

Naturally, I know the loan position is difficult, but I also know that loan funds are being found for many other projects in this State. If loan money can be found for one project it should be possible to find it for another. To my mind it is merely a question of priority, and he would be a very brave man indeed who would say that this type of assistance does not come within the highest priority. I am glad I have had the opportunity to explain to the Committee the difficulties which face these particular settlers, because while I have no doubt that the Treasurer and his Minister for Agriculture know the position well, I feel that other members in this Chamber should also be conversant with what obtains.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.43 p.m.

## Legislative Council

Wednesday, 26th October, 1955.

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

### ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Medical Act Amendment Bill (No. 1).

## QUESTION.

### HOUSING.

#### *Readjustment of Land Prices.*

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON (for Hon. A. F. Griffith) asked the Chief Secretary:

On the 12th December, 1952 ("Hansard," p. 2973), the Hon. G. Fraser moved the following motion:—

That this House requests the State Housing Commission to readjust the prices charged to ex-servicemen (clients of the War Service Homes Commission) for lots purchased from Melville Road Board about July, 1947, to a figure more in conformity with the cost to the Housing Commission.

(1) Did the Minister move this motion with a view to placing before this House his considered opinion on the matter?

(2) Was he representing on behalf of the purchasers of land under the War Service Homes Act in the district mentioned a desire by those people to have the prices of this land readjusted by the State Housing Commission?

(3) When he framed the motion, did he do so with the idea in mind that the motion, if carried, would assist the people in question?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No. I took this action on my own initiative and was submitting my personal views.

(3) I framed the motion with the idea of drawing the attention of the Government to the matter, and with the object, if possible, of obtaining uniformity in connection with charges for land to persons being assisted under the War Service Homes Act. At that time most of the land concerned was not built on.

### BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Junior Farmers' Movement.
2. Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Act Amendment.

*Passed.*

### BILL—MARKETING OF BARLEY ACT AMENDMENT.

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [4.36]: I have examined this Bill since yesterday. As the Minister said, it provides for the deduction of fractions of  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. or less per bushel of barley from the proceeds of sale due to those barley growers who are prepared to assist the Soil Conservation Fund in this State. Firstly, the Western Australian Barley Marketing Board will decide the best manner in which the money is

to be spent. What procedure will be adopted is very obvious from the consequential Bill that we will deal with.

If passed, this legislation will bring the barley growers into line with wheat growers. Last year a Bill was passed to enable deductions to be made from the proceeds of sale of wheat, to be used for the same purpose as envisaged in the Bill before us. I moved for the adjournment of the debate until today because I was not quite sure of the way in which the marketing of barley is carried out.

I am a grower of a variety of barley, but I have never applied for a permit to grow or sell it, as provided for in the parent Act. This position was brought about because of the type of barley I grow, which is known as black barley. It is mainly grown for use as fodder. Stock is fed off the green crop, which has a high feeding value. It is by far the best of the cereal crops for stock to feed off in its green stages. It is fed to pigs.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: It has a vigorous growth.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: It is a lush and rapid grower, and its high sugar content is valuable and necessary for stock. Its ability to successfully withstand grazing makes it very good for use as fodder. Members can realise my consternation when I discovered that I was doing something quite contrary to the Act.

Hon. L. Craig: But you did not sell it?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: The point is that I will have a surplus of this barley and will sell it; whereas under this legislation no provision is made either for black barley or for skinless barley. This morning I rang the manager of the pool and told him of this, and he replied to the effect that he saw no necessity to amend the Act as deals were going on in black and skinless barley and the board shut its eyes to them. For ordinary barley, a permit is necessary, and legally the other varieties would come under the Act. While the practice I have mentioned has been allowed, it would be possible for the Barley Board successfully to take an action against such a grower. Consequently I recommend to the Minister for Agriculture that a short amendment be introduced to exempt black feed barley and skinless barley from the provisions of the Act.

Hon. L. Craig: Why not provide full power for exemption and that would cover any new barley that came on the market?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: It might be done in that way, if desired; but some provision should be made for it.

Hon. L. Craig: You want to keep within the law.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I prefer to keep within the law. The only other provision relates to the duration of the Act.

In the past, this legislation has been renewed for a period of three years, and the proposal in the Bill is to extend it for 20 years. The only reason for this long extension is to bring the Act into line with the legislation dealing with wheat. That is the only redeeming feature of the proposal. Personally I would have preferred a shorter period, say, one half. We do not know what will happen in 10 years, and that would have been a reasonable period; but those in control consider that the longer period is necessary. I have not been asked to oppose this provision and therefore shall support it.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST** (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North—in reply) [4.45]: I think there is one point that has been overlooked by speakers on the second reading and that is that the proposed deduction will be entirely voluntary. Growers of barley will be required to give authority in writing to the board to make deductions for contributions to the soil fertility fund. Therefore any grower, no matter what variety of barley he produces, will be under no compulsion to contribute. I do not see why any specific variety of barley should be mentioned.

Hon. L. Craig: Mr. Diver was dealing with the power to grow.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST**: As Mr. Diver has raised the point that varieties of barley are not actually covered in the Bill, no doubt the Minister for Agriculture will have an investigation made and, if necessary, introduce an amendment. At this stage I suggest that the Bill might well be passed. Then the hon. member could confer with the Minister and his officers with a view to ascertaining the exact position of those growers who produce barley that may not be covered by this legislation.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

#### **BILL—SOIL FERTILITY RESEARCH ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 20th October.

**HON. L. C. DIVER** (Central) [4.50]: This is a measure consequential to that with which the House has just dealt. It seeks to increase the number of persons on the Soil Fertility Board, so as to include the president of the barley and oats section, of the Farmers' Union which the House has agreed should make contributions to the Soil Conservation Fund. This

measure would enable those making the contributions to have representation on the board.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

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

**BILL—ROMAN CATHOLIC BUNBURY CHURCH PROPERTY.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.52] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to vest in the Roman Catholic Bishop of Bunbury all property belonging to or held in trust for the Roman Catholic Church within the Diocese of Bunbury. Prior to the recent creation of the Bunbury Diocese and the appointment of a bishop, Bunbury was part of the Perth Diocese and the property was, and is still vested in the Roman Catholic Bishop of Perth.

The Bill seeks to divest the Bishop of Perth and all other persons holding church property in the Bunbury Diocese, and to vest the property absolutely in the Bishop of Bunbury and his successors in office. The crown lease, certificate of title folio, and grant numbers of this property are detailed in the First Schedule to the Bill, which proposes to give the bishop the status of a corporation with perpetual succession and the right to deal with church property in that corporate capacity. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. H. Simpson, debate adjourned.

**BILL—UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.54] in moving the second reading said: As members are aware, the Government has promised to finance half of the estimated capital cost of £300,000 of the proposed medical school. The University, has undertaken to raise by means of appeals, the other £150,00, plus a further £250,000 which will be used for medical research and for the purchase of apparatus.

It will be appreciated that the Government's loan programme would be considerably embarrassed if it were required to

provide its share of £150,000 in one sum, or even in two yearly payments. Members know full well the difficulty that the Government now has in financing even the most urgent projects. If the available funds were reduced by £150,000 in this way, some other urgent requirements would have to be deferred.

The University Senate is completely aware of this situation and is entirely sympathetic to the Government. In collaboration with the Senate this problem has been solved in a manner entirely satisfactory to the Senate and the Government. The manner in which the £150,000 will be obtained and repaid is detailed in the Bill.

The Bill authorises the university to raise a loan of £150,000 from a source approved by the Government. This sum will be obtained by way of three advances of £50,000 each. The Bill provides for these advances to be paid on the 1st October, 1955, the 1st April, 1956, and the 1st October, 1956. The university, therefore, will have received the entire amount within 12 months' time.

The loan, plus interest of 4½ per cent., will be repaid over a period of 15 years, and details of the repayments are shown in the schedule on page 4 of the Bill. The Government has undertaken to pay these instalments to the university which will, of course, pass them on to the lender. I understand that tentative arrangements for the loan have already been made by the Senate with a large financial institution in this State.

This method of raising the necessary money and of repaying it has three precedents. In 1931, when money was very scarce, legislation was passed enabling the university to obtain a loan to erect the physics and chemistry buildings, the Government agreeing to meet the interest bill and repay the principal over a period of years. Later, in 1938, a similar course was adopted to finance the construction of the Faculty of Agriculture buildings. In 1952 the previous Government sponsored a Bill, which was agreed to by Parliament, to enable the Senate to borrow £100,000 in order that urgently required buildings could be provided. In this case, too, the Government made itself responsible for repayment of principal and interest over a period of years.

I have no doubt that this House will agree to the Bill. It is an admirable method of meeting the situation when Loan moneys are scarce; and as members doubtless know, university building is normally financed from the loan programme. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

# **BILL—SUPERANNUATION AND FAMILY BENEFITS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.57] in moving the second reading said: This Bill mainly contains amendments of a machinery nature. As a result of a previous amendment to the parent Act which provided that the ceasing date for contributions should be the anniversary date of the initial contribution, it is desirable from the administrative point of view to make contributions payable from the date the employee is elected as a contributor and not from the date he commences employment. As a result, arrears caused by a delayed election will be avoided and no loss will be incurred by the fund.

Another proposal concerns the amount of pension paid to a contributor who, after attaining the elected retiring age, continues in the service, and who subsequently is dismissed for some offence. At present, notwithstanding the fact that, had he retired at the correct date he would have received full pension benefits, the provisions of the parent Act in regard to dismissals allow him to receive only a refund of contributions. It is considered that in such case the contributor is entitled to full superannuation benefits, and the Bill provides for this.

In view of the times, it is considered that the allowance paid for a child of a deceased contributor or a pensioner should be improved. Provision is made in the Bill for an increase of 5s. per week, the cost of the increase to be borne equally by the fund and the State.

The Bill also seeks to give discretionary power to the Superannuation Board to determine whether or not a person who engages in part-time work within the Government service should lose the State's share of pension during the period of employment. Instances have come under notice where a pensioner in receipt of a small pension is engaged for a few hours a week to perform a small duty, such as cleaning country schools or part-time night watching. The amount of pension involved is infinitesimal, but the administrative work in adjusting the small over-payments of pension is heavy in comparison. Where the hours worked and the amount received for services rendered are not great, the board will be empowered, if it thinks fit, to waive the present provisions of cancellations.

The remaining amendment concerns female subscribers to the provident account which is established under the Act. The present provisions are anomalous where a female is not subscribing to the account as a condition of service. As the Act now stands, it is compulsory for a female subscriber to continue to subscribe to the account while she remains in the service.

On the other hand, a male is permitted to withdraw subscriptions after a period of five years. The proposed amendment will give similar conditions to a female who is not required to subscribe to the account as a condition of service.

At the present time if a pensioner marries after his retirement and subsequently dies, his widow is not entitled to a pension. It has been revealed that some widows are in reduced circumstances; and to meet such cases it is my intention, when in Committee, to move an amendment allowing the Superannuation Board to grant pensions to such widows if hardship exists. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. Hearn, debate adjourned.

# **BILL—ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST** (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [5.0] in moving the second reading said: This is a small Bill, the purpose of which is to authorise the Zoological Gardens Acclimatisation Committee to borrow a sum of money up to £15,000. When the Act was originally passed in 1898 it gave the committee power to borrow £5,000. Subsequent amendments increased this figure to £6,000 in 1916 and to £7,000 in 1919. When a comparison is made between the value of money in 1919 and today, the amount of £15,000 does not appear excessive.

The existing premises used as a tea-rooms and shop at the Zoological Gardens are in very bad shape and have been condemned by the Department of Public Health. The committee has therefore been forced to consider means of replacing the building, and has decided to borrow the necessary finance from the State Insurance Office provided this Bill is passed. At present the committee has no bank overdraft, and there is no existing mortgage, but it is expected that the full amount of £15,000 will be required to build the new tea-rooms. The Minister has made a personal inspection which has left him with no doubt about the need for new premises.

The Acclimatisation Committee consists of the chairman of the State Gardens Board, the Assistant Under Treasurer, the Chief Veterinary Surgeon, the Government Botanist, the Deputy Conservator of Forests, and a representative of the Government Tourist Bureau. The first three are appointed as trustees and the remainder for terms of three years. For the information of members I have been supplied with the following attendance

figures which show that the patronage of the Zoological Gardens has been consistent for the last three years:—

1952-53	....	....	....	219,171
1953-54	....	....	....	211,207
1954-55	....	....	....	216,532

At this stage it might be fitting to pay tribute to the outstanding generosity of Sir Edward Hallstrom. This gentleman has been particularly generous to the South Perth zoo. Over the last five years he has made gifts of valuable animals, reptiles and birds; and, in addition, he has financed the cost of enclosures and cages to the extent of £3,900. On two occasions he has also met the cost of sending a member of the zoo staff to Sydney to study types of animal enclosures.

He has therefore provided animals and facilities that would not have otherwise been obtained, and the State should be very grateful. Sir Edward is President of Taronga Zoological Park Trust, and he has been particularly helpful to zoos, not only in Australia but also in America and New Zealand.

The Bill is self-explanatory. The authorities require to increase the amount of their loan borrowings so that they can build a new tea-rooms and give better service to the public. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. L. A. Logan, debate adjourned.

## BILL—PRICES CONTROL.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 19th October.

**HON. A. R. JONES** (Midland) [5.5]: I have spoken on similar legislation on previous occasions; and as members will recall, I have always opposed price control. I believe I have always put up good arguments for my opposition, and I trust that today I can point out briefly to those members who have spoken in favour of the Bill that it is not practicable and that we cannot lend our support to it. Governments generally throughout Australia have been very concerned about rising prices. Not only are Governments extremely concerned but everybody is; and we know that price control, even to a degree, has done nothing to bring about a levelling off of prices or their reduction. It will be found that prices still continue to rise in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, where control in some measure has either been reintroduced or continued from the time it was introduced many years ago.

**Hon. C. W. D. Barker:** Not in every case.

**Hon. A. R. JONES:** It is borne out most particularly by the fact that over the last three months in this State, where prices are not controlled, the "C" series index as it affects the basic wage shows a decline of 1s. per week. So the hon. member, in his interjection, has no argument whatever, in my opinion. The present Government of Western Australia went to the hustings some 2½ years ago and made price control quite a plank in its platform. If I am correct, it said that it would do its utmost to bring prices down. No doubt it has tried to do its utmost, but still prices have not been reduced.

The Chief Secretary: The members of this House who did not go on the hustings and who made no promises wiped the Government's policy out.

**Hon. C. W. D. Barker:** Do you not think that prices should come down?

**Hon. A. R. JONES:** Certainly.

**Hon. C. W. D. Barker:** Suggest some practical way by which they can be brought down!

**Hon. A. R. JONES:** I propose, before I sit down, to make some claim in support of the contention that prices can be reduced. We were never told by members of the Government how prices could be brought down. The other night, Mr. Barker spoke with great force, but his speech was not very illuminating in regard to the Government's policy as to how it would reduce prices.

**Hon. C. W. D. Barker:** That is only your opinion.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

**Hon. A. R. JONES:** I consider that no member who has spoken this session—or even previously—in favour of control, has put forward any good case why we should consider this legislation more thoroughly than we have, or arrive at a different conclusion from that which we have reached on several occasions previously. It has been claimed that we can control prices by setting up a commission similar to that in operation formerly and that that commission will employ agents to go around and fix the prices of commodities, and by this means we shall be able to hold prices.

However, that was not the experience when we had a price control commission before; and for the life of me I cannot see that the appointment of such a commission now will make any difference, because in this country we cannot control prices of goods from the source of manufacture to the retailing of them to the consumer. Unless we can do that, we cannot keep prices stable. All we can hope to do in this State is to say, "A tin of jam costs so much from the manufacturer to the wholesaler, and we will control it from that point onwards." We could never control it from the source of

manufacture because it might be manufactured in Tasmania, New South Wales or Victoria.

When price control was in force, meat was rigidly controlled, but the prices of prime joints were very dear, and most members know how various butchers overcame price control. There was no limit, although the butchers had the prices of various cuts on their boards at, say 2s. or 3s. a lb. If one wanted a good type of joint, instead of getting 2 lb. of meat it would be found that one received only 1½ lb. That was how butchers overcame price control. It was impossible to keep them to the limits prescribed, because they did as they liked, and they would do so again under the blackmarket system.

There was no chance of controlling the price of meat on the hoof as was shown when wholesalers often paid more for stock sold in the open market at prices up to or greater than the fixed price would allow them to profit from. The wholesaler had to supply that to a given customer at a price little above what he bought it for. The butchers were free to make a 33½ per cent. margin on the wholesale price; so price control did not worry them one bit. Also, they obtained a little extra margin by selling 3 lb. or 4 lb. of meat to a customer and charging for 4 lb. or 5 lb.

We can consider every angle and put forward many reasons why prices have risen. Mr. Barker would blame the huge profits being made by various people for prices being as high as they are today. However, when all the facts are boiled down, we cannot say other than that wage increases generally since 1946 have been the main contributory factor to the increase in prices of all commodities.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: You know that is wrong.

Hon. A. R. JONES: It was a sorry day for the Australian people when, a few years ago, we had so much prosperity that the Arbitration Court judges decided to award 30s. above the basic wage as a prosperity loading. I say that because from that day, there was the commencement of a gradual and, in some instances, hasty spiralling of prices. It was a sorry day for the farming community, too, when farmers received 250d. a lb. for a moderately good type of wool, because it seemed to create a false impression throughout the nation. Of course, none of us at that time expected the huge profits that would accrue from the high price of wool, and we had no conception of what the taxation on those profits would be in the future. As a result, many farmers were tripped up, because they found that although they did not owe anything to the bank in one year, they were up for thousands of pounds for taxation the following year. Some have never recovered from that tragedy.

If we had continued on an even keel and that sudden wave of prosperity had not engulfed us, we would have been in a better position today. However, it did happen, and the basic wage was increased by a prosperity loading of 30s. per week; and from then on prices have gradually climbed higher and higher, like the proverbial dog chasing its own tail. Members of the Government were warned by members on this side of the House of the impact of what was taking place two years ago when prices for primary products began to decline. I can recall saying that it was all very well for appeals to be made for greater margins or for greater remuneration for men; but who was going to pay? We have reached the stage when, as everybody is aware, the supply of primary products has not declined, but the prices are so low that our income has decreased by £300,000,000 over the last four or five years. Everybody can see plainly now that there cannot be a rise in one direction and a fall in another.

Members supporting the Government have made unjust claims in the past; and they should have observed previously the fact to which they are now awakening; that the economic prosperity of this country depends largely on primary production. While Mr. Barker has come to see the point of view of members on this side of the House, he has done nothing about it.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I have always held the view that the farmer pays too much, and that that causes an increase in the price of his products.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The farmer pays?

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: For everything he gets.

Hon. A. R. JONES: For everything he buys?

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Yes.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am thankful to the hon. member for mentioning that fact, because he is quite right. But he has not made any suggestion to overcome the difficulty except the passing of this Bill. If this measure is agreed to, there will be price control over butter, tea, sugar, vegetables and various commodities appearing in the "C" series index. But will we see control over the prices of ploughs, or tractors, or any of the other implements that primary producers use in the production of their commodities? Will we see any reduction in price in that direction? The goods that farmers buy to enable them to produce from the soil are not manufactured here to any great extent. When they are produced here, the materials used in their construction are not obtainable in this State and there can be no control over the price of those goods. So that argument does not hold water.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Tell us how you would do it!

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am hopeful that I can make a suggestion; but I admit that it would need a very brave government and a considerate people to adopt it. There is only one way to reduce prices, and that is for some responsibility to be accepted with regard to a reduction in wages and a similar reduction of existing prices for 12 months; then things would level out.

The Minister for the North-West: Another Niemeyer plan.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Yes. It will have to come.

The Minister for the North-West: You hope!

Hon. A. R. JONES: Let us look at the simple facts! We know that because of our prosperity, there was a loading of 30s. per week on the basic wage.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: It is not there now.

Hon. A. R. JONES: At that time we were all so prosperous that everybody approved of the idea, and no objection was made from any quarter. No objection was raised in the courts. People realised that circumstances were so favourable that the worker was entitled to reap some of the benefits of the existing prosperity.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: He has not got the loading now.

Hon. A. R. JONES: We are not so prosperous now. We are producing plenty of goods. We have plenty of wool and wheat—more wheat than we know what to do with. Barley and oats are being produced in abundance, and so is dairy produce, even though dairy farmers have been operating at under the cost of production for quite a while. Even manufactured articles are in good supply. We have plenty of commodities, but we have not the markets; and, where the markets exist, they do not return a profitable price. We are not enjoying any longer the prosperity that we enjoyed previously; and until we can reduce our costs so that we can compete on the world's markets we will not have a continuation of even the price levels that prevail today. I suggest that if that 30s. prosperity loading came off—

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: It is off.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I have not seen any application—

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: What about—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. A. R. JONES: I have not seen any application to any court by anybody at all for the lifting of the prosperity loading. I believe that until we reach the stage when somebody is game enough to implement that suggestion and when everybody will work willingly to give effect to it, we will never get anywhere.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: You want the worker to carry full responsibility.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am not asking the worker to do that at all. If the hon. member had been listening intently—which he could not have been—

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Yes, I was.

Hon. A. R. JONES:—he would have heard me say that everything would have to be at a lessened price. Prices would not be allowed to rise. That would have to be achieved by the Federal and State Governments, so that the worker would not be carrying everything. He would not pay any more for an article one day than he paid the previous day. The result would be reflected in conditions in six months' time. Because of lower wages, articles could be produced at a lower cost. Goods not listed, such as carrots, parsnips and so on, which fluctuate in price from day to day, would find their own level, and all primary products not under some form of control would recede in price because of the money shortage. That is the only way to solve the problem. I do not know whether governments will be big enough to tackle the problem on that basis, and whether the workers could persuade their unions to give such a proposition their backing. I cannot find anybody who will suggest another solution. Other ideas have been tried, but we have had rising prices all the time.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: The workers are already 30s. behind in the basic wage.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Who calculated that?

Hon. A. R. JONES: If this Bill were passed, the only people who would suffer would be the producers of small primary products like vegetables and dairy produce that are required from day to day. Wheat would not be affected because there is a form of price control imposed on it. Nobody else would suffer except the small primary producers. Mr. Barker has said that he does not want to penalise the primary producers and that they should be helped. But this legislation will not help them.

If there is to be any reduction in costs, or if prices are to be pegged at any figure, you can bet your sweet life that the men handling the matter will get their living out of it and the buck will be passed to the primary producers who supply the commodities affected! Is it not reasonable to suppose that when people find that they cannot produce goods at a profit they will cease to produce them? I consider that a shortage of goods would be the result, and that would have the opposite effect to what is desired, because people would be clamouring for such goods as vegetables and so on, which would not be plentiful.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Would it not be reasonable to reduce the big profits made by manufacturers?

Hon. A. R. JONES: Our friend has talked very much about the huge profits that have been made by manufacturers. When one goes through the balance sheets of the various firms, one finds that some are paying dividends of 10 per cent. and others 12½ per cent. The biggest outcry has been against General Motors Holdens which made nearly £10,000,000 profit. Of that amount £3,000,000 went back to original shareholders in America, and the balance is being ploughed back into the industry.

The Labour Party clamours for the establishment of secondary industries in this country. I do not approve of the method adopted to bring that about, because taxpayers are being asked to support the production of some goods that should not be manufactured here, because they can be bought more cheaply overseas. If we buy articles from Japan, Germany, England and other countries, it means that we can trade with those countries and so dispose of our commodities. I do not hold with the emphasis placed on the establishment of secondary industries on the basis I have mentioned.

Before his death, the late Mr. Chifley encouraged the introduction of foreign capital into Australia, but he established laws providing that a certain proportion of the money earned thereby was to be invested in the country and not taken out as dividends. That was a very good thing. But why criticise a firm like Holdens—which had the initiative to spend millions of pounds to establish an industry here—just because it derived £10,000,000 profit, of which £3,000,000 was sent to the shareholders, who were justly entitled to it, since they supplied the industry with money in the first place? Why criticise that firm when it is prepared to put £7,000,000 of that profit back into the industry? I do not know why any man should grizzle about that.

It cannot be logically claimed that the worker would gain any benefit if Holdens did not make a profit of £10,000,000. How many of the half-starved workers that some members say exist in our community would want to buy cars? None at all! It would not affect them one iota—because they would be so poor. Workers would not be affected unless the company made only £2,000,000 profit. In that event, some of the bonuses now paid to the employees would not be paid. If Holdens do not flourish and make a profit, the workers do not do too well, either.

The making of high profits is encouraged in other countries, particularly America, where there are well-conducted secondary industries. The workers do not mind the companies making big profits, because they know that, as a result, their jobs are secure and they will receive good remuneration for their labour. I would

like to ask members who support this Bill why it is a bad thing for Holdens to make a huge profit. I would like them to point out how the price of a Holden car affects workers who some members claim are so poor that they cannot even feed their families properly!

Members opposite claim to represent the working people. I do not see how they represent them any more than the rest of us do. We all have people in our communities who work. I claim we are all workers, no matter what type of work we do. However, members opposite claim they represent the workers; and my contention is that, if they do, they should show a little more concern for what is good for the community and ultimately the workers. Australia as a whole is so hidebound with controls, forced by the strong unions, that our costs of production are higher than they should be. I shall mention one or two instances that come to my mind of how the strong unions are going against their own aim, which is a good deal for the worker.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: A fair deal for the worker.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Very well, a fair deal and a fair day's pay, and that the worker shall receive those things in life to which he is justly entitled. I do not think anyone begrudges a good type of person those privileges. I am not as conversant with the union movement as members opposite; but I do know that if a carpenter attempts to do a job that a fitter should do, he is stamped on. One worker must not impinge on the work of another, or there is a hue and cry.

The Minister for the North-West: Similar to the dentist and the doctor.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Yes, if the Minister likes. It is certainly somewhat different to expect a dentist to take out a tonsil or an appendix.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Or a carpenter—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I refer the hon. member to Standing Order No. 398, which I ask him to observe.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I remind members of something which I told them a couple of years ago concerning a man who was employed by the Tramways Department. He is what is termed a wood butcher—a carpenter—and one of his first duties when he went to the department was to take out the flooring and remove the bell from the front end of a tram.

The carpenter did the job, and when the inspector came round he asked, "How did you get the bell out of the tram?" The carpenter said, "I pulled it out." The inspector said, "Did you undo the bolts on the steel frame?" The carpenter said, "Yes I did." The inspector said, "In future you take out the bolts that are



in the wood and not those in the metal. You must call the fitter to take them out." Subsequently he did that, and on occasions he had to wait as long as three hours for the fitter.

I mention this matter because it is one of the ridiculous situations that should not exist. If that is what members opposite work for as being a good deal for the worker, I feel they have been misled and badly informed.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: You know that is not true.

Hon. A. R. JONES: It is perfectly true. The man got a rap over the knuckles for what he did. That is an extreme case, I admit; but still it occurred. I believe that on many occasions where there is overlapping, the unions and the workers could work together more harmoniously and so reduce the costs of the job on hand. The driver of a vehicle is not, in some instances, allowed to load the vehicle. Does it not seem wrong that a man should just drive a truck and have to sit in his place until the vehicle is loaded? He gets paid for an 8-hour day or a 40-hour week, or whatever is prescribed, but in actual fact he does not work for 40 hours. He just stands around while the truck is being loaded. This country was not built to its present stage by that sort of thing. Our pioneers had to do an honest day's work.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: How long has this been going on?

Hon. A. R. JONES: Most men do an honest day's work. Some, but not all, squib and bludge on the other fellow. I believe that is not all the fault of the worker. I have been attacked by Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Webb for what I have said about what happens in the Midland Junction workshops. They have not quoted me correctly, because in many instances I have blamed the bosses. That is where I feel the organisation today is wrong. It is due to the unions' stand that a man can only be advanced, in the majority of Government jobs, by virtue of the fact that he is the senior. That position should not be allowed because there are many young men with tons of initiative who can take charge of a job much better than can the man who has just worked his way there because of his age and years of working in the industry.

Our Labour movement has done a grand job, and I believe the unions were very necessary. When we look back on what happened 20 or 30 years ago, we realise it was only right and fitting that someone should take up the cudgels on behalf of the worker in order to bring about better conditions. But I do suggest that we have gone to the opposite position now, and that the unions have become so strong that they are dictating policy not only to their members, but to Australia. When things reach that stage, it is time we

took cognisance of the facts and had a better understanding of the position. We have only to take the coal workers. I can vividly recall when all sorts of things went on in the coalmines of the Eastern States—not so much in Western Australia.

The Chief Secretary: You are getting a pretty good go.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I hope the hon. member will couple up his remarks with prices.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I will.

The Chief Secretary: You will have a job.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The cost of producing coal in the Eastern States has been increased so that in the last few years all the articles depending on coal for their production have been affected. Because of the high cost of production of coal—

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: You cannot say that about the Collie miners.

Hon. A. R. JONES: They have given us a good spin. I can recall their going out on strike only once when there was not much justification for it. Generally speaking, they have done an excellent job. Because of the high cost of production of coal and the consequent high cost of production of all articles, the workers price themselves out of a job; and that is what Australia is doing with this pushing up of costs all the time. Today the miners on the coalfields of the Eastern States are bemoaning the fact that they cannot stay in their industry. This is so because in New South Wales the Labour Government has turned to diesel fuel. The coal situation was such that the railways could not rely on production.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Tell us how you are going to prevent prices from rising.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I have already made a suggestion. It will need a strong Government.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Take 30s. off the workers.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Would it not be better to come to some agreement, if it were workable, rather than that we should let things drift until jobs become scarce?

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Yes; cut profits.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Ultimately, if we do not arrest the position and put Australia on a sound economic basis, the workers will not enjoy the high standard of living or anything else that they enjoy today. What always beats me is that they cannot and will not see that they will be the worst affected if things become bad.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Why should they be?

Hon. A. R. JONES: I do not suggest that I would convince the hon. member if I stayed here a month, because I believe she is one of those people who will not see.

The actual wording of the Bill is pretty vicious; but disregarding the wording and the measures that would be adopted, I have pointed out that we cannot control the price of an article when we come in half way, because we must be able to control it from the inception. We need to control the price of the labour involved, and the raw product that is used and so right along the line to the consumer. Unless we can do that, of what use is price control?

I am prepared to say that there is some justification for something to be done with regard to the butchers in this State. When we lifted controls, I thought everybody would come into line, but I admit that I am disappointed in the butchering trade.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: I paid 8s. for six chops the other day.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Most shopkeepers and other business people have done their best to keep prices at reasonable levels, except, of course, General Motors Holdens, as the hon. member opposite has said; otherwise they would not make the huge profits that they do. If they did not make huge profits, how could they keep going and pay the workers the good wages that they receive?

To my mind, the butchers in this State have not done the right thing; and if there were any means by which we could control them, I feel I would support the Government in such a measure. But having been a butcher, and knowing the tricks of the trade, I know that we cannot control prices thoroughly through the trade.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: In an attempt to ease the price, pre-packaged meat is being sold in the market at Victoria Park.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Well, meat can be sold that way; but when it is packed, we do not know whether it is from the horn or the shin. It could be called frying steak, but any steak that is put in a frying-pan is frying steak.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Even if it is off a kangaroo, it is frying steak.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I do not say that everyone in the butchering game is thoroughly dishonest, but some are evasive in their methods. Some people in the butchering trade give the buying public a good spin. On one occasion when I was waiting in a prominent shop in Perth, a butcher was obviously putting up an order for a hotel. I saw him put five lots of meat on the scale, and for a roast of beef that went 8 lb. he wrote "8½ lb." For steak that weighed 4 lb., he wrote "4½ lb." In the five articles he made an increase in the weight of 2½ lb. If that was not daylight robbery, I do not know what is.

The Minister for the North-West: You are prepared to let them continue robbing the public.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Price control cannot help.

The Minister for the North-West: It can.

Hon. A. R. JONES: It cannot. In his shop, a butcher can display the prices set down by the inspector; but when a customer says he wants 2 lb. of lamb chops, and the price is 3s. a lb. all the butcher has to do, in order to get 3s. 6d. a lb., is to give short weight. A docket has never been given, and the price of the meat has never been put alongside the amount purchased. The butcher just puts the meat on the scales, and very quickly tells the customer the price. I am certain that in most cases he has not had time to work it out. I believe we could control that position to some degree, and I put the suggestion to the Minister in case the Bill does not pass.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Was not a term of imprisonment imposed on one occasion for an offence such as that?

Hon. A. R. JONES: That might have been so.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It was so.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I believe these people could be controlled to a large extent by the Factories and Shops Act, as well as by the health authorities. The health authorities could make sure that the meat delivered to shops was in a good, clean, and healthy state, and fit for human consumption. I recently saw meat delivered to a shop, and I would be ashamed to say that I had killed or handled it in any way. It had come from the Midland Junction Abattoir and some of the innards were still left lying over the neck; in fact, the meat was in a filthy condition. It is pretty tough to expect people to buy that sort of meat.

The health authorities could ensure that the quality of meat was kept up to standard. This could be done by employing the right type of inspectors—men who knew their jobs and who knew one end of a beast from the other—instead of employing men from the rag trade to do the work, as happened in the days of price control. I know of a man who had worked in the rag trade for 30 years and, under price control, he was an inspector in charge of the price of vegetables. He did not know anything at all about carrots or any other type of vegetable.

The Minister for the North-West: At that time there were also man-power regulations.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Possibly so; but the same position would apply again.

The Minister for the North-West: Not necessarily.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I suggest that these meat inspectors would need to know all about meat from the time it was grown until the time it was put on the hook.

In that way we would be able to have some control over the quality of the meat delivered to shops. Inspectors from the Factories and Shops Department could make it mandatory for a butcher to display his prices.

The Minister for the North-West: You would not suggest that the quality be controlled by them at the markets.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I suggest that butchers should be made to write on the docket the amount of meat purchased, with the price alongside each item. In that way the person who bought the meat would have some check. When he got home, he would be able to check the weight and, knowing the price, would be able to work out whether he had been charged the correct amount. At present a person does not know whether he has bought 1 lb., 1½ lb. or 1¼ lb. The meat is simply put on the scales, and the person buying it is charged 3s. 6d., 5s. 6d. or 18s. 6d., as the case may be, and no weight is shown on the docket.

Hon. G. Bennetts: I agree with that.

Hon. A. R. JONES: So I believe we could have some form of control over butchers. The Minister raised a point in regard to quality at the markets. Another way astute butchers have of making profits, at the expense of the public, is to sell meat from an old sheep as hoggett. Only the other day a man told me that he had paid 1s. 6d. a lb. for hoggett, but I guarantee that that hoggett was nothing but old ewe—old small ewe that was probably nicely fattened but not too fat. When it was hung up in the butcher's shop it looked quite attractive. This person paid 1s. 6d. a lb. for the meat, and the butcher probably bought it for 9d. a lb.

The Minister for the North-West: It is sold for human consumption.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Price control could not stop that sort of thing. But I suggest the butchers could be given a darn good warning; and if the health inspectors were men who knew all the cuts of meat, and the inspectors under the Factories and Shops Act made the butchers issue dockets, showing the weight and price of meat sold, I believe it would bring about a better regulation of prices than would be possible under price control.

I do not wish to say any more; but if members on the Government side were interested, or if sufficient members were interested, I would support the appointment of a select committee to inquire into all aspects of price control, and as to whether some form of control is necessary. I shall not support the second reading of this measure.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST** (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [5.50]: Mr. Jones has certainly given us

some interesting reflections on price control. Of course, he has cited only those items which affect the basic wage. In other words, he is concerned only with wage-earners and the effect that the commodities shown in the "C" series index have on the basic wage. The price that farmers might have to pay for commodities that do not come within that index do not concern the hon. member. He has not mentioned or suggested that at least there should be some power on the statute book to control, if necessary, the price of those commodities.

That is all we are asking Parliament to agree to—to put the power on to the statute book, so that, where necessary, action can be taken to prevent exploitation and profiteering. When members of the Opposition formed the Government of this State, they supported price control and kept it in operation by the introduction of continuing measures. We know, too, that when the last Bill was introduced in 1952 to continue price control for a further 12 months, the measure also contained a clause which repealed the Profiteering Prevention Act. As the previous Government saw fit to remove the Profiteering Prevention Act from the statute book, I would say that its idea was to have no power to control prices after the measure of 1952 had expired. The field was left wide open; and when the present Government took office in 1953, and attempted to continue price control, the Bill was thrown out.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: I think that would have been done irrespective of the Government in power.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST**: The Bill did not even pass the second reading stage. I suggest that the previous Government did not believe in any form of control over certain commodities.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: A liberal interpretation of it.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST**: It is all very well for the farmers' representatives to shed crocodile tears on behalf of the workers of this country, and to talk about their getting a fair deal. But those members must not forget that they pegged the basic wage—

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: The Arbitration Court did that.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST**: We introduced Bills, time and again, to try to ensure that the basic wage would be adjusted quarterly. Those measures were rejected.

Hon. A. R. Jones: We did not fix the basic wage.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST**: The effect of the rejection of those Bills was the fixation of the basic wage. But prices could go where they liked!

Hon. C. H. Simpson: The fixation of the basic wage is at the discretion of the court.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Mr. Jones believes in price control over commodities that affect him personally. He believes that the price of wheat should be controlled.

Hon. A. R. Jones: When did I say that?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member agreed that there should be a minimum price for wheat.

Hon. A. R. Jones: I did not agree at all. I said that the price is fixed.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member voted in this House for that Bill.

Hon. L. C. Diver: You were glad to take cheap wheat for many years.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I am not saying whether the wheat is cheap or dear; I am talking about the principle of control. Everybody knows that the wheat cannot be sold. Why? Why does not the hon. member suggest to his supporters—the people he represents—that they take a 30 per cent. reduction for a start?

Hon. L. A. Logan: They have.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: They should put their wheat on to the world's markets.

Hon. L. A. Logan: They have taken that reduction.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: They should take a 30 per cent. reduction and sell the wheat instead of storing it.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: They think that is right out of order, but the worker is expected to have his wages reduced by 30 per cent. first.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Where do you get this 30 per cent. you are talking about?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member wants to draw the worker down first. He suggested that there should be a reduction of about 30 per cent.

Hon. A. R. Jones: I said 30s.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Well, a reduction of 30s. in the wage—whatever percentage that represents. Why not start with those who can best afford it? Why start with those who can least afford it?

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Who are they?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Who are they!

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Yes. I am asking you.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Those who can best afford it are the privileged people; those who are in a position to be able to afford it.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Who are they?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member knows very well who they are. He could quite easily be listed in that category himself. A good deal has been said against this Bill; and members who have spoken to it envisage that the whole ramifications of price control will come into operation, if it is passed, on the same scale as operated during the war years. That is not so. It is not necessary to control the prices of numerous articles; we know that. But there are times when control is necessary.

Hon. A. R. Jones: What items do you suggest we should control today?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I do not intend to name any particular commodities, but I suggest there are people in business who do exploit certain members of the public. In one instance, I paid 18s. for a pair of sandshoes. I happened to strike another resident of the town who had bought a pair of the identical sandshoes on the same day. I found, when we got talking, that he had been charged 24s. I was charged a fair price because they knew who I was.

Hon. L. Craig: Preferential treatment?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Yes. The same sandshoes in Perth cost less than 18s., but I consider I paid a fair price for them. Members opposite do not believe that anything should be done to protect the public from that sort of thing.

Hon. A. R. Jones: How often do you think that sort of thing occurs?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I do not know. I have had only one experience of it, and I did not go back to the same shop for any other goods in case I was not recognised in future. But if it happens to one resident of a town, is it not logical to assume that it will happen to others?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Did that person buy the shoes from the same place as you purchased yours?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: From the same shop, on the same day; and they were the same make of shoe. That is why there should be some legislation on the statute book. It would have a psychological effect on those people and that effect would not be small. When the Premier of South Australia was over here with the South Australian cricketers, or for some other function, he told our Premier, and me, in the dining-room at Parliament House, that he would not part with price control; he said that he would

not dream of it, because it is there if he wants to use it. But we have absolutely no control.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Ours was the only State whose cost of living was reduced over the last three months.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: According to the Commonwealth figures, yes. That is so as far as the basic wage regimen is concerned; but it does not take into account other items used generally throughout the country. We know that. The fact is that the legislation would be on the books and could be used if necessary; whether it would be used or not does not matter. I cannot see any objection to that. It has been said that this is a vicious Bill; that it is something new.

Speaking in official opposition, Mr. Simpson said it is quite a drastic measure, and is something that has not been here before. Yet it is, in fact, identical with the previous Act. The only difference between this Bill and the previous Act is that the Bill contains all the regulations that were in operation during the time the hon. member's Government was in power.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Not to the same degree.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Absolutely to the same degree, except as it relates to penalties. The hon. member mentioned the secrecy clause. He referred to Clause 10 of the Bill, which is the same as Section 12 of the old Act.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Was it not a war-time innovation?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: No. It was a provision that the hon. member continued each year he was Minister in charge of the House.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: That was the Federal Act.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: It was the State Act, the provisions of which were lifted from the Federal Act.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It was adopted from the Federal Act.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Yes; and the State Government at that time undertook to impose price control as a State measure.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: That shows how wise we were to get rid of it.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member did not get rid of it. He did not go to the people during the referendum and say, "You should get rid of it."

Hon. C. H. Simpson: This House did.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member's party said, "We could efficiently continue these controls; we can and will do it."

The Chief Secretary: Do not make them feel too uncomfortable.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It was carried in South Australia.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Yes; and in South Australia, where there is an L.C.L. Government, the Premier said he would not part with the power to control prices. That is all that this Government is asking for. If members study the old Act, together with the Bill, they will find that Clause 10 of the Bill is exactly the same as Section 12 of the old Act. Mr. Simpson took great exception to the power of the commissioners to inform the Commissioner of Taxation when they found that somebody was making a lot of money and perhaps not telling him about it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What statute are you quoting?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I am quoting from No. 3 of 1948, which was continued until this Government came into office in 1953; it was then defeated.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Was not that a carry-over from the war years?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Of course it was! We adopted it.

The Chief Secretary: The war was not on in 1948.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The Minister for the North-West is making the speech.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The powers in this Act were adopted by the McLarty-Watts Government in 1948 from the Commonwealth Act, which was defeated at the referendum. The clause in the Bill to which the hon. member took exception, and which gives power to the commissioners to inform the Commissioner of Taxation, is exactly the same, word for word, as the provision in the old Act which the hon. member continued year after year.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: I think my speech made it clear that it was adopted in war-time.

The Chief Secretary: There was no war in 1948.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: That was adopted from the Commonwealth legislation.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member's Government adopted it, and now he takes exception to it. He brought the measure here on several occasions, and we all agreed to it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Things were abnormal then; they are normal now.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The only difference is in the penalty clause, which is No. 62 in the Bill, and which was Section 16 in the old Act. The difference is that the penalties have been increased. Under the original Act, for

offences dealt with summarily, the fine was a sum not exceeding £100. In this Bill the penalty is £200 or six months. The penalty for prosecution upon indictment was £500 under the old Act; whereas, under this measure, it will be £750 and a term not exceeding two years. The imprisonment term is exactly the same; but the maximum fine that can be imposed was raised in each case.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Is not this much more severe than the Bill you introduced last year?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: It is identical with the Act, as it operated when the hon. member was a Minister in the previous Government. It passed through this House when the hon. member was in charge. I cannot see how any argument can be raised or any objection taken to a Bill which is identical in its provisions with the Act which the hon. member continued year after year; this Bill, in fact, asks for less power.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: It is not the same as that of last year.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member has rejected every Bill since this Government has been in office. This Bill has not the power that the old Act contained, and it is the type of legislation that Sir Charles Latham applauded.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I did not! You have a look at my discussions on that.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The hon. member will find that the Bill contains all the necessary regulations.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I opposed those regulations when I was sitting over there.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: There is no power in the Bill to make any further regulations. I always understood that that was the type of legislation that the hon. member supported, and which he feels should be written into the Act.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What connection can you make with that?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The connection is that the Bill we are introducing has not the range or the power of the original Act. It is not nor can it be, as drastic as the original Act, because that Act provided that any regulations could be made; whereas, in this Bill, every regulation and power is laid down specifically and cannot be altered.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I am glad to know you are at last taking my advice.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: We knew that the hon. member would support a measure such as this because it is so constructive.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It has that advantage; that is one thing I will say about it.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I hope the House will not throw this power out. I hope members will place the power on the statute book so that it can be used if necessary. If we are left without any power to control prices in the event of their being too high, or if we cannot prevent people from being exploited, then we will be in a hopeless state. It has been said that price control causes inflation. That, of course, is not correct.

The Chief Secretary: It did not when they were in power, but it does when we are in power.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The cause of inflation is shortage of goods and materials. That is what causes inflation and blackmarketing. It is not right to say that people should be allowed to charge what they like when goods are in short supply.

Hon. L. Craig: The workers do, you know.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The workers do not. Most workers in this country are governed by arbitration awards.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: From Monday morning until Friday night.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: That point may be argued from several angles. We know there are a lot of workers with collars and ties who do a lot of work at home; or their money does a lot of work for them. They still consider themselves workers. I cannot reconcile those two thoughts at all. I have no objection to any man obtaining that position. It is only a small percentage of the community that can do it. There must always be the workers and those who provide the finance and create the work. That is all right. But when we hear members say, "Why not reduce the wage of the worker—"

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: Who said that?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: If those are the views members hold, why should we not start at the top?

Hon. L. A. Logan: He said everybody.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: It must be remembered that the worker's qualification is his physical power to do the work. He is not sufficiently privileged to be able to build substantial assets for himself, or to think of knocking off before the end of his working life.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Many of them have.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I admit that many have gone in for share-farming. The cost must be on a 50-50 basis.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Most of these fellows have been workers in the past. Your argument is a bit weak there.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST:** I would not say that. I take exception when a cry is raised by certain people—not by all, but by certain people—that the wages of the worker should be reduced so that overseas markets can be explored and goods placed there at a reasonable cost. That has been the cry ever since there have been workers and investors. The cry has always been that the workers get too much. We now learn that some special emergency financial provisions are to be introduced by the Federal Government; but we hear no objection voiced to that. There is no objection to those controls; none whatever. The Prime Minister has told the nation that several controls will be brought in. He said there was too much prosperity.

Hon. L. A. Logan: He is right.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST:** Whether he is right or not, he gets the support of the Australian electors.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Then he must be right.

**THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST:** Not necessarily. I support the Bill.

On motion by Hon. F. R. H. Lavery, debate adjourned.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

### PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

#### *Clarification of Remarks.*

Hon. A. R. JONES (Midland): I wish to make a personal explanation to the House. Have I your permission, Mr. President, to do so?

**THE PRESIDENT:** Yes.

Hon. A. R. JONES: During my contribution to the debate on the Prices Control Bill, through the exchange of interjections, I was either not heard, or I omitted to make myself plain on one point. I would now like to clarify it. It is with regard to what I recommended as a solution. I said I would advocate taking the 30s. loading off wages, and the reduction of prices of all goods by a corresponding percentage, to bring all parties into line. I hope that members will be able to understand this viewpoint.

The Chief Secretary: Would you advocate taking 30s. off the basic wage?

**THE PRESIDENT:** Order! The hon. member is making an explanation.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I wanted to make myself clear. I do not want one section of the community to bear the burden by taking off the 30s. loading from their wages without a corresponding drop in the price of goods.

### BILL—METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY, SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE ACT AMENDMENT.

#### *Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [7.32] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is quite important. Its primary object is to bring about an improvement in the control of the drainage of the metropolitan area. As things stand at present the Metropolitan Water Supply Department is responsible for the storm-water drainage of the metropolitan area, and the Public Works Department handles the land drainage. This dual control operated satisfactorily enough in the past; but the growth of residential development in the metropolitan area in the last few years has created difficulties, not the least of which is the problem of determining the distinction between land and storm-water drainage.

The principal proposal in the Bill, therefore, is to give the Metropolitan Water Supply Department the control of both types of drainage. This is a recommendation which has not been made hastily. Many requests for an improvement of the existing situation were received from a number of sources, including members of Parliament, local authorities and progress associations. A conference between the two departments concerned was held; and after Crown Law advice was obtained, the then Director of Works, Mr. Dumas, recommended that the Metropolitan Water Supply Department be made responsible for land drainage as well as storm-water drainage.

At present, even if adequate funds were available, the provisions dealing with drainage are, despite the desires of the Government and local authorities, insufficient to enable a comprehensive drainage scheme to be carried out in the metropolitan area for the drainage of storm, surface and ground water, which, unless it can be removed, accumulates to the considerable disadvantage and discomfort of householders and other people. All members, I think, have seen or have heard of the experiences of those unfortunate people who are living in flooded areas. There is, too, the problem of draining undeveloped areas which, but for excess water, would be suitable for development.

Contour surveys have been taking place in the area between the ocean and the Darling Range as far as Wanneroo to the north and Riverton to the south, in order to obtain a complete appreciation of metropolitan drainage requirements. These surveys are practically complete, but a considerable amount of other detailed work has still to be done. This, of course, is understandable because the problem is one of considerable magnitude both from the technical and financial points of view.

In 1952 a report was submitted providing an outline scheme of a preliminary nature of estimates for the drainage of the land from Welshpool to the hills and to the Swan and Canning Rivers. This report emphasised the legal and financial difficulties, and inadequacies caused by two drainage authorities operating in the one area.

As a result of this report, the then Minister for Works, the Hon. D. Brand, appointed a committee to inquire into and report upon the problem. The Bill we are now considering stems from this committee's inquiries and recommendations. The department, however, has not been idle during the period of the committee's activities. Investigations have been made of a preliminary drainage proposal for an area between Bayswater and Bassendean, and detailed plans are nearing completion for the Bassendean and Kenwick areas.

The full design of all the districts affected has taken years of work. The staff available has been limited because of the urgent water supply projects which the Government has decided must receive far higher priority. However urgent we may regard the drainage question as being, the Government believes the water supply requirements should receive higher priority. As the funds available to the department have been limited and have all been required for water supply projects, drainage could not be undertaken to any extent.

However, in view of the difficulty of providing additional funds for drainage it cannot be said that the lack of skilled technical staff has really slowed down the development of drainage projects. If the Bill is passed, the Metropolitan Water Supply Department will be able to deal progressively with the situation as funds become available.

Provision is made in the Bill to ratify the department's power to separately assess, for rating purposes, occupants renting or leasing separate portions of the one building who are supplied by the one service. The Metropolitan Water Supply Department has always rated this way, but it appears that it has no legal justification for doing so. It is essential that this procedure be continued to meet cases such as where tenants occupying a building may be responsible for payment of rates. Where such a building is metered, the question of responsibility for payment of excess water also has to be established. I might say a similar provision to that proposed in the Bill is provided in Section 383 (d) of the Municipal Corporations Act.

Another rating proposal in the Bill is to give the Minister the discretion to adopt the unimproved rating system in an area where the local authority rates on annual values. At present, the parent Act requires the Minister to use the annual value system if the local authority

does so. This amendment was inserted in the Bill in another place as a result of representations from ratepayers in the Wembley area who are dissatisfied with the Perth City Council's method of rating on annual values, and who have asked that the Metropolitan Water Supply Department assess its rates under the unimproved system.

The amendment would allow the Minister to use his discretion as to what system to adopt in such cases. At present, the Act allows the Minister a certain discretion. He has the option of assessing rates on one of three annual values, these being the current value of the local authority, the rental value, or an amount not exceeding 6 per cent. on the capital value of the rent in fee simple.

Another provision in the Bill is for the appointment of valuers who are given authority to enter onto land for the purpose of making valuations. As members know, the department employs valuers who are appointed under Section 12 of the parent Act, which empowers the Minister to authorise any officer to perform acts which the Minister is required to do by the parent Act. There is, however, no authority in the Act for valuers to enter property or for persons to give them any information they may need.

The other principal amendment concerns persons who carry out illegal plumbing operations. The position at present is that the by-laws made under the Act provide it is illegal for any person, other than licensed water supply or licensed water supply and sanitary plumbers, to carry out work in connection with water, sewerage or drainage fittings. This offence carries a maximum penalty of £10.

Plenty of examples have occurred where through householders' ignorance or indifference illegal operators have carried out work which in the course of time has been found to be inefficient. Under Section 51 of the Justices Act, the time for taking action under a departmental by-law is limited to within six months of the breach. Where plumbing is concerned, the inefficient illegal work is often discovered after a period of six months. To enable the householder or the department to take action in such cases the Bill seeks to include in the Act a provision enabling action to be instituted within one year.

The maximum penalty that can be imposed for breaches of by-laws is £20, with a further penalty of not more than £5 for each day the offence continues after notice has been given to the offender. This provision has been in the Act since 1904, and in view of the change in money values since that year a substantial increase is warranted. The Bill, therefore, seeks to raise the maximum to £50. No increase in the daily penalty is sought.



I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

**BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES, BOUNDARIES AND SERVANTS, SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS.**

*In Committee.*

Resumed from the 20th October. Hon. W. R. Hall in the Chair; the Minister for Local Government in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3—Power of inquiry (partly considered):

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I have a long list of amendments on the notice paper, most of which are consequential to the main alteration. The chief feature of the amendments is to ensure that a referendum of all the people concerned shall be held before an amalgamation or alteration to boundaries is made. I believe I have the support of a large number of members, even though it may not be a majority. I am firmly convinced that the Government is creeping away from the people. It is becoming unmindful of the fact that individual citizens have sent us into this Chamber. I believe that in all these matters we should look back to the people and ask them whether they consider the measures we propose meet with their approval.

I may be told that people are parochial. This may be partly true, but it is a very poor way of looking at the matter. I feel that if a referendum were put to the people, the result would depend largely upon the manner in which the arguments were placed before them. If the referendum were not carried, it would be an indication that the arguments for the alteration of the boundaries had not impressed the average ratepayer.

We must not forget that the people themselves are the ones who contribute the rates to the local authority. In the main, the rates come from the people who live in the area and who desire to see the affairs of the neighbourhood in the hands of those who live there. It may be said that we shall get economy by these amalgamations; but I do not believe it, because the salaries of all officers will go up in geometrical proportions as the work of the local authority increases, and so will the salaries of the deputy officers appointed under such amalgamations.

One of the great difficulties is that in a large district, when men go out to work, they leave a central depot and proceed for some distance, and afterwards leave that spot and return to the central depot, whereas in a smaller area, there is a much closer observation of the work being done and the men do not have to travel such

distances. I believe that it is democratic to place such suggested changes before the people for their opinion. In my view none of these changes should be made without the consent of the people first being obtained. For these reasons I have put the amendments on the notice paper, all of which deal with the one matter, namely, that there shall be a referendum of the ratepayers before any action along the lines contemplated is taken. I move an amendment—

That the paragraph designation “(a)” in line 18, page 3, be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I hope that the amendment will not be accepted. It is remarkable how, when anybody sets out to do something to improve the conditions under which local authorities are operating, all sorts of obstacles are put in the way. The question of the amalgamation of local authorities has been a burning one in many areas for many years. During my term of office, I appointed the most competent man in local government matters to make an inquiry. He visited every area in the metropolis. Just about every local authority gave evidence. Other associations were given an opportunity to tender evidence and so was every individual.

What was the response? Without checking up on the point, I think I am right in saying that not one individual gave evidence. Members know that the average ratepayer does not care whether he is in Claremont, Nedlands, North Fremantle or Fremantle so long as the rates he is called upon to pay are reasonable and the amenities provided are of the best.

I admit that Dr. Hislop has very cleverly introduced this amendment because he has really put me on the spot politically, the reason being that one of the planks of the Labour platform is the referendum.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Then you will accept the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: There is a time and place for everything.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Not with the Labour Party.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: —and this is neither the time nor the place for an amendment of this sort. We have had a local government Act for years and all I have done has been within the four corners of the Act. I could proceed with these amalgamations without the passing of the Bill.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: I am aware of that.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: All I am attempting to do is to insert machinery provisions in the Act to straighten out one or two little anomalies.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: That is what I am trying to do.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** In all the years, the hon. member has never tried to make provision for a referendum on any of these questions, and amalgamation has taken place. Yet when we try to do something for the betterment of local government, he introduces amendments of this sort. The time and place for making such an amendment is when the Act is before us for review, not in a little machinery Bill like this.

In opposing the amendment, I am not saying that the idea of a referendum is bad, but if the hon. member's suggestion were adopted, the scheme of amalgamation could be washed out for all time. I say this very definitely because the local authorities that need to be amalgamated are the small ones. The most shining example of this is Peppermint Grove, a local authority consisting of a ridiculously small handful of people. Are they doing what they should do? No. They are relying on the adjoining district to provide amenities that they cannot supply. But take a referendum in Peppermint Grove and one would not be in the race. So for all time we would have to perpetuate these little pocket handkerchief local authorities. The smaller the place, the greater the reason why there should be an amalgamation.

If the amendments were accepted, I could drop the Bill and still proceed with the amalgamations. Fremantle has four wards with three councillors to each, in all 12 councillors; East Fremantle also has 12; and North Fremantle has three wards and nine councillors, a total of 33 councillors. That is a ridiculous position. Had Dr. Hislop read the evidence and findings of the Royal Commissioner, I do not think he would have tabled these amendments. I repeat that the amendments could be proceeded with even if the Bill were not passed, but I do not think the hon. member would like that to occur.

The position is awkward. Local authority elections are due next month, and one of the reasons why I wanted the Bill to be passed is because of the lack of power in the existing Acts to postpone those elections. Yet it is essential that those elections be postponed. The hon. member asked whether I had told someone that there would be no elections and I shook my head. What happened was that I told local authorities that I intended to introduce a Bill to postpone the elections.

All that this Bill contains are machinery clauses. One power we are seeking is to set up the local authorities in a sensible manner. If it were a road district, we could chop up the wards and the boundaries in any way we liked, but with a municipality we can merely take in a

ward. If local authorities have made provision in anticipation of this measure being passed, I do not know how they will overcome the difficulty. I am endeavouring to point out to members what we are faced with.

The Bill also provides adequate compensation for the officers concerned. If members persist in opposition to the measure, I will let it go, and will still be able to continue with the amalgamations. I agree that a referendum is useful in many circumstances, but that does not apply here. Surely members realise that it would be ridiculous to submit the question of amalgamation to a referendum in most areas! Why is it that over the whole experience of local government in this State the only provision so far made for a referendum is where loans are sought to be raised?

Hon. H. L. Roche: Would it not have been better if there had been this provision for a referendum?

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** No. Why is there no power for ratepayers to enforce their demands on a local authority?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There is opportunity for an election every year.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** That is so; but there is nothing in the Act about the voice of the ratepayers at their meetings. I do not wish to ride roughshod over local authorities and have not done so, but am asking for the provisions of this measure with which to implement the Act. I hope the amendment will be defeated.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: The Minister has put forward a better case than I thought possible. It is true that the smaller the district the more parochial people become. A referendum is democratic if the people take sufficient interest and the majority vote; but my experience in regard to a referendum on a particularly important matter was that only 7 per cent. voted, and so it is that I believe that expert advice is often sounder than the result of a referendum.

I would favour the referendum if at least 80 per cent. of those eligible could be made to vote; but that is impossible. When municipalities have assets or a particular right, they will not relinquish it lightly, owing to the possessive spirit that exists. In some instances there are three secretaries, three town clerks and three engineers within a range of a few miles. There might also be three graders and three rollers, where one of each machine could do all the work offering. I do not think parochialism would permit the position to be altered unless some outside authority, acting wisely, brought about that result. I oppose the amendment.

**Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM:** If, as he said, the Minister has all the necessary power under the Road Districts Act, why is he seeking further power here? I would remind members that the population in the metropolitan area has increased greatly in recent years, and that the local authorities have had very little financial support from the Government. The result is that where an authority has raised finance, it will not be willing to see that money spent in some other area which has not contributed. I would have thought the amendment would appeal to the Minister, as it would give the ratepayers power to decide whether there should be an amalgamation.

When the Government took over the electricity and gas undertakings, large sums of money were either paid or promised to the local authorities concerned, and I think they have the right to have that money spent in their own districts rather than in areas which made no contribution towards it. I cannot understand any Labour member wanting to refuse the people the right of a referendum. I believe that initiation, referendum and recall are still in the platform of the Labour Party.

**The Minister for Local Government:** I expected that.

**Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM:** Will the Minister go back on his platform? I cannot understand a good stickler for Labour principles—

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The hon. member must keep to the subject before the Chair.

**Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM:** I am thinking of the Minister's opposition to the referendum.

**The Minister for Local Government:** I anticipated that you would raise this question.

**Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM:** There is nothing wrong with the ratepayers being given this power by means of a referendum. I hope Labour members will stick to their platform—

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! This has nothing to do with the question before the Chair.

**Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM:** It is a means to an end.

**The CHAIRMAN:** The hon. member mentioned it once, but must now keep away from that subject.

**Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM:** I know nothing more in the interests of a community in this regard than a referendum. If I were a ratepayer in Subiaco I would not like to be joined with the City of Perth—

**The Minister for Local Government:** That is not being done.

**Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM:** The Minister has not told us what districts are to be joined. I am surprised at Mr. Teahan saying that only 7 per cent. of the ratepayers would vote at a referendum. I do not think the Minister would go to a municipality and say he was going to take its nest-egg and distribute it to others who had not been so thrifty. I am supporting Dr. Hislop in this, and I appeal to members of the Labour Party to give their support to it so that we may test it out.

**Hon. G. BENNETTS:** I am always in favour of a referendum being held provided that there is some guarantee that the majority of the people will vote. In the last week or two, in a certain part of my electorate, a referendum was taken and only about 80 people voted; whereas 350 to 400 could have voted. Many local authorities have their boundaries within a very limited radius of perhaps only three or four miles; and as a result, their works equipment is often duplicated. Also, there is the question of stores. As an example, one local authority that I was connected with had six different makes of trucks. Each local authority is forced to spend thousands of pounds on plant which, of course, is money lying idle.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Does the hon. member intend to connect his remarks with the question before the Chair?

**Hon. G. BENNETTS:** Yes. I am giving members some idea of what it costs these separate local authorities; whereas, if they were amalgamated, their costs would be reduced because there would be only one town clerk and so on. After a local authority has paid the salaries of its officers, and met maintenance costs, it has very little left to spend on the upkeep of roads. At the moment 25 ratepayers can sign a petition to request a local authority to hold a referendum.

**Hon. Sir Charles Latham:** I do not think so. That would only be in regard to the flotation of a loan.

**Hon. G. BENNETTS:** I know that that has applied to the local authorities I have been concerned with. However, we discovered that owing to the small number of people that vote, it was not worth while holding a referendum.

**Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM:** I support the amendment because I do not agree with the idea of whittling away the responsibility of local authorities.

**Hon. E. M. Davies:** That is ridiculous.

**Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM:** There is no doubt that this provision will whittle away the powers of any local authority. If people are interested they will vote on a referendum; but if they do not vote, that, to my mind, is an expression of opinion. Any vote that is taken must be voluntary.

I do not care for compulsion of any sort, particularly when it concerns a referendum held on boundaries. This provision is an encroachment on the power and responsibility of a local authority and also on the rights of the ratepayers of a district.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I oppose the amendment. After listening to Sir Charles Latham, it seems to me that his rusty armour has dimmed his sight for the future. The Minister has told us that, no matter what happens, he can still go on with the Bill because that is provided for in the Act. It is nonsense for Sir Charles to say it is our duty, according to our platform, to call for a referendum. The Minister can still proceed with amalgamations and this is only a machinery Bill.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: He cannot do that if the amendment still remains.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: But it will not remain. The Minister has explained that if he had to approach the small local authorities for their opinion he would never get anywhere. It has been proved in the past that some things have to be done for the general good of the people.

Hon. E. M. DAVIES: Most members tonight have dealt with the question of amalgamation rather than the question before the Chair, which is in regard to the holding of a referendum. As one who has had some experience of local government, particularly in the City of Fremantle, I say that the proposed amalgamation of the municipalities of North Fremantle and East Fremantle will be of no benefit to the City of Fremantle.

However, when we were called upon to give evidence before the commissioner appointed by the Minister, we felt that to be progressive it was necessary that some amalgamation should take place, and we suggested certain boundaries, which were not acceptable to the commissioner. He included two local authorities that are contiguous to Fremantle, and did not agree with the report of the Fremantle municipality.

The City of Fremantle has nothing to gain from this proposal. Many people who live adjacent to the City of Fremantle carry out their shopping in the business section of the city. The result is that they create business which, in turn, creates higher valuations; and they, in turn, create an increase in rates. None of that concerns the adjoining local authorities. However, if an amalgamation took place, some of that unearned increment would be spent in the adjacent local authorities, and therefore it would prove to be of some benefit to them. I support the proposal for the holding of a referendum.

Whilst I also agree with the amalgamation of local authorities, which I believe would be in the best interests of the community generally, I have already pointed out what that would mean to those people

who live in the districts contiguous to Fremantle. They have expressed opposition to the proposal. However, provided it was conducted on proper lines by a case for and against being submitted to the ratepayers, I believe a referendum should be held.

The two local authorities concerned in the amalgamation with Fremantle have already held referendums; but all they did was to ask ratepayers whether they were in favour of the amalgamation. Therefore, I can readily understand the Minister not taking a great deal of notice of the referendums. This amendment does not go far enough because it deals only with the two local authorities that will be absorbed.

I am sorry this debate has been resumed tonight, because I proposed to add an addendum to the amendment on the notice paper to the effect that if a referendum were taken, it should be held in the district of the absorbing local authority to give the people an opportunity to decide whether they were prepared to accept the absorption of the two other local authorities. I support the amendment for a referendum to be taken on proper lines; but if this proposal is passed tonight I intend, when the Bill enters the third reading stage, to have the Bill recommitted for the purpose of adding a further amendment to that already on the notice paper.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am somewhat amazed at some of the speeches that have been made tonight. It is extraordinary how some people can temper the wind to the shorn lamb; how principles can suddenly be twisted and made to look something which they are not. A referendum is either good or not good.

Until tonight I have not had a chance to study the Bill, but it looks as if anyone with a team of horses could drive straight through this proposal. It is good to consult the people at all times, even although one does not have to take notice of them. All people should be consulted—both those that are to be absorbed, and those who are to do the absorbing.

The weakness in the amendment is in the original Clause 3, which says the Governor may from time to time appoint any person. The "Governor" means Cabinet or the Government. Suppose the Governor does not decide to appoint somebody. In that case, the Minister can do everything he has been able to do from the beginning. He may not decide to appoint anybody to inquire what should be done. But even the Minister can do it, and the Governor does not come into it. This matter will need a lot of careful examination before we can determine that the amendment will do what the hon. member wants to have done. If the Governor—which means the Minister—decides not to make

these inquiries, it all breaks down, does it not? And things go on as if the clause had never been instituted.

I think that, as a principle, it would satisfy the feelings of the ratepayers if, when serious alterations were going to be made to their boundaries, they were consulted. I believe that ratepayers are sensible if they are informed. But in referendums that I have seen conducted, they have been most ill informed. The question has been: Do you or do you not? There has been no explanation at all. It is a good principle always to consult people who are going to be interfered with.

As Mr. Teahan has said, there grows up, particularly in small communities, sentiments which they do not like to let go. I am one who was responsible for the building of a new road board office in my locality—only by suggesting that it should be done. It is a nice little place, modern and nicely furnished. If the board with which I was concerned were absorbed by a bigger one, the centre would be with the bigger one. In other words, the centre of administration would be taken away from the nice, attractive little road board office to which I have referred. Irrespective of the advantages that might accrue from an absorption, a sentiment grows up around a place of that sort and the people say, "Why should we lose our own little road board office? We will be absorbed, and we will have to drive to such and such a place to pay our rates and licence fees. We are happy as we are." Those sentiments outweigh the realisation of the benefits to be gained by absorption.

So unless people are very well informed, referendums do not reflect the real opinion of thinking ratepayers. However, it should be accepted by a government as a principle that when serious alterations are going to be made, the people concerned should be consulted and both cases put before them and their opinion obtained so that the judgment of the Minister may be tempered. In such circumstances, he might alter his opinion upon receiving information as to the views of ratepayers on one side or the other. I have not any strong views on this matter, except that I do not like agreeing to anything that will not work; and, unless there is a drastic alteration in this proposal, it will not work.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Mr. Craig seems to think the amendment may not work because of the wording of Clause 3. But the Minister is not going to amalgamate any boards until he has appointed somebody to inquire into the matter. I think that in every case in which an amalgamation has taken place, an inquiry has been made into the ramifications of the proposed amalgamation.

Hon. L. Craig: Why is it put in the Bill if there is power already?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There is power if the Minister wants it. He is adding extra powers, although I do not know why he wants them. I have no worries on that score. I am certain the Minister would not effect any amalgamation unless he had had somebody inquiring into the ramifications beforehand.

One reason I think a referendum is necessary is that it would overcome the fear in the minds of the Fremantle local authorities today. We find that because of the half-baked referendum that has been taken and the propaganda that has been disseminated, nobody seems to know the truth of the position. If the referendum proposed in the amendment were carried out in the right manner, all such doubts and fears would be removed and the true story would be obtained.

While I admit there may be a percentage who do not like amalgamation, the majority, when they have been given the facts, are sensible enough to vote the right way. Otherwise amalgamations would not have taken place. We have had amalgamations in the country; and, when people have had an opportunity to know the full story, they have been satisfied. The same would happen in the metropolitan area.

Hon. W. F. WILLESEE: I propose to support the amendment. I feel that the principle of a referendum, not so much by ratepayers but more particularly by owners of property, is a basic principle that should not be lost sight of when we talk of the amalgamation of local authorities. More particularly do I think that the small local authority should not be subjugated under any circumstances. Never does an individual play a greater part in the community than when a local authority is manifest. Never does one see a more capable exhibition of public life than when a small local authority is struggling.

I know of local authorities that exist on a revenue of £1 per mile and have done so for some years. In such cases individuals on those local authorities play a great part in the progress not only of the local authorities but also of the State as a whole. I fear that if we swamp the local authorities we will lose individuals from such bodies who could not be replaced. I am not concerned that there should be a parochial attitude and that a local authority should jealously guard its rights and refuse to merge with a greater board.

If there is a plant problem, I feel that it can be overcome by a plant pool. Above all, if we interfere with the rights and take away the initiative and capacity of local authorities, we will create government by stereotyped individuals such as we have in governments today. I support the amendment because I fear

that if little local authorities here and there are swallowed, the initiative that has built this State will be destroyed.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Sir Charles Latham said that North Fremantle and East Fremantle had grown. I hope he knew more about the rest of the subject than he did about that part of it. North Fremantle has been deteriorating.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: There are some very nice buildings in North Fremantle.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** I will have a look and see if I can find them! I have only been living there for about 40 years. There are only 1.26 square miles in the territory now, 54 per cent. of which is non-rateable. It is ridiculous that a mayor and nine councillors should be running approximately three-quarters of a mile of rateable territory, with a population that is declining.

East Fremantle has never altered, notwithstanding what the hon. member said about its growth. It has an area of 1.2 square miles and always has had. If every block in the area were built on, not more than 6,000 to 7,000 people could be accommodated. That area has a mayor and 12 councillors.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Have both authorities road plant?

Hon. L. Craig: Two shovels and a wheelbarrow.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** They have a wheelbarrow, I think, and that is about all. I met a deputation from the North Fremantle municipality in the mayor's parlour. One councillor stressed how financial the municipality was, and another pointed out that it had all the plant that was needed. But I was able to tell the council that its ideas and mine on finance differed. At the date of the inquiry, the bank balance of the local authority was £33 12s. It has so much machinery that for the last four years it has had to bring in the Cottesloe municipality's team to do its road work. When one comes along, after an inquiry at which anyone can give evidence, and tries to rectify these anomalies, what does one hit? One hits a brick wall.

It does not matter to me whether there are amalgamations or not, but I would not be doing my job as the Minister concerned if I did not try to rectify the position. I have on many occasions heard it said that this Chamber is the greatest obstructionist in the world. After what I have heard on this measure, I am inclined to agree that there is some justification for that comment. The hon. member talked about referendums. A referendum was taken in East Fremantle.

Hon. L. Craig: Not an informed referendum.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Those who were against the amalgamation had it all their own way. No attempt was made by those in favour of the amalgamation to influence the people. What did those who were against the amalgamation get? A 30 per cent. poll!

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: They got an 8 to 1 majority in that poll.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** That is a terrible majority when not one-third of the people vote. They were so disinterested they would not even record a vote.

Hon. W. F. Willesee: Was it a ratepayers' poll or an owners' poll?

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** A ratepayers' poll.

Hon. W. F. Willesee: What value is that?

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** That is what the proposal is. The East Fremantle referendum was taken before the amalgamation, and the North Fremantle one afterwards. What happened there? Again, it was a 30 per cent. poll and again the local authority was against the amalgamation. There was not one word from myself or anyone else; and on that occasion there was a 30 per cent. poll.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: This will rectify that.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Members can do what they like about it. I have done my job. I have put before the Chamber the considered opinion arrived at after an inquiry. The people are so disinterested that 70 per cent. of them would not vote at a referendum. Yet members here shed crocodile tears and talk about having a referendum of ratepayers before anything can be done. The position is ridiculous. I am not talking now against the taking of referendums generally. Mr. Cunningham gets up and throws his chest out about giving the ratepayers a say. He is the mayor of a municipality; but what action has he ever taken to give the ratepayers a say? Yet, when I want to make improvements in my district, the hon. member, who comes from nearly 400 miles away, sheds crocodile tears here about giving the ratepayers certain rights.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Order! I ask the hon. member to address the Chair.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** The main point raised was in connection with the ratepayers having some say. Well, they have already had it. Mr. Davies mentioned Fremantle, and he has a lot of justification for what he said about Fremantle taking over these two authorities. I went out to East Fremantle and faced a hostile meeting of 200. Who was at the meeting? A lot of my people

from North Fremantle went along to see the fun. At the meeting there was a man and his wife—they were quite rightly there—but only one was a ratepayer.

I told the meeting that I was not putting East Fremantle in with a poor relation. For East Fremantle to go in with Fremantle would materially raise the value per head. The value in East Fremantle was about £14 to £17, and it was about £47 or £48 in Fremantle. So, by the amalgamation, the value of the ratepayer would have very nearly doubled in East Fremantle. It would have become reduced slightly in Fremantle. All these things have been considered, not by me but by an expert who has set out what is the best thing to be done for the State. Some members have not seen one shred of the evidence given. At the moment, I have on my table requests from Sir Charles Latham's area for amalgamations.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They had a meeting a little while ago which was against it.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Yes, the local authority, but not the ratepayers. As a matter of fact, the ratepayers' meeting carried the resolution. One local authority favoured it and requested the other local authority to do something, but the other local authority refused. This is the sort of thing that is going on in the State.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: This will adjust it nicely, now.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** This will throw it out of gear. Here we have the machinery to go ahead. To do what is suggested here means that all the work that has been done in connection with this matter will be thrown overboard, because another inquiry would have to be set up. What we have here has been nearly two years in course of preparation.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: A little longer will not make any difference.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** I see. The hon. member believes that the expenditure and so on should be thrown overboard. Only three local authorities have been kicking up a row; two of them are in my district.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Nedlands and Claremont.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Nedlands did not kick up much of a row, but Claremont did. The representative of Claremont at the inquiry said, "We are too small; our finance is not sufficient for us to govern properly; we must have more territory." But since the decision has been given, he is one of the loudest in his complaints. I have here the evidence given by the mayor of another local authority—

As pointed out in our evidence we agreed we would co-operate with you as commissioner and give you all

assistance. We feel you have a big job to do and we feel too that the Minister has got it in capable hands. We feel too that whatever your decision is it will be a conscientious one and we will be able to take it.

Since then, they have taken it in such a way that they have had combined ratepayers' meetings, held deputations, written letters to members, and so on.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Of course, we have not stopped the merging of these authorities.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Let the hon. member not hoodwink himself; he is not hoodwinking me. I say quite seriously that if this goes in he can say goodbye to making any improvement in regard to the amalgamating of local authorities.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It is more democratic to give them the right to decide it for themselves.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Do not talk about this democracy business! Fancy that coming from the hon. member!

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Do not bite!

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** We have many Bills here that are democratic, but we will have a different vote from the hon. member on them.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I hope I do what is right.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** The hon. member said, "Why come here if you have the powers?" I have the powers under the Road Districts Act, and the only power I lack under the Municipal Corporations Act is to merge portion of one area with portion of another and make it one ward. I can put the whole of the wards over, or the whole of the municipalities. At the inquiry, this witness was asked—

Supposing amalgamation did take place, do you consider East Fremantle should become one ward of the City of Fremantle?

His reply was—

No. I believe if an amalgamation did come about that the whole of the wards of the city and East Fremantle would have to go into a melting pot.

That is what I am after here; that it go into the melting pot and a proper balance of the wards be created. He was further asked—

Do you consider that the City of Fremantle acts as a centre for the district around here?

His answer was, "I do." They are not large enough to provide all that is required of a local authority. They lean on their next door neighbour.

Hon. J. D. Teahan: What was the experience of the amalgamations at Collie and Busselton?

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Why did Collie, Busselton, Geraldton and the other places do this? Because of economic pressure. Why is this done? Economic pressure demands that it shall be done. But if members take the attitude they do, I cannot do anything more about it. I have done all that is humanly possible, and I appeal to members to think twice before they record a vote.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I feel that I should say a word or two about what has been said. I am grateful to members for the interest they have taken in my amendments. The Minister has used all his gulle and has spoken softly, only to follow it with something a little more harsh. Then he has smiled to reassure us in regard to some of his arguments. He even introduced the phrase we know so well about bringing up a point on this occasion; any other occasion would be all right, but not this time. This is one occasion when I am bringing forward the wishes of some of the ratepayers of these districts.

I have asked, on many occasions, why a power was wanted when the Minister said he already had it under the Act. I have always been told that the Minister wants it but is never likely to use it. The power has been in the Act for many years, but the municipalities never thought that it would be used. One thing that disturbed me was that, in introducing the Bill, the Minister said local governing bodies could get too large, in just the same way as they could be too small. I have been informed, on good authority, that at one local governing body meeting at which the Minister was present, he was asked: "Is it your intention to amalgamate further?"; and he said, "Yes; Subiaco into Perth and one city between Perth and Fremantle."

**The Minister for Local Government:** No.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: That statement was made to me by a responsible person.

**The Minister for Local Government:** It is not true.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It was published.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It is exactly as Mr. Willesee pointed out. It is an ultimate absorption of small efficient bodies, with men working in voluntary capacities, into the larger areas. I believe that Mr. Davies need have no fears because, as Mr. Craig said, when amalgamation is to take place it will not be put to a referendum of the two bodies that are to be taken into the larger one but it will be put to all three, because they will ultimately form

the new body. There cannot be a referendum of a part without a referendum of the whole.

I cannot see much wrong with the local governing body in Peppermint Grove. If these people decide that they like living in that way, and they want to keep the same conditions that they have had in the past—even though they have to hire plant from a neighbouring authority and, on occasions, have to ask for the part-time services of a health inspector—it is still a well-organised territory and one in which a number of people prefer to live. I would hate to see it, just because it was a small area, having no alternative but simply to be told by the Minister that it must be absorbed into the larger body.

Hon. W. F. Willesee: It was 100 per cent.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Yes.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Seeing who live there, it ought to have been. What about the workers who live in Mosman Park? They do not get anything done.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: At one stage the Minister exhibited a great deal of unwisdom. He told us that even though we are of the opinion that a referendum should be held, it will not make any difference. The power exists in the Act, and he hinted that he could still go on with it, and probably would.

**The Minister for Local Government:** I was being honest with members.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It might have been, but it is most unwise politically if it is not morally right.

**The Minister for Local Government:** I was merely telling members what the powers are under the Act. I think it is my duty to do that.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I quite agree. But behind it all I was able to notice the veiled hint that the Minister would, with those powers, go ahead and do what he wanted to do, despite the fact that members might tonight exhibit a wish that a referendum be held.

I do not want to have any ill feeling about this matter. I simply concede that the people should have a right to express their opinion before an amalgamation takes place. I think some of the arguments put by the Minister tonight would convince any small number of people, outside a larger area, that they would be better off if they were absorbed by it. If the referendum is properly conducted and both points of view are expressed plainly I cannot see that anybody has anything to fear. The Minister's fears in regard to North Fremantle and East Fremantle are groundless and I do not think there is anything to fear about this.

**THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** I must make some comment in regard to the alleged statement made



at a local authority meeting. I said that it did appear obvious that Subiaco was a natural portion of Perth; also that the river was a natural boundary and that there may be in the future a new city south of the river—Victoria Park, Belmont and South Perth. I said that no one could convince me that there was a community of interest between the far end of Maylands and Scarborough and that the far end of Maylands was, like Subiaco, a natural part of the City of Perth. That is why I visualise that in future amalgamations that will be taken into consideration and something will be done along those lines.

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

Ayes	.....	14
Noes	.....	5
Majority for	.....	9

#### Ayes.

Hon. L. Craig	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. J. McI. Thomson
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. W. F. Willesee
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	Hon. F. D. Willmott

(Teller.)

#### Noes.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker	Hon. J. D. Teahan
Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. J. J. Garrigan
Hon. G. Fraser	

(Teller.)

#### Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. C. Diver	Hon. R. F. Hutchison

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I move an amendment—

That subparagraph (ii) in lines 24 to 31, page 3, be struck out and the following subparagraph inserted in lieu:—

- (ii) the name of a person appointed by him to act as returning officer to conduct the referendum referred to in the next succeeding subsection.

This means that after the inquiry is made, the name of the returning officer is notified to the bodies concerned.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (b) in lines 32 to 37, page 3, be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—

- (5) (a) Within one month after service of the notice referred to in Subsection (4) of this section—

- (i) the Minister shall forward to the returning officer an argument in favour of the exercise of the power which the report recommends be exercised;

- (ii) the local authorities shall forward to the returning officer an argument against the exercise of the power,

each argument to consist of not more than two thousand words, and in the case of that forwarded by the Minister to be authorised by the person who has made the report, and in the case of that forwarded by the local authorities to be authorised by the town clerk or secretary (as the case may be) of each local authority.

(b) The returning officer shall within two months after the expiration of the period of one month referred to in paragraph (a) of this subsection cause to be printed and posted to every ratepayer, as nearly as practicable, in each district the subject of the recommendation, a pamphlet containing the arguments together with a statement of the purport of the recommendation.

(6) (a) The referendum shall be held on a date fixed by the Minister and notified in the Gazette and by notice in writing to the returning officer, such date to be not earlier than three months nor later than four months after the expiration of the period of one month referred to in paragraph (a) of Subsection (5) of this section.

(b) The referendum shall be conducted and the question determined in accordance with the law for the time being regulating the conduct of elections for the Legislative Assembly so far as such law can be made applicable, *mutatis mutandis* to the taking of such referendum.

(c) A returning officer appointed under this section shall, with respect to the referendum, have all the powers possessed by a returning officer under the provisions of the Electoral Act, 1907-1953.

(d) Any moneys required for the purpose of carrying out any of the provisions of Subsection (5) of this section, or of this subsection, shall be provided by the local authorities whose district is the subject of the recommendation, if more than one in equal shares.

(7) (a) The returning officer shall as soon as may be possible after the holding of the referendum report the result thereof to the Minister who shall submit the same to the Governor.

Amendment put and passed.

On motions by Hon. J. G. Hislop, clause further amended by striking out paragraph designation (c) line 38, page 3, and inserting paragraph designation (b) in lieu; by striking out the word, "decision" in line 39, page 3, and substituting the words "result of the referendum" in lieu; by striking out the words "the decision" in line 40, page 3, and substituting the words, "such result" in lieu; by striking out the words in lines 8 and 9, page 4; by striking out paragraph designation (d) line 10, page 4, and inserting paragraph designation (c) in lieu; and by striking out the words in line 15, page 4.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I move an amendment—

That Subclause (5), in lines 16 to 21 page 4, be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—

(8) Where the result of the referendum is against the exercise of the power then the power shall not be exercised, but where the result is in favour of the exercise of the power and the requirements of paragraphs (b) and (c) of Subsection (7) of this section have been complied with, the Governor may by authority of this Act, and notwithstanding the provisions of any other Act, exercise the power by Order in Council.

Amendment put and passed.

On motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop, clause further amended by striking out Subclause (6) on pages 4 and 5.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 4, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

## **BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 20th October.

**HON. J. G. HISLOP** (Metropolitan) [9.26]: I have given quite a lot of thought to this Bill, and I feel that there are many points with which one must agree. The extension of the right to local bodies to assist individuals in sewerage their homes is a very good one, and the Government is to be commended for bringing down a measure of this nature.

Apart from that, the main point of interest is the definition of "infectious disease". Previously infectious diseases were not actually defined in the Health Act but were accepted commonly by the profession, and included such diseases as measles, chicken pox, scarlet fever and so on. Formerly, the local bodies were called upon to meet the cost of cases of minor infectious diseases which were admitted into infectious disease hospitals. But now they will be limited to those defined as infectious diseases.

There are one or two anomalies to which I would like to refer. Diphtheria is defined as—

Diphtheria in any person other than one who is proved to the satisfaction of the commissioner to be inoculated against the disease.

So apparently there is to be a distinction in the financial arrangements for the treatment of the person who has been inoculated against diphtheria and the one who has not been so inoculated. It is interesting to investigate the differences between these two types of sick persons.

In the case of the person who has not been inoculated against diphtheria and yet contracts the disease, a certain routine of payment takes place. So far as I can gather, the routine at the moment is that the full cost of the treatment is debited to the Public Health Department, which pays the hospital for the treatment given. The hospital then has to debit the local health authority for a certain amount, which is one-third of the difference between the total cost and what the patient pays.

The account decided upon by the Government as the actual cost of treatment in the hospital, which is around 35s. a day, is sent out to the patient. Then the difference is met. It virtually means that in the case of the non-inoculated person the local authority is charged a certain amount of the cost. For the person who has submitted to inoculation, but who then contracts the disease—there is a small number of such cases, though not nearly as large as would be expected of non-inoculated persons—the local authority is exempted from all cost of treatment.

This briefly is the distinction: For anyone who is inoculated against the disease and contracts it, the local authority is free of expense, and the whole difference between what the patient pays and what the hospital rates cost is borne by the Public Health Department; but in the case of non-inoculated persons the account, after the patient has paid what he can afford, is split up, one-third being debited to the local authority and two-thirds to the Public Health Department.

This appears to be a curious method, because the person who has taken the precaution of being inoculated and has carried out all that the State requires in regard to prevention, gets no financial benefit at all should he contract the disease, yet the local authority does pay. This brings up the point of whether the time has arrived for the Government to take over the responsibility for the small amount that is involved annually in the treatment of infectious diseases.

The method of handling the accounts is also very cumbersome. I understand that the full charge is made to the department and the hospital submits the bill to

the patient. On receipt of any money from the patient or local authority, the hospital pays over that amount to an organisation known as the Hospital Collection Service. That body then refunds the money to the Public Health Department. It is a very involved procedure. For the small amount involved, would it not be better for the Government to absolve the local governing bodies from payment, and thus save itself the charges at the Hospital Collection Service?

Another interesting feature is that infantile diarrhoea being diarrhoea of more than 48 hours' duration in an infant under the age of two years is included for the first time. Looking through the Bill this might have been the possibility because one must read outside the Bill to realise what infectious diseases are notifiable and what have been taken off the notifiable list during the last few years. It is a disease for which the hospital could charge the local authorities. It seems to be an anomaly that local authorities which have taken an active part in the control and prevention of this disease to a large degree, should be asked to bear the cost of treatment when the disease occurs.

Let me make the position clear to members by recounting the position which prevailed some years ago when I was the Medical Superintendent of the Children's Hospital. In those days this disease in infants under two years was very rife and at times a whole ward was jammed full of such cases. The death rate was around 30 odd per cent. I have known of occasions when a child had to wait for admittance to that ward until a cot became vacant through death. With the coming of infant health centres and infant health nurses this state of affairs was completely revolutionised. There is a different picture altogether today. Deaths from this disease still occur, though nothing like in such great numbers as 20 years ago.

Hon. J. McI. Thomson: What is the cause?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It is an infectious disease brought about by infection but contributed to by malnutrition and careless handling of the child. There are still other factors which have to be worked out. The care of the child as taught to the mothers by the infant health centres and nurses has altered the picture entirely in the last 20 years. The very organisation—the infant health centre—brought about by the local authorities, is asked for the first time to pay for the cost of treatment of such cases at Princess Margaret Hospital. I believe that the amount paid by local authorities in the past few years totals only £25,000. It would be wise for the Government to consider whether this charge could not be eliminated because a certain amount of

saving would be effected by simplifying the method of collection of accounts and distribution of fees.

There is one other interesting feature in the Bill. If one looks at the Act, one will find that local authorities have power to make arrangements with hospitals for the cost of hospital treatment. One wonders what would happen if a local authority declines to come to an agreement. Is it then absolved from the need to meet the cost for the hospitalisation by refusing to join the scheme? No local authority has done so in the past, but this could occur. There is a provision that a local authority can come to an agreement with a hospital in regard to the treatment, maintenance and care of cases of infectious diseases.

Another interesting feature of this measure is the provision to enable local authorities to spend more money in building homes for the aged within their districts, and for the taking away from the Act of the limiting clause to spend 10 per cent. on health and like measures. I wonder what this means. I doubt very much whether local authorities will have the ability to erect within their boundaries any large establishments to accommodate aged persons. If the style of accommodating aged persons is to be carried out on the same basis as at Mt. Henry Home, then very few local authorities will be able to afford the cost. They will not be able to look at any such project. This provision has been included in the Bill, but it will have little chance of being carried out.

The Chief Secretary: It was asked for by the local authorities.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I hope they will be able to achieve their objective, but I cannot see it in view of the finance involved. Before homes are built for aged persons in the various districts a good deal of inquiry should be made into the best means of solving the problem. I have said in this House many times before that the problem is not easy of solution. Even in the United States the answer has not yet been found. Since then, of course, geriatrics has become a world-wide study and much thought has been given to the housing and care of the aged.

The provision of pensions and medical services by the Commonwealth Government has altered the position considerably in that pensioners are not called upon so frequently to attend the outpatient's ward of the Royal Perth Hospital. That is a facet of social service which has proved to be of great benefit to the aged. So far as I can see, nobody has solved the problem of housing the aged. Whether they will be able to look after themselves in a small flat is problematic because the time may come when the aged people will age a little more and need someone to care for them. Where will the staff be found at that time?

The isolation of aged persons in hospitals has not proved to be wise, because the nursing staff lose a certain amount of interest if all they are called upon to treat day by day are chronic disorders. The leaving of the acute wards with chronic cases has proved to be a much sounder method for the accommodation and maintenance of aged persons. This brings me to the question as to whether in future there should not be hospitals in various districts on the perimeter of the city, attached to which or close by which are situated homes for the aged, to be divided into grades of accommodation, according to the ability of those persons to care for themselves. There is also the question of whether a transference from such homes to the local hospitals would not be the ideal way of looking after these people.

This is a matter of considerable controversy. I would not like to see local authorities building accommodation of an unsuitable type, and, having done that, to find that staff is not available. Even if staff is available they may be faced with a difficulty in caring for the aged persons when they come to the stage of not being able to care for themselves.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Is there any local authority outside of the metropolitan area able to set up such a home?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I doubt it very much. It is not as easy as it seems to establish such a home. I trust that local authorities will not be so unwise as to commence building such establishments. Yet something must be done to alter the conditions under which the aged live at present. I would like to take members around to some of the so-called rest homes for the aged in the metropolitan area. They would be horrified at some of them. In many cases the footage or air space required under the Health Act for living accommodation is not regarded seriously.

I have seen four or five of these aged people living in a room which normally, when the house was a private home, was the accommodation for one or at most two persons. A considerable amount of service is necessary to provide for these people and today the cost of proper accommodation for them is very great indeed. I do not intend to oppose the Bill, but I wished to direct attention to these difficulties. I sincerely trust that the local authorities will get together and pool whatever information is available regarding the housing and care of the aged before they commence to build such homes.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [9.46]: I can appreciate much of what Dr. Hislop has said. I am a member of a Goldfields committee dealing with one of these homes for the aged, and we are now

taking over a building that used to belong to the Kalgoorlie Foundry. What we are concerned about is the amount of money we shall be able to raise through the assistance of local governing bodies as well as the Government and by public collections.

We find that this home will accommodate about 15 people who are convalescent. Those are the only ones we can see our way clear to cater for because we cannot raise sufficient funds to care for bed-ridden cases. We have to consider space, which is most essential. We cannot overcrowd the ward, but by our accommodating 15 of these aged people, the local hospital will be relieved. That hospital is overcrowded with aged people and some of them are a menace to the nursing staff.

There is one man especially who is causing dissension in the hospital. The sisters get very worried about him and would be glad to see him leave. There is a lot of trouble with him on the score of complaints and it is difficult to get the sisters to do anything for him. Recently a doctor was called to see this man in his home. The doctor told the secretary that the man would have to go into hospital, although he did not like the idea of his being admitted.

When I was in the Eastern States I visited many of the homes for the aged and found that the care of these people was a very costly business, and I am afraid that local bodies outside the metropolitan area will not be able to finance them. The Goldfields might be able to provide some accommodation, but not for a large number.

Mention was made by Dr. Hislop that some of these aged people could be accommodated in cottages. If they were, they could earn a certain amount of money which, with their pensions, would enable them to maintain themselves. Dr. Hislop also referred to cases in the isolation wards. The other day I was dealing with a case in Kalgoorlie where a person was billed for a large sum for a little boy who had been in the isolation ward suffering from diphtheria or some such complaint. It was necessary to pay at the rate of 35s. a day whereas, in an ordinary hospital, the rate is 24s. If the person concerned is not in a position to pay the bill, the local authority has to meet it.

I think that the measure has a good purpose and that by passing it we shall be doing something tangible to assist the aged people. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. J. McI. Thomson, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.51 p.m.*