

Noces—13.

Hon. C. R. Abbey	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. S. T. J. Thompson
Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. J. M. Thomson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. L. A. Logan	Hon. F. D. Willmott
Hon. G. C. MacKinnon	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. R. C. Mattiske	(Teller.)

Majority for—3.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

*As to Committee Stage***THE HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North)**

[9.22]: I move—

That the Committee stage of the Bill be taken on Tuesday, the 1st November 1960.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE: SPECIAL

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban—Minister for Mines): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 7.30 p.m. tomorrow.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.24 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, the 25th October, 1960

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

BILLS (8)—ASSENT

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

1. Interstate Maintenance Recovery Act Amendment Bill.
2. Criminal Code Amendment Bill.
3. Architects Act Amendment Bill.
4. Firearms and Guns Act Amendment Bill.
5. Stock Diseases Act Amendment Bill.
6. Local Authorities, British Empire and Commonwealth Games Contributions Authorisation Bill.
7. Noxious Weeds Act Amendment Bill.
8. Motor Vehicle (Third Party Insurance) Act Amendment Bill.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**ALBANY HARBOUR***Construction of Third Berth*

1. Mr. **HALL** asked the Minister for Works:
 - (1) Are plans being prepared for the construction of a third berth at Albany Harbour?
 - (2) If so, will finance be made available this financial year for the construction of this berth?

Mr. **WILD** replied:

- (1) No. Present berthage will satisfy port trade demands for the next five to 10 years.
- (2) Answered by No. (1).

HOSPITAL BENEFITS*Liberalising Existing Policy*

2. Mr. **HALL** asked the Minister for Health:

Have representations been made by him to the Commonwealth Minister for Health to have existing policy altered, whereby patients

needing long periods of hospitalisation can increase their hospital benefit contributions to meet the increased hospital charges, even though the disease was contracted after the contributor had joined the fund?

Mr. **ROSS HUTCHINSON** replied:

Yes. I made representations to the Commonwealth Minister in August last, but he replied that because of existing heavy financial commitments by the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth was unable to agree to any increase.

CARNARVON PRIMARY SCHOOL*Completion and Future Requirements*

3. Mr. **NORTON** asked the Minister for Education:
 - (1) When is it anticipated that the new primary school at Carnarvon will be completed and occupied?
 - (2) Has an estimate been made of the number of extra classrooms which will be required at Carnarvon for the years 1961, 1962, and 1963; and if so, what is the estimate for each year?

Mr. **WATTS** replied:

- (1) About the end of September, 1961.
- (2) When the new school is completed, there will be sufficient accommodation for 1961. A survey is being carried out at the present time to see what the requirements will be for 1962 and 1963.

CARNARVON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL*Accommodation for Additional Pupils*

4. Mr. **NORTON** asked the Minister for Education:
 - (1) In view of the fact that the Education Department has, this year, had to hire the only available hall at Carnarvon to assist in accommodating the number of children attending the Carnarvon Junior High School, has his department made any definite move to find suitable accommodation for the anticipated increase of 63 children in the next school year?
 - (2) If so, with what result?
 - (3) If not, when will action be taken to obtain suitable accommodation?

Mr. **WATTS** replied:

- (1) It is understood that there are three halls available at Carnarvon which could, if necessary, accommodate increased numbers while the new four-roomed school is being erected.

- (2) and (3) Answered by No. (1).

BOGIE CASTINGS

Ban by Railway Unions on Imports

5. Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Railways:

- (1) Is he aware that a recent lunch-hour meeting of the Joint Railway Unions at the Midland Workshops carried a resolution placing a ban on bogie castings coming from other States?

Effects of Bradford Kendall Ltd. Contract

- (2) Is he aware that the granting of a contract to Bradford Kendall Ltd. for bogie castings on the basis that only 40 per cent. of construction need be done in Western Australia will represent an approximate loss of £22,400 in wages for Western Australian workers?
- (3) Is he also aware that the electric current required to weld the steel in the construction of the bogie castings would be in the vicinity of £950 in value?
- (4) In view of the abundance of electricity available to industry in this State at present, does he not consider that the loss of this sale to the State Electricity Commission is not in the best interest of the State Electricity Commission?

Suitability of Bradford Kendall Ltd. as Contractors to W.A.G.R.

- (5) Is he aware that the Bradford Kendall Ltd. quote for the same castings that it is at present under contract to make for the W.A.G.R. for £323 6s. 8d. per unit was £386 in 1959?
- (6) In view of the increase in manufacturing costs, approximately 6 per cent. since the tender of 1959, does he not agree that Bradford Kendall Ltd. had intended to make excess profit from the W.A.G.R. in 1959?
- (7) Under such circumstances, does he think that this firm is a fit and proper one to handle W.A.G.R. contracts?

Position of Employees of Hadfields Ltd.

- (8) Is he aware that the 25 men who had been engaged on the production of bogie castings at Hadfields (W.A.) Ltd. will now have to be found other work?
- (9) Would the W.A.G.R. be prepared to absorb any of this labour force if Hadfields finds it necessary to retrench men because of the loss of this contract?

- (10) Will he give an assurance that no further interstate contracts will be let for components that can be manufactured locally for the W.A.G.R. before a more thorough inquiry into the economics of such a proposition is undertaken?
- (11) Will he not agree that this contract will have a worsening effect on this State's adverse trade balance with the Eastern States?
- (12) As Minister for Industrial Development, would he indicate how this State can possibly hope to improve its adverse trade balance with the Eastern States while such a Government policy of interstate contract-letting is retained, to the detriment of local manufacturers?

Mr. COURT replied:

- (1) No official notification of such resolution has been conveyed to me.
- (2) to (4) In the letting of contracts, regard is necessary for all factors including the degree of local preference that the Railways Department or any other department can be expected to stand. Also any consequential benefits that might be available from a manufacturer who gets a contract must be taken into account. In this case the percentage for local preference would have been exceeded had the order been given to a local firm. In addition Bradford Kendall Ltd. is bringing work to Western Australia which would not normally come here, to replace any Eastern States component in contracts. Bradford Kendall Ltd. employees in Western Australia have already increased from 5 in April, 1959, to 30 as at today.
- (5) Yes.
- (6) No; volume is a very important factor in costs. The current order is greater than the numbers tendered for in 1959. The availability or non-availability of patterns could also influence costs.
- (7) Bradford Kendall Ltd. is a reputable firm and is considered one fit and able to handle W.A.G.R. contracts. This firm has been highly regarded by the Western Australian Government Railways for many years.
- (8) These men have not been retrenched and can be transferred to other work at Hadfields (W.A.) Ltd. without difficulty.
- (9) Answered by No. (8).
- (10) to (12) Answered by Nos. (2) to (4).

PERTH-KALGOORLIE RAILWAY*Freights on Sugar, Fruit Essences, and Aerated Waters*

6. Mr. MOIR asked the Minister for Railways:

What is the rail freight per ton from Perth to Kalgoorlie on sugar, fruit essences, and aerated waters?

Mr. COURT replied:

Sugar—178s. per ton, minimum 1 ton per 4-wheeled wagon.

Fruit Essences—228s. per ton (Smalls minimum).

Aerated Waters—130s 6d. per ton, minimum 4 tons per 4-wheeled wagon.

SILICOSIS*Scope of Committee's Inquiry*

7. Mr. MOIR asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) What was the composition of the committee set up early this year to consider the advisability of amending the Workers' Compensation Act to allow of a longer period in which claims could be lodged for disability caused by silicosis?

(2) When did this committee commence its inquiry?

(3) What was the scope of its inquiry?

(4) Did it invite submissions from interested people or organisations?

Tabling of Report

(5) Has the committee submitted its findings; if so, on what date?

(6) What were its recommendations, if any?

(7) Will he table the report?

Mr. PERKINS replied:

(1) N. W. Mews, Chairman of the Workers' Compensation Board; W. P. Mark, employers' nominee; R. C. Cole, workers' nominee; A. H. Telfer, Under-Secretary for Mines; Dr. Letham, industrial hygiene; E. J. R. Hogg, State Government Insurance Office.

(2) The 13th January, 1960.

(3) To inquire into the three-year limit on claims for silicosis referred to in the motion of the Hon. E. M. Heenan, M.L.C.

(4) to (7) The committee met informally and agreed to recommend that the Workers' Compensation Act be so amended as to remove the three-year limit. No formal report was prepared, but the Minister was informed orally. The Secretary of the A.L.P. (Eastern Goldfields) was informed of the recommendations by letter dated the 19th August, 1960.

AGRICULTURE PROTECTION BOARD*Expenditure in Pilbara Area*

8. Mr. BICKERTON asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What sums of money were expended by the Agriculture Protection Board in the Pilbara area for the years 1957, 1958, 1959, and 1960?

(2) How was the money allotted?

Mr. NALDER replied:

(1) 1956-57 — £14,316.

1957-58 — £17,327.

1958-59 — £19,008.

1959-60 — £19,179.

(2)

	1956-57 £	1957-58 £	1958-59 £	1959-60 £
Bonuses	969	1,480	1,540	1,428
Doggers and Vermin Control Officers	10,152	12,735	12,735	13,716
Miscellaneous (Poisons, etc.)	544	1,455	2,029	1,265
Aerial Baiting	1,304	*	1,382	1,395
Ground Baiting Drives	802	1,087	375	875
Mesquite Control	545	540	938	500
	£14,316	£17,327	£19,008	£19,179

* Baits destroyed in shipping fire.

WITTENOOM WATER SUPPLY*Restrictions*

9. Mr. BICKERTON asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

Is he satisfied that the Wittenoom water supply will be sufficient to meet all needs during this summer without restrictions being imposed?

Mr. WILD replied:

Yes, provided there is no excessive use of water. The town of Wittenoom is already receiving 40,000 gallons per day from the No. 1 8-inch bore on the Roebourne Road in addition to the water supply from the spring in the gorge. Further supply will be provided from the Roebourne Road area as soon as the necessary equipment is supplied and installed.

WATER METERS:**NEW INSTALLATIONS***Effect on Departmental Finances*

10. Mr. TONKIN asked the Minister for Water Supplies:

(1) How many of the 6,000-odd meters stated by him to be required for installation on properties now unmetered is it intended to install this financial year?

(2) What is the estimated cost of the meters to be installed this financial year?

(3) Is it expected that the installation of these meters will cause the department to run into deficit on the department's operations for this financial year?

Mr. WILD replied:

- (1) It is intended to install 5,385 meters this financial year.
- (2) £55,000.
- (3) No; meters are purchased out of loan and not revenue.

BUILDING INDUSTRY

Apprentices

11. Mr. TONKIN asked the Minister for Labour:

- (1) What numbers of building trades apprentices are registered in the various categories of apprenticeship?
- (2) What is the number of building trades workers still employed by the Government, including men employed on maintenance?
- (3) What are the intentions of the Government with regard to apprentices indentured to the Public Works Department upon the completion or cessation of public works projects now in course?
- (4) What steps does the Government propose to take to promote apprenticeships to the building trades, particularly in view of the fact that the number of registered apprentices fell from 1,173 on the 31st March, 1959, to 910 on the 30th June, 1960?

Mr. PERKINS replied:

- (1) As at the 30th September, 1960:

Bricklayers	40
Stonemasons	1
Carpenters and joiners	418
Plumbing	207
Plasterers—solid	32
Plasterers—fibrous	2
Painting and decorating	186
Signwriting	14
Glaziers	19

919

- (2) As at the 12th October, 1960:

Day Labour	427
Maintenance	253

680

- (3) The interests of these boys will be watched. It is anticipated they will complete their indentures in the organisation.
- (4) The intake of apprentices is steadily rising, and the Government is not unmindful of the position. It is in constant touch with the employers' organisations.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL

Proclamation and Effect on Municipalities

12. Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister representing the Minister for Local Government:

- (1) If the Local Government Bill passes all stages in both Houses this session, what will be the probable date of its proclamation?
- (2) What effect will this have on municipal councils who normally make up their estimates from November for a year in advance?

Mr. PERKINS replied:

- (1) The Act will be proclaimed as from the 1st July, 1961.
- (2) Municipalities will rate as normal for this year, but will rate for eight months only in the following year. A subsequent order to that effect will be made.

QUARRYING FOR MINERALS

Regulations

13. Mr. BURT asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

- (1) What tonnages of mineral ores, excluding gold ores, were produced by quarrying methods in Western Australia, during each of the past three years?
- (2) Are quarrying operations conducted under the Mines Regulations Act?
- (3) If so, and in view of the increasing importance of minerals which must be produced by quarrying, will he give consideration to the promulgation and gazettal of regulations to cover this specific type of mining?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON replied:

- (1) Crushed stone for road and building purposes is not classified under the Mining Act as a mineral and the department does not receive returns of output.

Quarrying or open-cut mining for minerals—such as iron ore, manganese, felspar, limestone, etc.—is conducted under the Mining Act and the Mines Regulation Act, and tonnages produced can be supplied if required.

- (2) All quarrying operations are subject to the Mines Regulation Act, and the regulations thereunder.
- (3) Answered by Nos. (1) and (2).

COLLIE SCHOOLS*Capital Cost*

14A. Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Works:

- (1) What was the total capital cost of building the primary school situated at Wilson Park, Collie?
- (2) What was the total capital cost of building the Amaroo School at Collie?
- (3) What was the capital cost of building the Fairview School at North Collie?
- (4) What is the capital expenditure involved in the additions to the Collie High School?

Mr. WILD replied:

(1) Erection	£16,521
Furniture and equipment	870
	<hr/> £17,391
(2) Erection	£12,674
Furniture and equipment	2,509
	<hr/> £15,183
(3) Erection	£20,735
Furniture and equipment	1,485
	<hr/> £22,220
(4) Erection and grounds	£123,059
Furniture and equipment	3,128
	<hr/> £126,187

COLLIE MATERNITY HOSPITAL*Capital Cost*

14B. Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Works:

What was the capital cost of building, equipping, and furnishing the maternity hospital at Collie?

Mr. WILD replied:

Erection	£89,773
Furniture and equipment	7,279
	<hr/> £97,052

COLLIE INFECTIOUS DISEASES HOSPITAL*Capital Cost of Alterations*

14C. Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Works:

What was the total capital cost of alterations to the original infectious diseases building now to be used for the aged sick?

Mr. WILD replied:

Alterations	£10,710
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WEST COLLIE RAILWAY YARDS*Capital Cost*

15A. Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Railways:

What was the total capital cost of establishing the railway assembly yards at West Collie?

Mr. COURT replied:

£555,280 has been spent since 1950 on marshalling yards, etc. at West Collie as detailed hereunder:—

New yard and loco. depot—work of clearing earthworks, drainage, etc.	£205,787
New yard — additional sidings	5,998
New yard — round house, turntable, etc.	208,397
New loco. depot—buildings, coal-handling plant, etc.	135,098
	<hr/> £555,280

COLLIE RAILWAY INSTITUTE*Capital Cost*

15B. Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Railways:

What was the capital cost of building the Railway Institute at Collie, excluding the cost of furnishing?

Mr. COURT replied:

£15,640.

VIRGIN LAND*Area Classified, Blocks Surveyed, and Land Open for Selection*

16. Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Lands:

- (1) What area of virgin land was classified in Western Australia in each of the following years:—1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, and 1960?
- (2) How many blocks were surveyed in those years?
- (3) What land was thrown open for selection, and in what classifications, viz., for grain production, grain and stock, and pastoral use?
- (4) In what areas was this land thrown open?

Mr. BOVELL replied:

(1) Year.	Area (acres).
1955-1956	425,000
1956-1957	931,980
1957-1958	2,679,084
1958-1959	180,039
1959-1960	134,920

(2) Year.	No. of Blocks.
1955-1956	513
1956-1957	949
1957-1958	640
1958-1959	798
1959-1960	597

- (3) and (4) Records in detail as asked for by the honourable member were not kept for this period, and are therefore not available. However, since April 1959, statistics showing districts, number of locations, and area in districts have been recorded; and if he so desires, this information will be made available to the honourable member.

I might add that on assuming the office of Minister for Lands I desired certain information regarding details of land releases, but I was informed by the department that the information was not readily available. I then instructed that records were to be kept of each district to indicate the use to which the land was put, the number of locations, and the areas in each district. These are kept in a special ledger; and therefore, as I have stated, the statistics are available as from April, 1959, if the honourable member desires them.

STATE HOTELS

Disbursement of Money From Sales

17. Mr. TONKIN asked the Attorney-General:

- (1) Did the State Hotels (Disposal) Act of 1959 amend the Financial Agreement Act, 1928-1944, in any way?
- (2) Do subsections (1a) and (2) of section 6 of the State Hotels (Disposal) Act of 1959 conflict with the provisions of the Financial Agreement Act, 1928-1944?
- (3) Will it be legally possible to pay any portion of the moneys received from time to time from the sale of State hotels into the Tourist Fund established under the Tourist Act, 1959, in accordance with the provisions of section 6 of the State Hotels (Disposal) Act, 1959?
- (4) If the answer to No. (3) is in the affirmative, will he give an example in support of such opinion?
- (5) In the event of there being available from the sale of a State hotel money in excess of the sum required to make repayment in full of capital provided from the Loan Fund, would it be necessary to pay such money to the Revenue Fund?

Mr. WATTS replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) No. It is thought that loan moneys used for the hotels referred to were not "advanced by the State" within the meaning of section 4 (2) of the Financial Agreement Act or of clause 12 (9) of the Financial Agreement as amended (despite the Auditor-Generals' opinion to the contrary expressed at page 228 of his Seventieth Report). However, it is intended that provision will be made for the reduction of capital of any trading concern sold before any proceeds are paid into the tourist fund as though the loan moneys involved were principal moneys "advanced by the State".
- (3) Yes.
- (4) No State hotel has yet been sold under the 1959 Act.
- (5) Yes. Section 6 of the 1959 Act operates notwithstanding section 64 of the Constitution Act.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES

Cost of Erection of Street Poles

18. Mr. O'NEIL asked the Minister for Electricity:

- (1) What is the approximate cost to the State Electricity Commission for the erection of street poles?
- (2) Have tenders ever been called for this work?
- (3) If so, how do the tenders compare with the cost of erection by State Electricity Commission staff?

Mr. WATTS replied:

- (1) The cost of erecting a pole is affected by many variable factors and can vary as much as from £2 10s. to over £50 a pole. The cost would refer to the labour of getting a pole on the site, preparing a pole for the equipment, digging the hole, erecting the pole, filling in and creosoting.

The length of the pole used depends on the number of circuits the pole will carry and on the voltage. Poles vary from thirty to sixty feet and the depth of the hole from five feet six inches to eight feet six inches.

Some of the factors occasioning variation in labour costs are—

the distance from depot to the job;

the size of the pole;

the amount of preparation for crossarms and other equipment; the depth and diameter of the hole (related to the length and size of the pole);

the type of soil, which can vary from hard rock, through various clays, loams and loose sand to clean, firm sand, varied again from dry through damp to exceedingly wet. Some soils are better in winter and some in summer;

whether the hole must be dug by hand or is suitable for mechanical equipment. This depends on surface, road conditions, accessibility and the type of soil; whether a single pole is to be erected or a number of poles in a run;

whether the pole is erected in the vicinity of live mains or not.

The figure of £2 10s. could be regarded as the probable cost per pole for the shortest single circuit pole with a number in a run and all conditions generally favourable. The figure of £50 would be for the longest pole set deeper in bad ground with most of the conditions unfavourable.

- (2) No; one reason being that it is necessary to preserve safety and security when erecting poles among live mains and experienced technicians are required.
- (3) Answered by No. (2).

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

WELLINGTON DAM OPENING

Presence of Police

Mr. MAY asked the Minister for Police:

- (1) Is it a fact that Bunbury, Collie, and Brunswick Junction members of the Police Force were on duty before and at the time of the official opening of the Wellington Dam last Friday, the 21st October, 1960?
- (2) If so, for what reason were police officers placed at the weir on that date?

Mr. PERKINS replied:

I have no idea whether police officers were on duty or not. The disposition of the Police Force is entirely a matter for the appropriate officers, and I would not think that other than normal procedure was followed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL

Returned

Bill returned from the Council with amendments.

BILLS (7)—FIRST READING

1. Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment Bill.
On motion by Mr. Ross Hutchinson (Chief Secretary), Bill introduced, and read a first time.
2. Fisheries Act Amendment Bill.
On motion by Mr. Ross Hutchinson (Minister for Fisheries), Bill introduced, and read a first time.
3. Government Railways Act Amendment Bill.
On motion by Mr. Court (Minister for Railways), Bill introduced, and read a first time.
4. Western Australian Marine Act Amendment Bill.
On motion by Mr. Court (Minister for the North-West), Bill introduced, and read a first time.
5. Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill.
On motion by Mr. Perkins (Minister for Labour), Bill introduced, and read a first time.
6. Companies Bill.
7. Simultaneous Deaths Bill.
On motions by Mr. Watts (Attorney-General), Bills introduced, and read a first time.

BILLS (2)—REPORTS

1. Paper Mill Agreement Bill.
2. Totalisator Agency Board Betting Bill. Reports of Committee adopted.

ACTS AMENDMENT (SUPERANNUATION AND PENSIONS) BILL

Second Reading

MR. BRAND (Greenough—Treasurer)
[5.3]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill is designed to effect amendments to the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act, 1938-58 and the Superannuation Act, 1871-1958. In dealing with the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act, consideration has been given to requests from contributors and contributor organisations to effect amendments to the Act in order to improve the conditions applicable under several of the present provisions.

Here I might interpolate that amendments to this Act seem to be very difficult for the layman to grasp in full; and when these amendments were suggested, before we could go forward with the preparation of the necessary legislation, it was found necessary to make a thorough investigation. The Under-Treasurer and

his officers therefore gave quite a deal of time to making a very full survey of the situation, and these amendments now come forward as a result of that survey.

At present, female contributors can only elect to contribute for retirement at the age of 60 years. As conditions in the Government service allow a female to continue in employment until the age of 65 years is reached, no logical argument exists whereby she should not elect to receive her superannuation at that age. It has been recommended by the actuary, however, that no employee should expect the State to contribute its share of the pension unless the prospective contributor has served the State for an aggregate period of 10 years.

Provision is therefore made in the Bill to allow females to elect for retirement at the age of 65 years and to restrict any employee, whether male or female, from becoming a contributor after the operation of the amendment, unless an aggregate service of 10 years will be completed before attaining the elected retiring age.

The maximum number of units now available to contributors is 26, and this maximum is reached when the salary exceeds £2,080 per annum. The existing scale of units was designed originally to provide a superannuation pension of approximately 50 per cent. of salary. With the advent of inflation and correspondingly higher salaries, it will be obvious that a maximum of 26 units, which covers only salaries of up to £2,080 per annum, is no longer adequate in the case of higher salaries if the designed ratio of pension to retirement salary is to be maintained.

In other State and Commonwealth superannuation schemes the maximum number of available units has been increased in order to offset the effect of inflation, and it is proposed to follow suit in this State. For example, in the Commonwealth scheme the maximum number of units is now 54. In New South Wales it is 48, and in Victoria and South Australia 36. The Bill now under consideration allows for an extension in the unit scale from 26 to 42 which, on average, is approximately in line with other States and the Commonwealth.

Consideration has also been given to the financial position of a widow following the death of her husband who dies while a contributor to the scheme or after retirement. The trend in other funds has been examined, and it has been established that the majority of the States and the Commonwealth provide for a widow's pension equal to five-eighths of the husband's entitlement, which, on the present unit value of 17s. 6d. per week, is equivalent to approximately 11s. per week per unit. It is therefore proposed that this rate be applied to widows in this State, which would result in an increase of 2s. 3d. per week per unit.

It is proposed in the Bill (following agreement by the Superannuation Board on the sharing of the increased cost) that the cost will be shared between the contributors and the State on the same basis as hitherto, i.e., two-sevenths payable by the fund and five-sevenths by the State. To a large extent, this increase in widows' benefits will remove the anomalies which occurred because of the supplementation of superannuation pensions by a flat rate under the repealed Pensions Supplementation Act.

Another anomalous situation exists in respect of a group of pensioners who commenced to draw their pensions before the 1st January, 1958, and who were contributing for more than eight units. At present these pensioners are paid at 15s. per week for each unit, plus a flat rate supplementation of £1 per week. The unit, at present, is 17s. 6d. per week.

When the 1957 amendment Act was passed to grant a unit value of 17s. 6d. for each unit, existing pensioners with units over eight received less for their units in comparison with contributors who retired subsequently. It is now proposed to bring the group of pensioners concerned into line with the current rate of 17s. 6d. per week for each unit. The amounts contributed for units held by retired contributors and existing contributors are at the same rate, and there is no reason whatever why the same rate of benefit should not be applied in respect of both classes of pensioner.

Another matter which requires attention is the State's liability in respect of a statutory office-holder, or those persons appointed to a statutory office for a limited term of years. Under present provisions, if the reappointment of such an officer is not made at the expiration of his term, he is regarded as a "retirement" with entitlement to a pension, comprising a *pro rata* proportion from the fund in accordance with the amount paid as personal contributions, plus the full share which would have been paid by the State if he had continued in State employment until he had at least attained the age of 60 years.

The State would be in an inequitable position where an appointment of a statutory office-holder was not renewed after, say, a six-year term, and the officer was a comparatively young man. Under present provisions the State would be liable, over his lifetime, for a very large sum of money as a reward for a very short service. It is therefore proposed that the benefit in such a case should be a pension on a *pro rata* basis for both fund and State shares, and subject further to a minimum service of 10 years. Otherwise, on termination of office after less than 10 years' service, only a refund of personal contributions would be made.

One matter which has been contentious for a number of years is the provision in the Act which prohibits the payment of a

benefit to a retired contributor until he has cleared all leave due to him on ceasing duty after attaining the age of 60 or 65. The scheduled contribution rates of a contributor under the Act are designed to ensure that the fund is financially able to pay its share of the pension at the elected retiring age. It is an established policy that the State should not pay pension and leave payments concurrently, so there exists a reason why the State should not pay its share of pension during the period the officer is clearing his final leave.

However, no argument can be advanced whereby the fund should not meet its obligation following the cessation of duty by the officer on or after attaining the elected retiring age, and it is now proposed that in such a circumstance, the fund will be liable for the payment of its share of the pension during the leave period following retirement.

In regard to the fund share of pension benefits as just explained, there is a group of contributors who are stipendiary magistrates and whose retirement age is fixed by law at 70 years of age. The maximum age for retirement under the Superannuation and Family Benefits Act is 65. A period of five years is therefore non-productive in the way of benefits for this group. It is proposed, therefore, that some benefit from their contributions to the fund should accrue to the magistrates; and, in accordance with a Commonwealth fund provision, the ultimate payment of the fund share following their retirement will be increased by a percentage in respect of each completed year of service beyond age 65. In effect, the accruing additional payment can be likened to interest on moneys which they have accumulated to their credit up to their 65th birthday. The cost involved would be met from the fund.

The only other item of importance in the Bill in regard to 1938 Act provisions is in relation to contributors who are retired on the ground of physical or mental incapacity. Every contributor joining the fund is obliged to be medically fit; but often deficiencies in health have been disclosed after a short period of membership of the fund, and in that regard the present provisions of the Act allow for pension benefits only after a membership of not less than three years' duration.

There is a possibility, however, that a contributor could become incapacitated from an injury arising from his Government employment; and, in such a case, it is felt that if such an injury were sustained after the employer had become a contributor, but before the three-year period of membership had elapsed, pension benefits should be paid. The Bill contains the necessary amendment.

In the matter of pensioners employed or re-employed in the State service, several cases have come under notice where widows

have been engaged in employment in some branch of the service; and, likewise, a retired contributor, whose particular qualifications make it desirable that he be engaged on a particular job, has been re-employed in the service. Under section 80 of the Act, it is now required that, subject to certain exemptions and concessions, the State share of pension be suspended during the period of employment or re-employment. The incidence of such employment is not great, and the present provisions have been found to be harsh in their application to some deserving cases of widows or retired pensioners. It is therefore proposed to delete the restriction now imposed by the Act.

The date proposed for the commencement of the amendments is the 1st January, 1961, with any pension increases becoming effective on the first pay day after that date. The estimated cost of these proposed amendments will result in an estimated annual charge to the Consolidated Revenue Fund of £15,000.

The remainder of the Bill deals with benefits being paid to those old members of the Service who receive pensions under the 1871 Act. Most of these pensioners are of an advanced age, and have been retired for many years. The pension originally provided for under the 1871 Act did cater reasonably for their retirement years; but because of the loss in the value of money over the last decade, their pension payments became inadequate in comparable purchasing power.

For this reason several attempts have been made over the years to alleviate their position. But on a recent examination of the problem, it has become clear that some pensioners have benefited more than others by reason of percentage increases, and other adjustments, to their assessed pensions on retirement. The methods employed to date in adjusting pensions payable under the 1871 Act, have not resulted in equitable treatment for all pensioners, and a fresh approach to the problem is required. As by far the great majority of State pensioners come under the provisions of the 1938 Act, it would be logical to apply to the 1871 Act pensions the same adjustments as have been made to the 1938 Act pensions.

Accordingly, the Bill provides for the application of a formula which is designed to grant pensioners, under the 1871 Act, the equivalent increase in benefits provided by the State for pensioners under the 1938 Act, between the date of retirement of an officer, and the 1st January, 1961. The method to be employed is to fix the number of units under the 1938 Act which would have been necessary at the time of retirement to give the pensioner the same original pension as was granted under the 1871 Act. The increases in unit values since the date of a pensioner's retirement are then to be applied in order to determine the appropriate pension payable in the future.

As is to be expected, the application of the proposed formula would result in some pensioners receiving increases, and others decreases. This is because of uneven treatment in the past, whereby those pensioners on the lower rates under the 1871 Act were more favourably treated than the lower-paid pensioners under the 1938 Act; and, conversely, those on the higher pensions under the 1871 Act received less favourable treatment than the higher-paid pensioners under the 1938 statute. It is not necessary, however, to reduce any pension below the amount now paid, and the Bill provides accordingly. The estimated cost to the State is £8,000 per annum, but this figure will reduce with the passage of time.

That deals with the amendments, which, in fact—with the exception of those relating to the widow's pensions—do not grant any increase, but aim at ironing out certain anomalies, and making certain adjustments to the 1871 Act, in order that, in the case of those aged pensioners, a more reasonable pension may be paid.

On motion by Mr. Hawke, debate adjourned.

Message: Appropriation

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

OPTOMETRISTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 15th September.

MR. NULSEN (Eyre) [5.21]: I notice there is an amendment on the notice paper in the name of the Minister for Health, which will not incur my strenuous opposition to this Bill, because it is different now from when it was first introduced. I feel that with many of these Bills the tendency is to raise the standard of the profession which, of course, tends to create a monopoly; and this sometimes causes a great deal of heartburning. This is so because there are a great number of people who are not able to obtain the necessary qualifications.

I am not speaking against qualifications at all, but I am sure everyone will agree with me when I say there are a number of subjects that could quite easily be left out; they are superfluous.

There are two legs to the definition of optometry which reads as follows:—

"Optometry" or "the practice of optometry" means—

- (a) the employment of methods, other than methods which involve the use of drugs, for the measurement of the powers of vision; and

I want to stress the phrase "powers of vision"—

- (b) the adaptation of lenses and prisms for the aid of the powers of vision.

That is where the difference comes in. The effect of the conjunction, "and" in the Act is that a person is not required to be a registered optometrist unless he carries out both the activities included in the definition. Therefore any person without any qualification may carry out any one of the legs of the definition.

That being so, it would be legitimate for two different persons to occupy adjoining rooms—the one person undertaking sight-testing, and the other spectacles-making. This could provide what would purport to be a full optometrical service. Further, it would give control in accordance with the spirit of the Act, and the intention of Parliament. That is the manner in which the Minister introduced the Bill.

By cutting out the spectacles-maker we will render it difficult for the oculist to apply himself to the work he is undertaking. The amendment in the Bill seeks to substitute the word "or" for the word "and." The whole effect is that a person must be a registered optometrist to carry out either leg of the definition. As I said earlier, a spectacles-maker is a very important person in his relationship to the oculist or the eye specialist. I have had many rings from eye specialists to inform me they could hardly do without the spectacles-maker.

Even though the Bill will provide for the spectacles-maker who is at present in business, I wonder what would happen if such a spectacles-maker were to die within a week or two after the Bill was proclaimed. I suppose it would mean we would be without the services of this profession, as it relates to the business of the particular individual. We would also be without the dispensing of prescriptions which is practised by a firm I have in mind.

I also feel that protection by examination for higher qualifications is sometimes too stringent. To my mind that is one of the reasons why there is such a scarcity of dentists today. Because of this scarcity, a monopoly has been created in the dental profession. What are we going to do about it? I know the Minister is aware that he is short of dentists; I know he is aware of the shortage that exists throughout Australia. I am at a loss to know how we will remedy the position.

I think at times that the standard of qualifications required for the various professions is getting ahead of the ordinary individual. I well remember the time when one could obtain a set of teeth, and good teeth—I have such a set of teeth—from those who did not qualify by examination, but by their practical experience,

which was obtained prior to the proclamation of the Act tightening up the profession generally. Those who have qualified either by time, or by examination, do not mind how high a standard is set.

The Minister should give consideration to the matter of qualifications. I know a standard must be set, and I do not suggest we should lower the standard; but I think we will get to the stage where, unless people are on a very high salary, they will be unable, because of the high fees asked, to secure the service to which they are entitled. For example, how would the pensioners be able to meet these costs?

As an example, let us consider the building trade. I am sure members will agree that there, to a great extent, we have created a monopoly. If there is a plumbing job to be done at my place which requires no professional skill, and which may cost only 7s. 6d., I am not permitted to do it; I must call in a plumber, whose services would cost me anything from £3 to £6. I know members who have had such an experience. I do not blame the tradesmen concerned; I blame Parliament for not going into the matter more thoroughly. I am one of those who should be blamed, because I, myself, am only just waking up to the fact.

Because monopolies have been created in various professions, we find we are not able to receive the attention to which we are entitled. Some such professions require very high qualifications; while, on the other hand, there are professions which do not. Let us take the example of the barber. His conditions of registration are such as to make it necessary for us to pay 5s. for a haircut. I can see people in this Chamber whose hair would not take more than two minutes to cut, and yet they have to pay 5s. for a haircut. That would apply to me as well, because I am getting thin on top!

Mr. Hawke: The member for Bunbury looks embarrassed.

Mr. Roberts: It would not take long to cut the Leader of the Opposition's hair.

Mr. NULSEN: I admit that the electrician's profession is a dangerous one. There was a little job on my place which I could have done myself; but I knew it was dangerous to undertake it, and accordingly I had to call in an electrician. A few years ago it would have cost £1 to get that work done; but, because there is a monopoly in that profession, it cost me £7 10s. to have the work carried out. I did not mind paying the £7 10s. to have that work done, because I can afford it on my present salary.

Mr. J. Hegney: What about exterminating white ants?

Mr. NULSEN: I think that our universities are to blame to a certain extent because they are, as I am, and as everybody else here is, in favour of qualifications. But I still argue that the qualifications at times are theoretically too high.

We should be more practical. One can read what he likes about cricket, football, or anything else, but he has to have a lot of practical experience before he is really qualified. It is the practical side we should look to.

Somebody near me whispered "politicians." In that regard, I would say this: The more experience one has in this House the more qualified one becomes. Prior to being a member of Parliament, a person can read as much as he likes, but he has no practical experience.

We have had men in this House who probably left school at 4th standard; and after a few years here they have made even members of the legal profession look childish at times. I am not reflecting on anyone at all.

However, we have to see that our standards are not too high. If they are too high people will not obtain the service to which they are entitled. I am now looking at the member for Avon Valley. He will be retiring shortly; and if he has to pay these high amounts for necessary services, he will need a lot of money; and unless he has a farm, he will not be able to pay. The same thing applies to myself. The member for Murray is not here at the moment, but I think he has a lot more than I have.

Mr. Hawke: A lot more what?

Mr. NULSEN: A lot more finance; and that is very handy. I think we must give consideration to the oculist. I see that the Minister for Health has an amendment on the notice paper, which reads as follows:—

9. The principal Act is amended by inserting after section 34B the following section:—

34C. Any person who not later than the thirty-first day of March, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-one makes application in the prescribed manner to the Board for registration under this Act, and proves to the satisfaction of the Board that—

- (a) he is over the age of twenty-one years and is of good character; and
- (b) being a natural born, or a naturalised, British subject he has resided continuously in the Commonwealth for not less than five years during which period he has resided in this State for at least two years; and
- (c) he has for not less than five years immediately prior to the passing of the Optometrists Act Amendment Act, 1960, been continuously, solely and *bona fide* engaged in

the dispensing of prescriptions made or given by oculists or optometrists as distinct from the craft of lens-grinding and spectacles-making; and

I want to know what is going to happen to our spectacles-makers. I think we should look at that position now. If we agree to these amendments and to the Bill, we will be in a position where we will not have any spectacles-makers, because they will not be qualified. To continue with the amendment—

(d) he has passed a test in the work referred to in section (c) hereof as prescribed by the Board,

shall be entitled on payment of the prescribed registration fee and the prescribed certificate fee to be registered as an optometrist under this Act, and shall be so registered by the Board.

The Minister has introduced this amendment to protect the people mentioned therein. But if the present spectacles-makers went out of the profession, they would have to qualify by examination to come back into that profession, because we are replacing the conjunction "and" by the word "or." Perhaps the Minister could explain the position to the House later on.

I do not want optometrists to be placed in the same position as dentists were. I am to blame for that position myself. I am not speaking of the dentist in a derogatory manner; but those who were practising when the Dentists Act was passed were entitled to the qualifications under that Act as if they were obtained by examination. However, I would go so far as to say this: It is not possible to make any distinction in the work they are doing today and the work performed by qualified men, because they have had practical experience. However, to become a dentist now it is necessary to have almost the qualifications of a doctor. It is necessary to have five years at a university. The Minister can correct me if I am wrong in saying that.

I do not know what the Minister is going to do to obtain the necessary number of dentists that will be required to carry out teeth adjustments in this State. They were getting scarce in my time as Minister.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: It is very difficult to attract students.

Mr. NULSEN: It is difficult to attract students because the standard required by examination is too high. They almost have to have the qualifications of a doctor. I am not keen on making the standard too high; and I am quite sure that if we leave the position to a board or to the University, the standard will get higher and higher. A monopoly will be created for

those who are qualified, in which case people will not be able to pay the amounts that will be demanded for treatment.

My teeth were supplied by a Mr. Bruce Campbell about 10 years ago, and he charged me £8. That man is now practising in the country. I know a person who, the other day, obtained a set of teeth similar to mine, and he was charged £35. How can we expect pensioners and people on the basic wage to pay these prices? How can they obtain the professional attention to which they are entitled? It is almost impossible for them.

As far as dentists are concerned, the position will get worse—and the problem exists throughout the world. This position has been brought about because of the very high standard that is required. This standard is just too ridiculous altogether. It is creating a monopoly and it is causing a lot of distress to the general public. This does not apply to members of Parliament, because they can afford to pay and that is also the position of people in big business; but it certainly does apply to the basic-wage earner and pensioners.

When the Minister is replying, I would like him to explain what effect his amendment will have on the people, and on spectacles-makers in regard to their dispensing of prescriptions. If he can explain that, I will be happy indeed. We do not want to find ourselves in the position that we are in with regard to plumbers and others that I have mentioned. They have a monopoly and it is in their hands to charge what they will. They charge what they please. That is what is going on today. Profits have never been so high in this State as they have been in recent years.

MR. ROSS HUTCHINSON (Cottesloe—Minister for Health—in reply) [5.41]: I thank the member for Eyre for his contribution to this debate. In many respects I agree with the honourable member, particularly when he says, in general terms, that where legislation is introduced to provide for the training and registration of any of the ancillary medical professions there are always, throughout the years, likely to crop up anomalies in this respect or in that. However, Parliament in its wisdom over the years, despite its knowledge of the possibility of such anomalies cropping up, has seen fit to pass many pieces of legislation which have been recorded on our statute book. By way of legislation we have provided for occupational therapists, optometrists, dentists, and physiotherapists.

Mr. J. Hegney: Soon provision will be made for chiropractors.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: It may not be long before the Honorary Royal Commission that was appointed last year comes up with a recommendation to register yet another band of individuals who have to do with some aspect of work pertaining to

what is, in orthodox terms, dealt with by the medical profession. So these problems will crop up.

In 1940 the Optometrists Act was introduced and passed by Parliament without any qualms at the time. In common with other Bills which have been passed by Parliament, that Act provided the machinery for the training and registration of optometrists and for the control of optometrists.

In my introductory speech on this amending Bill I pointed out the reasons for the amendments; but subsequent to that introductory speech approaches were made to me from several sources, and I felt it necessary to introduce the amendment which is on the notice paper in my name. I notice there is another amendment on the notice paper; and with this amendment I quite agree. It is in the name of the member for Leederville.

I would like to say at this juncture that the member for Eyre made mention of the fact that there are high standards for these professions. Perhaps in some professions there is a tendency to have a standard which is too high; and yet I think that is a debatable point. In the interests of public health and safety the standards of all these ancillary professions should be as high as possible.

It is important that the standards of optometrists should be high in order to bring about reciprocal arrangements between the various States. Endeavours are being made to this end at the present time. The honourable member mentioned that costs are high and are rising. This is so with many trades and professions at the present time. Unfortunately, these spiralling costs are reflected in prices charged by the various trades and professions.

The member for Eyre has specifically asked me what my amendment does. I intend to answer him honestly. The amendment merely provides that there may be included one person as a registered optometrist, provided he passes the test.

Mr. Nulsen: What will happen to Mr. Burton?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I am referring to Mr. Burton. History records that it is not good practice for amendments of this nature to provide for only one person. However, it has been done in the past. The only reason I am doing it at the present time is that this man possesses special qualifications in the field of spectacles-making and the dispensing of the spectacles. I refer to spectacles of a particular type that are made for persons who have received severe surgical incisions for cancer, or for severe accident cases.

Mr. Burton, in the considerable period that he has been here, has made himself invaluable to the medical profession and to the optometrical profession in regard to the specialised type of work he performs. I have spoken to the Optometrists Board,

and it will give consideration in the future to utilising his particular qualifications in lecturing to students either at the University or at the Technical College.

The situation will remain the same for optical mechanics, who will continue to exercise their craft of spectacles-making and lens-grinding in accordance with the Act. The amendment will not interfere with their craft, but it will preclude them from practising either of the limbs designated in the definition of optometrists. Only optometrists may practise either of the two limbs referred to in the Act.

However, those who practise the craft of spectacles-making or lens-grinding are not affected. The definition of optometry in the parent Act is as follows:—

(a) the employment of methods, other than methods which involve the use of drugs, for the measurement of the powers of vision;

It is proposed to change the word "and" which follows to the word "or"—

(b) the adaptation of lenses and prisms for the aid of the powers of vision.

The words which follow will explain what I have been trying to tell the member for Eyre. I quote—

These terms do not include the actual craft of lens-grinding and spectacles-making when engaged in by a person who is not an optometrist as hereinbefore defined.

He is permitted to practise his craft.

Mr. Nulsen: What would happen if the spectacles-maker ceased to practise?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Any spectacles-maker who has been dispensing spectacles under the terms of this Act will not be permitted to continue to practise that limb of optometry in the future. In order to practise either of those limbs he will have to become a qualified optometrist.

Mr. Nulsen: The oculist will then be at the mercy of the optometrist.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: He would not be at the mercy of optometrists. The work of the two is proceeding amicably at the present time. The oculist or—to give him another name—the ophthalmologist frequently refers work to the optometrist, and vice versa.

Mr. Nulsen: The oculists told me very definitely that they could not do without the spectacles-makers.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I think the honourable member is perhaps under a slight misconception here. Fears were expressed by the oculists and ophthalmologists that the legitimate liaison between themselves and optometrical firms would be stopped. That is not so. At the present time there is an optometrical firm

in the city which has, I believe, three qualified optometrists on its staff to deal with any optometrical work required.

After a patient has been measured as to his powers of vision, a number of ophthalmologists or optometrists refer the work to that firm, which may still continue to engage in its work, provided it has an optometrist in charge. That is what has happened over the years. That firm came here from the Eastern States. Although it knew there was a loophole in the Act and it could operate without a qualified optometrist, it kept to the spirit of the Act and employed a qualified optometrist.

Mr. Nulsen: This legislation definitely excludes the ordinary spectacles-maker who is not a qualified optometrist.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: It does not stop a spectacles-maker from making spectacles. It merely prevents him from dispensing them, which is the function of an optometrist. I wish to be frank and honest. This firm did carry out that work, and in the spirit of the Act, although there was no necessity for it to do so. In recent times the firm has desired to open up new branches. It has been unable to obtain the services of qualified optometrists, so the work has been carried out by an optical mechanic. Such a person has been contravening the very spirit of the Act. If the firm desires to open branches, it must employ a qualified optometrist to undertake the dispensing work. This is important work, since it plays a part in the first three or four years of study for one to become an optometrist.

My amending Bill will close the loophole in the Act, and any optometrists will be allowed to practise optometry as defined in the Act. The craft of lens-grinders and spectacles-makers will not be interfered with; but they will not be able to perform any part of the optometrists' work as defined.

Mr. Nulsen: It gives the optometrists an absolute monopoly.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: No, it does not. Firms may still practise provided they have a qualified optometrist on their staff. There are three engaged at the present time by this particular firm to which I have referred. In 1940, when introducing a similar Bill, the then Minister for Health said, among other things—

The Bill provides that, after the expiration of six months from the commencement of the Act, any firm desiring to carry on the practice of optometry must have a registered premises or the proportion of the premises used for the purpose.

Mr. Nulsen: I know that.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: It is considered that if there is to be legislation to cover this position, then it should be

carried out properly and in accordance with the spirit of the Act. As Minister for Health, I feel that this Bill is justified. Anybody who wishes to practise optometry must conform to the requirements of the Act.

Mr. Crommelin: If this firm to which the Minister referred wants to open a branch in Fremantle, there would be nothing to prevent the taking of orders in Fremantle and forwarding them to the central office to manufacture.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: There is nothing to prevent that, although I cannot see any value in the firm opening a big branch in Fremantle merely to receive prescriptions and then forward them to its head office. If the firm wanted to do anything of that nature, it need only employ a girl in a small office to receive the prescriptions. Why do that? There is nothing to prevent prescriptions being sent through the mail. If the firm wanted to open a branch in Fremantle, it would have to engage a qualified optometrist to do the work. Unless the member for Eyre has another question at this juncture, I think that any further questions could be left until the Committee stage.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Mr. Roberts) in the Chair; Mr. Ross Hutchinson (Minister for Health) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2 put and passed.

Clause 3—Section 5 amended:

Dr. HENN: The amendment which appears on the notice paper in my name is a small one and I hope the Committee will consider it favourably. When the Minister for Health was speaking on the second reading, he said—

The Optometrists Registration Board considers it desirable that the present number of seven should be increased to eight by the inclusion of a medical practitioner, to be nominated by the British Medical Association.

Optometry is an ancillary medical service; and now that a medical school is established, it is more important than ever that there should be definite liaison between an ancillary medical service and the medical service itself.

I agree with what the Minister said, but I think it would be a little more satisfactory if, instead of a medical practitioner, we had a practising ophthalmologist on the board. The definition of "ophthalmologist" in Blakiston's *Illustrated Pocket Medical Dictionary* reads as follows:—

One skilled in the science of anatomy, physiology, and diseases of the eye.

I believe that the general practitioner is one of the most important cogs in the medical wheel; but on this occasion I think we should define the type of person who shall be on the board. I move an amendment—

Page 2, line 21—Delete the words "medical practitioner" and substitute the words "practising ophthalmologist."

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I have indicated that I have no objection to the amendment. It may improve the wording, but originally I felt it would be wiser to leave the selection of a representative to the B.M.A. itself. However, in view of Dr. Henn's request, and in view of representations made by the ophthalmologists, I believe it may assist in making for better liaison between the ophthalmologists and optometrists in the future. I agree to the amendment.

Mr. NULSEN: I cannot see any objection to the amendment. A practising ophthalmologist would be directly concerned with this work and would be a more suitable person than a general practitioner, although an ordinary doctor would have other qualifications respecting the general physical condition of people. However, in this instance I think it would be more helpful to have a practising ophthalmologist on the board.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 9 put and passed.

New clause 9:

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I move—

Page 4—Insert after clause 8, in lines 6 to 8, the following to stand as clause 9:—

9. The principal Act is amended by inserting after section 34B the following section:—

34C. Any person who not later than the thirty-first day of March, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-one makes application in the prescribed manner to the Board for registration under this Act, and proves to the satisfaction of the Board that—

- (a) he is over the age of twenty-one years and is of good character; and
- (b) being a natural born, or a naturalised, British subject he has resided continuously in the Commonwealth for not less than five years during which period he has resided in this State for at least two years; and
- (c) he has for not less than five years immediately prior to the passing of

the Optometrists Act Amendment Act, 1960, been continuously solely *bona fide* engaged in the dispensing of prescriptions made or given by oculists or optometrists as distinct from the craft of lens-grinding and spectacles-making; and

- (d) he has passed a test in the work referred to in section (c) hereof as prescribed by the Board,

shall be entitled on payment of the prescribed registration fee and the prescribed certificate fee to be registered as an optometrist under this Act, and shall be so registered by the Board.

This amendment conforms to requests that have been made by various people, including the member for Eyre. I think it is fair to say that the Optometrists Board was not over-enthusiastic about it, but its members realise that the man for whom it is being introduced has special qualifications which would entitle him to registration.

Mr. BRADY: In the Act as it stands, a spectacles-maker, or one who is engaged in the grinding of lenses, is specifically excluded. Do I understand from the Minister that this man is only making spectacles, or does the Minister admit that he is doing more than spectacles-making?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I believe that Mr. Burton has in fact been transgressing the spirit of the Act. However, there are reasons for his so doing; and because of his special capabilities, I believe he should be brought under the Act and given an opportunity to register.

Paragraph (d) of the new clause states that he must pass a test in the work referred to, and as prescribed by the board, and the board has assured me that the test will be only on the actual specialised work that he has been doing, and that there will be no attempt to exclude him from registration.

Mr. NULSEN: I cannot agree with the Minister on this. By the Bill the Minister has substituted the conjunction "or" for "and".

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That is so.

Mr. NULSEN: So if Mr. Burton ceases to practise there will be no-one except a qualified optometrist to take his place. I cannot understand why the Minister has introduced the Bill if that is the position, because that is what happens now. As soon as Mr. Burton ceases to practise in the future there will need to be an optometrist working with a spectacles-maker.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That is so.

Mr. NULSEN: That means that the spectacles-maker will be cut out altogether unless he is working with a qualified person. That will create an absolute monopoly in regard to spectacles-making as well as for other eye work. The oculist will be at a disadvantage because he will not be able to go to a highly-qualified man who does nothing but spectacles-making, particularly in cases where a man has to have glasses specially made because of bulges on the face, or a deformation.

We know that this Bill was introduced to cover a certain person who had offended against the law; and I think the Minister will admit that the spectacles-maker must be working with an optometrist—the optometrist must be in the office and the spectacles-maker cannot work on his own.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: No; that is wrong. It is only if the spectacles-maker desires.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. NULSEN: Members seem to be concerned about spectacles-makers. I want to ask the Minister whether Mr. Burton, the spectacles-maker, would be able to carry on. Should he return to the Eastern States he would have no difficulty in practising there—practising without an optometrist as a senior partner. I wonder why there is this difficulty facing him in this State.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: It is true that if Mr. Burton were to return to Victoria he would be able to practise in that State. The reason is that Victoria has the same fault in its legislation as we have in ours. The two limbs which define optometry are to be linked by the conjunction "or", so that an optometrist will have to be able to do both classes of work before he can become qualified; but anyone will be able to perform either class of work without being a qualified optometrist.

Mr. Nulsen: That was the position previously.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: That is so. My amendment on the notice paper seeks to protect Mr. Burton.

Mr. Nulsen: The Bill would not cover his successor.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: No. At the moment optometrists cover the field themselves, and they are able to do the work which Mr. Burton does. However, Mr. Burton has specialised to such an extent that he now possesses special capabilities. Because of the position which he has built up, it is felt he should be covered by the legislation. The fact is that optometry is defined as having two limbs, which are now to be joined by the conjunction "or". Under the present Act a person cannot practise either limb unless he is an optometrist.

Mr. TONKIN: Having listened to the discussion on the clause, I am not too happy with what is proposed under the Bill. My reading leads me to the conclusion that an optometrist does not make spectacles. He is not skilled in the craft of lens-grinding or spectacles-making. We have depended upon the spectacles-maker, as distinct from the optometrist, to meet the needs of the community. In closing this so-called loophole, we are likely to create a difficulty for people who want spectacles made, because the optometrist does not make them.

By agreeing to the provision, we will be improving the position of the optometrist—by making him more secure—but by so doing, we will not improve the position of the spectacles-maker and we might bring about a scarcity of oculists in this State. I hope the Minister will re-examine this aspect to make sure that the proposal in the Bill is the right one to adopt.

The actual prescribing of spectacles is a very important task, but the making of the spectacles is even more important. One can issue as many prescriptions as one likes; but if there is not someone available to make the spectacles, the sight of affected persons will suffer. Optometrists can give prescriptions, but they do not provide the spectacles. The people who interpret the prescriptions and make the spectacles are essential. It seems to me that the spectacles-maker is the one who has been doing the more important work.

I agree that a skilled person is required to examine the sight, to measure the defective vision, and to prescribe the remedy; but so is the person who has to carry out the task of grinding the lens and making the spectacles to suit the vision of a particular individual. In improving the position of the optometrist, we will be creating a difficulty for the people.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: The passage of this Bill will not create a scarcity of spectacles-makers in this State. In ordinary circumstances, the optometrist makes out his prescription and sends it to the optical mechanic in a spectacles-manufacturing firm where lens-grinders and spectacles-makers, capable of interpreting the prescriptions and making the lenses, are employed. The craft will not be lost if this Bill is passed.

It does happen that on some occasions the technician works with the optometrist. There are optometric firms which deal very closely with the ophthalmologist, in that they have qualified optometrists to supervise the work of the technicians. I cannot see any difficulty in regard to the loss of the craft. I say frankly there are some optical mechanics at present who will not be able to go on with the dispensing work they are now performing if the Bill is passed, and that is the extent of the closing of the loophole in the legislation.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: The misunderstanding over this clause seems to relate to paragraph (b) of the definition of "optometry". Paragraph (a) refers to the diagnosis of the powers of vision. That is perfectly clear. Paragraph (b) deals with the implementation of that diagnosis. For instance, it covers a decision whether an individual requires bifocal spectacles. That definition deals with the measurement of the powers of vision, and the adaptation of lenses. The difficulty seems to arise over the word "adaptation." Paragraph (b) covers the making of lenses; in other words, under this paragraph the decision made in paragraph (a) is applied. The examination is another matter altogether.

It is stated at the end of the definition of "optometry" in the Act, as follows:—

These terms do not include the actual craft of lens-grinding and spectacles-making when engaged in by a person who is not an optometrist as hereinbefore defined.

Lens-grinding and spectacles-making are quite separate from the functions referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) of the definition, and the people now carrying out the work covered by these two paragraphs will be able to carry on in the future.

Mr. Tonkin: They will not.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Those classes of people are specifically excluded in the definition of "optometry." Lens-grinding and spectacles-making can be regarded as the mechanical side. To take the illustration of a dentist, he will first find out what is the trouble in his patient—whether there is an abscess or whether there is a toothache. The dentist may decide to remove the teeth. Then, what is parallel to paragraph (b) of the definition of "optometry," the dentist will take an impression if he decides to make a plate. The taking of the impression is related to the work of the optician. The impression is taken, and later on the plate is made. The making of the plate is equivalent to the grinding of the lens and the making of the spectacles. The mechanical side is entirely exempted from the definition of "optometry." I hope what I have said will clear the position.

Mr. NULSEN: The honourable member is absolutely on the wrong track. He referred to the position under the Bill, but not to the amendment of the Minister. As a consequence of the amendment, these persons will not be able to practise one field without the other; and that is the point we are debating. The arguments of the honourable member apply to the position under the existing Act, because the two classes of work are joined together by the word "and."

The reason for this Bill is that there is a loophole in the Act. If this legislation is passed a frame-maker will not be

allowed to practise unless he is under a qualified optometrist. The Minister has made provision for the present frame-maker; but when he ceases operation, the oculist will not be able to obtain the services of a frame-maker unless such frame-maker is under a qualified optometrist. I am sorry that the member for Narragin is on the wrong road altogether. He is explaining the Act as it is, but the Minister has introduced a Bill to alter the Act, so that the optometrist will be absolutely in charge.

Mr. Burton can go to the Eastern States to practise, as the Minister has admitted, but he cannot practise here unless this Bill is passed. But there is no provision for his successor other than that he must practise with an optometrist in charge. If the Minister had not altered the word "and" to the word "or", the Bill would have been all right.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: This Bill will only include Mr. Burton.

Mr. NULSEN: Yes; I know. That is all that is necessary. But from what I can learn, the oculists want Mr. Burton because he is a past master at frame-making.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That is another avenue altogether.

Mr. NULSEN: I know. But that avenue is still open in the Eastern States. We are taking it away here.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: They have been going to correct the situation over there for a long time.

Mr. NULSEN: I hope the Minister will indicate that he will allow an amendment in another place.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: In what regard?

Mr. NULSEN: To allow an oculist to send a prescription to a frame-maker. I have tried Mr. Burton's frames and they are excellent. If I had a pair now, I would not have to be pulling my glasses up and down all the time. I am sure the member for Leederville will have some views in regard to a frame-maker, who is the only person with whom I am concerned.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: The member for Eyre stated that I was off the rails. He is not on the rails himself. The amendment before the Committee simply changes the word "and" to the word "or", but does not delete the exemption in the definition of the word "optometry". According to this definition the lens-grinder and spectacles-maker are exempted, and therefore do not have to register.

Mr. Nulsen: The Minister told us definitely that he has only made provision for this frame-maker.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: The member for Eyre is referring to a particular person; but this exemption is not touched by the amending Bill.

Mr. Tonkin: If you are right, why does the Minister find it necessary to move this amendment to cover Mr. Burton?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: Because he is working under paragraph (b) of the definition and not paragraph (a). Therefore, at present he is able to practise.

Mr. Tonkin: The Minister says he is not really.

Mr. W. A. MANNING: He does not come under the Act because at present he does not have to register as he is not qualified to test vision.

Mr. Nulsen: What effect has "and" got?

Mr. W. A. MANNING: The effect is that an optometrist is qualified to examine the power of vision and to adapt lenses and prisms. The exemption provision is not altered, as the member for Eyre will realise if he studies the Bill.

Dr. HENN: I have taken the opportunity of ascertaining the definition of the various terms as they appear in the dictionary. An ophthalmologist is one skilled in the science of the anatomy, physiology, and diseases of the eye. An optometrist is one who measures the degrees of visual powers, usually without the use of mydriatic which is a substance which dilates the pupil of the eye. An oculist is the same as an ophthalmologist; and an optician is a maker or seller of spectacles or lenses.

I do not believe that the amendment moved by the Minister jeopardises the optician in any way. I do see, however, what it intends to do, which is to prevent the optician from becoming an optometrist to some extent; and I thoroughly agree with the member for Narrogin, because the definition does not include the actual craft of lens-grinding and spectacles-making when engaged in by a person who is not an optometrist. Therefore I cannot see the difficulty raised by the member for Eyre. This amendment will put the optician in a far stronger position.

Mr. NULSEN: I absolutely disagree with the members for Leederville and Narrogin. The Minister and I agree. My concern is for the frame-maker because he is a very important person.

Mr. W. A. Manning: He is still there.

Mr. NULSEN: Why is it that the oculist still wants him, and why is it that he is still allowed to practise in Victoria but not in Western Australia?

Mr. Watts: Is there a distinction between a frame-maker and a spectacles-maker?

Mr. NULSEN: No. The spectacles-maker is a maker of frames, but he can also be a dispenser, I suppose. There is nothing wrong with that. But what I am concerned about—as is the ophthalmologist—is that an optometrist will have to be

approached for the dispensing of any prescription and for the making of the frame. I want to see a frame-maker independent of an optometrist.

Mr. W. A. Manning: He is exempted. You read it.

Mr. NULSEN: If that were so, there would be no need for this Bill. I can see it quite clearly myself; and I believe that it is not I who am labouring under a delusion but the members for Leederville and Narrogin.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: A great deal of what we are talking about now has to do with clause 2 of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Roberts): I agree.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: But you, in your wisdom, Mr. Chairman, have allowed us latitude in this discussion, and I think you were wise in doing so. I cannot agree to give an assurance to the member for Eyre that I will sponsor an amendment in another place to provide that optical-makers may dispense spectacles in the manner prescribed in the second limb of the definition of optometry; because one of the reasons for my bringing the Bill down is to amend the parent Act so as to provide that an optometrist must be qualified—that a man may not practise either of these limbs of optometry unless he is a qualified optometrist under the Act.

Mr. Watts: Previously, unless he practised both, he was not an optometrist?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Yes; previously, unless he practised both limbs he was not an optometrist and therefore could have done one or the other or both.

Mr. W. A. Manning: By "both" you mean what is contained in paragraphs (a) and (b) of the definition of "optometry"?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: Yes. I cannot sponsor an amendment to do as the member for Eyre proposes.

Mr. Nulsen: I suggest you give it consideration, irrespective of (b).

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I think what the honourable member needs is, perhaps, additional legislation or another amendment to achieve his desires; but what he suggests cuts right across the spirit of the original Act, which I am, by means of this amendment, endeavouring to put back into the legislation.

Mr. Nulsen: I think the Minister who dealt with the legislation previously perfectly understood the position at the time he cut out a certain provision.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: No. The whole speech of the then Minister for Health is along the lines that it is essential for both these limbs to be carried out by a qualified optometrist.

Mr. J. Hegney: Did both Ministers have the same adviser?

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I would not think so; although there are some members in this Chamber now who were in the House when that Bill was passed.

The second limb of optometry is quite an important one and deals with the adaptation of lenses and prisms to the individual requirements of the patient in respect of the particulars of the refraction—eyesight test—and the prescription details.

To do this limb of optometry, the optometrist sits the patient in the consulting room chair and makes the necessary measurements such as the inter-pupillary distance between the eyes, general facial measurements, bridge size, lengths and angles of temples, etc. He then discusses with the patient such things as occupational needs and any other matters in relation to the adaptation of the lenses and prisms to the patient's individual requirements.

Then the optometrist writes out his prescription, which is sent on either to a manufacturing firm or to a technician who is employed by the optometrist. When the manufactured article is returned, the fitting takes place and adjustments can be made—and adjustments have to be frequently made—because of the background of knowledge that the optometrist has gained through his experience in study and in practice.

I exhort the Committee to accept this amendment, which is required to permit a man who is not by the Act at present allowed to practise as a registered optometrist, to do so.

Mr. TONKIN: The more the discussion proceeds the less happy I am about what we propose to do. If I understand the position correctly, it is that both optometrists and oculists prescribe; and, as the law stands at present, the prescription should be taken to a spectacles-maker who would dispense it; and that is what Mr. Burton has been doing. The Minister's legislation will ensure that when an optometrist gives a prescription it will have to go to someone else.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: No.

Mr. TONKIN: Yes. Why can it not go to Mr. Burton?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: It can, so long as he does not do the dispensing.

Mr. TONKIN: Is not the dispensing the reading of the prescription and the carrying out of the prescription?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: No; it is not.

Mr. TONKIN: If I get a prescription from a doctor and I take it to the chemist, what does he do?

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: He makes it up.

Mr. TONKIN: Yes. If an optometrist gives me a prescription for spectacles and I take it to Mr. Burton, what does he do? He reads the prescription and makes up the spectacles accordingly.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: That is so; but he does not do the fitting of them on to the patient; nor does he do the actual dispensing work.

Mr. TONKIN: I am not saying that he does. I am saying that the Minister's amendment will make it obligatory, after one optometrist has given a prescription, for another optometrist to dispense it. I cannot see the sense in that.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Some optometrists—

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Roberts): Order! I have been very lenient, but this cross-talk over the Chamber must cease. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will address the Chair.

Mr. TONKIN: I have no hesitation in doing that. The Minister's proposed amendment seeks to overcome the difficulty that faces Mr. Burton. I refer the Minister to paragraph (c) of his amendment, which is intended to cover a man who has been dispensing prescriptions which optometrists and oculists have provided. I can see nothing wrong with that.

If a man is skilled in the art of lens-grinding and spectacles-making, why should he be prevented from making up a prescription supplied by an optometrist or an oculist? Why should we say that a prescription from an optometrist must be presented to another optometrist or to a firm which employs an optometrist? That is what the amending Bill provides: that in future, when an optometrist or an oculist gives a prescription, the prescription can be dispensed only by a firm which has an optometrist.

Why go from one optometrist to another? If there is a man like Mr. Burton, who is skilled in the art of lens-grinding and spectacles-making, why should he not dispense a prescription properly given, in the same way as a chemist dispenses a prescription given by a doctor? Would we say that if a doctor gives a prescription, it can be presented only to a chemist who has a doctor in charge? I think we are overstepping the mark in this amendment; and I am only sorry my attention was not drawn to it earlier and that I did not interest myself in it more when the second reading discussion took place. I am not at all happy about the position. I feel we are doing the wrong thing.

Mr. NULSEN: The definition of "optometry" includes the words, "the adaptation of lenses and prisms for the aid of the powers of vision." If the Minister so desired, he could leave those words out and give authority to someone who will succeed Mr. Burton—because he is protected under the Bill—to make frames subject to an oculist's requirements.

New clause put and passed.

Title put and passed.

Bill reported with amendments.

BETTING CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 6th October.

MR. HAWKE (Northam) [8.12]: The Bill proposes to amend the existing Betting Control Act in some important particulars. As some members would know, the Betting Control Act was approved by Parliament for the purpose of setting up a system of licensed off-course bookmakers in order that off-course betting might be conducted on a legal basis instead of being continued on the old and disgraceful illegal basis which had operated for a considerable number of years.

The amending Bill before us proposes, in the first place, to abolish the existing Betting Control Board and to substitute for it the proposed totalisator agency board. As I was very strongly opposed to the proposals in the Totalisator Agency Board Betting Bill, naturally I am also opposed to the proposals in this Bill.

Another provision in the present measure would lay down that no bet on a horse race shall be accepted by a licensed off-course bookmaker unless the bet, in the event of being a winning straight-out bet, or a winning place bet, shall be paid at the appropriate on-course totalisator odds.

At present, licensed off-course bookmakers pay winning place bets at the appropriate on-course totalisator odds, but they pay winning straight-out bets at what is known as the winning S.P. price; and that is, as I think most members would know, the price at which the winning horse was finally returned by the registered on-course bookmakers.

It has been argued—with some degree of merit, I think—that off-course bookmakers benefit by paying winning straight-out bets at what is called the S.P. price; that is, the price returned by the on-course bookmakers. Briefly, the argument is that the on-course bookmaker, during the currency of betting on a particular racing event, varies the price upon a particular horse according to the amount of wagers laid on that horse. If that particular horse is well supported on the course, naturally the price shortens by the time the race commences. Should the horse in question not be well supported on the course, the opposite occurs and the price of that horse; and, consequently, the S.P. price of that horse—should it win in that later situation—would be quite a long one.

It is further argued that off-course bookmakers do not have to accept the risks which are associated with on-course bookmaking activities; and therefore the off-course bookmakers are benefited by paying winning straight-out bets at the official starting price as returned on the course by the on-course bookmakers.

So, in that regard, I would not have any objection to that principle as set out in this Bill; namely, that licensed off-course bookmakers should not accept any bet and would not be permitted to accept any bet legally, unless it was accepted on the basis that, in the event of its being a winning straight-out bet, or a winning place bet, it would have to be paid at the appropriate on-course totalisator odds for a win or a place.

I raise the point in this matter that licensed off-course bookmakers, under the provisions of the Betting Control Board Act, have offered set prices to their clients, particularly in relation to very important races in Australia. Those important races would be such as the Perth Railway Stakes, the Perth Cup, the Caulfield Cup, the Melbourne Cup, the Doomben Cup, and Doomben £10,000; the Adelaide Cup, and so on. Off-course bookmakers will give to their clients a set price for any particular horse not only on the day of the race, when a start is guaranteed, but also on days before the race; in fact, for weeks before the race.

Whenever an off-course punter, or a person wishing to have a bet at a set price on any horse with an off-course bookmaker, thinks the set price which the off-course bookmaker offers is a good price and better than the punter is likely to get on the day of the race, he can be accommodated in this way on the basis, of course, that should the bet be made in a straight-out fashion before the day of the race, then the punter would lose his stake should the horse be scratched before the day of the race, or even on the day of the race.

Another practice on which off-course bookmakers operate, and which is very popular with many of their clients, is to offer set prices for doubles, even on ordinary race days, in relation to the Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, or Brisbane races; but more particularly in connection with Melbourne races.

In other words, if a person wants to couple up two horses for each of them to win, he can obtain a set price from the bookmaker for the double and he can back his two fancies on that basis. As I understand the appropriate clause in this Bill on that matter, those set prices in the future will not be legally permissible. It seems to me that as the practice in this regard is sought by the punters and not promoted by the bookmakers so much, it should be permitted in the event of the totalisator agency Bill becoming law.

There is also a provision in this appropriate clause for the totalisator agency board, in the operation of totalisator pools, to pay appropriate on-course tote odds in regard to straight-out winning bets and place winning bets. I think we have discussed that particular feature of the new legislation very solidly under the provisions of the previous Bill. It has been

pointed out to members of the Government that the totalisator agency board could, and probably would, run into all sorts of financial trouble by operating the off-course totalisator pool on that basis, particularly when popular Western Australian horses were racing in the Eastern States and were successful either in winning a race or running a place when competing in those racing events in other States of Australia.

Whether we made any impressions on Ministers of the Government in stressing the financial dangers in that direction to the totalisator agency board, and therefore to the Government, I do not know. However, it is a financial danger should this new legislation become law, and one which should receive a great deal of additional investigation at the hands of Ministers, and a great deal of serious consideration, particularly by the chairman and committee members of the W.A. Turf Club.

I understand that the chairman of the Western Australian Trotting Association is a fanatical believer in off-course totalisators; and presumably, therefore, he is not at all concerned about any financial difficulties or disadvantages when he is 100 per cent. all out to get the off-course totalisator system established. Probably he believes that should there be some weaknesses uncovered in its earlier operations, Parliament would be available to make such alterations to the law as he would wish to have made; and so he goes more or less blindly on, strongly advocating the setting up of an off-course totalisator system in the belief, no doubt, that once a system is established it can be re-fashioned to suit his requirements, and maybe the requirements of the W.A.T.C. at some later date.

In that regard I would stress the point—as I did in connection with the other Bill—that all trotting and racing clubs now receive a guaranteed percentage of certain classes of taxation which are raised by the Government from the operations of off-course licensed bookmakers. Therefore, under the present law, the racing clubs and the trotting clubs have a guaranteed return; a return guaranteed to them by the law of the State.

Under the proposed new legislation they will have no such guarantee. In fact, they will have no guarantee at all; because, under the new legislation, the Government is to take the whole of the taxation levied upon the operations of off-course bookmakers. The racing clubs and the trotting clubs, under the proposed new legislation, will get some return only in the event of the proposed totalisator board making a net profit on its operations. We have sounded a strong note of warning about this, and about the board running into financial difficulties, particularly in regard to the operation of the proposed totalisator pool on Eastern States races.

So the prospect of racing clubs and trotting clubs receiving net profits out of the operations of the proposed new board, is a very doubtful, if not a very dim prospect. However the appropriate Ministers in the Government have succeeded in talking the W.A. Trotting Association and the W.A. Turf Club into supporting the new legislation, or vice versa; that is, the Trotting Association and the Turf Club have succeeded in talking the Government into it.

The only other point in this Bill that I wish to discuss is in relation to the investment tax. There is a provision which proposes to make it obligatory, in a legal sense, for the new totalisator agency board to impose an investment tax on all those persons who make investments with, or through, the totalisator agency board. When the Government introduced this investment tax last year—if I remember rightly—it was opposed very strongly by members on this side of the House. The opposition was based, firstly, on the principle that it was not reasonable to tax punters in this way; and, secondly—and more importantly, I think—because the rates of tax were considered to be most inequitable.

As I remember it, the investment tax lays it down that a person having an investment wager of less than £1 pays 3d. tax for every bet he makes; whereas a person who makes an investment or wager of over £1—even if it is £100—pays only 6d. tax on his wager. So I am opposed to that particular part of this Bill. As the basic principle is bound up with the proposed new legislation in regard to the establishment of a totalisator agency board, and all the other provisions which we had before us previously in that regard, I cannot see my way clear to support this Bill.

MR. TONKIN (Melville) [8.30]: There are a couple of points I want to deal with before the Minister replies. It seems to me it will be necessary for the Government to reconsider the turnover tax; because when the turnover tax was decided upon, it was on the basis of the course returns to bookmakers at the time. I have had an opportunity of having access to duplicates of Treasury returns, and although I know the Government accepts the position that there is very little difference involved, financially, in paying out at bookmakers' prices against tote prices, I do not hold that view at all. My conclusions are it will involve about a 10 per cent. additional pay-out.

I have completed my detailed examination of the sheets made available to me, but as I am able to proceed adding a further week's return, and then a further week, and so on, my original idea has been confirmed, and it shows a distinct additional pay-out averaging about 10 per cent. over, and above, what it would be

if they paid out at bookmakers' prices. If that is borne out in practice—and it is my firm belief it is—and if, of course, investigation proves it one way or another, then obviously the gross profit upon which the tax was levied originally would not be there.

So it may well be, and this is my prediction, that the numbers of bookmakers who the Government believes will still function in outer districts will not be able to operate. If they close up because they cannot operate, then there will be no facilities in those districts for the people, and the Government will lose income. I suggest that is what is going to happen, unless the Government has a look at the financial position, and relieves these people of some of the turnover tax which they are now obliged to pay. I know that in its present frame of mind the Government does not accept this argument. The Government is of the opinion that there is little difference in the two prices, but it is not in very large proportions, so it will not materially affect the issue. I do not accept that at all.

I have gone very carefully into this, and have based my calculations on actual sheets submitted to the Treasury. I have taken the weeks as they come, without selecting any particular week, and my conclusions so far are that bookmakers, had they been paying out on tote prices instead of starting prices, would have had to pay out 10 per cent. more than they have paid out up till today.

A little thought will show that if this is the position their gross profit will completely disappear after they have paid turnover tax; and, of course, they will not be able to operate. There will be a slight set-off against that in their favour. Up till now on local races, on placed horses they have been paying out on a dividend which is calculated on a 13½ per cent. commission deduction. The Government's latest legislation reduces the dividend to the on-course totalisator better. The Treasurer is going to get an additional 1½ per cent. out of the pool. That in effect is making the people who go to the races pay a contribution towards the off-course tote. When they know that, they will not be so happy about it; but that is the position.

Because dividends will be that much less than they have been hitherto, the bookmakers who will be paying out on the local dividend prices will not have to pay out so much as they have paid out previously for the same results. So they will get some financial benefit that way, which could quite easily be swallowed up by the fact that they will have to pay out from straight-out prices on the totalisator prices; and if the Eastern States experience is borne out with regard to local prices, they will have to pay out considerably more on those straight-out winning bets than they

paid previously. That might very well absorb the benefit which they would gain from paying out at smaller place dividends.

I have made no research with regard to the local section of racing at all, so I do not know what the experience is. My calculations have been based on Victorian results. In New South Wales the tote dividends are paid to the nearest 3d. instead of the nearest 6d.; and it is my belief that the disparity between the totalisator prices and the starting prices will be actually greater in New South Wales than it is in Victoria. If that is so, then the margin will be greater than 10 per cent. So with regard to the volume of business done on New South Wales races, the situation for the totalisator board, and for the bookmakers, will be that much worse.

I will have an opportunity of dealing with this in more detail later when I shall present to the House actual calculations I have made from the results—not from prepared cases, but from the actual results of persons operating in the industry—to show what the experience is, not in isolated cases, but as a general rule.

No matter what one wants to think about it, and how much wishful thinking one indulges in, one cannot get away from the cold facts of the situation. For example, if a bookmaker under existing prices is paying out on a particular race £240, and it shows that on the totalisator prices he would have paid out £280—and that trend is borne out from race to race, and week to week—then of course there is only one conclusion to which one can come, and that is, that the obligation to pay out at totalisator prices, whilst it is going to be a great boon to the punter, while it lasts, will not last long enough for him to get much benefit. That is as I see it.

I am all for it if it will put into the pockets of those who provide the money to keep the racing game going—namely, the punters—a bigger return than they are getting now; but as I see it, it will make it impossible for the bookmakers to continue to operate, having regard to the fact that the turnover tax was based on a gross profit which they will now no longer be able to earn from the business on the altered basis.

As the saying goes, "the proof of the pudding is in the eating." We cannot force men to stay in business and lose money. When a man is satisfied he has no hope at all, he gives the game away. That is what it seems to me will happen under the new proposals. If it were just mere guesswork on my part I would not suggest to the House that it took any notice of what I am saying; but I have spent some hours in actually working out what the results would be if this law, which is now before us, had actually been in operation.

On the results which have been shown, and which are completely authentic—because it is on these figures that these people are paying their turnover tax to the Treasury—the conclusions to which I have come up to date are that these pay-outs on totalisator prices on Eastern States races will involve an additional 10 per cent. pay-out. So if a bookmaker is returning £1,000 a week to his clients in winning bets, then he will have to return £1,100 a week. If he has to find an extra £100 out of the same volume of business which he is doing now, and pay the same level of turnover tax, then in my view he will not be able to operate.

I am taking as a guide the South Australian figures which are very complete. Where they pay a winning bets tax; and it is a reasonable assumption that the winning bets are not inflated, because if they were shown as a greater figure than they are it would involve greater tax. So the figures shown for South Australia as winning bets are, in fact, winning bets. If those were paid at totalisator odds, there would be no margin left for the bookmakers at all, on my calculations.

I repeat that my calculations have been made on actual results as shown from week to week, with no doctoring in any respect at all, and no selection of particular weeks where conditions have been favourable. They have been taken on face from race to race and week to week; and an investigation leads me to the conclusion that at least a 10 per cent. additional pay-out is involved in this method. Of course, when we come to apply that to the totalisator board, if calculations have been based on bookmakers' experience, and the board has to meet up with this experience, then the anticipated profit it will make will no longer be there. It will have disappeared, because the board will have had to pay the money out in winning bets.

If that does happen, and I confidently predict it will, then the whole thing becomes a colossal financial failure, and the Government will lose revenue; the clubs will get practically nothing, and the facility which up till now has been availed of by the people who wish to use it legally, will no longer be availed of in that way, and we will have a growth of illegal betting.

Whilst I welcome the idea that those who are providing the bulk of the money to enable racing to continue to operate, will have more money with which to play—they will still lose it in the end, but they will get a bigger return from winning bets—as I see it, it will result in this hybrid system the Government has developed completely collapsing, because it will be impossible for the bookmakers in zones not declared, to continue to operate, unless some of the financial burden is removed from their shoulders by means of reduced deductions.

If the Government is forced to do that, then it is losing the revenue which it is now getting, and its anticipations with regard to no loss to the Treasury cannot possible be realised. I think it is my duty to point those things out. Having done so, there is nothing more I am required to do. It now becomes the responsibility of the Government either to go ahead, or modify its proposals. But that is the Government's business. Once the points are brought up for consideration, and if they are dismissed lightly as of no importance, that is all right with me. I do not care. I still hold my opinions about it, and they are not opinions which I formed lightly or out of caprice; but they are opinions which I have formed as a result of very careful consideration and study of the information available to me.

I am of the opinion that the Government has not gone sufficiently into this aspect to enable it to determine, with any degree of confidence, that the path which it is following in connection with this matter is the right path. I would have felt much better about it had the proposals been referred to Mr. Smythe, who gave evidence before the Royal Commission, and who used figures in calculation which would be taken as a guide for the establishment of any off-course totalisator system.

But, so far as I know, Mr. Smythe's opinion of this hybrid system has not been obtained; nor has any consideration been given outside of the Government and its advisers, to what is actually involved in this paying out at totalisator odds as compared with straight-out figures.

It is not sufficient just to glance at the results from day to day and week to week and say, "It looks as though they balance out pretty well. Sometimes the totalisator is greater than the bookmakers' figure, and sometimes it is the other way, so we need not worry about that," because one would get an entirely wrong impression.

From the analyses I have made up to date, it appears that in five races out of seven in Victoria the figure is in favour of the bookmakers' starting price and against the totalisator figure; meaning that if one were paying out at the totalisator figure one would have to find more money to make the pay-out in five races out of every seven.

It seems to me very significant that the biggest margin is where the winner's price is around about 4 or 5 to 1, in the middle range of prices where the punters seem to be supporting the winners rather than in those instances where one gets a result where there is very little money invested on the winner and the disparity on some dividends is as much as 20 per cent. But I say it averages out as far as I can see around about 10 per cent., which is very

substantial, and could cause the anticipated profit completely to disappear. Time will tell, of course.

In actual experience one cannot order these things to suit oneself. One has to put up with what the experience is; and when we have the experience, we will know precisely whether the arguments advanced from this side of the House are sound or whether the Government has had all the information required and the proposals are completely workable.

I express the gravest doubts about this system being able to function; and I repeat: In my view, instead of having these facilities in country districts under the Betting Control Act as is anticipated, the Government will find that under the changed conditions a number of book-makers will find it completely impossible to operate.

MR. PERKINS (Roe—Minister for Police—in reply) [8.48]: I think the speeches of both the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have made it clear that this legislation is very much consequential on the previous Bill which we discussed at some considerable length in this House last week. There are differences of opinion between the Opposition and the Government on these matters; and it is only time that will tell who is right.

I say that the Government has not gone into this matter lightly. We have had very careful examination made of the various points discussed by both the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the last few minutes. It can be taken for granted that there is some difference between the straight-out dividends on the totalisator and the starting prices, but the Government considers, with the advice available to it, that the differences are not so great as to cause the very severe difficulties which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, in particular, has enumerated.

If the position the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has outlined should develop, then, of course, it could be embarrassing, and perhaps some adjustments would be necessary. But the indications are, so far as the Government and its advisers can assess them, that the difference is not as great as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition fears, and that it can be absorbed by the bookmakers.

From the arguments deduced, it seems that the punters are going to be somewhat better off. The danger, of course, is to the bookmakers and to the Government if, by any chance, it was impossible for the bookmakers to carry on and that part of the proposed system was to fold up. However, I emphasise that the Bill as framed is consequential on the previous legislation; and once the Government fully

accepted the previous legislation and the provisions contained therein, it was obvious the provisions in this Bill were necessary.

Under those circumstances, I can only leave it at that and say the Government is reasonably confident its assessment of the position is correct.

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

Ayes—25.

Mr. Bovell	Mr. W. A. Manning
Mr. Brand	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Burt	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Court	Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Craig	Mr. O'Neill
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Owen
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Roberts
Dr. Henn	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Wild
Mr. Lewis	Mr. I. W. Manning
Mr. Mann	(Teller.)

Noes—23.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Bickerton	Mr. Moir
Mr. Brady	Mr. Norton
Mr. Curran	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Evans	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Hall	Mr. Rowberry
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Heal	Mr. Toms
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. May
Mr. Jamieson	(Teller.)

Majority for—2.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

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

TOTALISATOR AGENCY BOARD BETTING TAX BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 20th October.

MR. HAWKE (Northam) [9.0]: This is a very short Bill. It has only one provision in it; namely, that the proposed Totalisator Agency Betting Board, should it be set up, shall pay a tax of 5 per cent. on all bets made through the board, or with the board.

I understand that the whole of this tax will be paid into Consolidated Revenue and be available for use by the Government. In other words, not one penny of it will go to the racing clubs or the trotting clubs. Here again, the trotting clubs and the racing clubs are losing out. However, they do not seem to be awake to what is happening, or to what is being put over them by the Government; or, alternatively, to what they are agreeing to have put over themselves.

I have no objection to this Bill. The Government is entitled to take 5 per cent. by way of taxation on the total turnover of the operations of the proposed board,

should it come into existence. I certainly would like to see some reasonable percentage of the tax guaranteed by law to the trotting clubs and the racing clubs. However, the Government proposes to take the lot. Apparently the racing clubs and the trotting clubs have been prevailed upon to agree to that. It amazes me that they could so easily allow the wool to be pulled over their eyes. However, that is their business, not mine.

They are giving away a guaranteed legal income for the shadow of possible net profits to be made by this new board. I am surprised that hardheaded businessmen, such as are associated with the W. A. Trotting Association and the W.A. Turf Club, should allow this one to be put over them. I congratulate the Treasury officers who have taken part in the negotiations, and who have succeeded in winning such a complete and overwhelming victory for the State Treasury. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

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

BETTING INVESTMENT TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 20th October.

MR. HAWKE (Northam) [9.8]: This Bill is related to some of the other Bills which have already been discussed and decided upon in this House. It proposes that the existing betting investment tax shall apply to the operations of the proposed totalisator agency board.

As I said earlier this evening, the rates of betting investment tax are 3d. on all bets up to and including £1, and 6d. on each bet in excess of £1. I have no desire to expand on the claim I made earlier that the principle of imposing an investment tax is bad, and that the proportions which I have just read are almost inequitable.

Years ago, as you may remember, Mr. Speaker, there was a winning bets tax. Under the provisions of that law any person who collected a winning bet paid a tax on it. That was bad enough, as the Minister for Works may remember. It caused a lot of hostility among those who collected winning bets, particularly when they had experienced a total losing day.

However, this new form of betting investment tax is a thousand times worse than the old winning bets tax, because a punter now pays a tax even if he never has a winning bet. He pays this betting investment tax on every bet he makes. So the injustice of it, in that regard, can

easily and quickly be understood. As I am opposed in principle to the investment tax, it is hardly necessary for me to say that this Bill receives my opposition.

MR. BRAND (Greenough—Treasurer—in reply) [9.10]: I merely wish to say that the investment tax has been applied from the time the legislation was implemented—legislation to which this Parliament agreed last year. Whilst naturally there have been some protests, I feel that the punter has accepted the fact that an investment tax has to be paid. The system has continued very smoothly; and, from the point of view of the Treasury, very satisfactorily.

Mr. Hawke: I should think so!

Mr. BRAND: Whilst I appreciate the fact that the Leader of the Opposition is continuing his opposition on this matter, it has been clearly stated that this tax is a very profitable one. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the winning bets tax, which has to be paid even when there is a losing day.

I understand that Sir Thomas Playford applies a winning bets tax in his State, and says that it does not upset anyone, because people pay only when they win. The fact remains that we have an investment tax in this State which has been paid by the punter over a period of time. It is proposed that to ensure some income for the Treasury in the new organisation the investment tax should still apply.

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

Ayes—25.

Mr. Bovell	Mr. W. A. Manning
Mr. Brand	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Burt	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Court	Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Craig	Mr. O'Neill
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Owen
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Roberts
Dr. Henn	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Wild
Mr. Lewis	Mr. I. W. Manning
Mr. Mann	(Teller.)

Noes—23.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Bickerton	Mr. Molr
Mr. Brady	Mr. Norton
Mr. Curran	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Evans	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Hall	Mr. Rowberry
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Heal	Mr. Toms
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. May
Mr. Jamieson	(Teller.)

Majority for—2.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

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

TOTALISATOR DUTY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 20th October.

MR. HAWKE (Northam) [9.17]: This Bill proposes to amend the Totalisator Duty Act. It aims to do this by increasing the rate of duty in all from the present 13½ per cent. to 15 per cent. This will apply not only to the proposed off-course totalisators, but also to the existing on-course totalisators.

Before going on to deal with the iniquitous proposal in the Bill to increase the duty from 13½ per cent. to 15 per cent. in connection with on-course totalisators, I would be interested to know from the Treasurer, should he be in a position to tell us, what will be the position regarding moneys held by the totalisator agency board, which moneys will not be transmitted to the on-course totalisator, and which will not go into the board's own totalisator pool; in other words, will there be any totalisator duty of any kind imposed upon those moneys which the board will hold in its capacity as a book-maker?

As I read the Bill, there will be no totalisator duty at all leviable upon those moneys. However, I would be pleased to learn from the Treasurer, when he is replying to the debate, just what the position will be legally in respect of those moneys.

I oppose very strongly indeed the proposition in this Bill to increase the totalisator duty on on-course totalisator investments. In recent years we have heard a lot about the necessity to encourage more people to go to the races to enable the racing game to be strengthened and built up. During that period we have also heard of many suggestions to encourage people to go to the races and do their wagering upon the racecourses. We have also been told that off-course betting operations and off-course punters should be taxed to help build up racing at the courses.

Another suggestion has been that the racing and trotting clubs in their operations should have fewer governmental taxes put upon them. Yet in this Bill we have a proposition that the on-course patron who does any betting at all through the totalisator on the course, whether it is through the win totalisator or the place totalisator, shall be taxed more than he is taxed at present in relation to his totalisator investments. Surely that is a weird proposition! Why offend those people who go to the course and bet on the totalisators; and why punish them financially? Why make them pay 1½ per cent. more tax by way of totalisator duty?

This proposal seems to me to run counter to all of the Government's reasoning in relation to this problem. On-course punters,

like off-course punters, are easily offended and bruised. They take the attitude, rightly or wrongly, that it is difficult in any circumstances to be on the winner, or even to back a placed horse. Therefore they argue, with some logic, that their situation should not be made more difficult; and certainly they argue very strongly that the dividends which they should receive should not be cut down by the imposition of additional taxation upon the investments which are made on the totalisators on the racecourses.

I can see from the looks on the faces of members on the Government side that they are surprised almost beyond measure to find there is a proposition of this kind in the Bill. How can they justify imposing an additional tax of 1½ per cent. on persons who go out to the Ascot racecourse and invest their money in the totalisator out there? How can they justify an increase in totalisator duty on persons who go to the racecourse in Pinjarra and make their investments through the totalisator on that course? There is no justification for it at all.

What I have said about the Ascot racecourse and the Pinjarra racecourse applies equally to all other racing and trotting courses in the State. This is a most stupid proposal. It will have the effect of causing quite a few people to cease going to the racecourses. It might be argued that the increase in taxation is not very much. However, it is not the amount involved so much as the fact that the Government would take an action of this kind to the detriment of people who go to the racing and trotting courses and make their investments there through the totalisators.

Many people are easily offended at this sort of activity. They regard it as an attack upon them, and as a most unjust action. They cannot see any reason or justification for it. Neither can I. There is no sense in it. It is a stupid proposition. I should think, if the Government wanted to encourage people to go to the racing and trotting courses—and the Government says it does—and it was going to alter the totalisator duty in respect of totalisators on the courses, it would reduce the duty—that is, if the Government was going to make any alteration at all.

I would be very interested to hear someone on the Government side stand up, and try to justify this. If the Government wanted the increased amount of money involved, as between the existing 13½ per cent. and the 15 per cent., why did it not get it by taxation on off-course operations, rather than by bashing the people who go to the races—the places to which the Government wants them to go?

It will be noticed in this that there is no corresponding increase of taxation on those people who go to racecourses, and bet with the on-course bookmakers. The Government is proposing to attack, and

punish, only the people who go to the races, and bet on the totalisators. The Government is going to slug them another 1½ per cent. I want to know why. I also want to know why the Government has brought this proposal before Parliament to increase the totalisator duty on investments made on the racecourses, and on the trotting courses through the totalisator systems.

It seems to me to run absolutely counter to Government thought, and Government policy, both of which are supposed to favour encouraging people to go to the racecourses and trotting courses. Yet this proposal flies in the face of that thought, and that policy, by placing an additional slug on the people who go to racecourses and trotting courses, and bet on the totalisators. So I shall await with interest the justification, if any, which the Government will offer in this matter.

MR. PERKINS (Roe—Minister for Transport) [9.30]: I am rather intrigued at the versatile approach to this question by members on the opposite side. First of all, we have the Deputy Leader of the Opposition telling us that the totalisator dividends are generally somewhat higher than starting prices.

Mr. Tonkin: My remarks were dealing with Eastern States races. I said I gave no attention to the local experience.

Mr. PERKINS: I thought the member for Melville was applying them to the local events as well.

Mr. Tonkin: I said the opposite. I said I had not given attention to the local experience.

Mr. PERKINS: I would agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition had he said the patron of the totalisator generally does at least as well as the patron of the on-course bookmaker. The Leader of the Opposition raised the question of the difference of the 1½ per cent. First of all, I think it should be clear to members that it would be a most anomalous position to have a varying deduction on the on-course totalisator, and on the off-course totalisator. That would be very anomalous indeed. But when we raise the deduction on course from 13½ per cent. to 15 per cent. the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe a substantial reduction is going to take place on dividends on course.

Mr. Tonkin: It is 1½ per cent.

Mr. PERKINS: The amount is so small that even if that reduction took place it would be a very small reduction, and the average punter would have some difficulty in deciphering the extra deduction made. But all the indications are that this will not happen at all; because, of course, it is fairly well accepted that the bettor on course is very much better informed than the bettor off course.

Mr. Andrew: Not always.

Mr. PERKINS: The indications point that way. Off-course bookmakers, for instance, have done much better than on-course bookmakers. The indications are quite definite that as we get further away from the course there is a bigger percentage of punters betting blind, and they are not as well-informed. The conclusions to which the Government has come after a very full discussion of its observations on these matters is that the position for the on-course punter, betting with the totalisator on course, will be improved rather than otherwise, as a result of this legislation; because, of course, the ill-informed punter off course is going to make it somewhat better for the better-informed punter on course, who, when he wins, should get a better dividend. The Government has not gone into this blindly; it is fairly confident that that will be the position.

While this is a Treasury Bill, on the other hand it ties up very closely with the other legislation we have been discussing; and I feel confident that the evil things which the Leader of the Opposition has predicted will not take place. I also feel confident that the punter on course is not going to be placed at a disadvantage in the manner which the Leader of the Opposition has stated.

MR. HEAL (West Perth) [9.34]: I rise to support the Leader of the Opposition in his objection to this measure. The proposition put up by the Minister for Police could be right; but in my opinion it is wrong, because he says the punter off course is not as well-informed as the punter on course. From what I have observed, there are many ill-informed punters on the course. If there were not, and all punters were on the ball, we would not have a totalisator or bookmakers left on the course.

For the information of the Minister for Police, since betting has been legalised, as members are aware, it has been revealed that there are many well-informed punters off-course—as is evidenced by the many successful S.P. plunges. What the Minister has said does not carry much weight.

One could term this a sectional tax. The Government seeks to impose it on the section of people who attend race meetings. It will affect only the people who bet through the totalisator; it will not affect people who take straight-out wagers or doubles with bookmakers. It will affect the people who bet straight-out or for a place through the tote.

At the present time a deduction of 13½ per cent. is made on all bets through the totalisator. The totalisator cannot lose because the percentage is deducted from the pool, and the dividends are calculated on the balance remaining.

I say this Bill will have an adverse effect on the dividends payable, especially on country race meetings. Over the last three or four months some place dividends paid by the tote were as low as 3s. 6d to 4s. 6d. on a 5s. bet. In other words, the successful punter did not even receive his stake back. I think the golden rule in betting should be adopted.

If a person has the courage to make a bet he should always have a chance of winning. If he backs a winner or a placed horse he should not lose a portion of the bet. If a punter places 5s. on the tote at a country race meeting and the horse runs a place, on some occasions the dividend is 4s. 6d., and sometimes 4s. and as low as 3s. 6d. That is not a fair proposition. Increasing the tote turnover tax from 13½ per cent. to 15 per cent. will not improve the situation.

Naturally people will object to this tax initially; but after it has been in operation for some time it will be—like the politician's rise in salary—a nine-day wonder and soon forgotten. It is unfair to impose this additional tax on the people who place their bets through the tote. It must be remembered that patrons of racecourses have to pay the admission charge—and I think this charge should be reduced. The increased tax will mean a reduction of 3d. to 6d. in the dividend on the 5s. bets. I think the Leader of the Opposition was quite correct in describing this Bill as—using his words—a stupid increase in tax on people betting through the totalisator. I oppose the measure.

MR. TONKIN (Melville) [9.38]: The Minister for Police raised a very interesting point. It is obvious the Government cannot have it both ways. In answer to a suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition that this additional duty would result in a reduction of dividends on course, the Minister countered that remark by saying that the less informed punter off course would be the means of boosting the dividend declared on course. In effect, he said that instead of receiving a smaller dividend, the course patrons will receive a larger one.

Let us accept that as a possible proposition. What will be the position of the totalisator and of the off-course bookmakers if the dividends are paid out at a higher rate? A related Bill, agreed to earlier this evening, provided that a bookmaker operating outside the prescribed zone shall pay at totalisator odds. If, as the Minister suggests, the establishment of the board will have the effect of increasing the dividends declared on each race—because on each race there is ill-informed money from off-course punters—then immediately all the bookmakers operating outside the prescribed zone will be involved in a higher pay-out. That would be the first result.

An examination of the investment tax returns shows that a large proportion of bets are in amounts of less than £1. When this legislation was under discussion previously the Treasurer refused to agree to an alteration in the basis of this tax. He pointed out that because so many bets were made in small wagers he could not forgo the tax on the small bets; he said that the 3d. investment tax on small bets made up a large amount of the revenue from this source. That has proved that a very large volume of the business done by off-course bookmakers is in respect of small bets of less than £1.

The Minister said it was intended to cater for this small business, practically right up to the starting time of a race. As is well known, the off-course punter almost invariably leaves his wager until the last five or ten minutes before the race. So a very large proportion of the holding of the totalisator agency board will not be able to be placed on the tote at all, because it will be too late for the board to do so.

According to the Minister's statement, on this large proportion of money the board will have to pay out at a higher dividend than is now paid, because he said this uneducated money from off the course will boost the dividend. So, to some degree, the dividend will be bigger than it has been. Thus, the board will penalise itself.

If the Minister's argument is correct, the more uneducated money that is placed on the tote, the higher is the dividend declared; that is, the dividend at which the board has to pay out on the money it holds. It is no good believing that the amount of money that the board will hold will be a very small fraction of the total amount invested in each race; that is, if the board makes good the undertaking that betting facilities will be available to the small punter right up to the start of a race.

The bulk of the small bets will pass through the board within the last five or ten minutes of a race, and there will not be sufficient time to allow the money to be passed through the tote. The board will therefore have to pay out bets at the higher dividends which the Minister says will be caused by uneducated money being placed through the tote.

There is another aspect of this matter which requires investigation by the Government and by the totalisator agency board, if this venture is not to prove a financial flop. It will not be plain and straight sailing. We cannot have it both ways. If the establishment of the tote will in effect result in higher dividends being paid, that will mean higher commitments to bookmakers who are operating beyond the zone, and it will also mean higher pay-outs by the board. The higher the dividend declared on the course, the higher is the commitment of the off-course bookmaker and the totalisator agency board, both of whom will have to pay out at increased odds.

It appears to me that aspects of this nature have not been taken into consideration by the Government. When it puts the scheme into operation, it will not find the garden as lovely as it would lead us to believe.

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland) [9.44]: I want to say a few words on this Bill. It is a measure which steps up the taxation of the people who attend race and trotting meetings. When this Government was at the hustings the people were told there would be a reduction, rather than an increase, in taxation. In this case the Government proposes to increase the tax on people who find recreation in attending race meetings and trotting meetings at the week ends.

In my electorate the only recreation quite a lot of the people have is attending the trotting meetings or the race meetings on a Saturday. Personally, I am not involved; but I know these people will resent very much the fact that they have to pay this increased taxation over and above all the other increases which this Government has imposed upon the people of Western Australia; and over and above the increases in prices which are taking place practically every day. There is no justification for this increased taxation; because last year the Government received £10,714 more from the totalisator tax than it received the previous year. So for that reason I feel the tax is not justified.

There is also another angle, to which some other members have referred; that is, the people who go to the race meetings have to pay an entrance fee. It will now be their privilege to pay that entrance fee as well as an additional 1½ per cent. tax.

I think the Treasurer should have been satisfied with the fact that he is getting 13½ per cent. taxation at the present time—and this is easy money. I suppose three-quarters of it comes from the average working man and from the average family that is already paying excessive taxation and is already paying through the nose for commodities.

As I said before, the man or woman—and a good many women go to race meetings—who attends race meetings has now to pay an additional 1½ per cent. in taxation. I would be doing the wrong thing if I allowed this taxation to be imposed upon the people in my electorate, having regard to the fact that this Government said there would be a reduction in taxation if it were returned to office. Therefore, I register my protest against this increase in taxation, having regard to the fact that the Government obtained last year £10,714 over and above what it received the previous year by way of totalisator tax.

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

Ayes—25.

Mr. Bovell	Mr. W. A. Manning
Mr. Brand	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Burt	Mr. Naider
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Court	Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Craig	Mr. O'Neill
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Owen
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Roberts
Dr. Henna	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Wild
Mr. Lewis	Mr. I. W. Manning
Mr. Mann	(Teller.)

Noes—23.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Bickerton	Mr. Moir
Mr. Brady	Mr. Norton
Mr. Curran	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Evans	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Hall	Mr. Rowberry
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Heal	Mr. Toms
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. May
Mr. Jamieson	(Teller.)

Majority for—2.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee

The Chairman of Committees (Mr. Roberts) in the Chair; Mr. Brand (Treasurer) in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2 put and passed.

Clause 3—Section 3 amended:

Mr. HAWKE: When I spoke on the second reading, I sought some information from the Treasurer as to the application, if any, of totalisator duty to moneys which would be held by the totalisator agency board in its capacity as a bookmaker. I do not know whether the Treasurer is in a position to give me that information.

Mr. PERKINS: Perhaps it would be better if I replied to this question because I have done the detailed work. Obviously the position will be that the totalisator agency board, in holding these moneys, will have the obligation to pay the 5 per cent. tax to the Treasury. Then it is estimated there will be some 6 per cent., or a figure perhaps a little greater than that, which will be used in administration; and the administration will not be materially different on the money that is held and not placed on the totalisator as compared with the money placed on the totalisator. Of course, it is hoped there will be a balance of perhaps 4 per cent. or a little less. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition thinks it will be very much less.

Mr. Tonkin: I think it will be minus four!

Mr. PERKINS: It is hoped that that will be the net profit which will be distributed between the racing bodies. The position will be exactly the same with those moneys held by the totalisator board

as it is with its ordinary orthodox transactions where the moneys are placed on the totalisator.

The provision is made that the 15 per cent. is taken off before the money is placed on the tote. This is exactly the same procedure as will apply on the course. Therefore comparable amounts will go on the indicators to arrive at a true dividend. I had a difference of opinion with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition previously on this subject, but it is more or less a matter of mechanics. I do not want to go into the details, because I think they cloud the issue a little. It is sufficient to say that the provision will be exactly parallel to the situation on the course.

Mr. TONKIN: I want to put the Minister right, because he is obviously under a wrong impression. He said we had a difference of opinion as to how the 15 per cent. would be calculated on and off the course. I want to tell him that never at any stage have I had a difference of opinion with him; but there were some on this side who had.

Mr. Perkins: Yes; I am sorry.

Mr. TONKIN: I merely put the position to him in order that he might explain it and confirm what I had already said myself. I was in no doubt whatever as to what would happen.

Mr. Perkins: I am sorry.

Mr. TONKIN: But I am still of the opinion that all these percentages which this board expects to obtain will not be received. When it gets down to the hard, cold facts of calculating with regard to sources of revenue, it will find that no matter how hard it tries, if it subtracts three from five, it will have no more than two left.

It will find that when it pays the 5 per cent. to the Treasury, and the 6 per cent. for expenses—I believe it will be higher than that—it will have 11 per cent. I cannot see it grossing anything like 11 per cent. over the whole of its business. It will be fortunate if it grosses 9 per cent. Of course, if that is all it does gross, the system will be a complete financial failure; and it will not be long before that is manifest, either.

I can see that it will be quite impossible to make any additional deduction over and above the intended 5 per cent. from the money which the board will hold as a bookmaker; and that is going to be a very substantial amount, unless—which is what I have believed all along—the Government clamps down on the amount of money which can be wagered after the closing time of the tote.

I think the Government has deliberately misled the people in this regard. The Minister has created the impression that very few of the small bettors will be inconvenienced by the necessary earlier closing

of the totalisator—40 minutes beforehand in New Zealand and probably 30 or 35 minutes here. He has tried to create the impression that the bettors will not suffer at all, and that it is only the hot money that he wants to prevent going on the tote.

He states that the person who wants to have 5s. or 10s. each way will be able to place his bet almost up to the time the race starts. But I do not believe that. The board will find itself holding such a large sum of money that it will actually be acting as a bookmaker for a greater amount of money than it is putting on the tote. Because of that, the amount of commission the Government expects to receive from the turnover will be reduced and the amount of profit will be down, if we accept the Minister's own statement that the dividends will be boosted. The board will be paying out on that money it is holding as a bookmaker at a higher rate than the bookmakers hitherto have been paying out. I do not accept the argument that the uneducated money will boost the dividends.

However, let us say that the Minister is right in that particular, and that these dividends will be higher despite the increased dividends paid in comparison with those paid out up to now. This will mean that we cannot rely on the experience of bookmakers up to now; because in future, after this legislation comes into operation, the rate at which winning bets will be paid off course will be higher than that at which they were paid previously. That will reduce the amount of gross profit which the totalisator board expects to make. It cannot possibly make anything like 15 per cent. on local business; and, in my view, it will not make anything like 8 per cent. on Eastern States business, having regard to the higher pay-out necessitated in Victoria, particularly, and in New South Wales.

Because of these features, I am satisfied that it is not possible for this 15 per cent. to be deducted from the amount of money which the totalisator board will hold as a bookmaker and in connection with which it is going to gamble in precisely the same way a bookmaker gambles; and it is liable to lose in precisely the same way as some bookmakers lose.

This matter was brought to my notice only last week when a Western Australian horse—Sparkling Blue—which is well-known here, won in the Eastern States, and paid a place dividend of 105s. It is surprising to learn the number of punters in Western Australia who supported that horse. The bookmakers did not have to pay out 105s. They paid out 55s. or 65s. I cannot remember which, but there is a limit. I do not know whether it is 10 to 1 or 12 to 1; but I know that they paid out considerably less than the pay-out would have been if they were paying out on

totalisator odds. If the totalisator board had been in operation, it would have been paying out on that money which it had not invested, at the rate of 105s. per 5s. investment.

I feel those are aspects of the matter which will very considerably reduce the amount of revenue which the Treasury at this stage confidently anticipates it will receive.

Mr. HEAL: In regard to the money the totalisator board will hold and pay out at totalisator dividends, if the board becomes financially embarrassed because the punters are picking winner after winner, what is the position going to be? Will the Minister call upon the Treasury to make a grant of money available to the board in order that it might meet its obligations? If that is so, as speakers have already stated, the Government will be setting itself up as a bookmaker; and I do not think that is a satisfactory state of affairs.

Mr. PERKINS: First of all, I would like to state that I was mistaken when I mentioned that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition disagreed with me on the method of calculating the 15 per cent. It was another member on that side of the House.

Regarding the other points raised, it is not a question of the Treasury getting mixed up in these transactions. I think the member for West Perth will realise that if the totalisator board is to operate, it will have to have capital available to it. This will be used to level out these fluctuations in dividends. All the investigations made by our advisers indicate that the awful things, which members of the Opposition prophesy, will not occur. I can only reiterate that this project has not been developed without very careful consideration by capable officers advising the Government.

The question of the variations in dividend will, I think, take care of itself. Experience in the betting world seems to be that the further one gets away from the racecourse the less well-informed opinion is. After considering the position very carefully, I believe there is a reasonable expectation that the totalisator off course is likely to be more profitable to the totalisator agency board than the totalisator on course. That can only be proved following its operation.

I reiterate that those advising the Government made a very careful investigation of the particular circumstances mentioned by members on the other side; and their investigations served to confirm the Government's opinion that no undue risks were being taken.

The other point, which the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has stressed a number of times, is that the totalisator agency board may be incurring considerable risks in that a considerable amount

of hot money is likely to go into the off-course totalisator after the closing time for free betting.

Mr. Tonkin: I did not say hot money.

Mr. PERKINS: Considerable amounts. If it is the usual uninformed money—

Mr. Tonkin: The ordinary volume of betting that will take place in the last few minutes of betting.

Mr. PERKINS: It does not matter how much money goes in in that period provided that the manner in which the money is wagered does not vary from the general pattern of wagering, because the dividend would still be a true dividend.

Mr. Tonkin: I agree. But you cannot declare a dividend on that.

Mr. PERKINS: If it were taken in similar to the others the dividend would be the same as the rest of the wagering. If there were any danger that that particular money had some different characteristics from the moneys that were wagered earlier, it would still be within the province of the totalisator agency board to put that money on the course totalisator.

Mr. Tonkin: But you said the dividends are going to be higher. You know that bookmakers do not gross 12 per cent. on local business.

Mr. PERKINS: I cannot say what they gross. And the Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not know, either. I do not think anyone can say with authority what they make. I think that off-course bookmakers have been doing a good deal better than they have admitted. We can only assess the probabilities of this, and I can only reiterate that the Government has not gone into this particular project without very careful examination by the most competent officers.

Mr. HAWKE: When the Minister for Police spoke during the second reading debate, he tried to gloss over the proposal in this Bill to increase the totalisator duty in on-course totalisators from 13½ per cent. to 15 per cent. by saying that on-course totalisator dividends would increase under the operations of the proposed new off-course totalisator system.

I suggest that the Minister would have a tough job to try to convince people who go to the races and bet on totalisators that that would happen. All they will know for certain, and all the Minister can know for certain, is that the increase in taxation, as proposed in this Bill—from 13½ per cent. to 15 per cent.—will mean that on-course punters who bet through on-course totalisators will pay more taxation.

The Minister can speculate as long as he likes about what will happen to on-course totalisator dividends under the new system. Anybody can speculate about that. Some might speculate that on-course dividends in future will be higher, and

some could just as easily speculate that they will be lower. Either speculation is simply speculation. Therefore it is idle for anyone to speculate.

Here we have something about which there is no speculation at all. It will become absolute fact should this Bill become law. Therefore it is absolutely certain, beyond any doubt, that in the event of this Bill becoming law people who go to racing or to trotting meetings and bet through the totalisator system will be slugged $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. more by way of taxation than they are slugged at the present time. In other words, the proposal in this Bill to increase totalisator duty by $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. will rob the on-course bettors who bet through totalisators on the courses. That is a certainty; and surely if we are to be effective in this place we should deal with certainties and place much more importance upon them than upon speculation.

As I said during the second reading debate, I consider that the proposal to increase the totalisator duty tax on on-course totalisators by $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is a stupid proposition. There is no sense in it, and there is no justification for it—none whatever. It runs counter to what we have understood to be Government thinking and Government policy, both of which are supposed to have been the encouragement of more people to go to the races, as against doing their wagering away from the courses. Yet paragraph (a) of this clause proposes to increase taxation upon the people who go to the races and who bet through on-course totalisators. Because I consider it a silly proposition and unjustified, I now move an amendment—

Page 2, lines 5 to 7—Delete paragraph (a).

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

Ayes—23.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Bickerton	Mr. Moir
Mr. Brady	Mr. Norton
Mr. Curran	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Evans	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Hall	Mr. Rowberry
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Heal	Mr. Toms
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. May
Mr. Jamieson	

(Teller.)

Noes—25.

Mr. Bovell	Mr. Mann
Mr. Brand	Mr. W. A. Manning
Mr. Burt	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Court	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Craig	Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. O'Neill
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Owen
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Dr. Henn	Mr. Wild
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. I. W. Manning
Mr. Lewis	

(Teller.)

Majority against—2.

Amendment thus negated.

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

Ayes—25.

Mr. Bovell	Mr. Mann
Mr. Brand	Mr. W. A. Manning
Mr. Burt	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Court	Mr. Nimmo
Mr. Craig	Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. O'Neill
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Owen
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Watts
Dr. Henn	Mr. Wild
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. I. W. Manning
Mr. Lewis	

(Teller.)

Noes—23.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Bickerton	Mr. Moir
Mr. Brady	Mr. Norton
Mr. Curran	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Evans	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Fletcher	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Hall	Mr. Rowberry
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Heal	Mr. Toms
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. May
Mr. Jamieson	

(Teller.)

Majority for—2.

Clause thus passed.

Title put and passed.

Report

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 20th October.

MR. MOIR (Boulder) [10.23]: This Bill is exactly the same as one which was introduced last year, received a lot of opposition here, and was subsequently defeated in another place. In the first instance it makes provision for an amendment to the Act to allow certain areas and townsites, which have not been proclaimed by the local governing authorities concerned, to be brought within the scope of this legislation and thus within the rating scheme of the townsite areas.

The Minister has done exactly the same on this occasion as he did last year, for which a lot of criticism was in my view justifiably levelled at him, in that he has not given us any reasons as to why we should agree to the second provision in the Bill, which provides that water-rate charges should be increased to the extent of 50 per cent. in country towns which come within the scope of the Bill. That represents an increase from the existing rate of 2s. in the pound to 3s. in the pound. Beyond saying it was desirable for the rates to be made uniform, the Minister has not given one reason why the House should agree to this proviso in the Bill.

Members will recall that when a similar measure was introduced last session, and the Minister did not supply any figures in regard to the additional revenue that

would be obtained, questions were asked by various members; and, in reply to the member for Middle Swan, the Minister said that the additional amount of revenue to be gained would be £57,948. Thinking, quite naturally, that the Minister would be well-informed, members accepted that figure as being correct. Subsequently, however, the figures supplied by a Minister in another place differed materially from the estimated amount quoted by the Minister for Water Supplies.

The Minister in another place was emphatic about the figure he gave, and I propose to read his remarks. Mr. Wise had made a statement in the House in which he quoted approximately the figure that had been given by the Minister for Water Supplies, and the following is what the Minister in that House said in reply:—

Mr. Wise stated that the Treasury would benefit by an amount of £58,000 from the proposed increase. That figure is not accurate. The actual increase to the Treasury would amount to £36,000. It must be said again that this is not an increase in taxation.

Therefore, according to that statement, the two Ministers could not reconcile their figures. The Minister in another place was quite emphatic about the amount of £36,000; because later in his speech, which appears on page 2670 of Vol. 3 of the 1959 *Parliamentary Debates*, he said he had received those figures from the Water Supply Department.

Judging from the answers given by the Ministers last year, if time had permitted inquiries to be made on the estimated additional amount of revenue that would be received from the higher rating, members could not have placed much reliance on the figures given this year. Nevertheless, the Minister, in introducing this Bill, should have attempted to show the additional amount of revenue he expected to get from this increased water rate and given the House some reason why that additional amount of revenue was required.

I also remember that there was a certain amount of confusion between Ministers in this Chamber last session when we had the Minister for Police almost carrying the Chairman of Committees away with his assertion that the increase in water charges did not apply to goldfields towns. I can well recall that when the member for Kalgoorlie was speaking he was called to order by the Chairman of Committees who, no doubt, had placed a great deal of reliance on what the Minister for Police had said, and the Chairman almost prevented the member for Kalgoorlie from going on with his speech when he persisted in mentioning the goldfields towns that would be affected.

So that members may be informed of the towns that would be affected by the increased rate, I point out to the House

that it will cover all towns on the Perth-Kalgoorlie railway line, from Parkerville to Boulder inclusive; also Darlington, Mundaring, Sawyers Valley, Mahogany Creek, Toodyay, Irishtown, Spencers Brook to Beverley inclusive, Goomalling, Shackleton, Belka, Nukarni, Nokanning, Nungarin, Coolgardie to Norseman, Bullfinch, Marvel Loch, and Boulder.

If the amendment to the Act is carried, it will mean that in those towns the existing rate of 2s. in the pound will be increased to 3s. in the pound. I know it could be said that 3s. in the pound is the maximum rate, and that any rate in between 2s. and 3s. could be charged. However, from experience we know that the permissible rate charged is the maximum.

I would take a great deal of convincing that this increase in water charges is necessary, especially when we remember that this Government has relieved quite a substantial section of the community of various charges which hitherto it had to meet. I refer to the Government's action in reducing probate duties, land tax and entertainment tax, and the agreement which the Government entered into in granting large sums of money to the paper pulp milling company on generous terms.

I would also refer to the proposed totalisator agency board in regard to which the Government will be guaranteeing its financial resources to the extent of £250,000. It makes rather peculiar reading, therefore, when we learn that the Government has decided to impose increased water charges on a section of the people on the goldfields who do not deserve such treatment. We hear a great deal of talk about decentralisation; but unfortunately not much is done to bring about that desirable object.

The Government has also imposed on the people of Western Australia—and these bear particularly heavily on those people in the areas I have mentioned—increased railway freight charges and passenger fares; and increased motor registration fees and driver's license fees. Every additional tax imposed represents an additional burden that has to be borne by the taxpayers, especially those living in outback parts.

It is also found that this Government has been extravagant in other directions. It has reopened non-paying railway lines and purchased expensive spare locomotive parts at a price much higher than would have been charged for the article had it been manufactured at the Midland Junction Workshops. So I would need a lot of convincing that it is necessary to raise additional revenue from the people in these country areas, and from those in the goldfields towns.

I know that last year some apologists for the Government played around with figures, and almost convinced themselves

that the Government was really conferring a benefit on these people in the additional allowable water they would have for the increased charges they would be expected to pay by way of rates. While that might have been true in the case of some people, it was not true in the case of all people; it was not true in the case of people who could least afford to have their water rates increased.

While the large users of water would no doubt benefit, or not be very hard-pressed, the smaller users of water—the people who live in modest homes, and do not have gardens on which to use water, would not be using the allowable amount; and, consequently, they would be paying more for using the customary amount of water.

To illustrate, I would point out that the system of rating on the goldfields seems to be based on the annual rental value. This is worked out on the assumption that a certain weekly rental could be obtained for premises if they were rented. Then it seems that 25 per cent. is taken off that valuation, no doubt to cover the rates and taxes as laid down in the Bill, and for other incidental charges.

So, in the case of a house which it was estimated could be let at 35s. a week, giving it an annual value of £75 for rating purposes, it was reduced to £50. At the present time an amount of £5 a year would be paid in rates; and under the provisions of this amending Bill, that would become £7 10s.

We find that at the old rate of 2s. such a house would be allowed an amount of 22,200 gallons a year; but under the proposed new amount, it would be increased to 33,000 gallons. While it would not be quite so hard on a person who used a lot of water in excess of that amount, it would be hard on a person who used a smaller amount. There are plenty of people on the goldfields who would use less than that amount; I refer to elderly people, living in modest homes, without any garden or anything of that nature; probably elderly men who have spent their lives in the outback, and who have come to Kalgoorlie to live in a modest home, and spend the rest of their days there. There are quite a number of such men on the goldfields.

That is bad enough. But when we recall that the last valuation in Kalgoorlie and Boulder took place as far back as July, 1953, we can well imagine that the Government would take the view that it is about time a revaluation took place. We do not know what that revaluation could be; we do not know to what extent the annual values of those properties will be increased. If that were done it would bring this 50 per cent. increase to a considerable amount. In view of what the Government has done in regard to the metropolitan water supply, we can readily

visualise such an occurrence, because the Government has made no secret of the fact that it has used the metropolitan water supply as a revenue-producing medium.

We have the Premier's own words on that; and should anybody have any doubts at all, I can refer him to *Hansard* No. 9, page 1341, where the Premier makes the statement about the various increased charges, including the metropolitan water supply charges, that will bring in such a large additional amount of revenue. Incidentally here, too, one sees evidence of a divergence of opinion among responsible Ministers of the Government.

When this matter was being debated here, the Minister for Water Supplies told the House that the additional revenue would bring in something in the vicinity of £300,000. We find the Premier, when speaking to the Estimates, giving the figure as £563,000, which is substantially in advance of the figure given to the House by the Minister for Water Supplies.

Mr. Tonkin: The Attorney-General said there was going to be a deficit of £14,000. How that will help the Treasury figures, I do not know.

Mr. MOIR: We also had the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—and I think he backed his case with quite a lot of substance—saying that in his opinion the amount would be something like £600,000. So we find these water supply Acts are going to be used by this Government as revenue-producing mediums.

Beyond the bald statement that it is desirable to have uniformity; that there are certain towns on the country areas water supplies which are rated on the 2s. mark; and that it is not desirable to have any towns rated as low as 2s., we have had no evidence from the Minister for Water Supplies that this is required. We must remember that when the old Goldfields Water Supply Act was repealed in 1949 it was replaced by this Country Areas Water Supply Act; and provision was made there for an amount no higher than 2s. in the pound to be levied as a rating for those towns.

No doubt that was done because it was considered that these towns had been on this water supply for upwards of 50 years, and had been paying rates on a very low original cost of the pipeline. We know that enlargements and duplications to the pipeline have taken place; but I suggest that the duplication of that line took place not to supply the goldfields with water so much as to supply other country areas. Those are country areas and towns which are now charged at the rate of 3s. in the pound.

There is no move by the present Government to increase the rating on country agricultural land, which is still based at the rate of 5d. per acre or 3 per cent. of

the unimproved capital value, whichever is the lesser. Although this rating has been in operation for many years, there is no proposal to increase it. But the townspeople in the same areas have been singled out, and the additional charge is to be imposed on them.

I am very much concerned about the revaluations which are taking place on the goldfields. It is indeed surprising that even from the statistics branch no reliable figures on the rental value of houses for Kalgoorlie and Boulder can be obtained. I do not know the position in respect of other towns, because I have not inquired about them. I found it difficult to obtain any indication of a fair rental value for those two towns. I have only been able to obtain figures for the year 1954, and they are the latest available from the statistics branch.

It was pointed out that not many houses in those towns are let. Most people own their homes or are purchasing them under terms. It is distressing that the latest figures on rentals should be for the year 1954, when the last revaluations took place and charges were increased considerably—in some cases by 100 per cent. We have no guarantee that a similar increase will not take place again.

Instead of having a 50 per cent. increase, basing values on present-day figures, the valuation could be based on much higher figures—from 50 per cent. to 75 per cent. We have seen very steep increases in the revaluation of city properties. We have no guarantee that the same steep increases will not be applied to properties on the goldfields.

I now refer to an article which was published in the *Kalgoorlie Miner* when a similar measure was debated in this House. On the 17th October, 1959, the following appeared in this leading article:—

The Government will lose many of its friends on these goldfields following its decision to increase by 50 per cent. the water rates for consumers in certain country districts drawing on what used to be known as the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme.

Much was said of the Liberal Party's intention to reduce certain State-imposed taxes when it was wooing the voters at the recent elections, but not a word was said of any proposal to sharply increase water rates in many country areas and the news came as a shock to local householders and businessmen.

The announcement of the lift from 2s. to 3s. in the £1 in these rates was badly timed, coming as it did at a time when the Government was putting into effect its plans to reduce entertainment and land taxes and probate duties.

Opposing the measure when it was before the Legislative Assembly, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Tonkin, made a good point when he said that there might be some justification if the Government proposed to provide some improvement in water supply services with the extra money, but this is probably not the case. A large part of the extra revenue to be raised from goldfields consumers will no doubt go to meet interest on the capital cost incurred in the raising of the Mundaring Weir wall and the putting in of a 30-in. main to take water to some outer metropolitan suburbs.

The members for Kalgoorlie and Boulder, Messrs. Tom Evans and Arthur Moir, also sought in the House the assistance of Country Party members—some of whom represent electors who will be affected by the amendment—but to no avail.

Admittedly, some householders with big gardens, who in past years have paid large sums in excess, will not be badly hit by the increase, but it will be a severe blow to the majority of local residents, particularly pensioners with their own homes who are struggling to pay their way.

It will certainly be felt by business houses in the district which are already heavily rated with no chance of using their allowance of water.

The proposal to lift the rate so steeply is all the more surprising when it is realised that it has been made by a Government led by Mr. David Brand, who, in the past, has often championed the cause of a State-wide flat rate to apply to city and country consumers alike.

That is a strong article which appeared in the *Kalgoorlie Miner*—a newspaper which is very favourably disposed towards the present Government, particularly during election time. One can imagine how strongly the newspaper was moved to have published a leading article like that one, censuring the Government for its action, because on most occasions it supports the Government and praises its efforts.

How far does the Government intend to go in increasing taxes? Are we continually to have new taxes imposed on this and new taxes on that? I cannot imagine the member for Avon Valley being very happy about the tax proposed in the Bill, because the area he represents will receive steep increases, particularly Spencers Brook and Beverley. No doubt he will feel as another member of this House felt when he voiced his protest in the following terms, which appear on page 649 of *Hansard* of 1958:—

It is time we resisted the imposition of additional taxation. Surely there is a limit; and I think that limit has now been reached. The more funds the Government can get, and the more tax it can collect from the people, the more it spends and the more extravagant it

becomes. The Government is like a schoolboy. If the father of that boy is prepared to hand out anything the boy wants, it will be taken and spent, and the boy will spend it extravagantly. That applies equally to the Government.

It is time we stopped becoming "yes" men and stopped agreeing to every imposition of tax the Government likes to introduce.

That is very true today. That statement was made by a member in this House who is respected by all. He knows quite a lot about taxation. The statement was made by the member for Murray, an ex-Premier of the State, in this House in 1958. Of course, at that time he was speaking in criticism of the Hawke Government. If those remarks were pertinent then, they are ever so much more pertinent today. I feel there should be an end to the increase of taxation.

It is unsound for the Government to say that because the rate is so much in the pound in a certain area, that is a valid reason why the rates in other areas should be brought into line. We do not have that apply in other instances. We do not hear it put forward by this Government that there should be uniform railway charges. So it applies with other things, too. We do not hear that the people on the goldfields should be put on the same basis as the people in the metropolitan area in regard to allowances of water. Although the people in the metropolitan area have to pay high rates in some instances, they are certainly allowed a lot of water for the money they pay. However, that is not so with the people on the goldfields. They are not allowed rebate amounts which in any way compare with the rebates allowed in the metropolitan area. Therefore they have to pay very high amounts for excess water.

When this Bill was before the House last session I opposed it very strongly, and I do so again with an equal amount of justification. The Bill may have been introduced hastily last year and the Minister may have been unable to supply the House with figures in connection with it; but one would have thought that on this occasion he would be able to supply authentic figures and more authentic reasons than he did as to why this rate should be increased, particularly in view of the fact that this measure was defeated in another place last year.

Evidently those members in another place felt the same as members on this side of the House felt last year—that it was too much of an imposition to place on the people who live in the outer areas and who have all sorts of hardships to put up with. These people should be able to obtain their water at somewhere near a reasonable rate. I oppose the Bill.

On motion by Mr. Evans, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.56 p.m.

Legislative Council

Wednesday, the 26th October, 1960

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 7.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

1. *This question was postponed.*

GOLD PRICE

Information on Recent Developments

2. The Hon. E. M. HEENAN asked the Minister for Mines:—

In view of its great importance to the goldmining industry in particular, and to the State of Western Australia in general, will the Minister for Mines make a statement to the House giving what information is in his possession regarding the developments now occurring overseas in relation to the price of gold?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH replied:

I am in the process of obtaining information relative to the development now occurring overseas in connection with the price of gold. I will make a statement to the House when I am in possession of the information.