I remember rightly.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: He was referring to insurance companies.

Mr. Court: He was corrected very smartly.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The hon. member can make the correction if he so desires. If the State Insurance Office, with its

operations covering workers' compensation, motor vehicle and school children insurance, as well as the pool insurance scheme for local authorities, can advance £50,000 a year to assist in housing the people, it is obvious that a greater amount will be available over the years if the State Insurance Office has the right to engage in general forms of insurance.

At this stage, with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I propose to make a brief comment on the school children's insurance scheme. By an Act passed in 1954 the State Insurance Office was permitted to extend its insurance activities to enable school children to be insured whilst attending school, travelling to and from school, and when the students were under the supervision of a school teacher at organised games.

The form of the policy was drawn up and the State Insurance Office was precluded from insuring the children on a 24 hour a day basis, for seven days of the week. I do not propose to quote all the figures at this stage in regard to the number of school children who have been insured under the school children's insurance scheme, but suffice to say there was a big proportion. Only quite recently a private insurance company came into the field; it is seeking and is doing business of insuring children for 24 hours of the day, and seven days a week. If this Bill is passed the State Insurance Office will be on an equal basis with the private company.

Mr. Court: No, it will not.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: If this Bill is passed the State Insurance Office will only be on the same basis as private insurance companies in regard to dealing in forms of general insurance.

Mr. Court: It will not; because, as the Minister knows, he will not allow the private company to have the same means of contact with the schools.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: That is a poor one.

Mr. Court: It is an absolute fact.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: It is a very poor argument.

Mr. Court: You know it is a fact because you gave the direction.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The State Insurance Office was operating in this field and the school teachers were very happy about it. There is no argument on the part of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Court: You are seeking a monopoly for your own State Government Insurance Office.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: This does not provide for any monopoly.

Mr. Court: In practical effect that is what you are seeking.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: This Bill does not provide for any monopoly. I can tell the hon. member that. The McLarty-Watts Government, the members of which now sit in Opposition, passed an Amendment to an Act in this House and in another place, which gave a monopoly to the State Insurance Office.

Mr. Court: We have heard you on this one before.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: It is worth repeating.

Mr. Court: You still have not come back to the other point. You will not allow fair competition.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The State Government Insurance Office wished to meet the challenge by the private company, but the limitation imposed by Parliament prevented that being done. By passing this Bill, members will remove this unfair restriction on the State Government Insurance Office and will permit it to indulge in fair competition with the private company or any other company which wishes to compete.

Mr. Roberts: Will you underline the word "fair"?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Hon. members will have a second thought about turning down this proposition to give the State Insurance Office the same insurance coverage as is given to private insurance companies operating in this State in regard to the school children insurance scheme.

For the information of hon. members, since the inception of the scheme over 6,000 claims have been received and finalised, and over £38,000 has been disbursed to the parents. It may be appropriate if I were to mention here that when this scheme was launched first, as a result of the passing of the 1954 amendment, the Government made it quite clear—I wish to impress this on hon. members—that it was not out to make a profit on school children's insurance.

Mr. Brand: What was the premium then?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: In the first place some premium had to be decided upon. It will be noted that the benefits were increased as a result of the amount of premium received against the amount of claims paid.

Mr. Brand: What was the premium then? I can tell you it was 2s. 6d.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I am not sure whether it was 2s. 6d. or 3s. 6d. with a maximum of 10s. per family.

Mr. Brand: It increased 100 per cent. to 5s.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: There is a maximum for a family, and benefits will increase considerably.

Mr. Roberts: What was the amount of the total premium received last year?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I do not know offhand, but that information could easily be obtained.

Mr. Court: If you had the right to do this business, would you give a personal guarantee of free access to private companies as to the State office?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: No. As a matter of fact, I think the State Insurance Office is the proper one, because it is a Government instrumentality and has been in operation—

Mr. Court: Now you have let the cat out of the bag!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is a champion of free enterprise and a champion at anything which has a hit at any Government instrumentality. Why did not the private insurance companies engage in this form of insurance years ago?

Mr. Court: People could have been insured if they had wanted.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: When the Parents' & Citizens' Associations Federation acting on behalf of the Parents' & Citizens' Associations of this State asked the Education Department if something could be done, the State Government Insurance Office was harnessed to the scheme. However, when it was found that the scheme was popular, another insurance company stepped in; it stepped in because it has the right to insure 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If this Bill is passed, the State Government Insurance Office will have the same right. If the member for Cottesloe were teaching—he has been lost to the profession for the time being at least—I feel sure—

Mr. Brand: Wishful thinking.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: —he would agree with me that it would not be right for numerous representatives and agents to be calling on schools, wasting the time of the headmasters and perhaps dislocating the curriculum. Would you call that a monopoly?

Mr. Court: That is the milk in the coconut.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: What?

Mr. Court: What you have just described.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: What did I just describe?

Mr. Court: The prohibition of private firms going to schools and leaving the field completely in the hands of the State Government Insurance Office. The State Government Insurance Office would take the business exclusively under your system.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: If parents wished to insure with another company, there would be nothing to stop them from doing so.

Mr. Hawke: Hear! hear!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The Government cannot be expected to put the skids under its own instrumentality.

Mr. Court: You are giving us the story we have been waiting to hear.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: You ask me whether I would agree with you whether it would be a bad thing for these people to enter schools. I might agree with that if you would agree with me that it would be a bad thing for the representatives of the R. and I. Bank to enter Government departments seeking business.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: The hon. member knows how it operates. The school teachers co-operate with the parents' and citizens' associations and the parents for the collection of premiums. As a matter of fact, the private insurance company has gone in and undoubtedly offered a commission to the people; probably a higher commission than the State Government Insurance Office. That is the position. If this Bill is passed the State Government Insurance Office will be enabled to insure school children on the basis of 168 hours per week.

Mr. Brand: There is no need for the State Insurance Office to offer higher commission when it has power of direction from the Minister.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Knowing the viewpoint of the Opposition I would not be surprised at anything put up by the Opposition to throw cold water on the proposed amendment.

I would like to turn to a provision in the Bill which has been inserted as a result of overtures made some time ago to the Treasurer in regard to probate on farmers' and graziers' estates. In many cases the assets were large—as I hope they will continue to be—but the cash available for payment of probate was very small; and this resulted in frequent requests for some relief in regard to payment—usually a request for the amount to be spread over a period and paid by instalments. This was not desirable from an administrative point of view, and an alternative was sought.

The provisions in this Bill are the result of this effort to overcome the difficulty. It has been introduced previously. It is provided that a farmer or pastoralist may make a proposal to the State Government Insurance Office for payment of an amount which he estimates will be his probate liability for estate duty on his death. The policy, when issued, is assigned to the Treasurer for that purpose. When death takes place, the Treasurer takes from the policy all the proceeds, if that much is necessary to provide for the payment of probate; or, if the amount is in excess of the probate calculation, takes the amount he needs and pays the balance to the personal representative of the assured.

Mr. Court: Is this exactly the same as last time?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Yes. If the Bill becomes law, it will provide a unique opportunity for the issue of such a policy, as, although a farmer or grazier may take out a life assurance policy with one of the companies for the purpose of paying probate dues on his estate when he dies, there is no provision for such a policy to be assigned to the Treasurer and the Treasurer would not be able to accept the assignment of such a policy. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition asked whether this is the same as last year. That provision is in the Bill.

I would like, in conclusion, to give some further points which illustrate how the probate policy would prove of great benefit. It would obviate the necessity of keeping a large amount of liquid or semi-liquid assets on hand, thereby removing any restriction on the investment of capital; it would place a considerable sum of money at once in the hands of the executor with which to meet without penalty the necessary expenses incidental to the settlement of the estate; it would relieve the executor of the necessity of raising cash by the forced sale of assets, thereby enabling him to await a favourable market; it would simplify the administration of the estate, thereby reducing the legal and other expenses; it would hasten the settlement and distribution of the estate; it would impose no undue burden on the beneficiaries all charges being met by moderate annual payments throughout the assured's life; it would keep the estate intact, so that each beneficiary would receive the precise sum intended by the testator; and it would enable the assets of the estate to be transferred, by providing funds for the payment of the tax which must be paid before the transfer is allowed.

Mr. Brand: There are already better facilities than those.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: No doubt the Leader of the Opposition will illustrate the better facilities. I have no doubt that the Bill will not receive his blessing, if past performances are any guide.

Mr. Hawke: He would not dare support it!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: But all that I am indicating—in summing up—is that this is the sixth time that a Bill of this nature has been introduced; and as far as I am concerned, if it is defeated on each occasion, it will be introduced until such time as our policy is implemented.

Mr. Brand: You won't get a chance to introduce it again!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I would just like to indicate, also, that if the members of the Opposition, both in this and another place, had regard for the decisions of the people—

Mr. Brand: We are back on that now!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Yes. It is just as well sometimes to make a very definite point of it, because members of the Opposition are rather apt to forget the rights and the interests of the people; and I reiterate that since the Bill was first introduced there has been a general Assembly election, and the Government was elected by a majority of the adult people of this State on the merits of its definite policy. We make no apologies whatever for our efforts to implement this policy, which the Opposition in both places has continued to frustrate.

Mr. Hawke: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I maintain that their personal feelings should be submerged in the interests of the State. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Court, debate adjourned for one week.

House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 2nd September, 1958.

CONTENTS.

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