

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 6th September, 1951.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Presentation.

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

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

QUESTIONS.

EDUCATION.

As to School Bus Service Extensions and Cost.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Education:

(1) What is the cost, per mile, to the Government for the Coorow-Marchagee school bus service?

(2) When was this bus route extended from 34 miles to 47 miles?

(3) How many additional children were provided with transport because of the extension at the time it was made?

(4) How many children are at present benefiting from the extension?

(5) Will he table the papers concerning the establishment and extension of the Coorow-Marchagee bus route?

(6) Will he, as soon as is reasonably possible, table a return showing particulars of all extensions to school bus routes which have been made during the time the present Government has been in office, such particulars to include name of route, length of extension made, number of children provided for by such extension, and the additional cost involved per school day?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 1s. 6d. per mile from 1/5/50; 1s. 7d. per mile from 30/1/51; 1s. 8d. per mile from 2/4/51; 1s. 9d. per mile from 1/8/51.

(2) Service commenced 5/12/49 (distance 34 miles); extended to Beaumont's 14/3/50 (distance 40 miles); extended to Shaddick's 1/5/50 (distance 47 miles).

(3) Five children at 14/3/50; four children at 1/5/50.

(4) Nine.

(5) File tabled.

(6) The work entailed in providing such a return is very considerable. I would, therefore, suggest to the hon. member that he informs me in writing of the reasons which actuate him in asking for such return, when I shall be glad to give the matter consideration.

STATE BRICK WORKS.

As to Conflict in Minister's Answers.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN asked the Minister for Housing:

What is the explanation of the conflict in the following answers which he gave to questions asked on the 21st August, 1951, and the 4th September, 1951:—

(a) No bricks have yet been delivered by State Brick Works against this release. Work has been possible on this job by reason of the fact that the contractor was working on a trade allowance established during the period of decontrol of bricks. The client had made arrangement some months previously with the builder to carry out the work;

(b) during the non-control period orders were accepted by the State Brick Works on production of permits only;

(c) T. W. Lees is a client of the State Brick Works who obtains delivery of bricks strictly on releases?

The MINISTER replied:

During the period of decontrol, arrangements were made with brickmakers to provide a trade allowance to established

clients to enable them to carry out their building programmes. The State Brick Works, however, required them to produce their building permit or quote the number of the permit when placing orders, but as the permit contained no reference to quantity of bricks required for any particular job, it was not possible—or necessary—as bricks were uncontrolled, to check up on the orders placed and the quantities delivered, consequently builders were in a position to build up reserves.

As the result of reserves built up or orders placed during the period of decontrol, subsequent releases to builders engaged on a number of buildings have lost their identity, but every effort is made by the Commission to ensure that bricks released are used only on authorised jobs.

Mr. Lees claims that he was also obtaining bricks from yards other than the State Brick Works.

COAL.

As to Government Contributions to Development Costs.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) Will he state to what extent, if any, the Government has contributed towards the cost of driving the new Neath tunnel at Cardiff?

(2) Will he also state the amount of Government financial assistance, if any, towards the cost of the erection of all new buildings adjacent to the Neath tunnel?

(3) What was the cost, if any, met by the Government concerning the driving of the new tunnel at the Co-operative mine?

(4) What was the cost, if any, met by the Government, of driving the new No. 21 locomotive road, Proprietary mine, and the cost contributed by the Government in connection with the driving of the stone drive to the bottom seam at the same mine?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) to (4) The Government has not made any direct contribution towards the costs of any of the works mentioned.

The costs were financed in the first instance by the colliery companies and to the extent that they affect production costs will no doubt be reflected in the price payable by the Government and other consumers of coal.

HEALTH.

As to Departmental Inspection of Bottled Milk.

Mr. OLDFIELD asked the Minister representing the Minister for Agriculture:

In view of the many prosecutions against certain members of the milk trade for delivering bottled milk in dirty bottles, and bottles containing foreign matter, and

as the school children are being supplied with bottled milk, will he take steps to have his departmental inspectors exercise greater vigilance at the bottling plants?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied:

In view of the fact that approximately 1,020,771 bottles are distributed weekly, the number of prosecutions is infinitesimal and the milk bottling plants are under constant supervision by inspectors of the Milk Board.

PUBLIC SERVICE.

As to Government's Employment Policy.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Premier:

In view of the report that some State civil servants would welcome a Government statement on employment policy owing to the uncertainty which exists in their minds because of retrenchments in the Commonwealth Public Service, will he give an unequivocal expression of his Government's policy?

The PREMIER replied:

The staff of the State Public Service is constantly under review by the Public Service Commissioner and every effort is made to keep the staff at a minimum consistent with efficiency.

The Government will continue to require the Commissioner and other Government employing agencies to exercise the closest supervision in this respect, but no special policy of retrenchment is contemplated.

BILL—TRUSTEES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—Mt. Lawley) [4.40] in moving the second reading said: Section 5 of the Trustees Act of 1900 sets out that a trustee in Western Australia may invest trust funds in the following manner:—

In any of the parliamentary stocks, or public funds, or Government securities of the United Kingdom, or of the Commonwealth, or of any of the Australasian colonies;

on mortgage of real estate in Western Australia;

on fixed deposits in any incorporated or Joint Stock Bank carrying on business in Western Australia.

They are the principal means of investment, but there are certain others set out in that section. In addition to the investments set out therein, by virtue of certain amendments to the Act a trustee is allowed to invest in semi-governmental securities, such as securities issued in debentures or other securities charged on the funds or property of any municipality in Western Australia; or in debentures issued by a road board of a road district, to which the Trust Funds Investment Act, 1924, is applied, by order of the Governor-

in-Council and published in the "Gazette." Comparable provisions exist in all the other States of the Commonwealth.

It will be seen, however, that investments in semi-governmental securities are limited to Western Australia. Therefore a trustee in Western Australia cannot invest in semi-governmental securities, or securities although guaranteed by a Government, which are issued in any other State in Australia. That means that a trustee in this State cannot invest in such securities as the Metropolitan Board of Works, the Sydney Tramway Trust or the Brisbane Municipality.

In August, 1949, the Premier of Queensland raised this question at a Premiers' Conference and the States agreed the matter should be considered at an officers' conference. At that conference, although most of the State representatives were in agreement with the principle that a trustee should be permitted to invest funds in semi-governmental securities of any State of the Commonwealth, some State representatives were not very keen about the idea, particularly Victoria. The reason given by the officer representing that State was that if they permitted trustees in Victoria to invest in semi-governmental securities of other States, it might raise the borrowing rate for semi-governmental bodies in Victoria.

Hon. E. Nulsen: That would concern only Victoria itself.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is so. The question has been considered by the Treasury, and the Under Treasurer of this State considers that there could be no objection to provision being made so that a trustee in Western Australia can have the advantage of investing in securities, of a semi-governmental nature, anywhere in the Commonwealth, so long as they are guaranteed by any Government. This Bill proposes to enable that to be done and it will be seen that the legislation gives authority to a trustee to invest in any security in respect of which repayment of the amount secured, and the payment of interest thereon, is guaranteed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, the State or any of the other States of the Commonwealth, or of New Zealand. If the Bill is passed, then the law will coincide with that already existing in Queensland, Tasmania and New South Wales.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Did any of the other States legislate against investments from Western Australia?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No.

Mr. Brady: Are the other States of the Commonwealth, passing similar legislation?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Some of them have done so already. Tasmania, Queensland and New South Wales have

existing legislation of a similar nature, but I do not know what Victoria intends to do. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. Nulsen, debate adjourned.

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

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. G. P. Wild—Dale) [4.48] in moving the second reading said: As an introduction, and to provide a necessary background to enable members to consider the amendments contained in this legislation, it is my intention to give a resume of the building materials position before I elaborate on the amendments. We are fortunate that the Government Statistician recently released his figures for the period to the 30th June, 1951. As a result, I am able to give members the benefit of that report, which is most encouraging so far as house-building is concerned. The number of houses completed, in the various years, is as follows:—

1946-47—	1,792 houses.
1947-48—	2,771 houses.
1948-49—	3,244 houses.
1949-50—	3,509 houses.
1950-51—	5,160 houses.

The increase of 1,651 during the last year represented an increase of 40 per cent. over the previous year. Of this number owner-builders and self-help builders have built approximately one-third. On the 30th June last there were under construction 5,764 houses as compared with 3,957 on the 30th June, 1950, which indicates a further expanding building programme in the current year. These increases were not confined to houses.

It has been and will continue to be the policy of the State Housing Commission to endeavour to allocate materials in a balanced method whereby housing will receive a certain percentage of the materials; a certain percentage will go to industry and a certain percentage to public works. The following figures give some indication in regard to shops, factories and other buildings, and do not include the South Fremantle power station or the Royal Perth Hospital:—

	Number completed	Value £
1946-47	220	358,000
1947-48	270	420,000
1948-49	347	889,000
1949-50	472	865,000
1950-51	839	1,432,000

This general expansion has been brought about by some increase in building materials and an improvement in the labour position, but the building materials position continues to be difficult. There has been an improvement in some lines, but, on the other hand, certain items, especially bricks and cement and a few others which I shall enumerate later, are at the present moment and will continue for some months to be very difficult to obtain.

Materials for building fall under two headings. Firstly, we have those that are produced in Western Australia such as bricks, cement, tiles, asbestos sheeting, corrugated roofing, etc. Then we have the materials that come from the Eastern States, such as galvanised iron, piping, baths, sinks, etc. I am certain that it is vitally necessary if we are going to increase our building programme to not only step up the supply of these materials from interstate and overseas sources but to pay greater attention to increasing the supply of materials produced in Western Australia.

To that end during the eighteen months that I have been Minister I have given a great deal of my attention. In addition to that I have received considerable co-operation from the Minister for Industrial Development, Mr. Watts, and his department, and as a result we are hoping to step up during the current year certain of the hard-to-get materials which are so necessary in our building programme.

Mr. Graham: Are you getting the co-operation of Mr. Bunning?

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING: In enumerating these items, the first one I wish to discuss is bricks. From a slow start, just prior to the cessation of hostilities, when only 7,000,000 bricks were being produced, the output has progressively been stepped up and it is now just over 62,500,000 bricks. For the first six months of this year, 30,500,000 bricks were produced compared with a production of 29,409,000 in the first six months of last year. I am pleased to say that, despite many setbacks—and there have been some that have caused the State Housing Commission, the State Brick Works and myself a considerable amount of worry—machinery for works at Armadale for the production of wire-cut bricks will be turning over towards the end of next week.

When I addressed the House on this measure 12 months ago I said that I hoped the wire-cut works would be in operation late last year or early this year. I am afraid I have been about six to seven months out in my calculations, but that was brought about by certain machinery ordered from the Eastern States which, though we expected it would be here, did not arrive. Then, too, we depended on

receiving certain supplies of steel from Newcastle, but these were not forthcoming. As a result, we could not go on with certain stages of the machinery equipment at Armadale. We hope that the wire-cut section of the State Brick Works will be turning over next week and will produce 150,000 wire-cut bricks per week. This will be approximately 6,000,000 to 7,000,000 bricks annually added to our total of 62,500,000.

In addition, the State Brick Works at Armadale has under construction the pressed-brick section which will, when completed, produce approximately 385,000 bricks per week which, together with the total of 270,000 per week now being produced, will give us a total increase of 16,800,000 bricks per annum. This works is progressing very well, although a large proportion of the equipment has to come from overseas. It is coming to hand slowly, some on the ship that was chartered by the Premier when he was in England. The "Trevelyan" is now unloading at Fremantle a considerable quantity of the machinery ordered and I confidently hope and think that these works will be in production by approximately June of next year.

Technical and financial assistance is being given to other brickworks throughout the State. Recently we have had in Western Australia a representative of a Dutch firm, and he has been promised all the co-operation possible. He was shown over the Armadale undertaking; he was taken to Geraldton and also to Albany and other ports of the State. He has now returned to Holland and prior to his departure he told both the Minister for Industrial Development and myself that he was going to report to his firm there that Western Australia was the ideal place to set up a new brickworks in Australia. In addition, negotiations have been carried on for some months with a firm that manufactures sand-lime bricks—lime coming from Dongara, a property for a factory having been secured at Belmont. The machinery is on order and I understand we should see, in a few months time, some activity in that direction.

Considerable encouragement has also been given to people prepared to manufacture bricks from cement. Unfortunately, however, the shortage of cement has been the limiting factor in this regard. The production of tiles continues to increase and the present rate of 12,000,000 annually, which is made up of 6,400,000 terra cotta and 5,600,000 cement tiles, compares very favourably with the prewar figure of 2,635,000 in 1938-39. Brisbane & Wunderlich Ltd. have, I understand, applied to the Capital Issues Board and received approval to ask for extra capital from the public. In the not-too-distant future

I understand that additions will be made to their plant which will very considerably step up the supply.

The shortage of galvanised iron has considerably increased the demand for tiles, and until such time as Lysaghts' works at Newcastle is able to work to 100 per cent. capacity, we will not have very much relief in that direction. It means that until an extra supply of iron is available, tiles—both terra cotta and cement—will predominate in houses in this State.

The cement position continues to cause considerable concern. Plant was transferred from Wiluna approximately 12 months ago and, at Government instigation, was installed at the Swan Portland Cement Works. It has been in production for four or five months and is turning out between 300 and 400 tons of cement per week, thus giving a total output, in round figures, of 1,600 tons per month. Present output is approximately 70,000 tons per annum, but from a survey I made last year it is evident that we require for our current building programme at least 100,000 tons. This deficiency in cement has to some degree been made up by importations from overseas; but in recent months this has been difficult, firstly because of shortage of supply, and, secondly, because of lack of shipping to bring it to this State. In view of the great demand for cement, every effort is being made—and I hope our attempts will bear fruit—to have another cement company established in the State in the not-too-distant future.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Why not start a Government enterprise?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The asbestos sheeting position has improved considerably during the last 12 months; but, unfortunately, approximately two months ago we had a setback, in that asbestos fibre, which is obtained from South Africa, has not been available in the quantities expected. Furthermore, there have been shipping difficulties. The result has been that at the Welshpool works it has been possible to work only two shifts instead of three for the past six weeks. The Department of Supply and Shipping was asked to see what could be done to step up the transport of this fibre from Africa, and in the last day or two I have been advised that quantities are on the water. I had a consultation with the manager of the works only yesterday and he feels that the fibre position should now be secure until at least the end of 1952. We at the Housing Commission are naturally pressing him to re-establish the third shift and return to the high rate of production which was evident up to two months ago.

Timber is the subject of a Royal Commission inquiry, and therefore it is not my intention to say anything about it, except that timber supplies continue to lag behind demand. With the opening of new mills in the South-West, there should be considerable improvement, and the Government is hoping that from the Royal Commissioner's investigations we shall obtain some guidance as to how extra timber can be obtained. With regard to the State Saw Mills, some three months ago, before the Shannon River mill came into operation, I had an order issued that at least 50 per cent. of the production was to be put down for drying in order that we would have more timber for joinery and flooring, the supply of those two items being anything from six to nine months in arrears.

The production of plasterboard has been satisfactory, and it has not been necessary to bring that product under control. Lately there has been some difficulty in regard to labour, and every endeavour is being made to improve the position by the employment of migrants. Supplies of materials that normally come from the Eastern States, such as galvanised iron, water pipes, porcelain enamelware, builders' hardware, etc., have been affected by the industrial troubles that occurred in the Eastern States last year and by shipping difficulties.

Mr. Graham: I think the Menzies rearmament programme will affect the position, too.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: Yes, I have no doubt that it will to a large degree, and I feel that while this rearmament continues, we can expect to obtain smaller quantities of such goods. The position with regard to piping became so acute four or five months ago that it was necessary to arrange for supplies to be carted overland by road. It is a very long way to bring piping, but we were down to an all-time low level of supplies. I am thankful to say, however, that in the last two months the shipping position has improved considerably, and we have now gone to the other end of the scale, having better stocks in the Government Stores than has been the case for a long time.

Before closing my remarks on the general building materials position, I would like to mention the number of tradesmen now employed in the industry. Their numbers have been closely related to the materials available and have increased proportionately since the war, with the number of trainees available under the postwar training scheme and subsequently tradesmen brought from overseas.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: I doubt whether the member for West Perth will agree with that.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The following table demonstrates the increase in the number of building tradesmen working on jobs excluding owner-builders:—

Year ending	No.
30th June	
1948	5,591
1949	6,220
1950	6,908
1951	7,985

That represents an increase in the past 12 months of just over 1,000 men. It is estimated that in order to pick up the lag in building and to provide for the large number of migrants coming to Western Australia—last year there were over 20,000—it would be necessary, within the next four years, for us to erect at least 10,000 houses per year. This will impose a terrific strain on the building industry, in respect of the construction not only of houses but also of factories, schools, hospitals and so on. This demand can be met only by judicious handling of the available building materials.

In the past 12 months, a great opportunity has been given to the owner-builder by the lifting of controls, as far as the building of houses is concerned, up to 15 squares; and I feel certain it was that which was responsible for the great stepping up in the number of houses built last year. The State Housing Commission will continue to expand its pre-cut housing scheme, particularly in country areas. A few months ago, a section was set aside at the State Housing Commission to foster the erection of pre-cut houses in country towns. The result is gradually being seen. I will not quote the exact number of houses supplied, but will merely mention that during 1951-52 we shall be erecting in the country approximately 1,000 of these homes.

Early this year the chairman of the State Housing Commission visited Austria and Great Britain with a view to finalising an agreement with an Austrian company for the delivery of houses to Western Australia. A contract was entered into for the delivery of 450 homes, with the right to a further 450 at a price to be agreed upon. We understand that the first of these houses is being loaded in Austria, and we are hoping they will be in Western Australia in approximately two months' time. In addition, the Railway Commission placed an order for 500 houses with an English firm, and already 80 of them have arrived. The balance will be shipped progressively as vessels are available.

While these many problems of material production and supply remain, it is very necessary that essential supplies should be directed into the correct channels. For that reason, I find it necessary to introduce this measure to continue the Building Operations and Buildings Materials Control Act for a further 12 months, and at the same time ask Parliament to agree to increase the penalties against those who flagrantly disobey the law by building oversized houses, putting up garages, erecting brick fences, laying cement paths, and so on.

Mr. Graham: I think you should have a talk with the magistrates, too.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: The words—

(c) use, cause or permit to use, any building material in a building operation,

appearing in Clause 3 of the Bill, have been inserted on the advice of the Crown Law Department. The Act gives a man the right to obtain building materials, and, unless his offence is detected within 12 months, he cannot be charged. Consequently a man may obtain bricks or cement and put them away in a shed; and, at the end of 12 months, or after that time, he can erect a garage or build a cement path, and the Commission can do nothing about it. That is an anomaly that the department considers should be removed in order to strengthen the hands of the Commission in dealing with breaches of the law.

Members will appreciate the difficulty of checking up on offences under the Act and in detecting cases of unlawful acquisition of building materials. In fairness, it should be said that only a small percentage of people commit these offences; but the experience during the past 12 months has been that when such offences rear their ugly heads, and the offenders are taken to court, the fines inflicted on men using these hard-to-get materials have been so infinitesimal that the offenders have been able to laugh at them.

Mr. Graham: Is it not the fault of the magistrate rather than of the Act? They can fine offenders, imprison them and confiscate the materials.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I am pleased to say that at least one magistrate recently saw fit to imprison a man for a flagrant breach of the law. That was the first occasion on which that has been done since I have been Minister. A perusal of the list of fines imposed on offenders in the last 12 months reveals that many of them have been absolutely ridiculous. There have been cases of men increasing the size of their houses by making additions to the extent of £750 or £1,000, and yet in such instances the magistrate has fined them only £50. We feel that in order to be fair to those who are playing the game the penalties should be made much more severe than they are at the present moment.

Mr. Styant: The penalties are drastic enough now, as offenders can be fined and imprisoned and the materials can be confiscated, but the magistrates do not apply the penalties.

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: I appreciate the remarks of the member for Kalgoorlie, but the experience of the last 12 months has been that, even though there are fairly heavy penalties laid down in the Act at present, they are not being applied and it seems to the State Housing

Commission and to me that, while the magistrates naturally adjudicate on each case according to its merits, with the minimum penalties as low as they are and in view of the fact that the magistrates have power under the Act to inflict a penalty below the minimum in certain circumstances, the minimum penalties must be raised in order to bring home to the judiciary the seriousness of the situation.

Last year the State Housing Commission launched 35 prosecutions which resulted in total fines of £1020, which figure gives an average of about £30. On looking through the list I was amazed at some of the things these people had got away with, incurring a penalty of from £50 to £75 only. The penalties suggested in the Bill, although severe, are not more so than those prescribed in the Eastern States and there will still remain the proviso that the magistrate may inflict a lesser penalty in certain circumstances if he records his reasons for doing so.

In New South Wales there is laid down a fine of £500 or term of imprisonment not exceeding 12 months. In Victoria the penalty is a fine not exceeding £500 or imprisonment for not more than 12 months, with provision that unauthorised structures "may be or to be demolished." In Queensland, if dealt with summarily, there is a fine not exceeding £100 in the case of a person or £2,000 in the case of a body corporate. If dealt with on indictment there is a fine of £1,000 or imprisonment for 12 months in the case of a person or a fine of £5,000 in the case of a body corporate. There is provision also that all cases must be dealt with summarily unless the Minister directs otherwise.

It will be seen that in the Eastern States these offences are regarded much more seriously than they are in Western Australia. For the reasons previously stated and having in mind the flexibility given by Section 9 (2) (i) and Section 9 (3) as passed last year, and the regulations gazetted thereunder on the 19th January, 1951—of which full advantage has been taken—I feel it necessary that the Act should be continued for a further year. I assure the House that every opportunity will be taken progressively to relax controls as materials and labour become available. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—RURAL AND INDUSTRIES BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [5.20] in moving the second reading said: This Bill makes provision for the granting of personal loans and will give the Rural and Industries Bank the same lending powers as other

banks possess. The Rural Bank is a State institution and has made great progress since it commenced operations as a trading concern six years ago. Its figures compare favourably with those of other trading banks and I have here a few interesting items that I will quote to the House. The Rural Bank has on loan £9,300,000, which can be dissected as follows:—£6,500,000, agriculture; £1,300,000, manufacturing; £550,000, housing; £200,000, commercial; £750,000, miscellaneous. It will interest members to know that the Rural Bank has on loan more money than has any other bank in this State.

Mr. Marshall: It has all the rural loans.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. It has, as I say, more loan money out than has any other bank here.

Hon. A. H. Panton: So it should, as a good socialistic bank.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Most of that money is invested in rural loans. I have some figures that have appeared in the reports of other banks and which are therefore not confidential. They are as follows:—The Bank of New South Wales has £8,886,000 advanced as loans and its deposits are £28,223,000, giving a total of £37,109,000, while the Rural Bank has £6,072,000 on loan and £6,230,000 in deposits, giving a total of £12,302,000. Although this bank has made such wonderful progress it is no easier in its terms than is any other bank. It is very careful in the matter of lending and sees that it has proper security.

Mr. Marshall: It has a good staff.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. Owing to the inheritance of activities from the Agricultural Bank we found we had a surplus of 13 inspectors. They have now been transferred from the Rural Bank to the department dealing with land settlement and other branches of the Lands Department which were formerly short of staff. They are now playing an important part in their new positions.

The amendment of Section 46 will empower the bank to make loans to people in temporary financial difficulties as the result of sickness or for family or other personal reasons, whether they are depositors with the bank or not. People of good character in regular employment will be able to secure financial help, repayments being by instalments fixed in accordance with income. The power to make small loans to assist worthy persons is desirable and should be included in the facilities that the bank is able to offer its customers.

The Act at present restricts the powers of the Commissioners because one section provides that only those who are depositors with the bank may secure loans from it. That provision has restricted the activities of the bank with regard to small loans. I feel that in the case of small loans the bank can secure itself to a great extent

by way of guarantors, orders on the salaries of the borrowers and in other directions, without being too hard on the applicants. Where the bank can take security it will do so.

Another idea of the bank is that in making these loans it will call husband and wife up to be interviewed together, thus ensuring that they are both in agreement in asking for the loan. I think it is a good idea to get the consent of both parties to such a transaction. Interest on personal loans will be controlled by the existing legislation and the position is fully safeguarded. Section 59 of the principal Act stipulates that the maximum rate of interest to be paid by borrowers in respect of loans shall be approved by the Governor and that will prevent the bank from increasing, in its enthusiasm, interest charges without such approval.

Paragraph (a) of Subsection (I) of Section 51 of the parent Act is repealed in order to remove the barrier that at present exists against people desirous of obtaining certain types of loans. There are many people requiring finance to purchase homes and under this subsection they must first of all open a current account with the bank before they can negotiate a housing loan. I have already stated that the bank has £550,000 out in housing loans and we desire to increase business of that kind. Most people on small incomes do not need cheque accounts, which involve the payment of bank fees in half-yearly charges and the cost of cheque forms.

Mr. Hutchinson: Is the barrier you refer to there the one which states that a person must be a depositor with the bank?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. That is the position under the Act as it stands at present. Members probably know that on different occasions when loans have been requested on good security persons have been unable to obtain those loans because they were not depositors.

Mr. Hutchinson: Is that the only barrier removed by the repeal of Section 51?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, it allows the bank to make small personal loans, which it has not previously had power to do. I have seen the figures for the Rural Bank in Sydney which, to the best of my knowledge, is the only other rural bank in Australia and, without divulging their business, as the information was given to me in confidence, I feel I can say that their earnings from small personal loans are astoundingly large. They do a tremendous amount of that class of business which is quite remunerative for the bank.

Mr. Griffith: Would it not be easy for a person to become a current account holder in order to finance a housing loan?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but after all, the person requiring a small loan and for whom we wish to make provision now, has nothing with which to open an account.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What is the interpretation of "a small loan"?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That will be in the hands of the bank and will be along the lines on which they are at present lending to the staff of that institution. Such loans will provide for almost anything such as the payment of a doctor's bill or an advance for the purchase of a refrigerator.

Mr. Hutchinson: Or of a block of land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A person could be helped in that way also, but, generally speaking, the finance with which to buy a block of land would not constitute a small loan. I know that members of the staff have had loans with which to pay for dental and medical treatment, furniture, refrigerators and so on, because it saves them approaching the firm they are trying to deal with.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Hire purchase organisations?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, it keeps them away from the hire purchase system.

Mr. Yates: Has that anything to do with housing loans?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, this is not dealing with housing. I think our housing loans are at 4½ per cent. interest.

Mr. Marshall: Four and a half per cent.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is correct. We have loans at 4½ per cent. and 4½ per cent., it all depends on what the loan is required for.

Hon. A. H. Panton: It depends on their good looks.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Bill also seeks to repeal Section 67 of the parent Act. This section makes provision for land, which is subject to any encumbrance in favour of the bank, to be vested in the bank with certain powers of sale, when the land is forfeited under the provisions of the Land Act or Mining Act. It serves no useful purpose and imposes lengthy and cumbersome procedures on the Lands Department, Titles Office and Rural Bank. There has never been any occasion to exercise the powers vested by Subsection (3).

The provisions of the section were specially designed to protect the bank, but they confer no benefit. In fact, the bank's business is hampered and delayed because of the considerable work entailed in the operation of the section. There is no reason to justify the retention of the section and the departments concerned are unanimous that its repeal would be

advantageous. That is actually what the Bill seeks to do. Any properties reverting to the Rural Bank at present, dealing with a certain amount, have to come under the surveillance of the Lands Department, the Titles Office and the Mines Department, which causes unnecessary delay in the handling of the business. The bank itself is quite capable of ascertaining all that is required because it has the necessary machinery to do so. So it has been considered by all departments concerned that the section is quite unnecessary and I ask the House to agree to its deletion.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: Before the Minister resumes his seat, can he tell me why 16 inspectors are to be dismissed from the bank?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The idea was—

Hon. A. H. Pantou: I understand that they were carried on from the old A.I.B.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They are old Agricultural Bank inspectors who have been working within the Rural Bank organisation on outstanding properties which were handled by the old Agricultural Bank and the stage has now been reached where their work has been practically finalised, making their services no longer necessary in the Rural Bank. We are extremely short of men of that type. We are therefore absorbing them into the Lands Department to handle matters relating to the soldier settlement scheme. I do not think they will suffer in any way.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Has any consideration been given to moving the head office to a more central position?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course, attempts have been made to do so. The bank was very interested in premises in the centre of the city which were put up for sale quite recently. However, strong pressure was brought to bear by other interests and the negotiations were not proceeded with.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I am sorry to hear that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: So am I sorry.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: The bank is branching out; it has a branch office in Forrest Place.

Mr. Hoar: By that, do you mean that private enterprise takes precedence over Government business?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I do not mean that. After all, the bank would have had to obtain the money from the Treasurer and there were difficulties in the way. However, I do not want to pursue that argument at present. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. H. Pantou, debate adjourned.

BILL—BUNBURY (ROMAN CATHOLIC OLD CEMETERY) LANDS REVESTMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [5.35] in moving the second reading said: This is a short Bill to deal with the old Roman Catholic Cemetery in Bunbury. Members will recollect that in 1936 Hon. M. F. Troy introduced a Bill to close the old Anglican cemetery at Bunbury and the Bill now before the House is a similar measure. The site has become extremely dilapidated and is no longer required for burial purposes.

The land concerned is Bunbury Town Lot 300. It is vested in the Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth for the purposes of a burial ground. The Bill provides for the reversion of the land in His Majesty and the reservation of the area as a Class "A" reserve. Provision is also made for the granting of the reserve to the Municipality of Bunbury for the purposes of a closed cemetery and public park. The Roman Catholic church authorities have been consulted. They are in agreement with the proposal and His Grace the Archbishop has assented to the resumption.

Power is given to the municipality to remove monuments, headstones and grave fittings to any other position within the reserve, and to grant permission to remove any monument, headstone or grave fitting from the reserve to any person establishing his right. The municipality is anxious to improve the area, without disturbing the monuments and tombstones to any great extent.

In the old Church of England cemetery, the gravestones were removed and placed around the boundaries of the area. The Bill relieves the municipality from any obligation to remove the remains of persons buried in the land, but makes provision for the municipality to permit the exhumation and removal of any remains from the reserve at any time by any person who proves that he has a title to the land in which such remains are buried. I do not think there is any need for me to say more on this small Bill for the reason that most members recollect what happened in regard to the old Anglican cemetery.

Mr. Marshall: This seems to be confiscation.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, there is no confiscation about it.

Mr. Marshall: Compulsory acquisition; you are taking it from them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but not compulsorily. We have consulted all parties concerned and they approve of it.

Mr. Marshall: What about poor old Dad's bones lying there? I do not like to think that you fellows will be dancing on them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They will be duly respected and cared for. There is no need for the hon. member to worry about that.

The Premier: I do not think he is worrying.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Neither do I. He is merely trying to give the House the impression that we are compulsorily resuming this land. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Guthrie, debate adjourned.

BILL—PUBLIC BUILDINGS ACT (VALIDATION OF PAYMENTS).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th September.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [5.41]: As this measure and the one following it on the notice paper are cognate, I consider that one address should suffice to cover both of them. The Bill now before the House is the one which, of course, will cause the most discussion unless members are prepared to sacrifice the efforts that were made in 1937, slight as they were at that time, to establish a basis upon which funds could have been raised for the purpose of erecting an urgently-required and most necessary block of buildings in order to centralise Government administrative offices within it.

You, Sir, will remember that over a period of many years this question of centralising Government offices has been almost a hardy annual before this House. Every year some member or Government has introduced a proposal or suggestion to effect the centralisation, in one building, of all our administrative departments. But you, Sir, will also realise, as I do myself, that little headway, apart from the provisions of the Bill with which we are now dealing, was ever made. Down through the ages the stumbling-block to giving effect to the centralisation of public offices was that this House could never come to a decision as to the most suitable site.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Like the town hall.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, like the town hall.

The Minister for Lands: Why bring that up?

MR. MARSHALL: I believe that the reason why the provisions of the 1937 measure were not put into effect, although sanctioned by Parliament, was on account of this self-same factor; that the site chosen was either too valuable, too central or not central enough, thus making it impossible for the Government to proceed with the proposal as laid down in this measure.

The Premier: I do not think that is right.

MR. MARSHALL: I recall the arguments and I am sure I am right. The Premier should remember that we discussed the matter on several occasions and that it was only after many years of wrangling in this House that we secured a block by excising a portion of some reclamation, and thus a decision was reached on a site for a building where public departments could be centralised.

The Premier: I thought you meant that there was still opposition to erecting the building on that site.

MR. MARSHALL: Not at all. Sir Ross McDonald, in 1937, strongly objected to the original measure because of the site on which it was proposed to erect the building. I feel that the Premier did not quite grasp the substance of the measure he introduced on Tuesday evening because, in reply to an interjection, he stated that he did not think there was very much money in the fund created under the Public Buildings Act. I have the Act before me. It is a very small measure, consisting of only five or six sections, and I have come to the conclusion that effect was never given to any of its provisions. No committee was ever created and, if no committee was created, neither of the two funds could have been created.

The Premier told us that the purpose of the Bill was to validate the payment into Consolidated Revenue of certain moneys, which under the Public Buildings Act, 1937, should have been paid into a special fund. He also told us that it is necessary to validate the payment to revenue of the lease rents of properties listed in the schedule to the Public Buildings Act, and to authorise the payment of such rent into revenue until such time as the Public Buildings Act has been repealed.

That is the actual position. No committee was ever formed, and the two funds were not created under the Act. The first fund was to be known as the Government Buildings Leasing Revenue Account, and the committee would have had the responsibility of advising the Government what the annual rent should be for Government land that was leased or the freehold value of land if such blocks were to be sold, as the blocks could be leased or sold under the measure. For that reason, I strongly opposed the Bill, but it was passed and became law.

I strongly objected to the selling of the few areas of land practically within the city block then owned by the Government. Surely we could retain those areas and hand them down to posterity as a little asset against the State debt! That is about all we shall hand down to posterity. The principle we have to consider seriously is that the Act did provide a basis, though only in a mean degree, upon which Governments could have operated to create a fund for the worthy objective of building offices to centralise public departments.

I was pleased to hear the Premier's admission that in 1937 loan money was very difficult to obtain, because we hear ministerial supporters gibing at the Labour Government for having done nothing at that time. It was hopeless to try to do anything owing to the lack of funds. We could not even borrow; we had no credit basis. Since then, however, thousands of millions have been spent for the purpose of bringing about the slaughter of human beings on foreign battlefields.

Mr. J. Hegney: At that time we had plenty of men and materials.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, both in abundance. Seemingly, the Government is now abandoning hope of ever establishing a block of offices in which to centralise public departments. The Premier shakes his head. I am aware that the erection of public buildings is financed from loan, but that applied equally in 1937.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is, when you can get a loan.

The Premier: That is a different set of circumstances, as the hon. member knows.

Mr. MARSHALL: Never during the whole of my public life have I known any Government, Labour or anti-Labour, the Treasurer of which was blessed with more money than he could spend. Through all the years, our greatest trouble has arisen from the cry, "No money," and the Commonwealth Government is now taking action to curtail credit issues. These are not credit issues in the real sense of the word; they are debt issues.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: That is the point.

Mr. MARSHALL: I regard this as being the first step towards another depression, perhaps not so severe as the last one, but, as Mr. R. G. Casey said, "A healthy depression is about 15 per cent. unemployed." If the Commonwealth authorities can manage that whilst preparing for the defence of the country, they will do it. Undoubtedly, we are going to experience a restriction of credit issues. The Premier has just returned from the Canberra conference, but he was not successful in getting an amount of money equal to the grant of last year, and he was told the reason why. The reason was, "You must cut public expenditure because we want the money for defence."

Thus, we are on the verge of experiencing what has been happening all along, with the exception of the war and post-war periods. This is the only time when the financial position of the State has appeared to be anything like flourishing. Previously, we were scraping and scratching and grabbing a little here and there in the endeavour to finance the State, and the Act was the outcome of that experience. Still, it did provide a basis, but in the years since 1937, when the measure was passed, we have been able to accumulate only £45,000. The amount of £300,000 or more

borrowed from the State Government Insurance Office—funds accumulated out of the premiums paid by the goldmining industry—has vanished.

The Premier: It has not vanished.

Mr. MARSHALL: It has not been applied to the purpose authorised by the Act.

The Premier: It has gone into Commonwealth bonds.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is correct. We are like the Palestinian chap with the hooked nose—we want every shilling we can get. Before long, we shall be taking in each other's washing for a living. The former prospect of these two funds operating with the aid of the quarter of a million of money which they should have had has become impossible. If only £45,000 has been accumulated over a period of 14 years, I agree with the Premier that it is of little use trying to persevere with this proposal. In 1937, however, the passing of the Act did show that the Government of the day was sincere in the desire to erect a building for the accommodation of Government departments.

I was astounded to hear the Premier say it was understood that the payments derived from these leasehold tenures could have been paid into Consolidated Revenue until such time as the proposed committee had been brought into existence under the Act, because the Act provides that all moneys so derived must be paid into the fund mentioned in the Act. So 14 years have passed and Governments instead of complying with the Act, have taken the whole of the money into Consolidated Revenue, and the Bill now before us is designed to validate that action. I say that the money has been wrongly paid into Consolidated Revenue.

By the passing of the Bill now before us, the Government will be authorised to continue along the same lines until the Act is repealed. I agree with the remarks of the Premier on that point. The Government has received that sum from the State Insurance Office, and if it were still available and could be used under this Act, I would oppose its repeal, but as we have only that small amount coming in each year from the leasing of blocks and as there will be no committee to advise the Government to sell what few blocks of land it holds in the city, I feel that no great harm can be done by passing this Bill.

In the final analysis, we shall have to borrow large sums of money to provide a central block for Government departments. We have decided upon a site after many years of disputation, and I hope that when labour and materials become available, the Government will proceed with the erection of the building. For the love of goodness, let us get rid of the unsightly scene around this House, and permit the reserve to remain to form part of our city beautiful. I support this measure, and I recommend

other members to do likewise. I shall not speak on the other Bill because I think my one contribution will do for the two.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray—in reply) [6.1]: The member for Murchison has outlined the reasons, as I did when I introduced the Bill, for the measure being brought before the House, and the necessity to pass it. I did intend to give members some information with regard to the fund that is actually in hand, so I shall do so now. Altogether a sum of £44,085 is involved. For the benefit of those members who are not conversant with the question of the Government buildings that it was proposed to lease, I shall detail the gross rents received as follows:—

	£
Commonwealth Savings Bank, Hay Street	14,262
Workers' Homes Board Cen- tral Buildings	2,997
Wyndham Meat Works Cen- tral Buildings	2,150
Observatory	7,144
State Hotels, Murray Street Grieve and Rich, Wellington Street	708
H 143—Hoardings	1,840
State Saw Mills, Murray Street	245
State Saw Mills, Building, Private Tenants	7,475
Carr Street School Quarters	6,338
	926
Total	44,085

Mr. Marshall: Where are the State hotels, Murray-st.?

The PREMIER: I am not too sure where they are.

Mr. Marshall: I think they are somewhere near, or in the Health Department.

The PREMIER: Yes, I think that is so.

Hon. A. H. Panton: What does the Minister for Health, Dame Florence, think of that?

The PREMIER: In addition, the Rural and Industries Bank does not pay any rent, but it has made substantial alterations on its own account. So, no rent from that organisation is included.

Mr. Styants: Where is the money? Was a trust created, or has the money been taken into Consolidated Revenue?

The PREMIER: The money has gone into Consolidated Revenue. That is the reason for the Bill.

Mr. Styants: It is a validation Bill.

The PREMIER: Yes. We have not abandoned the hope that one day we will erect public buildings on the reserve near Government House.

Mr. Marshall: Near Christian Brothers' College.

The PREMIER: That is so. The idea of centralised buildings that existed in days gone by, is still the idea today, but as I have explained, and as members know, the materials position is such that we just cannot erect buildings at the moment. In future, I presume loan moneys will be available for buildings, as they have been in the past, and when the time is opportune, or the Government thinks it is opportune, to go ahead with the consolidation of public buildings, the finance will be available from ordinary loan moneys, the same as it is today for schools, hospitals and other public buildings. I do not know that I need say any more. The necessity for the Bill has been fully emphasised.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—PUBLIC BUILDINGS ACT REPEAL.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 4th September of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.