The MINISTER FOR HOUSING: —all over Western Australia with the exception of the Goldfields. For the benefit of members I will read a table to show how much this has meant to the Goldfields. It reads—

	Rate prior to 1-5-51.	Rate from 1-5-51.	Increase.	Percentage increase.
	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	%
"M" ...	36 6	43 9	7 3	19·86
"A"	53 5	66 4	12 11	24·18
"B"	75 5	91 5	16 0	21·22
"C"	106 5	127 8	21 3	20s.
"I"	153 0	181 3	28 3	18·46
"Z"	199 7	234 11	35 4	17·62

In addition, although timber is normally an "A" class charge, it was put into "Miscellaneous." Further allowances are the 20 per cent. reduction on crude cyanide and special rates for gold flotation reagents. Members also know that the Government has appointed a committee to inquire into the possibility of a flat rate being charged throughout the State for water supplies. In the main, I would say that complaints have come largely from the 'fields, and exactly what the determination of the committee will be I cannot say at the moment. However, I think it was largely set up as a result of the many complaints that came from people on the Goldfields and Norseman, because they had to pay a much higher price for water than people in the metropolitan area.

One cannot get away from the fact that it is not possible to grant much relief to the goldmining industry until we get a rise in the price of gold. While I agree with the sentiments expressed by both the member for Boulder and the member for Merredin-Yilgarn, the hard, cold fact remains that it is much too big a job for the State. We can and have assisted in small items, such as water, rail freights and in other ways, as well as lending a large sum of money, about £100,000, to the firewood company, but it is not possible to do any more. If we are to have any great success, there must be an increase in the price of gold.

All we can do is to keep putting pressure on the Commonwealth Government who, in turn, will have to keep putting pressure on the International Monetary Conference with a view to getting an increased price for our gold. That would make it possible for our mines to do all they want to do in the way of development, etc. and I hope the day is not far away when we will be able to work many of the mines that have been forced to close down during the post-war period of inflated prices. Therefore, I consider that nothing constructive could emerge from the holding of a Select Committee as suggested by the hon. member, but it behoves us as a Government to exert all the pressure we can on the authorities in America to ensure that we will obtain an increased price for our gold.

On motion by Mr. Butcher, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 2.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 10.41 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 23rd October, 1952.

CONTENTS.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

LICENSING ACT.

As to Clubs Outside Metropolitan Area.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND (for Hon. G. Bennetts) asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) How many club licenses are in force under the Licensing Act outside the metropolitan area?

(2) Where are these clubs situated?

(3) What is the population of the particular towns concerned?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Sixty-five.

(2) The number of licensed clubs in each town is as follows:—

Albany, 3; Mt. Barker, 2; Kellerberrin, 1; Meckering, 1; Merredin, 2; Beverley, 1; Corrigin, 1; Pingelly, 1; Bunbury, 4; Carnarvon, 1; Geraldton, 4; Boulder, 3; Kalgoorlie, 7; Gnowangerup, 1; Katanning, 1; Balcatta, 1; Moora, 1; Harvey, 2; Bridgetown, 3; Deanmill, 1; Donnelly River, 1; Manjimup, 1; Nyamup, 1; Pemberton, 1; Quinninup, 1; Shannon River, 1; Northam, 4; Busselton, 2; Margaret River, 1; Kalamunda, 1; Goomalling, 1; Toodyay, 1; Wundowie, 1; Wagin, 1; Narrogin, 2; Bullfinch, 1; Bruce Rock, 1; Narembeen, 1; Quairading, 1. Total, 65.

(3) Definite particulars regarding the population of these towns cannot be obtained at short notice. If the hon. member will call at my office I will provide him with a list showing the populations of the local authorities concerned.

RAILWAYS.

(a) As to Goldfields Freights and Fares.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND (for Hon. G. Bennetts) asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is it the intention of the Railway Department to increase rail freights and fares on the Goldfields line?

(2) If so—

(a) what will be the amount of the increase;

(b) when is it likely to take effect?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The matter of increases in railway freights and fares is one for Government determination. There is no intention to make any increases at present.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(b) As to Coogee-Kwinana Line Gauge.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Minister for Railways:

In view of the enormous amount of money to be spent by the Government, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Coy., the Broken Hill Pty. Ltd., and other financial interests, and future harbour development for the port of Fremantle, with Fremantle ultimately as the terminus of the standard railway gauge—

(1) Has the Government given full consideration to making all the necessary provisions for the future extension of the standard railway gauge along the proposed route of the Coogee-Kwinana railway?

(2) Will the Government give consideration to Clause 5 of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Standardisation of Railway Gauge from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle, which reads:—

> That a complete investigation be made of the territory in the vicinity of Southern Cross, to the Corrigin district, and thence westerly in the direction of a developmental railway route recommended by a former Engineer-in-Chief (Mr. Stileman), or along any other route found suitable, to Fremantle, etc.

(3) Will the Government consider appointing an independent railway construction engineer to report on this route, and the future linking up with Fremantle?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The possibility of conversion to standard gauge is considered in all proposals for railway development and no exception will be made in the case of this proposed railway.

(2) and (3) This question was referred by the previous Government to the Railway Advisory Board which was the appropriate body to deal with such matters. Although standardisation does not appear likely in the immediate future, full consideration of all relative factors will be given before any final decisions are made.

BILLS (4)—THIRD READING.

1, Child Welfare Act Amendment.
Returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

2, Pharmacy and Poisons Act Amendment.

3, Health Act Amendment (No. 1).

4, Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Amendment (Continuance).

Passed.

BILL—FREMANTLE ELECTRICITY UNDERTAKING (PURCHASE MONEYS) AGREEMENTS.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. H. S. W. Parker in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after Clause 7 had been agreed to.

Clause 8—Section 276 amended:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move an amendment—

> That in line 3 of paragraph (a) of proposed new Subsection (2) of Section 276 the words "is entitled to payment of" be struck out and the words "shall be paid" inserted in lieu.

Members will recall the discussion of last evening. At the request of Dr. Hislop I have moved this amendment.

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

Clause 9—Section 322 re-enacted:

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I hope the Committee will not agree to this clause, the purpose of which is to transfer the liability for the payment of the cost incurred by local authorities—it is a ratio of one-third by the local authority and two-thirds by the Government—to the patient. As I said during the debate on the second reading, the cost of treatment in the Infectious Diseases Hospital is now beyond the financial capacity of the average individual to pay.

When, under the provisions of the Act, a person is ordered to that hospital by a medical practitioner, it is for the purpose of protecting the public and preventing a possible epidemic of whatever the disease may be from which the patient is suffering. The cost of that hospitalisation should therefore be a charge on the Public Health Department. The cost of treatment in the Infectious Diseases Hospital was not exorbitant in days gone by but, the incidence of diphtheria having been reduced to its present low level, the cost per bed per day in this hospital has risen proportionately to the present figure of 70s. It is for those reasons that I hope the Committee will not agree to the clause.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not think one can differentiate greatly between a disease that is infectious and one that is not. If the argument put forward by the hon. member were accepted, it would have to be applied to all diseases. I do not think the cost per day of treatment in the Infectious Diseases Hospital is much greater than in any other hospital.

Members: Oh yes, it is.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Some hospitals charge as much as 21 guineas a week for a bed.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: So do some of your own.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Members should realise that some people in the State could well afford to pay for hospital accommodation but if this provision is not re-enacted they will not have to pay.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Few could afford to pay £3 10s. per day.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There are some that could afford it.

Hon. A. L. Loton: We must legislate for the majority.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The money to run these hospitals, if the patients do not pay, can come only from taxation or from borrowings on the taxpayers' account. If this provision is not agreed to, it will not be possible to claim payment from anyone. I do not know of two cases where a hospital in this State has sued a patient who could not afford to pay. We may depend on liberal treatment by the Government in this matter because it has always had to foot the bill for patients who could not afford to pay for hospital treatment, and it will continue to do so. By putting this provision back into the Act, it might mean, in the minds of members of this Chamber, that we will be making a charge on everybody. I do not know of one case, in the past history of hospital management, where a charge has been made respecting a patient who cannot afford to pay. In the old days we looked to the local authority to meet the cost.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Why was it taken out before?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It was taken out because the local authorities were paying it. That was in 1950. Since then we have obtained some financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government which affords some relief.

Hon. E. M. Davies: It is only 8s. 3d. a day for a patient in an infectious diseases hospital.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: A person would be very unwise not to ensure against sickness these days because of the small contributions that have to be made, and I know that my insurance policy covers me for more than 8s. 3d. a day.

Hon. E. M. Davies: A person contributing to a health scheme obtains 4s. from the Commonwealth Government and 9s. from the benefit society.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If we want to socialise hospitalisation let us do so, but I know that we take away from the pockets of the people the money that is necessary to carry out such socialisation.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: People cannot afford to pay £3 10s. a day.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If members do not wish to have this provision put back, they cannot accept my

challenge that I do not know of one hospital, particularly a Government hospital, that has made a patient pay when he could not afford to do so.

Hon. E. M. Davies: That is not correct.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I will accept the hon. member's challenge and on Tuesday I will produce the facts for him. However, I do not mind if the hon. member desires the general community to pay for socialised hospitalisation if he considers that that is what his electors desire.

Hon. E. M. Davies: I do not say it is socialised hospitalisation.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member is trying to start it on its way. What is the difference? I will tell the House the difference between an infectious case and one that is not. A patient suffering from an infectious disease is forced to go to a hospital for treatment, but how many patients today suffering from ordinary illnesses are nursed in their own homes?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They are not infectious cases.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I know that and that is why I say that an infectious case has to go to the hospital for treatment. However, how many people today are nursed in their own homes?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: A very small percentage.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I agree with the hon. member, and so they go to hospital for treatment. That is why we are paying up to £8,000 for the accommodation of patients in some hospitals. In a short while we will probably be asked to expand the accommodation available at the Infectious Diseases Hospital. It is true that science has materially assisted us and it has been of great benefit in preventing the spread of infectious diseases. I refer particularly to diphtheria. Further, there are very few cases of typhoid now as compared with days gone by. I feel sure the hon. member knows that there is a very small percentage of infectious cases. There are times when we have an outbreak, but that is not very often. If the hon. member goes against my advice and is still desirous of deleting this provision, the responsibility is his.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: How long are patients kept in the Infectious Diseases Hospital?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They are held only sufficiently long to render them safe from spreading the disease among the community and no longer. Because of the demands that are made on the available accommodation, the hospital authorities are pushing the patients out a little bit too soon.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Not in the case of the Infectious Diseases Hospital.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, there they make sure the patients are well enough to be discharged.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They have sufficient beds.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not going to answer any more the hon. member's interjections because they do not carry much weight. Members do not want any further assurance from me that hospitals do not make a patient pay for the treatment unless he can afford to do so.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I am sorry the Minister has rather clouded the issue in a way because he has confined his remarks to the question of hospitalisation. There is no analogy between an ordinary patient and one suffering from an infectious disease. Patients suffering from an ordinary illness can be nursed in their own homes, but an infectious disease case is compelled to submit to segregation in an infectious diseases hospital to safeguard the community and to prevent an epidemic.

I consider that this is an instance where the charge should not be levied against the individual. The Minister has said that there are many people who can pay, but I venture to suggest that there are few people in that position. The local authorities are meeting the charges for the full amount and they have to wait for a refund from the Government or the individual. Two local authorities within a short space of time have received an account of £400 for two children each of whom was a patient in the Infectious Diseases Hospital for two months. That means the hospital treatment for each child cost £200. There are children in some families who are regarded as carriers although not suffering from an infectious disease, and they would be placed in an infectious diseases hospital.

The Minister for Agriculture: A carrier?

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Yes. A carrier is sent to the Infectious Diseases Hospital and a charge is made, the local authority concerned having to pay its proportion of one-third, while the patient is asked to pay whatever he can. The Minister has referred to cases that are taken off ships. At present, with ordinary cases, the hospital charge is met by the shipping company. Provision could be made for patients who are taken off ships suffering from an infectious disease to be treated in the same way. A hardship is inflicted on some of the local authorities in the metropolitan area where there is a great influx of people, because sometimes a person is committed to the Infectious Diseases Hospital although not a resident of the district of the local authority concerned. It is iniquitous to ask a local authority to be responsible for the charge incurred by such a patient when he is

placed in an institution for the safety of the public. I hope the Government will bring down legislation later on to prevent the anomalies that will be created by the retention of this clause. I ask the House to vote against it to prevent it becoming part and parcel of the legislation.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It is amusing to note two members arguing about hospital matters. Mine has usually been a lone voice, but now some keen interest in the subject is being shown.

The Minister for Agriculture: We always let you be the spokesman.

Hon. A. L. Loton: For the Government?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: In the past the feeling was that the hospitals belonged to the people and not to the Government. As a result of some sentimental notions on the part of a former Prime Minister, the late Mr. John Curtin, a proposal was put up that admission to hospitals should be free and that the patient would not be questioned as to his financial status before admission. Following upon that, during the regime of the next Prime Minister, the late Mr. Chifley, a scheme was introduced making hospital accommodation free to the people.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is why this particular provision was taken out of the Act.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: That is correct. At the time I asked the Government not to have anything to do with the scheme as it would ultimately destroy hospital finance, which it did, and also public interest. Now it is proposed to get over the whole difficulty by merely reinserting the provision that was formerly deleted. That will not get over it at all. What is required is an entirely new approach to the whole matter of hospitalisation and the cost to the individual patient.

When the Minister states that no hospital authorities have prosecuted persons for the recovery of fees when the individuals concerned could not afford to make the required payments, that may be correct as regards any actual prosecution being launched. During the eight years I was a member of the board of control of the Perth Public Hospital, I cannot remember any patient having actually been taken to court for the recovery of hospital charges, but I know that a collector was sent out regularly in an endeavour to secure payments of outstanding accounts.

The Minister for Agriculture: And the accounts were never paid.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: At nearly every meeting of the board large numbers of accounts had to be written off. That was altered when the Chifley scheme came into being. I agree with what Mr. Davies said regarding the large number of people who could not afford to pay heavy hospital bills, while there are others who, out of a sense of responsibility, endeavour to pay off as much as they possibly can. Others still refuse to attempt to pay anything towards the cost of their hospitalisation. That serves to indicate how inequitable is the position as between individuals. I know that patients on leaving the hospital have been handed accounts covering the cost of their treatment but that position cannot be rectified merely by the reinsertion of this provision. I have repeatedly asked the Government to institute a hospital commission, comprising men trained in hospital matters, to indicate what is necessary.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The Committee is merely discussing whether the clause will be agreed to.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Yes, and I am suggesting that the deletion of the clause would not be harmful if the Government had in mind the appointment of a hospital commission to deal with hospital problems. What is proposed in the Bill to rectify the position simply will not work.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I thought members would have some opportunity to hear something from Dr. Hislop.

Hon. A. L. Loton: We did.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Of course we did.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member said that the hospital scheme introduced by a late Prime Minister was not wise and then spoke about the Government collecting money from those who could not afford to pay.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: I did not.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Surely it is right that the Government should collect from those who can afford to pay. Neither Dr. Hislop nor Mr. Davies took up my challenge when I said that no hospital has sued patients for the recovery of charges. We know there are many people who will not pay their debts if they can get out of it.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: But patients are worried and harassed by demands for payment, including pensioners.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Government does not worry or harass patients in that way.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: I can give you instances where that has been done, but not at a Government hospital.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: But not with regard to pensioners.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I would like to have particulars of a case.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: I can give them to you.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We must depend upon our officers in these matters. It is useless to blame the Government or the Minister because certain things happen. During the three years I was in charge of the Health Department I know the policy was to collect money if possible, but there was never any question of harassing people. At the time Dr. Hislop was associated with the board of management of the Perth Public Hospital, as it was called in those days, the policy was that beds would be available to patients whether they could pay or not.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: But none of the patients pay now.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member knows why. It is because the Federal Government makes a contribution that renders it possible. I trust the Committee will agree to the clause. I accept the statement made that it costs £3 10s. a day at the Infectious Diseases Hospital, but that seems to be a very high charge.

Several members interjected.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think members should interject one at a time.

The CHAIRMAN: I suggest that the Minister should address the Chair.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: But some of the interjections are of interest! However, anything we can possibly do for the sick should be made available to them. The Government is not hard-hearted or harsh, and there has been no difference in the policy that has operated. Labour Governments in the past have acted in the same honest, reasonable way as the present Government has, and I am sure that will be the position in the future as well.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I suggest that members should not be led astray by the statements of a Minister who does not quite understand the position. I did not say anything like what he attributed to me. What I told the Committee was that the Government cannot restore the position that obtained prior to 1950 by merely inserting in the Act a small provision such as that proposed. A more intelligent approach to the subject should be made. For instance, there could be an approach to the patient and perhaps relatives so that the question of hospital charges could be discussed. That will not be possible under the terms of the clause.

There have been instances of which I am aware where patients, on their discharge from hospital, have been handed their accounts. Probably that does not apply to every institution, and I will not name the one where it was done. That has a definite effect on the individual if he cannot meet the bill. I asked the Chamber not to accept the Chifley scheme and I still ask it not to accept free treatment, but I do not want to see a complete reversal where a patient incurs a liability, and is left to meet it. We get into all sorts of difficulties. We find that the Commonwealth takes over the whole cost of one particular infectious disease, and pays the patient in addition.

The Minister for Agriculture: How would you compare T.B. with other diseases?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: The Commonwealth said it would accept the whole responsibility in connection with T.B., but not for any other infectious disease. The Health Department lays down which are notifiable diseases that call for isolation and segregation. Patients with ordinary sicknesses can be treated in their own homes, but not those who legally have to be isolated or segregated.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Is that not a wise provision?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Yes, but the person who contracts such a disease has to meet the hospital bill. The whole problem must be given considerable thought. I do not believe the Government can restore the 1950 position by reinserting this provision. Something of this sort is essential, so I am not going to vote against the clause, but I plead with the Government to investigate the relationship of the patient to the cost, and to the methods of collection.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I oppose the clause because I feel it is not fair to the rich person who pays huge taxation which includes social benefits contributions. Such a person might have to go into an infectious diseases hospital and, through no fault of his own, be compelled to pay more than if he had some other ailment and went into an ordinary hospital. He should pay the amount that would be required of him if he went into an ordinary hospital, but not the extra charges levied by an infectious diseases hospital. In the same way, a person in poorer circumstances should not be expected to pay this amount either. A poor family, with two or three of its members in an infectious diseases hospital, could not possibly pay the 70s. a day required for each of them. In fact, it would beyond any family at all.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I cannot agree with this clause, either. A sick person should be liable to pay his hospital fees, but if he contracts a notifiable disease and is put into an isolation hospital, he should be treated differently. We should try to find some way of doing that rather than wipe out the clause altogether, because if we strike the clause

out we ruin our chances of getting a subsidy from the Commonwealth Government.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am sure we would.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I cannot suggest a way to do it; I leave that to Dr. Hislop.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: In reply to the Minister, I have not endeavoured to cast any aspersion on the treatment that has been given in the various hospitals throughout the State.

The Minister for Agriculture: You have not done that.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: I am proud of the Fremantle institution. In my opinion, there is no analogy between the person who is ordinarily sick and the one with an infectious disease who is compelled to go to an infectious diseases hospital. The charge for the public ward in a public hospital is 35s. a day. The Commonwealth Government makes a contribution of 8s. a day, plus 4s. to members of approved health schemes. If a sick person does not desire to go to a hospital, he can be nursed in his own home, but a patient with an infectious disease must be segregated for the protection of the public. It is not equitable to say that he should be burdened with today's charges of 70s. per day for the Infectious Diseases Hospital. Of course, such a person gets the Commonwealth amount of 8s. 3d., and if he is a member of a health scheme he gets 9s., plus another 4s., which is a total of 21s. 3d. a day, but he still has a large amount to meet himself. If we wipe out the clause, it should not be beyond the power of the Government to bring down other legislation to correct any anomalies that might arise.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Members are trying to confine this matter to the infectious diseases hospitals, but that is not the position; it applies to all Government hospitals.

Hon. E. M. Davies: I know.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Under the Commonwealth Act, it applies to public hospitals, and not to hospitals where people are forced to go. If members strike this provision out, the hospitals will go back, and then the contributions made by the Commonwealth Government for the upkeep of hospitals must cease. We cannot cover the Federal legislation. The Health Act in Sections 317 and 318 deals with the position.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Section 317 deals with infectious diseases.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The section we have struck out and are now reintroducing is Section 322, and it deals with all hospitals.

Sitting suspended from 4 to 4.22 p.m.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I had a look at both these Acts during the afternoon tea suspension and I think I can make the position clear to the Minister. In the Health Act there is a division headed: "Public Hospitals." So far as the Health Act is concerned, those public hospitals are infectious diseases hospitals. Section 317 of that Act reads as follows:—

> The local authority may from time to time, of its own motion, and, when the Commissioner so requires, shall provide, equip and maintain hospitals suitable and sufficient for the reception and treatment of persons suffering from infectious disease, and the reception of persons who have been in contact with infected persons.

Then we find in Section 318 the following:—

> (8) Two or more local authorities may, if they think fit, combine in providing and maintaining a common hospital.

The common hospital is not a general hospital. A common hospital is when two local authorities or more combine to form an infectious diseases hospital that will look after cases from those two or more communities. The next section also refers to infectious diseases hospitals and then goes on purely in relation to infectious diseases.

As I have said previously, the Health Act has never referred to our general hospitals, but to infectious diseases hospitals. This section has appeared in the wrong Act. Where it should appear is in the Hospitals Act of which I have a copy dated 1927. I do not think it has been very much altered since. The Hospitals Act gives the definition of "board," "department," "Health Act" and so on and then declares that a public hospital is really a general hospital which also includes a maternity home, and any convalescent home which is part or a branch of a public hospital and so on.

It will be seen that the definition of "public hospital" does not contain the words "infectious diseases hospitals" at all. I will read the definition. It is as follows: —

> "Public hospital" includes (subject to the exceptions hereinafter mentioned) any institution founded or maintained (whether wholly or partly by or under governmental authority or otherwise howsoever) for the reception, treatment, and cure of persons suffering from disease or injury, or need of medical or surgical treatment or assistance, whether the treatment or assistance afforded by the institution is wholly or partly gratuitous or otherwise.

> The expression "public hospital" also includes a maternity home, and any convalescent home which is part or a branch of a public hospital; but it does not include any hospital, maternity home, or convalescent home carried on for the purpose of private gain.

It is quite obvious that there is a distinction between public hospitals under the Hospitals Act and public hospitals mentioned in the Health Act; those set aside for the treatment of infectious diseases. If the Minister desires to recoup the money payable by the Commonwealth in all cases, then the necessary provision must go into the Hospitals Act and not in the Health Act. I would suggest to the Minister that he report progress with a view to seeking departmental advice in the matter, because I feel that if this clause is left in the Health Act it will refer only to infectious diseases hospitals and not to general hospitals. This should not be put back into the wrong Act and the Minister would be well advised to get his department to have another look at it.

Progress reported.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Section "A," 1952.

The PRESIDENT: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of Section "A" of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1952. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [4.29]: Although I am allergic to bees, I am definitely not allergic to honey or to the people who keep bees. I would like to commend Mr. Loton for bringing down this amendment to the Act. When we find in the principal Act the number and the classes of people who benefit by these concessions, then I think it is only fair and reasonable that we should include this other class, although those concerned may be quite small in numbers.

In the principal Act we find this reference—

> When a trailer or a semi-trailer which is owned by a person carrying on a business on a farm and/or grazing.

Grazing is the eating of grass, the product of the land. I do not know the term applied to bees, but I should think it would be "feeding." After all feeding is a form of grazing, because the bees feed on the blossoms of trees, shrubs or plants grown on the land. The Bill proposes to provide exemption for a beekeeper who is bona fide engaged in the keeping of bees substantially as a means of livelihood. I understand that the word "substantially" means that the main part of the beekeeper's income would be derived from this source. The remainder of the wording is practically the same as applies to graziers and others who come under this provision by stipulating a vehicle which is used by such person during the currency of the license solely or mainly in connection with the occupation of beekeeping.

As Mr. Loton explained, a commercial beekeeper, in order to obtain the greatest benefit from his bees, must follow the blossom during the various seasons. I have seen quite a number of beekeepers on the by-ways following the blossoming of the trees. In Western Australia, taken as a whole, beekeeping is not a big industry. According to the latest statistics, there are 397 registered beekeepers, but only 96 of them have more than 50 hives. When we consider that the normal gross return is only £5 per hive, members will appreciate that only a small number of vehicles are concerned.

I should say that to qualify under the definition including the word "substantially," a beekeeper would need to have at least 100 hives. Then the gross return would only be in the vicinity of £500, and the number of beekeepers with hives over 100 is only 66. Consequently, although local authorities will be affected to some extent, I do not think the amount would represent more than £5 per vehicle if the whole 60 were concerned, but I am doubtful whether all of them would be as some of them might be engaged in some other form of primary industry.

The statistics show that in 1949-50 the number of hives was 21,967 whereas in 1950-51 it had declined to 19,536. The production of honey in 1949-50 was 2,041,156 lb. of a value of £42,978, and in 1950-51, it was 1,314,587 lb. of a value of £39,027. There is one big point in favour of Western Australia and that is while the Commonwealth production of honey is 78.25 lb. per hive, the Western Australian average is 92.92 lb. I believe that the high production here is due to the fact that the commercial beekeeper follows the blossom during the season.

I hope that the Bill will be passed, because I consider it to be an anomaly that the beekeeper was not included in the parent Act. By including him, we may be paving the way to some extent to securing an increase in the production of honey in this State. We have no surplus honey for export and, on the figures of the Government Statistician, I should not be surprised if we are importing large quantities.

If that is so, we should take steps to increase our production, because we have all the conditions favourable to that end. The beekeepers need a little additional encouragement, which will be afforded by the passing of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; Hon. A. L. Loton in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 11:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: In reply to Mr. Henning, I point out that the words used in the parent Act are, "solely or mainly," but the Parliamentary Draftsman suggested that the word "substantially" should be employed in this measure.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—LAND AGENTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st October.

HON. R. J. BOYLEN (South-East) [4.39]: I support the second reading. I have very few remarks to offer on the Bill as I consider it a move in the right direction to control further the activities of land agents. The measure will permit of our being more selective than in the past of the people who are to be licensed to carry on this occupation as they will have to submit testimonials, lodge deposits and satisfy the court that they are fit and proper persons to be licensed.

In recent years and more especially in recent months, members of the public have been exploited by some of these people. The provisions of this measure will have the effect of tightening up the Act and safeguarding the interests of people who have to avail themselves of the services of land agents. There are many directions in which the public can be exploited. Land agents handle trust moneys, and it is only right that these should be safeguarded. I believe that the measure will make it increasingly difficult for any land agent to deny the public reasonable service and consideration.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 14th October.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [4.44]: I asked for the adjournment of the debate in order that I might have time to study the provisions of the Bill. After perusing the proposals. I am satisfied that the measure is necessary and contains nothing of a contentious nature. I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—POLICE ACT AMENDMENT

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [4.46] in moving the second reading said: This is an unusual Bill inasmuch as it does not actually amend the principal Act in any way. Its purpose is to allow the consolidation and reprint of the principal Act and the 11 Acts by which it has been amended since 1894. Such consolidations are usually carried out under the Amendments Incorporation Act of 1938, but in this case the nature of the majority of the amending Acts will not permit of this being done. Four of these amending Acts are such that they could be included in a reprint under the authority of the Amendments Incorporation Act and they are therefore not dealt with in the Bill.

In several of the other amending Acts no reference is made to the principal Act although they and the principal Act have to be read and construed as one. There also are many sections in the amending Acts, which, without this Bill, cannot be inserted in proper sequence in the principal Act. The result has been a hotchpotch of legislation which is difficult to comprehend and which legal practitioners and others find cumbersome in court work. The Act is frequently consulted by departmental officers, representatives of the legal profession and lay persons, and copies should be available in a form easily understood.

The Bill is designed to bring about this state of affairs. It will enable the Act as amended from time to time to be reprinted. The Bill will not alter the law as it exists, the only amendments being those necessary to remove redundancies and those consequential on a consolidation. It is proposed to bring the revised Act into operation on a date to be fixed by proclamation. This is being done so that all outlying police stations will have

copies before it is proclaimed, thus enabling correct descriptions of offences to be used in complaints, etc. and for various documents to be amended accordingly. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Suburban) [4.49]: I regret that this Bill has been brought forward, although I propose to vote for it. There are a great many police Acts. The Police Act of 1892 deals with the administration of the Police Force and also with a considerable number of petty offences such as vagabondage, gambling, prostitution, drunkenness and all sorts of minor offences. I have always been in favour of two Acts, a police administration Act and a police offences Act, so that the administration of the Police Force would be entirely apart, so far as the statutes are concerned, from petty offences such as those committed by rogues and vagabonds.

Recently I had an opportunity of being one of a committee of members of both Houses appointed to go into this matter with the Attorney General and the draftsman, and I raised the same point as I am submitting now. Although there was agreement with my view—and, of course, many amendments are required to the provisions dealing with the administration of the Police Force and many to those dealing with petty offences—it was pointed out that the law governing these matters was contained in so many statutes that it was rather difficult to draw up a comprehensive consolidating measure to deal straight away with the two subjects separately. It was stated that considerable time would be required.

I agree that a great deal of drafting would be needed and the measure would be a big one. It was pointed out that this could not be done during the current session. It was also stated that the original Police Act is out of print and to reprint it would be foolish unless all the other measures were reprinted and unless there was a consolidation. There cannot be consolidation unless we pass this measure. This Bill is merely to consolidate prehistoric drafting. But consolidation is urgently required because law students at the University cannot get copies of the measures, nor can the Police Force and outback stations get supplies. It is therefore essential that the Bill should be passed so that the statute can be printed quickly.

I trust that having once got this consolidation through the printers, after the passing of the Bill, the Government will not lose one minute in putting on, not one draftsman, but several draftsmen to rewrite the whole of the Police Act and divide it into two parts, one to deal with the administration of the Police Force and the other with petty offences. May I give an example of what occurs? When a man is charged in the Police Court with keeping a common gaming house, defending counsel immediately asks the prosecuting sergeant whether he is prosecuting under the Criminal Code or the Police Act. Very often the sergeant does not know and the defending counsel scores the first hit because he has thrown him off balance. The law is confusing. If offences are dealt with in the Criminal Code, they should be taken out of the Police Act. There are many instances of the kind I have mentioned, and I sincerely trust that the Bill will be passed and that the Government will then have the law brought up to date and put in an intelligible form.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [4.54]: I also was a member of the all-party committee to which Mr. Parker has referred and, through the courtesy of the Attorney General, that committee had an opportunity to go through this measure carefully and have it fully explained. I wholeheartedly support it and strongly recommend it to the House. As the Minister adequately pointed out, it does not alter the Police Act and its amendments in any way beyond carrying out the very necessary task of consolidating the measure and all its amendments. It will do a great amount of good and the consolidated statute will be of great convenience to all concerned, including members of this House and others whose occupations bring them into contact with the framing and interpretation of our legislation. I commend the Government for bringing down the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland— in reply) [4.55]: I was very interested in the contribution to the debate by our two legal members. I think it was made quite clear when the Bill was introduced that the object is to reframe the measure in such a way that it will be intelligible not only to the legal fraternity and police officers but to laymen as well. I take it from Mr. Parker's remarks that what he suggests can be done without introducing any amendments to this Bill. Having regard to the intention of those who will be charged with the duty of consolidating the Act, I should say that they would give very careful consideration to his suggestions. In any event, I will make it my duty to draw the attention of the Attorney General to the points raised, so that they can be carefully considered when the work is done.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

MOTION—PRIVATE INQUIRY AGENTS.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 14th October, on the following motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan:—

> That a Select Committee be appointed to investigate and report upon the activities of private inquiry agents, and, if deemed advisable, to make recommendations for legislation in connection therewith.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [5.0]: I wish to associate myself with Mr. Heenan in his request for a Select Committee to inquire into the activities of private inquiry agents. It is probably a tragedy that our social order is such as to require this type of agent in our midst, but they are there and are apparently performing what is, in the circumstances, a necessary function. We know that their main purpose is to collect evidence for either a husband or wife for divorce purposes. If either the husband or wife does not like the idea of waiting for five years to gain a divorce on the grounds of separation for that period, the remaining available ground is generally adultery.

We know that it is in most instances necessary for evidence of adultery to be produced, and that is where these agents come into the picture. Unfortunately, they have not always played the game, and even since Mr. Heenan moved his motion certain information has been given to me backing up my opinion that an inquiry is necessary. It has been practically proved to me that a certain inquiry agent was acting for one party and receiving a fairly heavy fee, and then went to the other party, told what he was doing and presumably collected a further fee from that source.

I do not for a moment doubt that if this inquiry is agreed to we will find that this sort of thing happens in a number of instances. The present-day trend is that before people can operate in many fields they must be licensed, and I think that should apply to private inquiry agents. A Select Committee would enable us to gain evidence and submit to Parliament a basis upon which to frame suitable legislation.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

Select Committee Appointed.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan, a Select Committee appointed consisting of Hon. R. J. Boylen, Hon. A. R. Jones, Hon. L. A. Logan, Hon. J. Murray and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers and to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned; to report on the 25th November.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [5.5] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to provide statutory authority for the employment in hospitals of a class of nursing assistants who will bear the title of "trained nursing aides." For many years it has been the practice in this State to employ nursing assistants on work that does not warrant the services of a fully qualified nurse. This occurs not only in Western Australia but also elsewhere in the Commonwealth and the world.

A few years ago a survey conducted in the United States of America by that country's College of Surgeons revealed that two-thirds of the nursing tasks required for an average patient in a general hospital could be performed by a person trained to a lower level of skill than that of a trained nurse. In Western Australia many hospitals employ only one or two fully-trained nurses, the majority of the persons working in the wards having acted as nursing aides for years, and, in the course of their duties, having acquired a considerable amount of skill and experience.

Not only in this State but also in other parts of the world the service rendered by these aides is regarded as of the utmost value. It is proposed in the Bill to follow the example set in Victoria and to give these aides status in the nursing profession, provided they have the necessary skill and experience. To implement this, the Bill seeks to incorporate in the Act a definition of the term "trained nursing aide." To be enrolled as an aide the applicant must be of good fame and character and must at all times keep the Nurses Registration Board aware of her address. Other conditions to which an aide will have to conform will be those that apply to age, educational standard, health and training.

Any persons at present employed as aides, and who, within six months of the Bill becoming law, can assure the Nurses Registration Board of their competency, can be enrolled as aides without examination. This is a reasonable provision as many of these girls or women have, by experience, obtained considerable skill at their work. All aides enrolled by the board will be presented with a certificate and a badge, and it will be an offence for any person to wrongly state that she is enrolled as a trained nursing aide. Under the Act a nurse's cap may be worn only by a registered nurse. As a result of the enrolling of aides, it is proposed to prescribe by regulation, differing types of caps for the various classes of nurses.

I might say that the various nurses' organisations are in favour of the proposals in the Bill. The Western Australian

Nurses' Association advised the Minister for Health, on the 12th September last, that the scheme had its full support and that it had already applied to the Arbitration Court for its constitution to be altered to include nursing aides. The association said it felt that aides would take an important place in the nursing world. A letter was also received from the Australasian Trained Nurses' Association supporting the principle of a training course for the aides.

The Bill also contains a provision protecting members of the board from liability for acts performed in good faith in the exercise of their duties. At present the conditions which must be complied with before nurses may be registered are specified in the Act. With the increased number of classes of nurses now practising, this method of dealing with the matter is becoming unwieldy and it is proposed in the Bill in future to make regulations prescribing the courses of training and institutions at which training may be undertaken. I trust that the House will agree to the Bill, which, as I have said, has the recommendation of the nurses' union and the Nurses Registration Board. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [5.12] in moving the second reading said: There are two amendments in this Bill, the first to repeal Part IV of the Act, and the other to continue the operations of the balance of the Act for a further 12 months to the 31st December, 1953. As all controls over the distribution of materials were removed by the Government in June last, Part IV of the Act, under which restrictions were imposed upon the acquisition and disposal of materials, is now redundant and may be deleted from the Act.

As members are aware, the Act was introduced in 1945 at a time when building materials and skilled tradesmen were at a premium and the housing shortage constituted a grave national problem. Although the general housing position has not permitted the entire cessation of controls, these have been subjected, during the past 2½ years, to a system of gradual relaxation. In February, 1950, controls were eased to the extent of permitting immediate erection of homes of up to 9 squares. Five months later this was extended to include houses of up to 12½ squares, and in July, 1951, the maximum area was increased to 15 squares.

The steady improvement in the supply of materials enabled the Government in March, 1952, to relinquish all controls over the building of homes, and in June, as I have mentioned, control over the distribution of materials ceased. The only control now existent is the necessity to obtain a permit to build other than for residential purposes. Applications of this nature are dealt with on their merits, a deciding factor being the needs of an expanded and balanced building programme and its impact on the materials and labour position. It cannot be justifiably said that the claims of industrial building have been ignored, and the following comparison will substantiate this assertion. During 1946-47, 220 buildings other than dwellings were completed at a cost of £357,000. In 1951-52 these figures had increased to 727 at a cost of £2,193,000.

The Government is of the opinion that so far as industrial, commercial and social buildings are concerned, the part of the Act relating to permits should be continued for a further 12 months. The sharp impetus in industrial expansion which we are about to experience will create large demands upon the availability of labour and materials. The Government is committed to a housing programme at Kwinana on behalf of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Coy., and there is no doubt that the new industrial projects will encourage a continuance of the flow of migration into the State, with its consequent strain on housing facilities.

The continuance of the permit system respecting non-housing building will enable any permit to be conditioned so far as materials are concerned and prevent their diversion into non-essential channels. I have said on several occasions and I repeat: The Government has no taste for controls, and will be only too happy to relinquish them immediately it is convinced they are no longer in the interests of the people.

The progressive relaxation of controls on private house building has followed the trend of improvement in the supply of the basic materials such as clay bricks, asbestos cement sheets, tiles, fibrous plaster and timber. Together with the importation of steel, piping, galvanised iron and cement, this has enabled a balanced industrial programme to proceed hand in hand with home-building. The Government has played an important part in improving material production, particularly in connection with the steps taken in building new wire cut and pressed brick works and in the opening of new timber mills. It has also imported materials for much of its own works programme.

The great demand upon materials and labour by housing requirements is revealed by a glance at comparative figures. In 1946-47, 1,792 homes were erected, while in 1951-52, this number had risen to 6,577; an increase of 367 per cent. The quarter, July to September, 1952, showed a further increase, the 1,899 houses completed being equivalent to an annual rate of 7,600. The continuing need for homes is further emphasised when it is understood that, despite financial restrictions, the number of homes under construction on the 30th June, 1952, was 6,917, this being a record.

The Government here, too, has borne its share in assisting in the housing of the people, by means of housing projects, precut and imported homes. Since June, 1947, the number of tradesmen employed on building activities has increased from 5,242 to 8,654 in June last. This has, in no small measure, been contributed to by the Government's efforts in contracting for the erection of imported houses with Austrian labour and in its sponsoring of British tradesmen for its own and private contractors' projects.

Although it is proposed to retain permit control over non-housing building, it will be possible under the amending Act of 1950, to exclude by regulation, any operation or part operation from the provisions of the Act. At the present time applications for which permits have not yet been approved represent an estimated expenditure of £3,000,000. These include three banks, £9,375; 13 garages and service stations, £27,057; six halls, £56,250; 22 industrial projects, £360,350; six institutions and hostels, £171,700; 12 offices, £1,269,000; 58 shops—42 of which are in the metropolitan area and 16 in the country—£296,460; 14 picture theatres and gardens, £194,520; 28 hotel alterations and additions, £273,781; five new hotels, £251,000; and three extensions to sporting bodies' facilities, £22,385.

These represent 170 projects at an average cost of £17,600 each, so it can be realised the amount of materials and labour that would be diverted to such purposes from the more essential requirements of housing and industrial construction. In view of the indisputable fact that equilibrium has not yet been established between housing and demand, allied to the very considerable inroads that industrialisation will make on available materials and labour, the Government asks that power be retained for a further year to divert the flow of materials and labour into those channels which possess the greatest priority.

Certain sources have alleged that the building position is much improved; in fact, it has even been said that a recession in the trade has occurred. This is not borne out by facts. A target of 7,000 homes per year has been set, exclusive of the 330 annually for the next three years to be built at Kwinana. Some three months ago the State Housing Commission called its first tenders for a considerable time. These were in multiples of five, and tenders were received for less than half of them.

In response to an inquiry recently for carpenters the Commonwealth Employment Service reported that it could not at present meet the demand for these tradesmen. It is apparent that while migration continues at its present rate, the housing problem will continue to be difficult and I therefore submit to this House that it is in the interests of the State to agree to this Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Davies, debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

Coogee-Kwinana Railway Bill.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: Before the House adjourns, I would like, with the indulgence of members, to make a statement. Members are invited to inspect the photographs of the proposed Coogee-Kwinana railway line which will be on view in the committee room upstairs at the Council end at 3 p.m. next Tuesday. I have arranged for one of the Railway Department engineers to be present to explain various points and to answer any questions that members wish to put in their desire to obtain information.

House adjourned at 5.24 p.m.