resumed for industrial purposes. That will still be as difficult as it has been all the way through. The Leader of the Country Party said there would be more applications for land to be resumed under the provisions of the Act. There might be. Would that be a bad thing?

Hon. A. F. Watts: I think it would be.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: Sometimes.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Occasionally it might be; but by and large, would it be a bad thing for us to know that, as a result of applications under the provisions of this Act, industry was doing well and progressing and was producing more wealth and employing more people? Surely that would not be bad!

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: It creates hardship for some people who happen to live next door.

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: Hardship is being created every minute of the day. It is part of the price of progress. As far as it is reasonably possible to do so, we should protect individuals from suffering hardship; and it seems to me that the provisions of this Act are so extensive in regard to their protective sections that there is much more protection in this legislation than in any other measure of which I can think at the moment. I doubt whether the member for Mt. Lawley or the Leader of the Country Party, both of whom are lawyers, could name any Act which gives more protection than this one.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: In one respect; but in another it does not. I realise that we are not dealing with the Act at the moment but it is hard not to take the Act into consideration. If you had gone a little further in your amendments—

The MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT: I am prepared to have a look at the angle mentioned by the hon. member. I thoroughly agree that no business firm which is doing so well that it has to extend, and no firm that proposes to establish a new industry, should be able to have land compulsorily resumed for its purposes under the Act at a price that is not entirely reasonable and to some extent generous with regard to the person from whom the land is being resumed. I would thoroughly agree with that point of view; but that is not included in this Bill, which deals with matters entirely apart from that.

Now the hon. member has raised the question whether more generous provisions should not be put into the parent Act concerning the price that would have to be paid for land resumed, I will go into the matter. I think there is a lot of merit in the point raised. So far as I know, the question has not previously been brought under my notice; and evidently it was not brought under the notice of the previous Minister either. If it had been, I am sure he would have had a close look at it and probably brought down amending legislation.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.13 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 10th November, 1953.

CONTENTS.

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

QUESTION.

LANDS.

As to Resumptions and Claims.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) What number of claims for resumption of land, if any, remain unpaid?

(2) What is the total amount of such claims?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Approximately 300.

(2) Approximately £980,000.

BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th November.

HON. H. HEARN (Metropolitan) [4.36]: Workers' compensation legislation followed a very uneventful course from its inception in 1912 until 1948. Although from 1912 to 1944 there were many amendments to the Act, the real new approach to workers' compensation came with the measure introduced into this Parliament in 1948. It is significant that in the many years when Labour Governments were in office, very little was done to alter substantially the benefits provided under the Act. It was the McLarty-Watts Government in 1948 that introduced a Bill which, to my way of thinking, re-oriented our views and attitude to workers' compensation.

During the currency of the L.C.L.-Country Party Government, Bills were also continually brought forward in order to keep up the monetary value of the compensation claims granted. I think we must all agree that the task accomplished by that Government in regard to workers' compensation stands out in bold relief from the records of previous Governments in this respect. It seems remarkable that a Government that has pleaded poverty since the beginning of its present term of office; has increased rail freights; has reinstated the entertainments tax, which had been abandoned by the Commonwealth Government; and has on several occasions attacked the parsimony of the Commonwealth Treasurer, is now so satisfied with its financial outlook that it is willing to take over a portion of the Commonwealth social services liability—because, in my opinion, that is what the present Bill proposes to do.

The Government is the largest single employer of labour in this State, and, as such, proposes to increase the compensation payments to its workers by at least 45 per cent. In addition, it proposes to extend the cover under a clause which is rather familiar in this State because it has been discussed so many times, and which has become known as the "journeys" clause. The experience employers have had of this provision is that it has added to the claims cost by 6 per cent., and it is still rising. This includes, of course, all Government work.

Before considering the effects of the Bill on primary and secondary industries, we should endeavour to clear up some of the confused thinking which surrounds the question of workers' compensation. Why is there a Workers' Compensation Act? There is no pedestrian Act: there is no Act giving benefits to the person who is injured during his normal activities away from his employment. Such people must sue under common law and prove negligence before they can obtain any compensation.

A worker who is injured through the negligence of his employer has his remedy at common law, but since it was found that most workers were injured either through pure accident or through their own negligence, and so had no claim on anyone, it was rightly decided to bring in a provision to allow for workers to be tided over the time of their troubles. Because their families had no just or legal claim on anyone, it was vital, in a community such as ours, that workers' compensation should be introduced.

Then came the question of who would pay—the Government or the employer. As is customary, it was decided that the employer should pay. When the Workers' Compensation Act was passed, and for many years afterwards, it was acknowledged that the benefits of the Act were a gift made with the express purpose of sustaining the worker through his incapacity. It was never intended to give him full payment for his loss. It was not acknowledged that he had any right to full benefits. It was something to keep him going, as are the social services and unemployment benefits of the present day.

It is only in recent years that we have heard of the workers' right to full compensation, and it is only in recent years that we have seen the principle of relief through workers' compensation, confused with the much older and more just rights under common law. I repeat that workers' compensation is something given to a worker who is injured through the fault of no one, unless it be himself. If any other person is at fault, then the worker has his full remedy in common law. Bearing in mind that in this Bill we, as members of a legislature, are asked to confer the benefits, for which primary production, secondary industries and the ratepayers generally are paying, it would be just as well if we examined the contents of the measure.

In Clause 1 we should see to it that, if the Bill gets into Committee, the effects of the Act shall come into force on a date to be fixed by proclamation, the reason being that on the last occasion when the Act was amended and came into force on receiving the assent of His Excellency the Governor, no printed copies were available, and confusion reigned for some time in insurance offices. One of the first things to assist a changeover from one era to another would be to bring the Act into force on a date to be proclaimed. By that time it would be pos-

sible for the insurance offices to receive, and have in their possession, copies of the revised legislation.

Clause 2 makes increased benefits retrospective so that workers on compensation when this Bill comes into force will be compensated at the new rates. It goes further than that; it implies the application of the principle of retrospectivity to all future amending Bills. To my mind, this is quite contrary to the established rule of law, because, after all, it is very seldom that a Bill is passed giving retrospective benefits. In addition, it will encourage workers to delay their return to work and their settlement of claims.

Most members will, perhaps, have seen a few days ago in the evening paper a statement by a trade union leader advising workers that, under no consideration, should they attempt to settle their claims until they knew the fate of this Bill and the added benefits that will be available in connection with claims. Anything that tends to keep workers away from production has a bad effect on the community. It would also be unfair to the conscientious and honest workman whose claims have recently been finalised.

Furthermore, I believe there is no justification for the reopening of matters relating to injuries or occurrences where a lump sum has been agreed upon by a worker in full settlement of his claim. We know very well the machinery that operates before a claim is finalised, and if arrangements have been made for the finalisation of a claim, I cannot conceive why these people should be brought in under the new legislation.

We must not forget that insurance companies are price-fixed regarding workers' compensation premium rates. These rates were drastically reduced early this year. That reduction had the effect of increasing the loss ratio of the State Insurance to 90.5 per cent., that being the answer given by the Minister to a question asked in another place. If the increases granted under this Bill are to be applied to all outstanding claims, the ratio of loss will be well over 100 per cent.

Self-insurers who have costed for preceding liabilities will find claims greatly exceeding the amount budgeted for. In the case of self-insurers we should remember that they are not allowed to build up any reserves. Therefore it seems quite unfair that they should be asked, in common with others, to find extra money to meet claims which they had no idea would be made on them when making provision for their liabilities. Up to date the Government has consistently—and I hope the Minister will give us the information we require—refused to give any estimate of the added impost on industry if the Bill is passed, or even the cost of this particular section. In the consideration of such an important matter we should have full information. Before the Bill reaches the Committee stage, it is vital that we should be given some information about the ultimate cost to industry. The extension of the claims now in existence will certainly involve a huge sum of money.

In this State there are approximately 80 insurance companies. On the basis of information submitted by eight of them, it is estimated that there are in existence over 13,000 current claims for an aggregate amount approximating £900,000. This Bill proposes to increase the expenditure by 60 per cent., so the additional amount involved will be £500,000. I think members will agree that that is a staggering sum of money.

Clause 3 will permit dependants in other countries to claim full benefits under the Act. Members will find that the Act contains a provision in Section 6(5) to extend the benefits in respect of dependants who live in other countries, provided that the law of their country permits dependants in Western Australia to claim similar benefits in respect of workers injured in those countries. If we accept the principle of reciprocity, we can see that that is a very fair provision, but if the new proposal be agreed to, we shall be sending money to countries which provide no similar benefits for injured workers and to countries that would not reciprocate if the situation were reversed.

Hon. L. Craig: Would you condemn them for that?

Hon. H. HEARN: Certainly not, but we cannot say that some of this money will not go behind the iron curtain.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It would have to.

Hon. H. HEARN: So far as I am aware, there has been no hardship on this score and I should be glad to know why the provision is desired at this stage.

Clause 3, para (b), proposes to extend the definition of "worker" to include empoyees receiving wages amounting to £2,000 per annum, whereas the limit previously was £1,250. Possibly the Minister, when replying to the second reading debate, will tell us who else will be included for compensation benefits as a result of this alteration. Will the Minister cite an instance of the present amount of £1,250 having proved inadequate? Many employers, particularly those in the goldmining industry, cover all employees irrespective of income, despite the fact that the Act does not compel them to do so. Since employees receiving £1,250 per annum are compensated and since the Act at present provides a reasonable maximum of weekly compensation, the additional cost is within bounds, but if the provision in the Bill be agreed to, workers, particularly in the goldmining industry, would be entitled to weekly compensation, not of £10, but of £30 per week.

I think members will agree that that is fantastic and would be getting right away from the principle of workers' compensation. The effect will be simply to load up an industry, which at present has no opportunity of passing on increased costs, with an unwarranted burden. The estimated additional cost to the Goldfields alone under this heading is £10,000 a year for no benefit at all from the point of view of the mines or of the men. That provision should not be approved of.

Now I come to the hardy annual, the journeying clause, as it has been called, though it is also known by other names. Three States of the Commonwealth have included a similar provision in their compensation legislation, but I point out that that should have no bearing upon the measure we are considering. The three States that have adopted this provision are highly industrialised, and seeing that Western Australia at the moment is endeavouring to ensure industrial development, if we are going to extend cover to the extent granted in highly industrialised States that have population, scope in manufacture and a lower basic wage, all I can say is that industry in this State, both primary and secondary, will be confronted with a tremendous handicap.

Such a provision will raise complications in the administration of the Act. I have a copy of a medical certificate that was issued in Victoria. I wonder whether members know anything about the coccydema nerve. It is a nerve at the base of the spine and might cause great pain. This certificate was issued to a Victorian worker, but I shall not mention names—

> I hereby certify that I first attended and examined ..... of ..... street, St. Kilda, an employee of ..... company on 10th April, 1951. She was suffering from coccydema, which she stated was the consequence of travelling on trams to and from work for eight years. In my opinion the nature of the injury was consistent with the stated cause. She will be unfit for work for one week.

We who are in industry in Western Australia recognise our obligation, but we do say that once an employee has left our control, our responsibility for him should cease. That is my definite objection to this journeying provision. There is no need for me to emphasise that statement, because most members have heard me discuss the matter when like measures have been before us and we refused to approve of it, and so I shall content myself by saying that there is no justification for it. Who is to say that any worker injured was not, at the time of his injury, on his way to see his doctor or chemist or a friend and that he was not doing something in between the time of leaving the factory and reaching his home? The proposal to introduce such a provision is bad.

Clause 6 proposes to increase the maximum liability of an employer to a worker in respect of weekly compensation and weekly compensation plus lump sums from £1,750 to £2,800, an increase of 60 per cent., and that, by the way, is the beginning of a series of large increases that run through the Bill. I personally agree that we should bring the amount allowed into keeping with the present value of the Australian £, and I have no doubt other members will agree that it is right and proper that we should adjust the monetary return to keep it in line with any depreciation that has taken place in the £ since the Act was last amended.

Hon. L. Craig: Does that apply to rents and prices, too?

Hon. H. HEARN: We hope it will, but after all, we, as employers, are expected to be generous. In spite of his interjection, I am sure Mr. Craig agrees with what I am saying about compensation, but, for the life of me, I cannot see that anything has happened in the economic field to warrant the radical departures in monetary amounts suggested in the Bill.

Today Australia is standing at the economic crossroads. It is true that primary production is returning high prices, but it is just as true that the expenses of the primary producer have remained commensurate with his increased return. Industry today faces vastly increased costs of raw materials and so on, together with a very real buyer resistance. Within the next two or three years, Australia will have some difficult problems to overcome, and we must be careful that we do not cost ourselves out of prosperity in both the primary and secondary industries.

I would like to know what has happened to make the Government feel that these huge suggested increases are justified, in the light of our economic position. I believe that the most we can do is to adjust compensation payments to the movement that has taken place in the value of the £ and to that end it is my intention to place certain amendments on the notice paper.

Clause 9 is a strange provision from the point of view of a Government which has just been returned to power with a slender majority, because it follows almost the lines of the famous nationalisation legislation, in that it states that one must insure with one office only. I do not know the reason for that, unless it be that the Government hopes by that means to build up the State Insurance Office, but at all events it shows a lamentable lack of understanding of the business life of Perth.

I would remind members that business is based on reciprocity. In my own business my insurance is distributed among four different offices, yet the Government in its wisdom apparently wishes to say to me, "You shall not deal with four com-

panies, but with one only." Why? After all, that was the principle over which we waged the big fight in the Federal sphere, when an attempt was made to force everyone to use one bank only.

Now the present Government is suggesting that we should use only one insurance company. I feel that members will make their own deductions as to the reason for this provision being included in the Bill. I will fight it to the bitter end because too often we are being asked to forgo our personal freedom. It is not the function of Government to say that we shall give the whole of our insurance business to one company, particularly bearing in mind certain circumstances which, I think, we can best pass over. I definitely oppose this clause.

Clause 10 is another which astonishes me because I do not think it is in the best interests of the workers. This provision seeks to make it compulsory for the consent of both parties to be obtained before legal representation may be arranged in any action before the Workers' Compensation Board. If this provision is agreed to, the result will be obvious. The insurance companies have experts in workers' compensation who would possibly be more effective as advocates than would solicitors. If this clause is agreed to lawyers may be excluded from hearings before the board, while these men will be allowed to appear and ultimately the worker may be prejudiced.

Again, we are being asked to restrict personal freedom and I do not think we should go out of our way—providing we do the fair thing—to hedge the individual round with restrictions. This sort of thing is becoming the order of the day, but I have a lot of respect for personal freedom, and on those grounds I oppose the clause.

The Bill proposes an increase of 80 per cent. instead of the 66⅔ allowed under the present statute. What has happened in our economy that we can afford an increase such as this? I think the Minister will have great difficulty in giving the House instances of hardship that have occurred under the present Act. By and large justice would have been meted out had the Government simply broadened the Bill to adjust the increases in keeping with present-day monetary values. If we agree to the proposed 80 per cent. it will mean that in many cases the worker on compensation will receive more than he did while at work.

I have prepared a number of amendments which I shall place on the notice paper and which I shall ask members to consider when the Bill is in Committee. Were it not for the fact that I believe the time has arrived when we should adjust the monetary value of the compensation paid to the Australian worker—as we have in the past—I would vote against the second reading, but, as this is a measure that can be dealt with in Committee, I reluctantly support the second reading.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [5.10]: This measure shows a tendency, on the part of the Government, to transform workers' compensation into national insurance and, if that is the trend, I do not know that we can call upon industry to bear the whole cost which would accrue from following such a course. I believe it right, in the interests of the worker, to move in that direction, but I feel it would be wrong, from the point of view of industry, to lay the whole cost at its door. I have one or two suggestions to make later, which will show the trend of my thinking in regard to this movement away from workers' compensation and towards national insurance.

From a general viewpoint I think one could estimate that the total adjustment suggested would mean at least a 60 per cent. increase in the cost of premiums, if the Bill were agreed to, and that includes the increases suggested for lump sum awards, weekly payments, the journey to and from work, and the increase from 66⅔ to 80 per cent. I made one or two inquiries as to whether my estimate of 60 per cent. is a likely figure, and I find that, in general, it is agreed to.

But there is another difficult side to the picture. Prior to the introduction of the amending Bill last year—and I think that of 1951—the whole economic set-up of the workers' compensation fund had been in the interests of the insurance companies, but, owing to the inflation that has taken place, that position has long since been reversed. Today there are a number of companies working at a 100 per cent. loss ratio and in the case of some I believe it has gone as high as 208 per cent.

If they are losing at that rate under the present legislation, the increase of 60 per cent. over all charges, as proposed in the Bill, would put industry in a serious position and so we must examine the measure from that point of view as well as from the point of view of what is fair to the injured worker. I have always looked upon the Workers' Compensation Act as a measure which made it possible for an injured worker and his family to continue to live during the time of injury and rehabilitation without financial distress.

I believe we should fix compensation at a reasonable amount to ensure that the injured worker receives enough to allow him and his family sufficient on which to live reasonably during the period of incapacitation. All other members of the community above a certain income have of necessity to insure themselves. I feel that with the rise to £2,000 we are bringing into the compensation field those who have rightly insured themselves above the amount awarded under the Workers' Compensation Act. I am told that this has

been brought in because there are men in the mines who are earning £37 a week, but I cannot believe that the Workers' Compensation Act should entitle them to receive 80 per cent. of their earnings.

However, I can see that they may require that amount to help them maintain their pre-accident standard of living. If they desire to maintain their pre-accident standard of living, it is their own responsibility, just as it is my responsibility to maintain my standard of living if I happen to meet with some accident. As long as we can ensure that the worker and his family are not in want during his incapacity, we should not place this further burden on industry. The worker today who earns well above the basic wage should be able to pay his own insurance.

One of the interesting features of the Bill is the extension of the field of silicosis compensation to the iron and steel industry. The term "iron and steel industry" is a very loose one, and does not really tell me what occupations will be included under such heading. In the silicosis department of New South Wales a very definite list of occupations is included under the heading of the iron and steel industry and one knows exactly, therefore, what occupations will be included in such compensation. Over here we are in a very different position from New South Wales, but even in New South Wales we find that the claims for silicosis that arise in relation to iron and steel operations are relatively small compared with the rest of the occupations that are named under the schedule of the Act. The figure in New South Wales for 1951-52 dealing with compensation paid to beneficiaries and dependants of deceased beneficiaries was a total of £159,000. Of that, the amount that can be put down to iron and steel and associated industries is £2,000.

In two of the clauses of the Bill the word "sandstone" appears because sandstone, that is the silica, is necessary in the occupation before the worker can acquire silicosis. So the extension of the schedule in the Bill to cover the iron and steel industry will probably not mean a very large addition to the number of claims under the Act. But it is one interesting sidelight which has already been mentioned by Mr. Hearn. When introducing the Bill the Minister said that whilst employers were compelled to insure with one company, provision has been made to have silicosis excluded under that heading. So that whilst an employer would have to insure with one company for all other claims under the Act, claims for silicosis need not be made, because he can insure his silicosis risk in another company.

Legal opinion is very much against that viewpoint as it concerns the wording of the parent Act and the wording of the Bill. It does appear that even though the individual may have made provision to spread his risks by placing his silicosis risk with another company, there is a clause that compels him to insure all his risks with the same company. A legal man said to me the other day that he would need no better case than this with which to go to the High Court; that he would win quite easily.

Therefore the Bill does contain a certain amount of risk. It forces the employer not only to insure all his general accident risks with one company but also to insure them with the company that deals only with silicosis; I refer to the State Insurance Office. I do not for a moment want to say that this has been contrived or that it is meant for the future, but in going through the Bill I believe we should make certain that if this clause is to remain in, the protection the Minister said has to be made in the Act should be thoroughly made.

I doubt very much whether real thought has been given to the exclusion of legal assistance in claims before the court. Fortunately I have not seen many claims in the last few years. Prior to that I saw a large number, and I should think it would be grossly unfair to the worker were he to be deprived of legal assistance in making his claims, because I saw quite a number of men employed in the insurance companies who knew this Act in veritable detail and could use it in such a manner that it could confound any worker or any worker's representative.

For my part, I believe that the absence of legal assistance to a worker in making his claims would only permit of more appeals, because appeals can be made only on the basis of law and in the absence of law we might find that the magistrate in charge of the board wanted legal advice and the matter would therefore have to go to appeal. In the end the worker would pay a lot more. If the Government desires to assist the worker I do not think this House would object to the alteration of the Poor Persons Legal Assistance Act to enable the worker to receive adequate legal assistance in his case when it comes before the board. I believe that if a move were made to convert payments to workers from a lump sum to a pension and an approach made to the Social Services Department of the Commonwealth so that it would meet portion of the claim, it would reduce the growing burden on industry.

If by that means we could reduce the burden on industry, we could then again reduce the cost to the worker. I believe that a combination of assistance between Commonwealth and State could arrive at a plan such as this. We find the position arising where, if we give a large sum to the widow of a worker killed in a fatal accident, she will be debarred from receiving a pension from the Commonwealth because of the amount granted to her by the State. This Peter and Paul business between Commonwealth and State looks

like one which will eventually injure the industry very severely, if these rising costs are to be met from year to year.

I think it would be fair to the widow if she were granted a pension, and a reasonable one, portion of which could be paid by the Commonwealth and portion by the State. After all, what does £1,000 or £2,000 provide by way of interest in these days to ensure even a semblance of a living? We must look at this from that point of view. Having gone that far, I am not at all certain that we could not save a very large amount of this workers' compensation by evolving something along the lines of the motor vehicle trust. I am not alone in this view either. There are others who, I believe, feel as I do in this matter; they feel that something can be done along the lines I have mentioned. I have been very careful not to talk to the insurance companies or the employers because they might be incriminated, so to speak, but in discussing this matter with my friends who are interested in public affairs I find they feel, as I do, that the care of the injured worker should be a national trust, and if something could be evolved along the lines of motor vehicle insurance to take the place of the present method of administration, it would be a great advantage.

The Bill could, I think, be dealt with better in Committee, so I do not propose to say very much more on it at this stage. Each clause must be argued on its merits. In conclusion, I might say that I am disappointed with the administration of the Workers' Compensation Board. I am not at all satisfied that the administration of the Act is sufficiently well defined, and I do not know who has more authority in these matters, the compensation board or the State Insurance Office. I do believe, however, that the compensation board has fallen down badly in its job.

Some years ago this House inserted in the Act sections which allowed the Workers' Compensation Board to set aside sums of money for an inquiry into the causes of accidents and into means for their prevention. Provision was also made to rehabilitate the worker. I think I am right in saying that although these provisions were made, not a single thing has been done or a solitary penny spent either to rehabilitate the worker or to see what can be done to prevent him from being injured.

I am quite certain these provisions have been passed over and the board has become purely a body for settling claims. I am convinced that this House did not envisage the situation that has developed, nor did it think that the board would operate in this manner. I have not given much thought as to how the position might be remedied, but I do believe that the trend must be towards considering this matter as a national trust which must be prepared to share in the prevention of accidents. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [5.30]: I am not going to make a long speech on the second reading of this measure, because I regard it as a Committee Bill. Mr. Hearn and Dr. Hislop have dealt with it more or less clause by clause, and have stated their objections to many of the provisions. I believe it would have served the Government right if the Bill had been thrown out. I look upon it as being ill-considered, and in many ways irresponsible. When, a year or two ago, we were dealing with an increase of rents Bill, the argument used by the opponents of that measure was that we could not possibly afford to add to the cost of living by allowing landlords to increase rents, even to pay for the added costs of repairs and maintenance. The whole argument was that the "C" series index would be affected, and that it was not fair.

Now, however, we have a Bill that will probably add more to the cost of living than any other measure that has been introduced in this House for a long time. The provision that people on £2,000 a year shall be compensated under the Act is too stupid. The Labour Party seems to have forgotten that a change has taken place in the economic conditions of various kinds of workers, and that the manual worker has ceased to be the real worker, or the only worker. He is amongst the high-salaried people, amongst the high earners.

But the Government says that because he is a worker he must be compensated by an employer not earning half as much; that that employer should pay a premium to compensate a man who is earning up to £2,000. That is too ludicrous. We must come to our senses, and realise the economic changes that have taken place in the world. I suppose the average earnings of the skilled manual worker today would be higher than the earnings of most skilled office workers. I do not think that is an exaggeration.

Hon. H. Hearn: It is an understatement.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I would say so. Changes are taking place; and the time has come when people with large salaries, in whatever industry they are engaged, should accept some of the responsibilities of life. If they want to be insured against accident, they should do something towards insuring themselves. I can see the time coming when the present Government will be introducing permanent life policies for workers, so that when they grow old there will be large sums of money waiting for them. However, I said I was not going to make a long speech on the second reading.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: They can afford to pay for themselves.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes; they can afford to insure themselves against accidents. However, the House should let the Bill go into Committee, because it has some merits. Changes have taken place in money values. I do not agree with Mr. Hearn about payments to dependants. Premiums paid do cover dependants. Because a dependant happens to be living in another country, he or she should not be debarred from benefits. He or she may be on the way to becoming a migrant. There are many immigrants here who propose, as soon as they can save enough money, to bring their wives and families out. The Bill says they have to prove that the people they intend to bring out are dependants. If they can prove that that is so, then whether we have some reciprocal arrangement with the other country or not, should not enter into the question.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What about a Mahometan?

Hon. L. CRAIG: If we class him as a migrant, bring him here, and give him benefits, and if he has real dependants, then they should also receive benefits.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: He might have four wives.

Hon. L. CRAIG: He would not be paid for each one.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Why not?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Let us be sensible! If a man has real dependants living in another country, and that country has no reciprocal arrangement with us, I do not think we should hold that against him. I would allow those dependants to receive compensation. It is not as though the premiums would be affected, because the risks are accepted by the companies at the time the rate is fixed. I support the second reading.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [5.36]: With other members, I regard this as a Bill to be dealt with at the Committee stage, but I would like to say a few words in reference to it. In Australia today we are attempting to arrest the costs spiral, yet here we have a Bill that will do nothing but tend to increase it. Consider the rise in costs that has taken place over the last few years. There has been a succession of basic wage rises which has led to big increases in the cost of living.

On top of that, we have had increased water rates and local government rates; increased electricity charges, rail freights, and sales tax. Excise duties have risen, though it is true that on some items sales tax has been reduced recently. Again, over the past four or five years, there has been an additional burden on industry by way of social service payments. These costs have been mounting all the time. Where do we expect to get, if industries and business people are to be burdened every year with enormous rises in costs? I wish now to refer to a few of the clauses in the Bill.

Clause 5 provides for compensation to workers who are injured while proceeding to or returning from work. That was never intended to be a function of workers' compensation. As others have stated, workers' compensation was established to help an injured worker over a special time of adversity. Employers more or less agreed to do something towards helping a worker to avoid running into debt while in hospital and unable to do any work. One angle of this clause is that there are people—like bus workers, tramway employees, and workers in hotels—who are employed on a roster system, and they may proceed to and return from work two or three times a day. Is the employer to be liable every time they travel to and from work during the day? That is what the measure provides.

The Chief Secretary: For whose convenience does the employee do that—his own or that of the boss?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It may be at the convenience of the boss; it all depends on the industry. But it may be more suitable for the worker to operate on a roster system. At any rate, he is agreeable to take the job. He is not forced to do so; there is no dictatorship compelling him to take such a job and work on a roster. He does it of his own free will, and it is his own free choice.

The Chief Secretary: It is not a free choice.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: There is no reason why the employer should have to pay insurance when the worker makes three or four journeys a day to and from work. I do not think the Minister can justify that.

The Chief Secretary: He does not travel three or four times a day of his own choice.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: He does, if he takes the job. If he does not like that sort of thing, he can find other employment. Clause 9 makes it compulsory for an employer to insure all employees through one office. What are we coming to—a dictatorship? Is this the thin edge of socialism; of a socialistic dictatorship? It looks like it when the Government, through legislation, seeks to dictate to employers what they shall do with their money with respect to insurance.

Clause 10 is on the same lines. It refuses a party legal representation before the Workers' Compensation Board except with the consent of both parties. Surely we are not going to abolish the freedom of a democratic country like Australia! I would ask the House to consider the points I have raised, when we get into Committee. With other speakers, I consider there are some ill-conceived

clauses in the Bill, and from end to end it needs amending severely. Then we may get somewhere with improvements to the Act. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. A. R. Jones, debate adjourned.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Administration Act Amendment (No. 1). (Hon. H. S. W. Parker in charge.)

2, Declarations and Attestations Act Amendment. (Hon. R. J. Boylen in charge).

3, Returned Servicemen's Badges. (Hon. H. S. W. Parker in charge).

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—BANK HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—FERTILISERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th November.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [5.45]: I support the Bill because I believe the time is well overdue when the farmer should receive better treatment than he has for some years past. In prewar years we were able to purchase free-running super of good quality at the time of the year when we needed it, so we had very little difficulty with it, if any. At that time the production of super was about 120,000 tons per annum.

As the war years went by, it rose slightly, and during that time the super companies had to put up with many disabilities, some of them due to the fact that they could not receive rock from the usual sources, and the rock they did receive was of a different quality and nature so that a fair amount of experimental work had to be done on it and certain changes of equipment had to be made in order to produce superphosphate. During the war years, everyone, whether actively engaged in the fighting areas, serving in the services or working on farms or in industry, suffered certain hardships.

Whilst the farmers might have grizzled, as everyone else did, they carried on with the job and took no action about the type of superphosphate then being manufactured. At the end of the war there was what we might call a boom period in the advancement of agriculture throughout the State. By 1948-49 something like 400,000 tons of super were produced, but the factories were not equipped to manufacture such a large quantity at such short notice. They claimed that the war years were responsible for their not having added to their plant, equipment and drying space.

But one of their own men—Mr. Norman Lowe, who was chief adviser in the field for the Cuming Smith-Mt. Lyell Coy.—told his firm as far back as 1937-38 that the need for increased production of superphosphate would be so great in a few years from then, because of the methods adopted with regard to pasture improvement, that it would have to see that the machinery and the capabilities of the factory were considerably extended. His opinion then was that the increased amount needed, within five years, would perhaps reach 400,000 tons. Of course, no notice was taken of him, and the companies missed their opportunity, prior to the war, of extending their manufacturing and drying capacity so that they could produce and mature more super.

Of course, during the war the probability of doing these things was much against them. Even after the war the farmer, the dairy farmer, the grazier and others who are users of superphosphate refrained from doing anything because, in the first instance, they knew the works were up against it to manufacture the required tonnage—it is 440,000 tons today—and, secondly, the railways, because of the lean period of the war years, had been unable to increase their rollingstock, or, in fact, keep up to standard what they had.

It was not, therefore, possible to handle the quantities required when the super users needed it. So time went by until this year, but now we feel we have been patient for a long time and we think we should have some redress because we believe the super companies have not played the game with us. Mr. Loton produced some figures showing that in 1950-51 and 1951-52 the moisture content in super varied from 1.5 to 11.4 per cent.

So it seems that as it is possible to manufacture super with a moisture content as low as 1.5 per cent., the farmers would not be asking too much if they requested the department, or the Minister in charge of it, to call upon his advisers to nominate a reasonable maximum moisture content. If it could be produced at 3 per cent. I think it would meet the needs of the farming community and other users, because they could run it through the drill, topdresser, or other machinery used for the spreading of superphosphate.

Hon. A. L. Loton: You would not have it lumpy, either.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is so. We find from these figures that super with a moisture content varying from 6 to 11.4 per cent. can be delivered, and we claim that any superphosphate with such a moisture content will set hard. We are compelled to take early delivery of 25 per cent. of our requirements. These deliveries take place between September and December. If we get immature super we lose not only in the weight of the superphosphate itself, but the bag as well because it rots.

In addition, the super goes lumpy and has to be put through a grister or be crushed by some other process before it can be spread. The super delivered from December to April may be in fair condition so that the farmers and graziers can use it for topdressing purposes and for their early crops—such as the renovation of pastures and the sowing of oats. The later deliveries, between April and June, are, as we have found through our experiences in the last few years, definitely immature, and contain a large quantity of moisture which causes clogging in the drill and the breaking of parts as explained by a previous speaker.

On the last occasion I actually took part in the use of superphosphate myself, I found it was too much to expect anyone to put it through a drill because of the time wasted in cleaning the machinery and chasing parts which were then difficult to procure. It would be no exaggeration to say that on a small farm we lost at least 100 acres per week in drilling. Members will realise that with 100 acres lost like that, if the weather is against the farmer the following week, he cannot put his crop in at all; or if he does do so, it is bogged in so that the yield is reduced considerably.

Some years ago a neighbour of mine took delivery of a 10-ton parcel of super which he put in his shed. He said it was quite damp. He took the trouble to weigh a ton as it came off the truck. Each bag weighed 187lb. He took delivery in April, and by June it had dried out so that when he weighed it again each bag weighed 175lb. That meant a loss of 12lb. per bag or 144lb. per ton.

Hon. L. Craig: Would it be phosphate that was lost?

Hon. A. R. JONES: He would not lose the phosphate value, but would be receiving 144lb. less superphosphate than he would have received if it had been in a drier condition. It meant also that he paid rail freight on the additional 144lb.

Hon. L. Craig: But he did not lose the fertilising value.

Hon. L. C. Diver: His dressing becomes heavier, and his super does not go as far.

Hon. L. Craig: I am only talking of the value of the super.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I claim the farmer does lose in the quantity of phosphate available, because if he receives a ton of phosphate with a maximum moisture content of 5 per cent. as against 11.4 per cent., he is receiving 6.4 per cent. additional moisture. Therefore he must receive less weight in superphosphate, so he receives less phosphate value per ton. In addition to that, as has been pointed out, the extra freight is something to be considered, particularly in view of the fact that the railways have been up against it to handle the tonnage required.

While I have not worked the figure out, it speaks for itself when 144lb. is lost in one ton. Let us take 6.5 per cent. as being the mean average between 1.5 and 11.4 per cent. The loss, therefore, is 5 per cent. On a 1,000-acre cropping programme with 1cwt. to the acre, a 50-ton parcel of superphosphate is required. If the farmer loses 5 per cent. in the moisture content, then he loses 2½ tons of super which, at £15 per ton—the average price of super delivered today—amounts to £37 10s.. Whilst anyone might claim, as Mr. Craig has, that there is no loss in the actual super content, there is a loss in the actual weight, so that if we got our expected weight of 1 ton of superphosphate delivered, we would have extra phosphate in the total.

Hon. L. Craig: Only the moisture comes out, leaving the phosphate behind.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is correct. Its manure or phosphate proportion remains as at the time of delivery, but if we lose a bag in weight and someone has to make that bag up to the purchaser, would not the purchaser be getting back something extra?

Hon. L. Craig: No. It is richer when you put it on than when you receive it.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Certainly, but there is not the weight to put on.

Hon. L. Craig: You have to adjust the sowings.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is so. Therefore, the farmer must lose if he receives superphosphate which has a high moisture content. In asking members to agree that a maximum moisture content be fixed, we are asking for something which is most desirable and a good deal of the money spent on labour on farms would be saved because we have to employ men to crush the super when it is too hard to be put through the drills. There would also be a saving in bags, because they would not rot out so quickly, and there would be a big saving in machinery parts. If the moisture content in super is reduced, the overall costs to the farmer must be reduced also, and those savings must be handed on to somebody somewhere.

Those who expect the producer to produce and sell his wheat in Australia at a lower figure than he can obtain for it overseas, also expect the farmer to produce his wheat at the cost of production, plus a small margin. If Labour Governments in the Eastern States had their way, our wheat would be delivered at the cost of production, but those costs could be reduced greatly if we could effect some saving in the use of labour, the loss of bags and the replacement of machinery parts. So it is not much to ask members to agree to this measure.

The manufacturers have said that if the Bill is passed they will have to provide additional storage space so that the super can be sold in a mature condition. As a

farmer, I know that I would sooner pay another 2s. or 3s. a ton, over a number of years, if I could receive my super in good condition; in that case, I would not have to pay for labour to smash up the superphosphate and I would not have to pay for the cost of bags, extra freight and so on. I am sure that all farmers throughout the State would rather pay a few shillings a ton more for their superphosphate than continue to suffer all these inconveniences which are brought about by an excessive moisture content. I have much pleasure in supporting the measure.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [6.4]: I rise to support the Bill. I do not desire to weary members, but some of them may recall that I mentioned the problem of moist superphosphate when I spoke to the Address-in-reply earlier in the session. At that time I said that moist superphosphate was one of the greatest bugbears with which farmers had to contend, and we think that this measure is only fair and just, because every industry is regulated in some way or the other. The wheat farmer who desires to deliver wheat to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. must comply with its requirements and ensure that his wheat does not exceed a given moisture content. Therefore we do not think that we are asking for too much when we urge that the fertiliser manufacturers shall deliver their product with a maximum moisture content.

A good deal has been said about what this extra storage space will cost the manufacturers. The cost involved in delivering superphosphate in a dry condition would not be nearly as great as the present total cost to the various users of superphosphate throughout Western Australia because of the delivery of immature super. The Electweld Steel Coy. at Kellerberrin is manufacturing special machines for one purpose only—breaking up lumps of superphosphate. I think that proves conclusively that the super works would be in a position to provide storage space more cheaply than the farmers could procure all the machinery and labour necessary to be able to use hard lumpy superphosphate.

I was pleased to hear some members mention the figure of 5 per cent, because during my speech on the Address-in-reply I mentioned that figure as being the average excess moisture content in superphosphate. In other words, farmers are paying at least £20,000 a year in freight on the excess moisture content in the superphosphate. If that £20,000, plus the sum of money involved in buying machinery for crushing the super and the extra labour that must be employed by farmers in order to ensure that the superphosphate is in a fit state to go through the drills are added together, members will see that the total figure is in excess of the cost to the fertiliser companies of providing additional storage space.

The fertiliser companies would need to provide additional storage space for 200,000 tons of superphosphate per annum. Once they provided that storage space, the capital cost could be spread over a number of years. Thus it is of no use the companies saying that the costs are prohibitive. As a matter of fact, the figure mentioned in the fertiliser select committee's report is for capital cost only and does not take into account the fact that that cost could be spread over a number of years, whereas the moisture content in super is costing farmers in Western Australia annually, more than the capital cost mentioned. So I trust that the House will pass the Bill. With those few remarks I have much pleasure in supporting it.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [6.9]: I rise to support the measure and to tell members of some of the experiences I have had over the years. Prior to the war we did not see damp superphosphate and we could use the product we received with confidence. We knew that it would go through the machines without any trouble; but during the war years, and since then, farmers have had considerable difficulty in putting the superphosphate through the broadcasters. They have found that the product has varied from bag to bag and they have had to alter their machines accordingly.

Frequently the super would cake in the bottom of the machine and have to be dug out; then, after altering the setting, they have discovered that instead of using 112lb. to the acre, they have used 224lb.. This has caused a good deal of lost effort, and it is high time some move was made to ensure that producers received the superphosphate in a condition to enable it to go through the machines without all this trouble.

There is another matter to which I wish to refer. By interjection Mr. Craig intimated that, although there might be some loss in quantity owing to the moisture content in the superphosphate, there would be no loss in the phosphoric content. Over the years producers have been supplied with superphosphate the phosphoric content of which has been as high as 23 per cent. It stands to reason that because of this high moisture content there must be a loss in the phosphoric content. As Mr. Jones pointed out, in a ton of super 144lb. was lost through excessive moisture and that amounts to about one bag in each ton.

Therefore, if there is one bag less in each ton, there must be the equivalent loss in phosphoric content in a ton of super. Mr. Craig has had some experience as regards butter, and the regulation provides that the moisture content in that commodity shall be no more than 22 per cent. There is also a fixed maximum for salt content; and surely if

the salt content were reduced, there would be a loss in the weight of the butter. The same thing would apply in the case of the water content.

Hon. L. Craig: You have not studied it.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I have. The consumer of butter would soon kick up a noise if butter were supplied with an excessive moisture content, So I think the farmer is justified in objecting to purchasing superphosphate with an excessive moisture content.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Is not super made up of a certain percentage of phosphate and a certain percentage of something else, irrespective of the water?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That may be so, but the farmer loses in the weight of the super, owing to the excessive moisture content. If Mr. Craig bought a dozen eggs and one was bad, he would not lose that egg—according to his calculations. Of course the man must lose the value of the phosphoric content if the moisture content is too high, because, on the figures quoted, he loses approximately one bag in each ton. So I ask members to support this measure because it will be of benefit to all producers who use superphosphate.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES, ROYAL VISIT EXPENDITURE AUTHORISATION.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [7.30] in moving the second reading said: The Bill has a long title, but there is not a great deal in the measure itself. It is one of those pieces of legislation that are small in every respect. Members probably know that during the coronation celebrations, many local authorities spent a good deal of money. No doubt quite a number of them found it extremely difficult to keep their expenditure within the limit prescribed under the provision relating to the expenditure of three per cent. of their ordinary revenue on entertainment, etc.

We do not desire that the local authorities should be placed in such a position again during the visit of Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh to this State in March next. Also, we do not want any local authority to stint itself in any way, because of lack of funds, in celebrating the Royal Visit. It is considered that many of them will have to stint if they are permitted to spend only the amount allotted to them in their three per cent. account.

The whole purpose of the Bill is to permit local authorities to spend more money than that available to them to make donations to charitable organisations and sporting bodies. After making such donations, they have very little money left for any other purpose. I believe that the local authorities in the South-West intend to take 10,000 children from various centres in that part of the State to Busselton, in order that the children may see the Queen when she makes a visit to that centre. Of course, no local authority would have the funds to provide for the transport of such a large number of children to Busselton. Therefore, we are asking Parliament to approve of the expenditure of any money by a local authority during Her Majesty's visit over and above their normal three per cent. expenditure.

Unless a measure such as this is approved, any expenditure in excess of three per cent. of their ordinary revenue would naturally be queried by the Government auditors and would cause a great deal of embarrassment to the local authorities concerned.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Do you propose to put a limit on such expenditure?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No; we consider that any such expenditure can be left to the discretion of each local authority, and that no definite limitation should be fixed.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Is it anticipated that each local authority will estimate for the expenditure?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I suppose many of them would, and I think that in their estimates they would be guided by what they intend to do in their own particular districts.

Hon. H. Hearn: You are going to leave it to their good judgment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is so. I do not think that is granting too much, because members of local authorities will not let their heads go too freely; in fact, they are more inclined to act the opposite way.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Will this expenditure be subject to a specific audit?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I suppose the hon. member wants to know if the Minister will have some say in regard to the expenditure?

Hon. H. Hearn: You mean in the audit following the expenditure of the money?

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Yes.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes; the expenditure would be audited following Her Majesty's visit. That is the substance

of the Bill, and I think members will be generous enough to grant this concession to local authorities. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central [7.40]: This is an unusual Bill. We do, of course, limit local authorities in the expenditure of money for special purposes to three per cent. of their ordinary revenue. No doubt there will still be some money left in those accounts by the time Her Majesty arrives here by the end of March, because there will still be three months to go before the end of the financial year.

I would like to see some limit on the expenditure provided for in the Bill. That would be difficult, of course, because more money would probably be expended in a large centre, such as Kalgoorlie, than in some of the smaller centres which Her Majesty intends to visit. On the other hand, in the matter of expenditure the Bill gives a free hand to any municipality or road board which may be miles away from a centre included in Her Majesty's itinerary; and such local authorities, following the Royal visit, could say, "Yes, that expenditure was incurred because of Her Majesty's visit in 1954." For that reason this is an unusual piece of legislation, particularly when no limit is prescribed. However, if the Chief Secretary is satisfied that no local authority will expend money unnecessarily I suppose it is all right.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Many of them do not get three per cent. of their ordinary revenue which they could spend on such an occasion.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: According to this Bill, every local authority in the State will be granted permission to spend anything it desires over and above three per cent. of its ordinary revenue.

Hon. L. C. Diver: The members will still be responsible to those who elect them.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: They are responsible to those people only at election time, which will be in the following April. I know quite a deal about ratepayers, and very few will take any notice of this measure. Mr. Diver might say, "Well, if their own ratepayers do not object, why should we?" We know that today no local authority has sufficient funds to meet its commitments. Local authorities are continually asking for money in excess of that allowed them.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: How will they recoup themselves for this expenditure? By an extra rate?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not know that they can exceed their estimated revenue for the year. By the Bill, we are now advising all local authorities that they will be able to save certain sums of money to spend on the celebration of the Royal visit. I have no objection to the Bill, but I hope it will not mean that local authorities will indulge in lavish expenditure; in fact, I do not think that Her Majesty herself would agree to that being done. However, if the measure will mean that Her Majesty's visit will be commemorated in a proper manner, I am quite satisfied; but I do not think there is any need for the Bill. The Minister has not told us whether he has been approached in regard to this matter.

The Chief Secretary: Yes.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Centres such as Busselton, Albany, Northam, York, and Kalgoorlie, which are included in the Royal itinerary, will probably need to expend quite a lot of money in order to cater for the large number of visitors to those towns. The only additional expenditure required will be for extra conveniences, and perhaps additional parking space for vehicles. The amount allocated under their three per cent. account can be spent only on entertainment, donations, decorations, etc.

I would like to mention at this stage that many local authorities will be unable to obtain decorations unless more are imported. I know that in my province great difficulty is being experienced in procuring them. However, more decorations may be made available later. At present some local authorities are making inquiries in the Eastern States for supplies to be forwarded by air. I will not oppose the Bill, but I want members to know my opinion of it. I believe that we might perhaps limit each local authority to five or ten per cent. of its ordinary revenue in the same way as it is limited to three per cent. for expenditure on entertainment, etc.

HON. H. HEARN (Metropolitan) [7.43]: I support the Bill. I consider that, during this eventful visit of Her Majesty the Queen, and the Duke of Edinburgh, even if some local authorities do spend a little more money than they can afford, it will be money well spent. It was my privilege to be in England a short time ago, and to be in those boroughs which Her Majesty was visiting at that time. To have witnessed the way the various local authorities in England spent money during such a visit would have been an education to the average Australian if he had happened to be fortunate enough to be there, as I was.

I believe that in connection with the forthcoming visit of Her Majesty the Queen, and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, we should at least be prepared to be generous and ensure that local authorities are permitted to spend some extra money to provide happiness for the people, especially the younger generation. After the Royal visit is over, and we have to face the fact that local authorities have spent more money than that which is at

present allocated for expenditure on such occasions, we can say that they celebrated the occasion with due decorum and with the full authority of the people. I know that such is the wish of every Australian.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [7.44]: I support the Bill because I think it is an extremely good one. If a local authority can be trusted to carry out the functions specified under the Act governing it, surely it can be trusted to spend a certain amount of extra money wisely. Her Majesty will be visiting not only Perth but several country centres also. The question will arise, as it has already arisen in a number of areas, as to how children are to get in and see the Queen. Some will travel from fairly distant areas. No doubt the parents and citizens' associations will do their utmost to make the necessary financial arrangements for conveyance, and road boards should also assist in these matters.

Regarding decorations, not much will be done in areas not included in the Royal itinerary. The most lasting impression on the minds of children will be a sight of the Royal couple. Any money expended by road boards over and above the three per cent. permitted would be well spent.

HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [7.47]: I support the Bill. It was mentioned by Sir Charles Latham that local authorities of towns to be visited by Her Majesty would, in the main, be using their funds to commemorate the occasion. I hope this will be carried out not only in those areas but throughout the State, even in centres not included in the Royal itinerary. I trust the local authorities will arrange some form of celebration, particularly for the children, because of the importance of the occasion of a reigning monarch visiting Australia. We should have no hesitation in giving local authorities the necessary power to expend the required funds. It is desirable that they should be empowered to spend money for this purpose, over and above their normal expenditure. I repeat that if areas of the State cannot be visited by Her Majesty, then at least some form of celebration should be arranged by the local authorities to commemorate her visit.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [7.48]: As members of most provinces have spoken, and seeing I brought up the question of the visit of Her Majesty to Kalgoorlie and Boulder, I would like to add a few remarks. The local authorities in my area will not waste any money; they are careful. But the Kalgoorlie Council, of which I am an ex-member and which is perhaps the biggest participator, has ample funds to arrange an impressive welcome. Arrangements have been made for children in the Norseman area to travel to Kalgoorlie, and it may be necessary for us to transport them. I support the Bill.

HON. C. W. D. BARKER (North) [7.49]: I support the Bill. The northern towns will not have the pleasure of seeing the Queen; but I am of the opinion that some form of celebration should be held to mark the occasion, and extra money will be required for this purpose. This will be an occasion on which the people can express their loyalty to the Queen; and I suggest that, in the area I represent, this be done through some sort of celebration, and by sending some of the children to see the Royal couple. On an occasion such as this, we must be generous with expenditure.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [7.50]: Having heard the views of most members from the areas to be visited by the Royal couple, it may be as well for me to add something concerning an area which will not be so fortunate. In an effort to make arrangements for children to visit Perth on the forthcoming occasion, some of the road boards may be able to assist in the plan I have been trying to develop. I am pleased to see that local authorities will not be restricted to a percentage, because it is difficult to assess the cost beforehand. The local authorities in the area I represent will assist in the organisation of transport of children to the city, and for that purpose they will need more than the three per cent. I am therefore pleased to see the provision authorising the expenditure of more than that amount. I trust that local authorities will use the funds to good effect. Their expenditure will enable children of those areas to be given the same opportunity as children in the city to see the Royal couple. I hope this can be arranged. I support the Bill.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West—in reply) [7.52]: For a long time I have waited to introduce a Bill which would have a happy ending. We have reached the stage of being 100 per cent. unanimous, and I am pleased at the reception of this measure. The Bill has revealed one thing: how unanimous we are when it comes to anything concerning the Empire.

In the course of his remarks, Sir Charles Latham asked whether there had been any requests. I have a file covering this, which states—

> I have been approached by several local authorities asking if something could be done in order that the 3 per cent. limit, as now prescribed, could be exceeded during the year in which the Royal visit takes place.
>
> The 3 per cent. limit will seriously embarrass some local authorities, but rather than suggest an amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act or the Road Districts Act, I would suggest for your consideration that action might be taken to have a special Act

of Parliament enacted, authorising all local authorities to expend such portions of their general revenue, to be determined by the local authority itself, on matters pertaining to the Royal Visit.

I approved of this, and so we find the Bill here. The suggestion has been made that the expenditure should be limited; but I do not think that is possible or desirable, because it would be very hard to gauge the expenditure. I hope that in all districts there will be some celebration to mark the occasion whether they are included in the Royal itinerary or not. As was the case during the Coronation, I hope local authorities throughout the State will make the Royal visit a special occasion for the children. I anticipated an amendment, because it might be thought local authorities would overspend.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: I have one written out.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I did not want that. I have sufficient confidence in the local authorities to believe they will not overdo the celebrations. In any case they are limited by the Bill. The latter portion of the Bill limits the expenditure to "out of their general revenue." So they have the 3 per cent.; and if that is not sufficient, they can call on their general revenue.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Where else can they get the funds from?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Approval has been given on many occasions for the expenditure of funds for certain purposes. Applications could be made for loans. This Bill does not make provision for that, but merely limits the expenditure to three per cent. That means that percentage of revenue throughout the year. If the local authorities found that three per cent. of the revenue up to the time of the Royal visit was not sufficient, they could spread the percentage over the whole of the revenue for the year.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. W. R. Hall in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Authorisation of expenditure of ordinary revenue:

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I move an amendment—

That the following proviso be added to Clause 2:—

Provided that such expenditure does not exceed more than fifty per centum of an amount equal to the three per centum already provided for at present without the consent of the Minister.

While I am entirely in accord with the expressions of other speakers, in my opinion there should be some provision for a possible excess expenditure on the part of local authorities, on the occasion of the visit by the Royal party. Other authorities not included in the Royal itinerary could, and should, make provision for celebrating this event some manner. They could hold a gala day, or a children's day. This would impress on children the importance of loyalty. To honour the event, other authorities might go further and establish library additions, or things of a permanent nature. The effect of the amendment is to impose, at the discretion of the Minister and where such expenditure is desirable, a limit on the expenditure of funds by local authorities. There should be a limit to what such authorities can spend without being 'vetted" by other authorities.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I oppose the amendment, which is tantamount to saying that we cannot trust the local authorities, and I say that as one with experience of local government. Surely the members of those bodies have sufficient sense of proportion to act wisely in this matter! The proposal is an absurd one, which would spoil the whole gesture.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I oppose the amendment. The local authorities from Wagin southward are endeavouring to arrange for the children to be conveyed to Albany and back to their homes, and for this reason it would not be wise to set a limit to the expenditure. The expenditure to be undertaken could well be left to the discretion of those bodies.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope the amendment will not be accepted.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You practically suggested it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I said I was too bashful to suggest an amendment, but this one is too paltry. Fifty per cent. of three per cent. would mean 1½ per cent., and that would not allow the local bodies very much.

Hon. A. F. Griffith : It would depend upon how much was in the three per cent.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Most local authorities have little cash to throw around. We need not worry about those that have the cash, and the others will not indulge in excessive expenditure, because the money will not be available to them. What does it matter if, for once in our lives, we let ourselves go? We should give local bodies freedom to do the job properly. The saying that we should not spoil the ship for a ha'porth of tar might well be applied in this case. The Bill came here as a clean skin, and should go back as such.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I also oppose the amendment.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I congratulate the Chief Secretary on having stirred the patriotic impulses of members and on being prepared to give local authorities a real go. However, we have to bear in mind that when the surges of patriotism have passed away, the auditor, in cold blood, vets the accounts. Most local authorities would exercise discretion, and some of them would inspire other bodies to assist by raising funds, but we would be wise to provide for cases in which such discretion might not be shown.

Hon. H. Hearn: Not on such a historic occasion.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Three per cent, of the revenue represents a fairly substantial sum. I do not think that my amendment would have any effect on the spirit of welcome or the desire of local bodies to do justice to the occasion. Some members have suggested that there should be a limit to the expenditure; and, that being my idea, I included it in a proviso.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—ASSISTANCE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN WIRING DWELLINGS FOR ELECTRICITY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd November.

HON. H. HEARN (Metropolitan) [8.9]: I support the second reading, but have one definite objection to the measure in that apparently it will not permit free enterprise to tender for such work.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Is that in the Bill?

Hon. H. HEARN: With Dr. Hislop, I consider this to be a serious matter, and in Committee shall move an amendment with a view to rectifying it.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [8.10]: I support the second reading of the Bill, which embodies a good idea, but there are one or two points that ought to receive attention in Committee. Mr. Hearn has mentioned that evidently the measure is not merely intended to be of a financial nature, but is designed to permit of local authorities providing the men and materials for this work. I should be sorry to see this Bill being made the means to build up departments to compete with private enterprise. If the measure were restricted to providing financial assistance, that would be satisfactory.

Another point is that the work may be done and the charge incurred at the request of the owner or occupier of the dwelling. Inasmuch as the charge for the work can, in the terms of the Bill, be treated as rates and therefore be recoverable from the owner, it should be the sole prerogative of the owner to decide whether the property shall be wired, or rewired, or have the wiring extended. Otherwise, an occupier could make all sorts of fanciful requests and leave the place a week or two after the work had been completed, and the owner would find himself liable for the cost, notwithstanding that under rent control he may have been receiving only the miserable amount of rent that Parliament decided he should charge. For those reasons, I hope that in Committee the measure will be amended along the lines I have suggested.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [8.12]: I support the second reading. There is considerable interest in this Bill amongst people on the goldfields, and only last week in Kalgoorlie I was asked whether the measure would operate in that part of the State. Many of the homes in Kalgoorlie need rewiring, and it would be a hardship for many people to have to find the money for the work. When I was a member of the Kalgoorlie council, we were notified of many places that needed rewiring, and they had to be granted exemption. The Kalgoorlie Municipal Council does not undertake such work; it is done by the local electricians.

Hon. H. Hearn: Therefore you will support my amendment.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I take it that agreements would have to be entered into so that the money for the work could be recovered by way of rates. The particular houses that needed to be rewired, I assume, would be determined by the council, and the owner would be consulted. Then he would enter into a contract with a private electrician and the amount would be repayable by way of rates. The Bill represents a step in the right direction and will be welcomed by the people of the Eastern Goldfields.

HON. J. McI. THOMSON (South) [8.15]: I support the Bill in principle, but think it necessary that the owner should have the sole right to give instructions for a house to be rewired.

Hon. E. M. Davies: The Electricity Commission will do that.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: It should be left to the owner and not the occupier, who, under the measure, if he is instructed to carry out the rewiring, must submit the job to an electrician, as directed by the Electricity Commission. There are, in country districts, many local authorities who supply current to householders; and I do not think an owner should be compelled to accept the tender submitted by any particular electrician, but should have the right to choose from whoever is available to do the work. I hope that the Bill will be amended when in Committee.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [8.16]: If I remember rightly, we were told when the Bill was introduced, that it was to deal with one or two specific cases; but, from the debate so far, I think it will be taken to have general application throughout the State. From where are local authorities going to get the extra money? They will have to raise loans for a period of ten years or, alternatively, do the work on an overdraft; but the overdrafts are definitely limited, as are loans also. The loans are limited to so many times the annual rate collections.

Later in the measure, it is laid down that the repayments by householders are to be regarded as rates. Does that mean that if a local authority expends £5,000 on rewiring, and that sum is repayable at £500 per year that revenue, when the authority requires to borrow money and has already borrowed to the full limit, will be regarded as rates in order to increase the limit of borrowing? As the Bill uses the term "rates" I take it that the repayments will be regarded as rates.

No local authority desires to go deeply into debt; but if any person in the State can apply to the local authority to have property rewired, I think we will be getting away from the original intention of the measure which, as I understood the Chief Secretary to say when introducing the Bill, was to cater for a few special cases only. Until I hear him speak in reply, I do not know how I will vote.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [8.20]: This is what I call sloppy legislation. The right thing to do in order to achieve the object of this measure is to amend the Road Districts Act and the Municipal Corporations Act, so as to give local authorities power to do what is required. Under their present legislation, they have limited powers; and this is an attempt, by a backdoor method, to enable them to become moneylenders. I can imagine that before long, if this measure is agreed to, local authorities will become inundated by applications for the wiring of new houses, and will thus come into competition with those who ordinarily do that class of work; because once people know that the local authority can give an extended period of repayment, they will prefer to have the work done in that way. Wiring of premises is not cheap, and there are few houses today that could be rewired for £100. If this principle is accepted, we will have people wanting sewerage installed on the same system.

If we are to do anything to achieve the end sought by this measure, I think the Government should do what is required just as it does in the case of sewerage, under the Public Works Act. Few local authorities have men in their employment experienced in electricity. I do not object to helping people who require this class of work to be done on their premises, but do not think this is the best way to go about it. The measure proposes that the ordinary revenue of the local authority should be used for this purpose, or that it may float loans in order to finance the work.

Hon. A. L. Loton: They will have to.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: We know how local authorities are permitted to use their revenue under the Road Districts Act, and on what works their loan funds may be expended; but in this case it is to be a loan for ten years from ordinary revenue or, if necessary, from loan funds raised for the purpose. A little while ago, many local authorities had great difficulty in obtaining loan funds for their ordinary requirements. It is nice to make oneself popular by saying "yes" to everything put forward in the House.

The Chief Secretary: You will never do that.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I hope I will not, but that I will use whatever judgment has been given to me; and I would like to see other members do likewise. When there is a change of Government, someone says, "We will get the Government to do this for us." Today we have the unhappy habit of running to the Government for everything. I am glad that I have not another 50 years ahead of me, because I believe that by then the whole world will be in such a difficult position that it will be hard to extricate oneself from financial difficulties. While this legislation might suit metropolitan members, and it is natural that any member likes to placate his electors—

Hon. H. Hearn: This Bill was not introduced for the benefit of metropolitan members.

The Chief Secretary: I think it originated with your Government.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Where did it come from?

Hon. H. Hearn: From Northam.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: We know the Premier is a soft-hearted man, and will say "yes" to anything his electors request of him, but I do not think he is doing the wise thing in this instance. I know that the municipality of Northam once got a special Act to enable it to conduct a freezing works, which I think it still owns; I do not think this measure should have general application. It is not a healthy class of legislation. I oppose the Bill on the grounds that, although it may be seeking to do the right thing, it is not seeking to do it in the right way.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [8.25]: I have my doubts about the Bill. With the slow but sure acquisition by the State Electricity Commission of the

country power houses which supply current to domestic consumers, I can see a real danger arising in the future. Most country municipalities and road boards already have the authority literally to order the rewiring of a residence and it is then left to the occupier to see that the work is done. It has been said that this measure originated at Northam and that is one centre where the electricity supply has been taken over by the State Electricity Commission. Certain people may welcome being able to have their premises rewired and the cost charged to them as rates over a period but I think such cases would be isolated, taking the State as a whole. Is it not possible that the State Electricity Commission, with its myriads of workers and electricians, could condemn the wiring of a property and order this work to be done by its own electricians, whether the owner wanted it done or not?

Hon. E. M. Davies: Be reasonable.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I am being reasonable. I think members should examine the Bill with caution.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [8.27]: I rise in suprise at the amount of debate that this measure has engendered this evening. The genesis of the Bill lay in a desire to protect life and property; and, from what I know of local government, there is a section of the community which is not able to pay for the rewiring of its properties. Bad house-wiring is obviously a dangerous fire hazard; and to assist those who cannot afford to have their premises rewired, it is the purpose of the Bill to permit the local authority to have the work done and spread the repayment by the property-owner over a period of ten years. The repayment will not be charged as rates but, I repeat, will be spread over a ten-year period. In that way it will be possible for a house to be rewired and the fire hazard reduced, with the result that the owners or occupiers will feel safe.

I know of no local authority in the metropolitan area which employs an electrician. The Fremantle City Council, the second largest such body in the State, does not do so; and if called upon to perform this sort of work would call tenders from local electrical contractors. To protect the local authority, a caveat would then be taken out on the property to cover the expenditure, just as is done in the case of sewerage work under the Government scheme, or as was done when the Fremantle City Council changed over to the bacterial system of sewage disposal. In that case the payments were spread over a ten-year period and caveats were taken on the properties.

Members are reading into this measure something that does not exist there. I do not mind if the word "occupier" is struck out, because all he would do would be to tell the owner that the wiring was bad; and if the owner did not see fit to have the work done, he would only be placing his own property in danger of fire. I have no objection if the word "occupier" is struck out, because I do not think it means very much in the Bill; nor do I think it means what members have said it does. In the interests of those people who have not the finance to rewire their homes, I trust this Parliament will give the local authority an opportunity to do it for them if it thinks fit. I feel sure it will be done only in those cases where it is considered the people are indigent and are not able to meet the financial obligation. I think it is essential, however, that this should be done for the protection of life and property.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [8.31]: The points made by Mr. Davies are good ones, and the supporters of the Bill are quite entitled to pick out the good points it contains. Mr. Davies has pointed out that he has no objection to the word "occupier" being struck out. There are people who need their houses to be rewired and cannot afford it; there are not many of them, but there are some. Other members, however, are also entitled to point out the dangers and abuses that may occur by our giving a local authority power to use somebody else's money for the provision of an amenity to a house. I was glad to hear Mr. Davies say that he would not object to the word "occupier" being deleted; because, at the present time, any occupier whether he had anything to do with the house or not—he may have been a new tenant—could apply to a local authority to have the house rewired.

Hon. E. M. Davies: The S.E.C. would be the authority to say whether it was necessary.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It may not be necessary. A local authority could grant, on the application of a relative or a member of the board, a sum of money for that work to be done. The electricity supply today is going right throughout the country; it is going into villages and odd farms, and also into little country towns. It is in places like that that I envisage applications being made to local authorities for financial assistance to rewire small houses. I know one or two people that are not finding it easy to lay their hands on £70, £80 or £90 in order that they might have a house rewired, because it is necessary to pay cash.

Hon. G. Bennetts: There will be a limit.

Hon. L. CRAIG: There is no limit at all. The Bill says on the application of an occupier or an owner for financial assistance.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: It does not say "financial."

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member says it does not mean "financial." If it does not mean "financial" I do not know what

it means. However, I will say on the application by an owner or the occupier for assistance. It must be financial assistance, however. It cannot be anything else.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I will tell you directly.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The local authority, without any other evidence whatever, can grant that assistance and pay for the wiring to be done. There is no question about that. I do not think any occupier should have that authority; it should be with the owner of the property, because he has to pay it. The Bill says that the applicant shall pay. What happens if the applicant is a tenant and goes out the following week? Who pays in that case? It becomes a charge on the property, and it comes before mortgages or any other debts. It becomes a first charge on the property. Accordingly, it is a very serious charge for anybody but the owner to have imposed on the house. Let us strike out the word "occupier" and permit the owner to make application or at least give his approval, because he has the responsibility.

I think there is some merit in the Bill in that it helps those people who cannot afford the money to have the wiring done. There is also the danger of this being abused. We could have wholesale applications from people who, whether they could afford it or not, would make application. By means of pressure they could have large sums of money made available to them which might be urgently required on roads, and the local authority would have to wait up to 10 years to be recouped. It is all very well to say in the Bill that it may be provided from loan moneys.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I should say the committee would have the right to agree or disagree with the applications.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The local authority or road board would determine it. The hon. member has been a member of a road board and knows what pressure is brought to bear by relatives or others, in requiring money to be made available. It could be provided from loan funds; but there are a number of difficulties in this connection, because it has to be advertised, and details have to be given, and it also has to be approved by the Minister. When it is approved, the money may lie idle for months. The scheme is not without danger or without the possibility of being abused. The Bill is a good one inasmuch as it concerns the poor people. But it would be the same old story of people wanting things whether they could afford them or not, and thinking that somebody else would pay for them. We have dealt with Bill after Bill where some sort of amenity or assistance has been given at somebody else's expense. It will be the ratepayers who will lose if a Bill of this nature is used to any great extent.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Why not float a loan?

Hon. L. CRAIG: To float a loan would mean a great amount of detail and advertising. The object of the loan must be specified; and, in fact, it is a long rigmarole and a complicated business. A local authority may think that £300 is needed then suddenly decide that that might not be enough, and may then want to borrow another £2,000. Borrowing money is not an easy job.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Cannot we increase the State Electricity Commission loan?

Hon. L. CRAIG: It has nothing to do with that. The Electricity Commission is willing to provide power; but before power is provided, the houses must be wired. In the country, the Commission can order this to be done. I have power on my farm.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: How much does it cost per point?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am told that it costs £4 10s., but I cannot vouch for it.

Hon. H. Hearn: You are pretty right.

Hon. G. Bennetts: A lot depends on how you look.

Hon. L. CRAIG: Does the hon. member mean what one looks like? Girls can get away with that sometimes, but I do not think one's looks would enter into it.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. L. CRAIG: I paid £70 the other day for electricity to my house. It had been wired 20 years before. It is a big house in the country, and though it had been wired, the odd points and earthing, etc., cost £70. It is very expensive, and the scheme could involve local authorities in large sums of money. However, as in the past, we give way and say, "Let the large number provide for those who really need it." We must leave it to the common sense of the local authorities to see that it is not abused at somebody else's expense. I do not know one farmer who cannot afford to have his house wired. Only this evening my son reported to me that a vacant block with only fencing around it had brought £176 per acre.

Hon. H. Hearn: What has that to do with the Bill?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Only that it was bought by a man who I did not think had 2s.

Hon. H. L. Roche: How much did you offer?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I offered £175 an acre. Perhaps!

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member had better keep to the Bill.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am sorry, Mr. President; my colleagues are trying to draw me, and I am a simple soul. I support the second reading.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [8.42]: I support the measure. I know that the Bill says that a local authority may agree

to the granting of assistance, but if funds are short, the local authority will not grant assistance. If the measure becomes law, it will create a considerable amount of work for the officers of the local authorities, and they will frown a good bit on the book-keeping that will be entailed. These provisions are going to be used only in exceptional circumstances when it is absolutely necessary. There has been much play about the word "occupier." Mr. Davies said he did not object to its being struck out. I am glad of that, because that is the only objection I have to the Bill. I do not think there can be any objection to the owner's being entitled to say, "Yes" or "No" provided his is not a house in which the wiring is in a state of disrepair. The present Act states that the supplier, whether it be the S.E.C. or a private concessionaire, can condemn wiring.

Hon. L. Craig: It is not in this Bill.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: It does not matter. That point is covered and the local authority has that power at present. An electricity inspector can walk in, and condemn the wiring, and make his recommendations. If they are not complied with in a given time, the electricity supply is cut off. Then the owner can make up his mind whether he is going to have that house rewired or the faulty sections put in order. If the place is occupied by a tenant, and not the owner, the tenant is not going to stay there too long without a light.

Hon. H. Hearn: Where will he go? There are plenty of houses!

Hon. L. C. DIVER: They are becoming more plentiful. But I have yet to know of any landlord who would be so unreasonable as to ask a tenant to stay in premises without having electric light when it is available.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They had to use candles in the early days.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I do not want to sentence people to the use of candles nowadays if electricity is available. I think that when the Bill reaches the Committee stage the objectionable word can be withdrawn, and I trust that the measure will be passed so as to enable the few people who want assistance to receive it. I know a widow in Northam who would be very hard put to find the necessary cash to have her house rewired. The cost would be £40 or £50. But if this Bill becomes law, she will be able to avail herself of the terms set out therein. I hope that, for the sake of such people, this House will pass the measure, though in an amended form.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Suburban) [8.47]: The intention of the Bill is excellent, but I see some possible flaws in it. Generally speaking, the rewiring of a building is required by an insurance company, though sometimes the suppliers of electricity refuse to make current available when the wiring is bad. The Bill provides that a local authority may do the work. Irrespective of what Mr. Craig says, I would like to read Clause 5. Concerning the amendment of Clause 3 by striking out the word "occupier", quite obviously the occupier should not commit the owner; because this debt attaches to the land, and he would be forcing the owner to pay it. No doubt the owner would be forced in some other way, and I think it should be the owner who pays.

The owner will make application, and it is provided that the local authority shall consider it. It is necessary then for the local authority and the owner to enter into some agreement. I suggest that we should insert the word "financial", thus providing that the owner shall ask for financial assistance. Then an agreement will be entered into, and the owner and the local authority will decide what work is to be done and how. In a small town where the local authority was also the supplier of electricity, a certain arrangement would be entered into. In another town there might be only one electrician, and some other arrangement would be made. But they would be mutual arrangements; and I suggest that we should delete Clause 5 so that the effect of the Bill would be that if a local authority agreed to give a person assistance, that authority would be empowered to do so. Whether it obtained the money from a loan fund, or from ordinary revenue, would be a matter for the local authority. Obviously, if it had no money, none could be given to the person asking for it. The Bill merely authorises a local authority to help an individual to rewire a house, if it can do so.

HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [8.50]: I support the principle of the Bill; but after listening to the arguments submitted by other members, I see a weakness in it, and before I commit myself I would like the Minister to give me the Government's view on a point I have in mind.

I agree whole-heartedly that the words "or occupier" should be deleted, and that the expense should be incurred by the owner alone. But I would like to refer to the interpretation of "wiring" which means—

> installing and from time to time renewing wires, materials and apparatus in a dwelling-house for the supply of electric current for the use of the occupants.

What is the interpretation of the word "installing"? To my mind, it means putting in wiring for the first time. If that is so, the Bill provides that anybody building a new house or anybody desiring to rewire an old house can apply to a local authority

for assistance. That being the case, I consider there is a very great weakness in the Bill.

A house is constructed for two purposes —either for an owner-occupier to live in; or for one who desires it to be erected for somebody else to live in. Let us take the first case—that of an owner-occupier. Such a person usually has sufficient money to buy land and pay a deposit on the total purchase price. He then goes to some financial institution to obtain the rest of the money by way of a mortgage. This Bill would allow him to make a separate approach to a local authority for an amount which would be in the vicinity of £80. That figure is arrived at by accepting £4 as the cost of a point and 20 points being required. That is a fair number of points for the average metropolitan and country house.

We know that if one buys a house, or has one constructed by a builder, one pays for the electrical installation in the total cost. I think, therefore, that it would be very undesirable to have two separate contracts in connection with wiring. Mr. Craig pointed out that the caveat or lien in connection with wiring would be the first call on the premises as a security. I do not know about that. I am inclined to think the first mortgage—

Hon. L. Craig: It is regarded as rates.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes; that would give it a lien. However, I would like to hear the Minister on this point. I think it would be much better if the Bill dealt with rewiring only, and not with initial installation as well.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: The average house would not contain any more than 14 points.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes, I agree with that. If there were five rooms, and allowing two points to each, the cost at the rate of £4 per point, would be £40. What value is there in that to a man who is in a position to put down the necessary purchase money by way of a deposit on a house that will cost him £2,000 or over? What advantage is there in his making a separate contract with a local authority for £40?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It would be of great assistance to the self-help builder, the chap who has not got the finance.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: It might be.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It would be.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Even so, it would mean a separate contract. Let us have a look at the initial outlay. As Mr. Thomson pointed out, the cost in respect of a five-room house, with two points in each room, would be £40. The period of time for repaying the amount would be 10 years. That would be £4 a year, or approximately 1s. 6d. per week. If the house is good enough, I venture to suggest that the £40 could be easily be included in the total purchase price, and there would be only one mortgage involved. From the point of view of good orderly housekeeping, I consider that a man might well deal with one financial institution for the whole lot. I would like to hear the Minister on the matter, and particularly his interpretation of the word "installing." If assistance is to be given with respect to installation, then I think that word should be removed. For the time being I support the second reading.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [8.57]: I oppose the Bill. It is entirely unfair to foist this measure on to local authorities, for that is what it amounts to. The Minister laughs; but if some local governing authorities had to find the money to finance the installation of wiring over a 10-year period, they would be very hard put to do so, even if it were done by loan. Why should local authorities be forced into this work when they have other things on their hands such as the maintenance of roads and similar amenities which have to be provided?

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: They are not being forced into it.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It is all very well to say that; but pressure will be brought to bear on them to provide this assistance. It will be done for one person, and then the whole business will catapult and it will have to be done for others who apply for help. The local authorities should not have this foisted upon them.

We have an authority in charge of electricity supply, in the State Electricity Commission, which was established by legislation introduced by a Labour Government. If finance is required for the purpose set out in the Bill, why not let the commission supply it? Is it not the commission's job rather than that of a local governing authority? The commission will eventually be the controlling authority in electricity matters in this State. There is no reason why it should not arrange the financial set-up for this job too. Legislation could be introduced for this purpose. The S.E.C. has much more chance of finding loan moneys than has a local authority.

Hon. L. C. Diver: It would be outside its jurisdicition.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Not if there were legislation for it. The S.E.C. is the controlling body in Western Australia as far as electricity is concerned, and it will eventually take over all electrical undertakings in the State. It has power to do so at any time, so why not let it raise this money and not foist the obligation on men who are doing a good job in an honorary capacity? This will be the last straw to break the camel's back so far as they are concerned. I am not asking the members of local authorities to take this problem on their shoulders in addition to those they already have.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: (Hon. G. Fraser—West—in reply) [9.2]: I am amazed at the debate on the Bill. Mr. Baxter talked about foisting something on road board members. Strangley enough, the request for the measure came from a road board in his area. This is not something the Government is trying to put over the people, but something which is being done at the request of a local authority. During the debate we have been around the world.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Apply it to Northam only, and I shall support it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot understand the hon. member.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You are not the only one, either.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am quite satisfied about that. Here we give a local authority the power to do something if it wants to do it. The word "may" means "may" and not "shall." The hon. member asks why we give this power to a local authority, and then he goes on to say that the Government should do it. I can imagine what would have happened if we had brought down a Bill allowing the Government to do this. Members would have said, "What, socialising the State!"

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: I believe that is what it does now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Cases have occurred where local authorities would have liked to assist, but they had not the power. They made a request to the Government for the power to be given to them. We introduced this small Bill, and all we say is that, if a person requires assistance in this respect, he can apply to the local authority which may, after consideration, decide to grant a loan so that the job may be done. There is no compulsion in any shape or form. Mr. Griffith put up an Aunt Sally in connection with installing, and then knocked it over himself.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I did not.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: All he had in mind was the building of a new house.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The Minister obviously did not listen.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I did.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Then you did not understand.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Very often I do not understand because members are so hard to understand. The hon. member asked me for an interpretation of "installing." Well, the word means what it says—installing. Then he went on about a new house. There are many old places where there has been no electricity, and then electricity has come along, and the owners have applied for it to be installed. The hon. member made out a whole case about building a new house, and the owner making arrangements for finance. This Bill covers houses that have been built for years, and naturally it would be a case of installing there. In other places, where electricity had been available for some time, applications could be made for rewiring. So the measure covers both the initial installation and rewiring. As Mr. Lavery interjected, very often an extra £40 to the man who is building is a serious concern.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Surely it is not an Aunt Sally to ask you what you think, is it?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No. I would not have minded had the hon. member stopped at that, but he went on to put up an Aunt Sally and then endeavoured to knock it over.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Could not a place at Northam be condemned—

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know, because I do not know what obtains there. I assume the S.E.C. is in charge at Northam, so that the Northam Council would not have power to do it. The inspectors of the electricity undertaking would have the power of condemnation or rewiring. Much exception has been taken to the word "occupier." My reaction on first looking into the Bill was similar to that of Mr. Davies and others, but I think there is a definite reason for it. There are many people who do not own a place, but have a long-term lease of it. They could not be classed as owners.

Hon. H. Hearn: Should they be allowed to commit the owner to expense?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They would not commit the owner.

Hon. H. Hearn: It would depend on the terms of the lease.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A local authroity would not make an agreement with an owner on the word of an occupier. In any case, the owner would not sign the agreement. The local authority could sign an agreement with the occupier, and it would do so if satisfied that the circumstances warranted such action.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: From whom would it recover?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: From the person who signed the agreement, the same as a moneylender would recover from the hon. member if he went to one and made an agreement about borrowing money. The agreement would be made with the person who wanted the job done, whether he was the owner or the occupier. All applications would be considered by the local authority. I am surprised at the lack of confidence in the capacity of the local authorities displayed by members.

Hon. H. Hearn: We had confidence in them in the previous Bill.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is a reversal of form on this occasion.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: There is no lack of confidence at all.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There must be, because it is the local authority which will decide whether it shall grant a loan.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Do you think the local authority would go to the owner?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, if it was not satisfied with conditions as far as the occupier was oncerned.

Hon. L. Craig: They could take his word under this.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Members of local authorities are not fools. No local authority would lend money to anybody without good reason.

Hon. L. Craig: But the Bill gives it authority to take the word of the occupier.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. I have sufficient confidence in local authorities to know that they will investigate the position. They are given power to exercise their judgment.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: How many local authorities asked for this?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I know there was a request from Northam, but I am not the sponsor of the Bill, and I do not know what other requests were made.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: One local authority is not sufficient.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I did not say there was only one, but that applications were received. They were made to the responsible Minister—the head Minister of the State; the Premier—and he considered it advisable to introduce the Bill. Whether there were more or not, I could not say.

Point of Order.

Hon. C. H. Henning: Section 160 (8) of the Road Districts Act states—

> A board may, subject to this Act—subject to the Electricity Act, 1945, acquire by purchase or otherwise, works as defined in that Act, and sell or supply or contract with any other person to sell and supply electricity for any lawful purpose to any person or local authority or to His Majesty's Government of the State or Commonwealth, or to any department or agency thereof, and provide the material for and construct and maintain all works necessary for reticulation, and supply all necessary fittings and appliances to consumers, and if the board thinks fit, on a system of deferred payment (if so approved by a majority of the ratepayers on the question being submitted to them in the prescribed manner), and exercise for any of these purposes any power set out in the said Act.

I would like to know whether the Bill is consistent or inconsistent with this section of the Road Districts Act.

The Chief Secretary: This is rather a rough one to rock in at this moment. I do not intend to take the Bill into Committee tonight. Once it passes the second reading, I shall adjourn the Committee stage until tomorrow, when I shall have the point investigated. Offhand—do not take this as a ruling—I cannot see that anything the hon. member has read would conflict with the Bill or render it inoperative. A further reason why I think the Bill is not in conflict with the Road Districts Act is that it was drafted by the Crown Law Department. I shall have the point checked by the Crown Law Department and let the hon. member know the answer when the measure is in Committee.

Debate Resumed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have nothing to add to what I have already said.

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

Ayes	18
Noes	5
Majority for	13

Ayes.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker	Hon. H. Hearn
Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. C. H. Henning
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. J. McI. Thomson
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. C. H. Simpson
	(Teller.)

Noes.

Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. N. E. Baxter
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	*(Teller.)*

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th November.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [9.18]: I hope this measure will receive the same blessing as the Bill with which we have just been dealing.

Hon. L. Craig: Is it properly wired?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Anything to do with the health of the community, or any measure which will help to improve the health of the people, should receive our first consideration. I can remember when I had my first extraction. It was many years ago, on the goldfields. I went to Dr. Irwin, who was the dentist in those early days, and had my teeth taken out without an anaesthetic.

Hon. H. Hearn: That was daylight robbery.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: It was daylight murder for me. Nowadays, we have painless extractions, and I think we have reached the stage where a person can go into a dental surgery and have no worries about having teeth extracted. I know of a young lady in Kalgoorlie who, a few years ago, attended one of the dentists to have teeth extracted. Owing to the careless attention she received from the nursing staff, an abscess formed on her face and, as a result, she was disfigured for life. This measure now before us will enable dental nurses to be properly trained.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: These girls have nothing to do with dentistry, unless they are qualified dentists, and you know it.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: But they must be trained efficiently so that they can take care of patients after extractions and prepare patients before an operation.

Hon. H. Hearn: And know all about Arbitration Court awards!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The instruments used have to be properly sterilised, and these girls must be trained in all phases of dental work. If members would visit the Dental Hospital, they would be surprised to see all the equipment that is used, and the service and attention given to patients who attend that hospital.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Would you say that dental nurses are the only people who can give correct attention?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I say that these girls should be trained for that purpose.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: But they are not the only people.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No. There are some very efficient girls in dental surgeries now, and many of them may appreciate the fact that they will be able to obtain some assistance from the Dental Hospital, if they are given an opportunity to attend and undertake a course.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: The efficient ones would be trained at the hospital.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Yes. When young dentists take up practices, they rely a good deal on their dental nurses; and I am sure that if they were able to obtain properly trained nurses, they would be glad of their services. The first few months in a practice are the most difficult; and if a young dentist does a good job at the beginning, and has a good nurse to assist him, he can work up a good practice, and people will go to his surgery for treatment. I know that a couple of sisters from the hospital went to the Eastern States, and they were regarded over there as being most efficient.

I am sure there are a number of dentists in this State who do not know what goes on at the Dental Hospital; and it would do members good, too, to see the set-up there. They have a small surgery for children, and every attention is given to them. This measure, if passed, will ensure that dental nurses receive proper training, and they will be able to take care of all patients. General nurses, too, if they took a course at the Dental Hospital, would become more efficient and would know more about dental treatment than they do now. Probably a course of 12 months' training would assist them in their general nursing work.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: If a dental nurse had been working for five years in a surgery and decided to take a 12 months' course, what pay would you expect her to receive?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I think she should be paid at least the basic rate.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: There is nothing in the Bill about that.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: You would have to alter the Act.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: If we want our girls to become efficient, we must pay them for that efficiency. Why should Western Australia lag behind the other States of the Commonwealth or any other part of the world? Our soldiers proved themselves the equal of any soldiers in the world, and our nurses who have been abroad have always been recognised as possessing outstanding qualifications. We should endeavour to maintain that standard and keep the name of Australia well to the fore. I hope that Western Australia will lead in the training of dental nurses. At the Dental Hospital there is an after-treatment room, and in that room there are three beds. Sisters are in attendance to take care of patients after operations because the after-care is most important, as Dr. Hislop will agree.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Tell us what the beds are for.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: After people have received an anaesthetic and been operated upon, they have to be treated.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Who gives the anaesthetic? The nurses?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: No, that would be done by the surgeons there.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: No, they are not permitted to do that.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: In any case, the after-treatment room is a most important part of the hospital, and the sisters in attendance have been trained for this work. They know how important it is because it is at that stage that a patient's life might be lost, as Dr. Hislop would agree.

Hon. H. L. Roche: He never loses a patient!

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Any person who has studied first aid knows that if a person has received a shock the after-care is most important. I understand, too, that there are not many dentists in

this city who are qualified in the treatment of gums. That is a most important aspect of dental surgery.

Hon. A. L. Loton: That has nothing to do with the Bill.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: If these nurses could receive some training in that direction, it would be of assistance. They are there to help the dentist and to gain knowledge. I do not intend to labour this question, because Dr. Hislop knows more about it and is more qualified to speak on this subject than I am. However, I have had some years' experience of first aid, and I know how important it is to obtain qualified assistants in most instances. The more one learns, the more one realises how little one knows about the treatment of the sick; and if we can give these girls a good training in dental nursing, it will be a step in the right direction. I support the measure.

On motion by Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

In Committee.

Resumed from the 3rd November. Hon. C. H. Simpson in the Chair; Hon. H. S. W. Parker in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Section 183 amended (partly considered):

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Section 192 amended:

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

> That all words after the word "by" in line 2 be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—
>
> (a) Deleting all words after the word "prohibited" in line two down to and including the word "candidate" in line eight and insert in lieu the following:—
>
> "namely—
>
> (1) Distributing any handbill, pamphlet, card, or other electoral matter.
>
> (b) Re-numbering subsection (4) to read subsection (2).

Members will note that I have altered the amendment appearing on the notice paper by omitting the words "electoral advertisement" in subparagraph (i) of paragraph (a) of the amendment, and also adding subparagraph (ii). My reason for doing this is that since giving notice of my intention to move the amendment as appearing on the notice paper, I have realised that the words could be interpreted as meaning that no newspaper publishing any electoral advertisement could be distributed on election day.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I have no objection to the amendment; but I point out that, during the second reading, objection was raised to the fact that if the distance from a polling booth were extended to one mile for the purposes of canvassing, no candidate could have committee rooms within that distance, and also that it would be an offence to canvass for votes within one mile of the booth. This amendment will again restrict the distance to only 50 yards. As far as I can see, the amendment will prohibit the distribution of all printed electioneering matter on election day.

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

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th November.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [9.43]: During the second reading, the Chief Secretary referred to the proverbial dripping of water on a stone; but we must also remember that the late unlamented Joseph Goebbels believed that if one said a thing loudly enough and often enough people would believe it. During the three sessions that I have been a member of this House, Bills similar to this one have been introduced, but to date I do not think the legislation has aroused any great enthusiasm among the people as a whole.

The first thing we should consider in a measure such as this is what are the functions of this House? I do not mean that we should delve into every nook and corner of our Constitution, but only into the broad outlines of its function. During my short period as a member, I have seen that the first and foremost task is the examination of Bills. It appears to me that this is necessary because the party spirit becomes more and more dominant in politics in this State as elsewhere in the country. Then there is the initiation of Bills by the Government or private members. Again there is full and free discussion on any matter that may come forward from individual members. There were at least two examples of that during the present session.

The first amendment proposed by the Bill is for the reduction of the age from 30 to 21. I suggest, and I think everybody else agrees, that at 21 a man is in his physical prime; but has he the required practical experience of life? If a doctor were to qualify at 21 years of age, how many members of this Chamber would permit him to perform a serious operation upon them? I am certain the vast majority, if not all, would go to a far more experienced practitioner. The

same would apply to people seeking judicial advice. There are one or two advocates and presidents of powerful unions under the age of 30, but they are in the great minority. If there are more, I would like to know. Do any unions have advocates under 30? There are odd ones, perhaps; but we have not heard of many.

Attention was drawn by Mr. Heenan to the fact that Pitt was Prime Minister of England at 21. That is not correct; he became a member of Parliament at 21, and he was Prime Minister at 24. Finance was not one of his strong suits. He may have been eloquent, and a loyal member; but when he died, an Appropriation Bill was passed to pay £40,000 worth of debts contracted by him. That is not a good example of a man fully experienced in life at 21, at which age Pitt entered politics, and remained therein for the whole of his active life.

At 21 a person may have plenty of theory, particularly boys who have carried on their education. But theory is only one of the qualifications required. We require practical experience, and we get that only in the world. The world has been termed the university of hard knocks. Any man who is a candidate for this House should have practical experience of life as well as the theory received during his education. In a House of review, such as this, the best results are obtained when it contains members acquainted with all phases of life; those experienced in trade, in commerce, in agriculture, in judiciary, medicine, trade unions, and the more important phases of life of the community. It is not easy to get members experienced in all phases. In order to get a bi-cameral system working efficiently there should be people experienced in the various phases of life.

It has been said that this in a non-party House, but admittedly all members belong to one party or the other. Certainly the party spirit is definitely inseparable from any member here. As a man grows older, he is not so confirmed or bigoted in the party spirit as a younger man. I am certain that this trait would not be found in a man of 21 years of age, because he would not have the experience of an older man and would lack his tolerance.

The next provision is to liberalise the franchise. From what has been said, one would conclude that Section 15 has not been amended since 1899, when the Act was first brought in. On referring to the Act, I found quite a number of amendments. The original Act provided that a person had to be registered as a voter for six months before he was entitled to exercise the right to vote. Where the financial requirement is now £50 sterling, in those days it was £100 sterling. Where we have £17 now, it was £25 then. There are also amendments in the proviso.

Hon. A. R. Jones: But the monetary values are loaded today.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: With property franchise this would be. It would not be possible to get anything more liberal than this. Regarding the clause relating to householders, it has been said that Subsections (5) and (6) of Section 15 already make that provision. If a wife desires to be registered and pays rates, subject to the husband's concurrence, she is entitled to be registered as a voter.

Another provision concerns plural voting. The effect of the provision is that the vote of the freeholder is to be reduced, and that of the householder increased. There seems to be some political implication.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Where is that indicated?

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I am certain there is. The Chief Secretary gave no reason why plural voting should be abolished.

Hon. E. M. Davies: It was abolished in England over 60 years ago.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I believe that ownership of land carries some responsibility, and in 99 cases out of 100 that is realised by a landowner. The way in which a Government functions can affect a landowner greatly. Therefore, no matter in what district or electoral province a person has property, that person should be entitled to vote there. If a person has land in all ten provinces, I can see no harm in his having ten votes. If anyone can give good and valid reason why this should not be the case, I am prepared to listen, and accept it if sound. So far I have heard no good reason.

We have been told that this Bill seeks to give a little liberalisation. If it is agreed to, then next year we will have a little more liberalisation; and the water will be dripping on the stone year after year and the stone will get smaller, so that eventually, instead of this House being of use, and a House of review, it will become a rubber stamp, as the Senate is alleged to be. That would be the worst thing that could befall this State. The Chief Secretary has asked this Chamber to give the Bill the consideration it deserves; I am giving it what consideration it deserves by opposing it.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [9.57]: I oppose the Bill as I have opposed similar ones in the past. Over the years, many public statements of a most derogatory nature have been made about this and similar Chambers, particularly by members of the Labour Party. This attitude does not conform to the action of that party. By some members in another place, at election time, we have been accused of hypocritically deceiving

the public. They promised certain things that were not carried out. I wish to bring to the notice of this Chamber acts that are probably far more deserving of censure than anything done in this State by members. I refer to the oft-repeated promise and desire of the Labour Party to dissolve Upper Houses, particularly the Senate. Yet when the Labour Party had the opportunity of dissolving the Senate there was a peculiar silence on its part. We are told that the Upper House was abolished in Queensland. Ever since the day that came about, the Queensland people have regretted it. I believe that if they had the power to alter the situation they would do so.

Hon. E. M. Davies: You do not hear it mentioned in Queensland.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I have lived in Queensland, and that is not a fact at all. Queensland today has what amounts literally to a second House. The Brisbane City Council has extended its boundaries to the largest in the world. It has an electoral franchise. The Council is composed almost entirely of Labour supporters who receive salaries in excess of those paid to members of this Chamber. Their authority literally constitutes a second House. There is no doubt about that; they have literally a second chamber in another guise.

We have on the one hand an oft-expressed wish to improve the Upper House by widening the franchise and doing all sorts of things, implying that this House is of some value. On the other hand, we find this very difficult to reconcile with the statement that there is a desire to abolish this House. I have little doubt, as have other members, what would happen to any Bill designed to abolish this House were it in the power of members advocating it to introduce such a measure. I believe that this is now no longer an avowed objective of the Labour Party.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: You have some funny beliefs.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: They are not funny, but are fairly well known. If it should so happen that they are misconceptions, all I can say is that they are widley held misconceptions and are held even by members of the party to which Mr. Lavery belongs. Another charge often made is that this House is one of frustration and that its sole purpose is to defeat legislation. That is a most unfair charge to make because it can be proven by figures that cannot be denied that over the years when the Labour Party was in power—for some 16 years straight off and then, after a short break, for a further four or five years—the Government of the day was able to get its legislation passed through this House in the usual smooth way. That legislation was achieved over all those years without disruption of any kind. To say that this House is one of frustration is completely wrong and misleading—far more misleading than the statements that have been attributed to members on this side of the House.

Hon. E. M. Davies: What has that to do with giving the wives of freeholders and householders a vote?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I have a few figures that I should like to quote. I could have obtained more, but figures are often wearying. These figures provide an answer to the charge so often made that members of this House are elected by a very small minority of the people, that we do not have a broad franchise, and similar poppycock. The inference to be drawn from that criticism is that another place enjoys all the love and loyalty of the people because of the large percentages that vote at elections. These figures were obtained from the Electoral Department and relate to elections immediately prior to the introduction of compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting for the lower House, the years being 1927 for the Assembly and 1928 for the Council.

I have selected three electoral provinces that were somewhat parallel in actual enrolments. In 1927 when there was an Assembly election, the electorate of Bunbury had 3,694 electors and 57.6 per cent. voted. A parallel figure was for Central Province which in 1928 had 3,856 electors and a percentage of 64.19 voters. Then I selected the very small electorate of Coolgardie with 949 electors, 72.31 per cent. of whom voted. In the Council election for North Province, there were 638 electors, and 75 per cent., voted.

Taking a larger electorate, Avon had 5,235 electors, and 69.13 per cent. voted, while South Province had 5,362 electors and 71 per cent. voted. Some members might argue that those figures are not important, but I contend that while in those times members were elected on those percentages to enrolment, today the people get no better representation by their 80 or 90 per cent. polls under compulsory voting, and we in this House may have equally good representation under the comparatively low percentages recorded at Council elections.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: The main part of the Bill gives the wives of freeholders and householders a vote.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The figures I have quoted are segregated as between male and female voters and show that the percentage of non-voters is greater amongst females than amongst males. Therefore I cannot see any advantage whatever in granting to the wives of registered electors the franchise because the effect would be to show the percentage of voters for the Council at a far

greater disadvantage due to the lack of interest by the womenfolk. I have not received one request by womenfolk for the vote and I do not believe that the effect of granting the vote would have any influence on the quality of the members elected or in arousing greater interest amongst the people, seeing that the woman's would be a reflection of the husband's vote. Until the day comes when a greater number of the people actually enrolled for the Council are prepared to go to the poll and vote on account of being discontented or having sufficient feeling to wish to vote, I am not prepared to agree to any extension of the franchise. When a greater percentage of the enrolled electors are prepared to go to the poll and vote—

Hon. E. M. Davies: That will be doomsday.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: If that is so, we can continue to believe that we are giving satisfaction to the electors who are enrolled. We know that if people qualified to vote so desired, treble the number could be put on the roll. If they desired different representation in the House or were in any way dissatisfied with their present representation, treble the number could be put on the roll by the mere act of applying for enrolment. What more do we want than that? What wider scope do we want than is provided in North-East Province where a habitation which is a little more than a bush hut with a tin roof, has been valued at the required amount to entitle the occupant to be enrolled. If any member desires any wider franchise than that, he must be generous-hearted or upset about the prospects in his electorate.

Until the time comes when we have a greater enrolment and a greater voting amongst those already enrolled, I am not prepared to approve of any widening of the franchise.

Those are the only points I desired to mention. I shall oppose the second reading and trust other members will do likewise. I see no virtue whatever in the Bill, and I think the House has much to be proud of in the work it has done and that with a continuance of the same franchise. we shall have little to be ashamed of in future.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [10.11]: I am amazed that members do not support a Bill to give their wives a vote. In my opinion, the measure does not go far enough. If I had my way, I would provide for compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting for this House, and then members would not be put to the trouble of racing around to get electors on the roll and chasing them up on election day to go to the poll.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You would force them to vote.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: They are ready enough to approach members when they have complaints to make, but many of them do not bother about getting on the roll. If we adopted compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting, every qualified person would have a proper say in the conduct of the affairs of the State. Every wife is entitled to be on the roll and to exercise the vote, just as her husband does.

Hon. L. Craig: The Bill has wider scope than that.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Under it every householder, freeholder and leaseholder would have a vote.

Hon. L. Craig: Not every leaseholder.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: Anyhow, every freeholder and householder. The wife has an arduous part to fill in the family life and is entitled to the same consideration as her husband enjoys. He goes out to earn the money necessary to keep the home going, but the woman does three-fourths of the work in the home.

Hon. L. Craig: You must have a very good wife.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I have, and a family of seven, and I am proud to say that even with the somewhat limited amount of money that was available, we were able to give the children the best of education and bring them up as good citizens. If we can enable our womenfolk to play their proper part in the life of the community and record their votes for this House, we shall be doing something to benefit the State. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.14 p.m.