

trucks. Other State Forest Departments are also approaching the Commonwealth Government for a subsidy to make up the loss on firewood production. They are hopeful of obtaining some financial assistance from the Commonwealth. If there is any other information I can give to members on these Estimates, I shall be pleased to do so.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.59 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 30th September, 1943.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

- 1, Public Authorities (Retirement of Members) Act Amendment.
- 2, Public Authorities (Postponement of Elections) Act Amendment.
- 3, Financial Emergency Act Amendment.
- 4, Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment.
- 5, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.
- 6, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment.
- 7, Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation).
- 8, Pensioners (Rates Exemption) Act Amendment.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. L. B. Bolton (Metropolitan) on the ground of private business.

MOTION—VEGETABLE GROWING.

As to Encouragement to Householders.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East)
[4.36]: I move—

That, in the opinion of this House, every encouragement should be given to householders to grow vegetables for their own use, thereby enabling professional vegetable growers to concentrate on supplying Defence Force requirements.

My reasons for submitting this motion are the position of vegetable growers in this State and the reference which appeared in "The West Australian" to a meeting held in Melbourne on the 26th September. Through the courtesy of the Honorary Minister certain hon. members had the pleasure of meeting some of the metropolitan growers last week and discussing with them their position as growers. At the gathering in Melbourne it was stated that a drive was to be made throughout Australia for the production of more vegetables. According to the report, attention was drawn to the fact that there was a shortage of 60,000 acres in the target for vegetable production, and that in expanding the output of vegetables it was recognised that if growers were to undertake considerably more increased commercial production, the Government would need to support the market at times to prevent price deterioration. A statement to that effect was made following a meeting of the Agricultural Standing Committee.

One of the main factors with which we have to contend is that the price of vegetables is sometimes by no means payable. I know people who last year planted large quantities of tomatoes and could not find a market for them. That was in the Albany district. We have also read of growers in the metropolitan area who have planted large quantities of cabbages and other vegetables which have been practically unsaleable. It is our duty to assist the Government in playing its part in this matter and it is necessary to ensure that the highest degree of production is secured without loss to the growers who have to do the work. It has been suggested that a minimum price should be fixed for

vegetables. Price-fixing may be considered dangerous, but in wartime it is essential that not only a maximum but also minimum price for goods should be fixed. In the potato industry today a better state of affairs exists than has prevailed in Western Australia for many years. That can be said to have been largely brought about by the bonus paid to potato growers. However, organisation of the growers is essential. That is why metropolitan growers met a number of members of this House with a view to placing before them the position as it exists today so that this House might have first-hand information on the matter.

We cannot get away from the fact that to overtake the shortage of 60,000 acres to which I have referred is a big task and unless we have the co-operation of agricultural departments throughout Australia, that objective will not be achieved. The committee when it sat in Melbourne, worked out plans that, it was considered, would lead to a considerable area under crop for vegetables. According to an article that appeared in the "Daily News" of the 24th September last, the Agricultural Department of this State definitely advised the committee of what it regarded as the most advantageous way in which an increased supply of vegetables could be obtained in Western Australia. Under the heading "Home Garden Drive Attacked" the following appeared:—

View was expressed in Perth today that the shortage of insecticides, fertilisers and other necessities for growing vegetables at home made the present time inopportune for a "grow your own" campaign in this State.

It was held that the campaign would cause wholesale requests for requisites which could not be supplied.

"A few experienced growers would do much better than hundreds of home gardeners, and at a smaller cost in water, manures and labour," said one grower.

Minister for Agriculture F. J. S. Wise considers the time inopportune for the campaign in the State, and he says that he has advised Minister for Commerce Scully accordingly.

Mr. Wise referred to the difficulties of water supplies, fertilisers, insecticides, rubber hose, etc., and expressed the opinion that the campaign would cause a demand for these which could not be met.

The Minister for Agriculture (Hon. F. J. S. Wise) sent a telegram to the Commonwealth Minister for Commerce (Mr. Scully) pointing out the difficulties here but, as so frequently happens with action either by the Government or the Parliament of this State,

the Commonwealth Minister apparently took no notice whatever of the advice tendered him by one of the most efficient of all the Departments of Agriculture in Australia. That is how I regard our Western Australian department, which is under the control of a Minister who has been trained in the work of agriculture. I certainly think that the advice tendered by such a department should at least be considered by the Commonwealth Government. The propaganda indulged in took the form, among other things, of circular letters sent to all local governing bodies. The Fremantle Municipal Council replied in very forceful language and it is a pity that other local governing bodies did not adopt a similar attitude. The ordinary citizen with his backyard garden has had very little experience in vegetable growing compared with those engaged in that work professionally. One has only to note the great production within the metropolitan area to appreciate the degree of knowledge displayed by the professional grower in vegetable production. I go further and say that in the Albany zone we have the land available, large areas cleared, the machinery at hand and the trained men necessary to produce large quantities of vegetables.

Hon. L. Craig: Did you say "trained men"?

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: Yes, men who know how to grow vegetables successfully. From my knowledge of the Albany district I assert that for many years the growers there supplied 80 per cent. of the goldfields requirements in vegetables. In 1910 I was accustomed to seeing the vegetable train arriving in Albany from Elleker to connect up with the trains running to the Goldfields. Many men have made a competence for life out of vegetable growing in the district. With the use of mechanical appliances many acres of vegetables can be planted at much less cost than would be possible on the more valuable areas adjacent to the metropolis. Naturally the cost of production must enter into the consideration of a vegetable-growing drive. Machinery must be available, but, most important of all, those engaged upon the work must have the necessary experience.

Success is more likely to accrue in the country districts where we have not the diseases nor the necessity for dusting to the

extent that would probably be apparent in the metropolitan area. Moreover, in the South-West, summer crops can be produced without irrigation right from Busselton to Albany. I trust that when the Government is considering advancing money for the establishment of factories and industries, the suitability of Albany and surrounding districts will receive attention, particularly in connection with the erection of a plant for the canning or dehydration of vegetables. The land there is suitable and with the harbour facilities available export work should be handled easily. Of course, that also applies to Bunbury and its hinterland. Occasionally we read about losses incurred in connection with tomatoes, but what we have read of constitutes infinitesimal failures from the standpoint of those who know how to produce that line. Quite a lot was made out of the fact that Plaistowes had to send a small parcel of tomatoes to the rubbish bin. I know of one man in the Elleker district who had to allow from 50 to 100 tons of tomatoes to rot on the ground because he could not secure a market for his output although he had gone in for tomatoes at the request of the Government.

Hon. F. E. Gibson: And we were paying 1s. a lb. for tomatoes!

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: That is so, and, of course, the price dropped very appreciably. When I was discussing the vegetable position with the executive of the Metropolitan Growers' Association I promised to ask some questions regarding collections from potato growers and so forth. This I did yesterday when I asked the Chief Secretary—

How much money has been collected by way of license fees under the Potato Growers Licensing Act

The Minister's reply was—

1942, £877; 1943, £1,107. Total, £1,984.

The second question I asked was—

How many growers are licensed under this Act?

To that the Chief Secretary replied: 1,300. The third question I asked was—

Does the Government consider that a greater area than last year will be planted in December, January and February and has it the assurance of the Federal Government that sufficient manpower will be made available to harvest this crop?

The Minister's reply was—

Yes. It is hoped that sufficient manpower will be made available to harvest this crop.

Today, I believe, our potato growers are more contented than they have been previously for many years, the explanation being that they are obtaining a reasonable price for their production. I was in hospital when I received an urgent telegram asking me to attend a Federal conference in Melbourne. It was impossible for me to go; but my colleague Mr. Burvill was able to make the trip. For the first time Western Australia secured the fixing of a price for its potatoes on the same basis as Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia. I refer to the prices agreed to at the conference. If a fund had not been available it would have been impossible, in ordinary circumstances, to arrange for a passage by air and Western Australia would not have been represented at the conference. I am, of course, aware that the Minister for Agriculture and the Under Secretary had already attended meetings in Melbourne, and that they recommended a similar procedure. However, when one can send a professional grower to a conference, Western Australia's case is put much more effectively before the Eastern States people. I am pleased to say that excellent work has been done by the Department of Agriculture to advance the interests of the potato-growing industry.

Some little time ago I had the pleasure of talking with a man who had been in conference with the Professor of Agriculture who had come from California to give advice to Australia. That man's remarks upon leaving Western Australia were gratifying. The professor said that our markets were the best controlled in Australia, that our production of vegetables was undoubtedly the best in point of quality and showing in all the markets he had seen, and that our system of handling vegetables was also the best in Australia. The professor was also mindful of the fact that under our Potato Growers Licensing Act every potato-grower was registered and licensed, and that the Department of Agriculture, when sending out superphosphate and potato manures, exercised a strong control in so much as a grower who was not registered could not draw supplies.

That proviso, of course, forced every grower to register, since otherwise he would not have received fertilisers to carry out his work. I hold that we should heartily commend the Minister for Agriculture, Hon. F. J. S. Wise, on his attitude in this matter. By passing the motion we shall certainly tell the Government that we stand behind it on this question. The Government is capable of dealing with the situation, and its methods are correct. Of course when this Parliament tried to tell the Commonwealth Government formerly what it should do, it sometimes met with opposition; but on this occasion I believe we should support the attitude of our Ministers. We have also to bear in mind that the backyard grower of vegetables must not overdo it. The main production must be left to the professional growers in the metropolitan and country districts.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East): The object of Mr. Piesse is really to help towards securing to professional growers adequate prices for their vegetables. He also desires to urge householders growing vegetables to do so only for their own use. The reason is that superphosphate and other fertilisers should in the first instance be made available to professional growers. I understand that Mr. Piesse bases his action upon views submitted to him by men endeavouring to obtain a living by vegetable growing. When men have adopted the slogan sounded by the Commonwealth Government, to grow their utmost, it is highly discouraging to them to find, after having produced the vegetables, that there is practically no sale for them. The Defence Forces being the largest purchasers of vegetables at the present time, I hope the military authorities will deal with the professional growers, and, as far as possible, spread their orders all over the State. I consider that the motion can be carried without much discussion.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): I regard the motion as an excellent idea. The only thing I have against it is its vagueness. It does not state how the Government can help the growers. Perth and Northam householders, for example, are hindered in vegetable growing by the water question. Therefore I move an amendment—

That after the word "householders," in line 2 of the motion, the words "by provision of cheaper water" be inserted.

That amendment I think meets the needs of the situation, and supplies something for submission to the Government. The greatest encouragement to growers would be to let them have more water and cheaper water. In my opinion, too much has been said about growing vegetables for the Military Forces. I am not one who would say that women and children, in particular, should go short so that some of the people who are in uniform in military stores and so on should receive priority in regard to vegetables. As regards the Forces at battle stations, let us give them all we possibly can. Numbers of people in the metropolitan area are more or less civilian caretakers in uniform.

I take strong exception to housewives being told when they go to a vegetable shop that they cannot have such-and-such vegetables because they are required by the Forces. I have been to the markets for a case of tomatoes and have been informed that the Army has had the lot. I am aware that tomatoes cannot be sent to battle stations, and it is therefore pretty certain that the soldiers who are about the local camps are getting them. I know of a private hospital which, the week before last, was allowed one leg of lamb for the week for the 29 patients and nine members of the staff because the butcher said that all the meat had gone to the Army. That sort of thing is happening throughout the country with respect to vegetables.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

BILL--TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT. ACT, 1941, AMENDMENT.

Introduced by Hon. G. B. Wood and read a first time.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING

- 1, Road Closure.
- 2, Municipal Corporations Act Amendment.
- 3, Road Districts Act Amendment.

Passed.

BILL—FREMANTLE MUNICIPAL TRAMWAYS AND ELECTRIC LIGHTING ACT AMEND- MENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—COAL MINE WORKERS (PENSIONS).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.10]: I see no reason to alter the view that I held when a Bill similar to this was before us. If all other industries in the country were able to establish a pensions scheme for their workers this might be a good thing, but I doubt whether any of them, either now or in the future, is likely to be in a position to carry the burden. To bring forward a measure like this just now will be detrimental to people who come here to embark upon industries, for they will find that yet another weight has been placed upon their shoulders. This measure is on all-fours with the previous one we had dealing with this subject. I look upon it almost as a threat. It represents an imposition upon those who have embarked upon an important industry, have found the money for its development, and are carrying it on.

The men engaged in the mines at Collie are working in a magnificent climate and under admirable conditions, such as could not be improved upon in any part of the world. They are also drawing pay that is unsurpassed in any other industry. These men are to be compulsorily retired at the age of 60. I cannot understand their embracing such an idea. These men are employed under ideal conditions and are working short hours, and I cannot understand their wishing to be compulsorily retired at the age of 60 and thus lose so much of their earning capacity. Many of them, because of the conditions under which they work, may want to go on earning their present income for another ten or 15 years.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you want them to go on till they are 75?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am sure many of them would regret having to live on a pension when, by continuing to work, they could make better provision for themselves in their old age. They are certainly better off than if they were working in any other avenues of industry; they are enjoying more comfortable circumstances than are many other employees. Collie is close to the sea. I suppose many of the coalminers have motorcars, and, after they have done their day's work they can go off to the sea

coast. Very little chance would be afforded to outsiders to get employment in the industry, which is one of the closest combines imaginable.

Hon. G. Fraser: Have you ever tried to get a job in the mines? You are too shrewd for that.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I am sure that they are very jealous about anyone getting into the industry, and that they would not allow anyone else to come in. They intend to keep it a close preserve. Up to the present they have succeeded in doing that and doubtless will continue to do so. Goldminers have nothing like the same conditions to work under. I doubt very much if they are earning as much as are the men at Collie, and they certainly do not work in such a good climate. The men on the Goldfields have not the same opportunity to make provision for their old age as have the coalminers. The suggestion has been made that this measure will be the means of robbing some of the shareholders in the coalmining companies of their money so that this fund may be built up. Other industries will suffer from the consequent increased price of coal as a result of the foundation of the proposed pensions scheme. The last increase paid to the miners at Collie resulted in a heavy increase in railway freights, the reaction from which was felt by people in the country. Farmers have had to pay more freight because of the increase in the price of coal.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you know what the percentage increase was?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: No, but farmers were much concerned about it. All these increases are thrown upon one section of the community, those who usually are farthest from the metropolitan area. It is not fair that the producers should be mulet in all these extra charges.

The Chief Secretary: Are you sure of your facts?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I oppose the second reading, and hope I shall have company in that opposition.

HON. G. FRASER (West): I cannot let this measure pass without saying a few words in support of it. The greatest opposition to it has been on the score that it is sectional legislation. The members who made that accusation do not appear to be sincere because in the past they have voted for mea-

tures just as sectional in character as this. They did not then raise their voices in protest. Much sectional legislation exists in this State. All the pension schemes consist of sectional legislation. This House has agreed to them. I have never heard a word of protest in this Chamber regarding the judges who retire on a pension. Is not that just as sectional as this measure? The judges are in a better position than are the miners. This measure provides the age at which a miner shall retire, but a judge is allowed to please himself.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: This House did not pass that Bill; it did not give them a pension.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is still sectional.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: You said that members of this House passed it.

Hon. G. FRASER: There are other measures which members have passed. The judges themselves say when they are to get the sack!

Hon. L. Craig: All future judges must retire at 70.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, but up till now the matter has been left to their own discretion. They are also given a pension to which they do not subscribe.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: As Mr. Parker reminded you, this House was not responsible for that.

Hon. G. FRASER: It is sectional all the same. I am mentioning sectional pensions, and that is one. Another that was agreed to by this House was the pensions for public servants.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: They do not get pensions.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I must ask members to allow the hon. member to proceed with his speech.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am endeavouring to point out some of the sectional legislation that this House voted for. On this occasion, however, members oppose this measure because it is sectional in character.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Members did not vote for the measures you mentioned.

Hon. G. FRASER: The majority of the members voted for the pensions for civil servants.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: But not for the judges.

Hon. G. FRASER: I have finished with that aspect. I am now speaking of what has taken place since Mr. E. H. H. Hall

has been a member, and since Mr. Parker has been a member.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What are you speaking of now?

Hon. G. FRASER: The Public Service.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: They have not got a pension.

Hon. G. FRASER: Why split straws? They retire on a pension.

Hon. W. J. Mann: It is superannuation.

Hon. G. FRASER: I fail to see any difference between superannuation and a pension. The persons concerned in this Bill make certain contributions. So far as they are concerned it is a pension. When they retire they will get a pension whether it is called superannuation or something else.

Hon. L. Craig: And the public pays always.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, whether directly or indirectly.

Hon. L. Craig: But not under this Bill.

Hon. G. FRASER: I suppose when the matter is fined down the public will pay a certain amount. I agree with the hon. member that the public eventually pays for all these things.

Hon. L. Craig: Not on your life!

Hon. G. FRASER: Members have supported schemes of this description. I can remember the local governing authorities measure which passed through this House. The majority of members voted for it. Was that any less sectional than this?

Hon. L. Craig: The ratepayers paid for that.

Hon. G. FRASER: Someone has to pay. I am not disputing who pays, but criticising the attitude of members who oppose this measure because it is sectional legislation.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: You do not know how they voted.

Hon. G. FRASER: The majority of members voted for it otherwise it would not be on the statute book. Whether the hon. member voted for it or not, I do not know. Mr. Parker is apparently afraid that I will produce "Hansard" to show that he was in favour of these schemes. I ask members to examine their consciences to see whether they have always been against sectional legislation or whether it is only on this occasion. I ask them to be honest with themselves and to examine this Bill on its merits, to forget all about the sectional part of the question, and to

vote accordingly. A number of members said they would support a scheme if it covered all workers, but not the present Bill because it refers only to a few. I have never believed in revolution, but always in evolution, and this is along those lines. By degrees pensions will eventually be provided for everyone. I adopt the attitude that because we are not providing for all I should not vote against a section getting the benefit. I support the Bill and hope that other members will support the second reading.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan): I wish to make my position clear. I voted for the second reading of a similar measure last year purely because I felt that in Committee the Bill could be altered to fit the necessities of the case. This time I am going to vote against the second reading for the simple reason that we made amendments last time which were fitting, but this Bill still contains some, though not all, of the contentious matter which was previously included. Having given a lot of consideration to it since, I have arrived at the conclusion that whichever way I vote I am likely to do some injury to someone. For that reason I would have the present position remain until such time as a widespread pensions Act to cover all sections of the community is brought into being. I do not think it will be long before the Commonwealth Government makes a move in that direction.

Rather curiously a letter came into my hands this afternoon—it has nothing to do with the way I am going to vote on this Bill—which throws a certain amount of light on the present position at Collie. This letter, sent by the Town Clerk, Collie, asks me whether I could do something to end an impossible position in that town. With the permission of the House I will read some paragraphs of the letter—

I am directed by my council to bring under your notice, in the hope that you may be able to assist my council and the surrounding Collie Road Board, out of its difficulties in their endeavours to have reasonable hospital and maternity facilities provided in this district for the general health benefit of the community.

I read this letter because this Bill is entirely devoted to the health of the Collie miners, in other words, of the Collie community. Here,

I find, that the people of Collie are in difficulties in another direction. Whilst the Government is agreeable to making £2,500 available for the purposes of the Bill in the first year of operation of the Collie miners' pensions scheme, it has allowed an extraordinary position to be created regarding another aspect of health in that town. The next paragraph of the letter is as follows:—

Briefly the two local authorities are at present saddled with a debt for the construction and equipment of the Collie hospital (on a £ for £ system organised by the Health Department of this State) to the extent of £6,500 18s. 9d. for 52 years from the 31st December, 1935, at 4½ per cent. per annum interest, plus ½ per cent. sinking fund (as arranged after the voluntary system failed in 1933).

The gist of this letter is that after having been debited with the cost of £970 to convert the infectious diseases block for the purposes of midwifery accommodation, the council was told, according to the letter, that—

—this maternity hospital cannot be opened until accommodation for nursing staff is provided, estimated to cost an additional £2,500.—

That is the exact amount of money that the Government is prepared to spend on the coal miners' pensions fund in the first year of its operation. I suggest it would be much better to postpone this Bill for another year and apply that £2,500 to putting the maternity hospital into operation. The letter goes on to say—

—and it has been suggested to this council that we apply to the Lotteries Commission to agree to pay one-third of this also and that the local authorities also agree to pay their third share—an additional £833 each. The Medical Department will, of course, collect all hospital fees. Local authorities get no consideration whatever except annual demands for payment of interest, sinking fund charges and repayment of principal.

They made various suggestions regarding alterations in methods of repayment, and raised the question of interest, but no reply could be obtained. I do not propose to read the whole of the letter because, at a later stage, it is my intention to move the adjournment of this House to discuss the position that has arisen. We should suggest to the Government that if it has £2,500 to spend on the Collie Coalminers' Pensions Fund, it could devote that money to this very noteworthy cause. For the reasons I have given, it is my intention to vote against the Bill.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East): I intend to support the second reading of the Bill, although if it is defeated on the second reading, the sponsors of the measure must accept a fair share of the responsibility themselves. Previously we passed a similar measure, certainly with amendments, and the amendments were resisted by the Government. At the same time, that measure should have provided a workable basis on which to institute a pensions or superannuation scheme for the Collic miners and later, if and when necessary, it could have been reviewed. The Bill could have been varied at a time when, perhaps, there was a possibility of a more enlightened approach to the principle of pensions or superannuation.

My opinion is that the extension of superannuation or pensions schemes is long overdue. That opinion is voiced on all sides; it is heard amongst members of the Legislature. As the years creep on the average man is faced with a very real problem, namely, to know what provision will be made for him in his old age. While some members seem to be very hostile to or intolerant of men being pensioned from industry at 60 years of age, I believe that if we take a realistic and commonsense view of social improvements, we shall appreciate that a man on reaching the age of 60 is entitled to retire. When a man has worked till that age he should, under modern conditions, be entitled to look forward to enjoying a certain amount of leisure in his old age, a leisure that should be attainable before he reaches the period when it will be of very little use to him.

There are one or two features of the industry that I hope the Minister, in replying, will explain. For instance, I would like to hear from him about the proposals for installing machinery in the mines. I understand that some machinery is available; I would like to know what obstacle is really preventing the installation of that machinery. I can hardly believe that, in the present demand for coal, there is any great reason for the men employed on the mines being fearful of losing their work, or that any great number would be thrown out of employment if labour-saving appliances were introduced. When we consider the published reports of the desperate paucity of coal stocks, there is ample room for a considerable expansion

of production. If machinery will give an increased output, surely there will be plenty of other work available for any of the miners who might be temporarily displaced by the machines.

Some members who are hostile to the Bill have painted a picture that would lead us to believe that ease and contentment prevail in the industry. I have visited Collic on various occasions and have met people concerned with the mines, but in no instance have such ideal conditions been obvious to me as a casual observer. The miners appear to be hard-working men, and I assume that when they reach the age of 60, they feel that a spell from this type of work is their due. Frankly, I am inclined to agree with them. If the second reading is carried, I reserve the right to support amendments that may be moved in Committee. If the Bill is defeated, the sponsors of it will have only themselves to blame for not having accepted the measure that was passed by this House last session.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): Like Dr. Hislop, I am changing my opinion and shall cast a vote different from that which I recorded last session. Then I voted against the Bill; on this occasion I propose to vote for it. I feel that if I opposed the second reading, I would be voting against the principle of pensions. I believe there should be pensions for everybody, and because this measure deals only with one section of the people, I am not prepared to say that we should deny pensions to coalminers simply on the score that others do not get them. Another reason why I have changed my attitude is that a similar Bill was passed by both Houses last season, and this being so, I feel that it is not within my province to oppose this measure. Therefore I shall vote for the second reading with a view to giving the Bill further consideration in Committee.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	22
Noes	..	..	..	..	4
					—
Majority for	.	..	..	..	18
					—

AYES

Hon. C. F. Barter
Hon. Sir Hai Cotesworth
Hon. J. Cornell
Hon. O. R. Cornish
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. F. E. Gibson
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. E. H. H. Hall
Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. V. Hamerley

Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. W. H. Kiteon
Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. T. Moore
Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. G. Fraser (Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. H. V. Plesse
Hon. H. L. Roche

Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. L. Craig (Teller.)

Motion thus passed; debate adjourned.

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [5.41]: I support the second reading. While the Bill will extend the powers of the Government and enable it to erect homes for letting on weekly tenancies, this system in effect has been in operation for many years because, under the leasehold conditions, if a man pays an amount of £5 on taking possession of a home, he has a right to live in it at a very small rental. The Government is introducing what might be termed a housing trust such as has been set up in South Australia and has given great satisfaction. Our Workers' Homes Board is really a housing trust, and I commend the Government for having introduced the Bill.

Nevertheless, I should like to sound a note of warning. The Minister, in moving the second reading, spoke of the pre-fabrication of buildings and of erecting houses in groups. Of course the Government will construct these homes departmentally and I cannot see how we can prevent its policy in that direction from being carried out. Still, I view the possibilities with a certain amount of anxiety. There will be absolutely no check upon the cost of the houses that will be erected. In saying this, I mean that the department will prepare plans and immediately proceed to erect the homes. Under the Government policy, when buildings are constructed departmentally, the whole of the material is supplied by the State Sawmills and State Brickworks, and trading of this sort is undoubtedly detrimental to private industries. I hope that the proposals for group construction and pre-fabrication of workers' homes will be examined very closely.

I, for one, have no desire to see row upon row of houses all looking as if they had come out of the same pot, notwithstanding that they might be semi-detached or a certain distance away from each other. In that respect, the Workers' Homes Board has, during the years of its existence, been very successful. In the metropolitan area, as well as in country districts, the board has erected homes of which the owners, who in some cases may have put their own money into them, are justly proud. The board has erected houses of distinctive types which are a credit to the workers themselves. After all, it is the worker for whom the board caters. In the Old Country, as well as in various parts of Australia, one can see in some streets rows of buildings all alike, so that a man going home from a gathering "blotto," as the saying is, would probably experience great difficulty in finding his own house. We had heard a great deal about juvenile delinquency and I think that that is partly owing to children living in such an environment.

The Bill also provides for the making of advances for additions to houses. A married couple may have had a house built which was large enough to accommodate themselves and one child, but in due course increases in the family arrive and it is necessary to make additions to the house. The Bill aims at meeting such a position. Of course, we realise the Government cannot at present launch out on a big building scheme, but it may be possible to secure some relaxation of the regulations governing manpower and materials. I hope the Government will not adopt the policy of obtaining all the materials required from the State trading concerns, as there is absolutely no check upon the charges made. My desire is that those engaged in private enterprise shall have an opportunity of tendering for the supplies of necessary materials. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West): I do not know at this stage whether I can support the second reading of the Bill. I am afraid that it might clash with the Commonwealth scheme now under way. On the 20th May, 1924, the Federal Joint Committee on Social Security, in its fourth interim report, dealt with the housing problem in Australia. It made recommendations for a national housing scheme and for the immedi-

ate appointment by the Commonwealth of a house-planning authority. The Federal Housing Commission was subsequently appointed. It has taken evidence in Brisbane and Sydney and is now, according to the Press, completing the taking of evidence in Melbourne. The Commission is, so it is understood, to take evidence in all the States in order to assess the housing requirements with a view to giving effect to the recommendations of the Social Security Committee.

These recommendations are on pages 4 and 5 of the Committee's report. Recommendation (1) is that the Federal Housing Commission shall lay down the principles of policy for a national housing scheme, planned in consultation with the States and supervised by the Commonwealth but executed by the States under Commonwealth legislation adopted by the Commonwealth and State Parliaments. Other recommendations include the provision of homes for persons on low incomes who are to purchase with a small deposit, purchase without a deposit or rent at an economic rental not exceeding a certain percentage of the basic wage. Recommendation (3) also includes provision for tenants at a rental of a sub-economic rate within the capacity of the tenant to pay, having regard to family obligations and income.

The present Bill has not been the subject of consultation with the Commonwealth housing authority, although it purports to make provision for the tenant class. Are these tenants to be specially selected tenants like those occupying houses under the South Australian scheme, or specially investigated and guaranteed like purchasers of workers' homes in this State? What about those tenants whose capacity to pay rent comes under what the Social Security Committee's recommendation describes as a "sub-economic rate?" And what will be the economic rental of houses erected under the powers sought in proposed new Section 48A of the Bill now before the House? What will be the basis of assessment for such rentals? It is urged that the House consider the recommendations in the fourth interim report of the Joint Committee on Social Security to see whether the present Bill does not attempt to ignore the principle of meeting the needs of workers who, because of their inability to earn the basic

wage throughout the year, have to remain tenants.

The sponsors of the Bill should make it clear what type of houses are to be erected for tenants and where they will be put up. We should know how the rentals are to be assessed and whether there will be any charges on Consolidated Revenue or on the general taxpayer to make up any deficiency. More particularly we should be told why the recommendations of the Federal Housing Commission have not been included in this Bill and whether the Commonwealth authorities have been consulted in any way. This Bill is premature and the Government, before meeting the requirements of tenants who cannot afford to purchase a worker's home on £1 or £5 deposit, should wait for the visit of the Federal Housing Commission, or at least until the Commonwealth's intentions in regard to the recommendations in its report have been made clear to the States concerned. I am quite certain that this is a most important measure.

THE PRESIDENT: Order! Members should maintain order while Mr. Tuckey is addressing the Chamber.

HON. H. TUCKEY: The scheme will involve millions of pounds and many aspects must be considered. We do not want slum dwellings to be erected, nor do we want houses to be built in a place which may become known as a workers' district and may be despised or looked down upon. There is no hurry about the measure, because building cannot be undertaken for some time, manpower and materials not being available. The Federal Housing Commission is proceeding with its investigations into what will be a Commonwealth-wide scheme. Therefore, why should we rush this legislation through? It may so happen that we shall spend a large sum of money on this proposed scheme and then find that we have missed the opportunity to avail ourselves of the Commonwealth proposals. This legislation could wait until the new Parliament meets. I do not suppose the Minister will withdraw the measure, but I would like to see it postponed until some future date. I shall wait until other members have expressed their views on the Bill before deciding whether I shall vote against the second reading.

HON. J. CORNELL (South): I hope the House will give this Bill the consideration

that it deserves and merits. As I understand the proposal, it is a retrograde movement. An endeavour is being made to build cheap and smaller houses, which will be made available to the less fortunately circumstanced in life. That is the objective sought. If ever there was a time when such an objective should be put into reverse, it is now. It is absolutely opposed to the principle on which workers' homes and war-service homes have been built in the past. That principle has given universal satisfaction. Every person who desires to acquire a home should be given a reasonable opportunity to do so. When the war-service homes scheme was introduced—

Hon. A. Thomson: The trouble with that scheme in its early stages was that the proposed owner was told, "Take this house or we will give you nothing at all."

Hon. J. CORNELL: The position was changed. When the administrative officer of that scheme was transferred to another State, the jerrybuilders followed him in the hope of reaping another harvest; but I got in touch with a man who is now in this State, with the result that all the administrative officers were discharged and the expectant jerrybuilders got nothing. The whole situation was improved and the type of building altered. No one can question those facts. What does this Bill propose to do? The Workers' Homes Board is to become a landlord. As I stand here today, I can almost hear one of my dear old friends, who has passed on to where sooner or later we must all go, say, "Fools build houses and wise men live in them."

Our objective should be to continue to adhere to the present policy of endeavouring to provide ways and means by which a person who has a genuine desire and will make a genuine effort to get a home of his own, can be helped. If he is in such a position that the law as it stands and conditions as they are debar him, we should endeavour to lift him up and so order things that he will be enabled to embark upon the project of owning a home of his own which, I think, is the right of every married man. I agree with Mr. Tuckey that if we passed this measure it could not be implemented. The labour and materials are not available, and even if money were procurable the rate of interest would be

4, 4½ or 5 per cent. We are not in a position to relieve the housing shortage.

Hon. A. Thomson: Not at the moment, undoubtedly.

Hon. J. CORNELL: No. I am thinking of the general shortage of houses throughout the Commonwealth and of the absolute necessity for bringing about such a state of affairs that anyone desiring a home of his own shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity of having it.

Hon. A. Thomson: I think we are all in favour of that.

Hon. J. CORNELL: We shall have a negation of that idea if we say that we will not lift up men who cannot afford to have homes of their own. If we say to men who are unfortunately badly placed that we are prepared to build them houses of a cheap variety and let them on a weekly tenancy, that will not cut much ice. I can assure members that Service men and women of this country and those who are looking after their interests are going to reach out and grasp and fight to the last ditch for their rights. I am sure they will see that circumstances are so altered that those who have helped to keep this country free will, if they are not in a position to finance a home themselves, be assisted to do so. While I have every regard and esteem for our Workers' Homes Board, I say definitely—just as the soldiers say in regard to future land settlement—that the problem of the housing shortage can be tackled adequately only in a nation-wide manner. The conditions surrounding home ownership must be changed. Interest on money and burdens of that sort which have prevailed in the past must be forgotten. The Returned Soldiers' League has said that no higher rate of interest than 2 per cent. should be paid for money used for war service homes or future land settlement.

Hon. W. J. Mann: The R.S.L. has not the last word.

Hon. J. CORNELL: No, but I think there is a great deal of logic in what they say. I am not a "Bolshie," but I would ask members to look back over the past and to realise that when men and institutions had money to lend they viewed the lending of it from the standpoint of what it would return them. That day has gone by. The outlook in future must be in the national interest. We must ask ourselves

not what money, when invested, will do for individuals but what money and credit will do to help the nation generally and the units of which it is composed. That is the situation we must face. I counsel caution and delay. It may be said that the Hon. James Cornell is against proper housing and against giving some chap a house to rent. I am prepared to risk that impression. My answer would be that I cast my vote against this measure in an honest endeavour to have something better provided. I oppose the second reading.

HON. G. FRASER (West): I intend to support the measure. Mr. Tuckey and Mr. Cornell think the Bill is premature. I take the opposite view and consider it is much overdue. Long before the war began there was a shortage of houses in many districts in this State, and particularly in industrial areas. We know that of recent years private enterprise has not gone in for house-building for rental purposes. Money has been invested in companies which have built homes for sale, and the building of homes for rental purposes has been neglected. The result has been that for the best portion of the last ten years it has been almost impossible for people to obtain any sort of reasonable rented accommodation in industrial centres.

Some years ago I was disappointed when this Chamber was responsible for the withdrawal of money which had been set aside on the Estimates for house-building purposes. The object at that time was to do what this Bill sets out to accomplish. If the money had been spent then, there would not have been in recent years such a shortage of houses for renting. Like other members, I want everybody to own a home who so desires. But it is not possible for everybody to do so. Most people want to own their own homes, but in some instances, circumstances will not permit that. It is not a question of the wages men receiving so much as the kind of employment in which they are engaged. Everybody cannot go into a district and obtain a job and say, "I am here for life and will buy my own home." That is not possible in all cases.

Unless a worker has security of tenure, it is not much use his looking forward to owning his own home. Some workers never

know when they will have to shift to another district on account of the nature of their employment. A large number of people who desire to have their own homes are prevented through economic circumstances from enjoying that privilege. Consequently it is necessary to provide a large number of houses for letting purposes, and I know of no better organisation to which to entrust this task than the Workers' Homes Board. Mr. Thomson mentioned that he hoped there would be no interference with private enterprise. I do not know whether he is aware of it, but for some years private enterprise has not been too keen to build workers' homes. As a matter of fact, quite a number of tenders were called for by the board and none was received. Unless private enterprise alters its attitude, there will be difficulty in this regard in the future.

Hon. L. Craig: You made it so difficult that private enterprise would not build homes.

Hon. G. FRASER: The board has tried to get value for the money spent.

Hon. F. R. Welsh: Are building materials available?

Hon. G. FRASER: I presume so.

Hon. J. Cornell: The policy of the board is to give preference to persons who are most competent or likely to pay.

Hon. G. FRASER: That was the case, but it has not been so since the cheaper type of house—the £500 home—has been built. Since then it has been an entirely different proposition. I knew that certain homes were to be built and I canvassed a number of contractors and asked them to tender in order that the buildings might be erected. I hope that members will realise that if the board is forced to build these homes in the future, it will be because private enterprise has not been too keen on undertaking the work in the past. I hope the measure will be passed because there has been a shortage not only during but before the war, especially in industrial areas.

A few houses have been built for letting in recent times and, in addition, a number of older buildings have been condemned by local governing bodies. They have been demolished, and unfortunately the owners have not replaced them. I suppose my district is typical of other areas. In my province people have walked their boots off in order to obtain houses which they could rent.

They are people who follow a casual type of employment and it is not possible for them to attempt to own their homes. The time is long overdue for consideration to be given to granting the board permission to erect homes to overcome the shortage. This measure is a start. We know that the Commonwealth authorities contemplate the building of homes, but after the war there will be plenty of room both for a Workers' Homes Board housing scheme and a Federal housing scheme. There will be such a shortage of houses that both authorities will be able to operate, and even then it will be many years before the scarcity is overcome. There is ample evidence of the necessity for a Bill of this description, and I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

HON. SIE HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan): I cannot help thinking that the Bill represents a retrograde step. It departs entirely from the principles of the Workers' Homes Act, the object of which was to encourage workers to own their own dwellings. That was the sole purpose for which the legislation was introduced. It is a very proper aspiration that every man and woman should possess his or her own home. This proposal is that the Government shall embark upon a new enterprise. It is to buy land and build houses for letting purposes. I do not think it at all likely that the Government entering into competition with private builders will have the effect of reducing the cost of homes. Rather is it more likely to have a contrary effect. If the present Act is not sufficiently liberal, by all means let us amend it. I would be prepared to go to any distance considered necessary to achieve that end, and I would not have any regrets if the State should lose a certain amount of money on an enterprise that I would regard as deserving of every support to encourage people to own their own homes. I can see the probability of the State losing quite a lot of money on an enterprise such as that outlined in the Bill, which, to my mind, can serve no useful purpose. This State would assume the ordinary obligations of a landlord and if it did so it would soon learn how irresponsible many tenants are. It would soon find that it would lose a great deal of money.

There is another aspect: I think, and I certainly hope, that after the war the demand for workers' homes under the Act as it stands at present is bound to increase. Loan money must be available for that purpose and the extent to which that money will be available will necessarily be somewhat restricted. If we are to spend a lot of money in buying land for the purpose of building houses to let it will inevitably mean that there will not be so much money available for building homes for people who desire to own their own properties. For that reason I think the Bill is bad. Let us see if the Act contains any defects that make it difficult for people to acquire their own homes. Let us remedy any such defects, if we can. Let us refrain from dissipating our resources in the manner proposed. To suggest that the State should assume the functions of a landlord, buy land and build houses for people to rent is to contemplate what I cannot help regarding as a retrograde step.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Metropolitan-Suburban): I agree that the Bill is a retrograde step but it is merely the logical consequence and natural result of recent legislation. I am not speaking now particularly of the National Security Regulations, but of the general trend of the law as regards landlord and tenant. This sort of thing has been coming; I have foreseen it and have mentioned it in this Chamber. In these days there is no distraining for rent. There are restrictions of all sorts against the landlord. There have always been difficulties, as everyone knows who owns houses or has had anything to do with matters as between landlords and tenants. We know that if a tenant occupies a house the only way to get rid of him is to threaten to distrain on his furniture. In these days, however, there is no such thing as distraint for rent, and therefore the landlord cannot get rid of a bad tenant. There are all sorts of rules and regulations regarding the rental that is permitted.

We have fair rents legislation brought in from time to time. The general trend of that legislation is to prevent the existence of the class known as landlords. The result is that no one will build houses nowadays for other people to live in. There have been so many restrictions that the business of owning houses has become altogether too pre-

carious. The argument is that if a house should cost £1,000, as soon as the landlord has received by way of rent a return of £1,000—some will go a little further and say that he may receive a return of £1,000 plus the normal rate of interest—then he should own the house no longer and it should become the property of the tenant. That has been the underlying argument in connection with fair rents legislation, and it has frightened people from building houses. In the circumstances it has become essential for the Government to step into the breach that has been created because of the trend of recent legislation.

The Government has seen that a man would be foolish to own a house, even his own home, and that it is far better that he should rent the place in which he dwells. The reason for that is simple. A man will continue paying 30s. a week for 30 to 35 years and then he will own the house. That individual could have secured the house as an ordinary tenant for a rental of perhaps 20s. or less per week. A man who desires to own his home does not worry about seeking to secure one until he gets married. Let us assume that the marriage takes place when he is 25 years of age. He will be 60 before the debt on the house is paid off. As members are aware, 35 years is the usual period allowed for the purchase of a house under the Workers' Homes Act. Then the man dies and the house is left to his widow who may not live in it for very long. The property then goes to the children. Let us assume that the man had two children. The house is left to them jointly and therefore the house will have to be sold. Who will buy the house? Mr. Cornell tells us there is a movement on foot to allow payment of only 2 per cent. on money invested.

In most instances houses are sold partly for cash and partly on mortgage, in which circumstances the beneficiaries of the man who has owned his home for 30 years or so will receive a little in cash and the balance on mortgage at 2 per cent. What man will pay the extra amount when he can rent a house for less and get out of it when he likes and perhaps move to quarters that are better and newer? If a worker were to come to me and ask my advice as to whether he should buy a house or rent a home I would not hesitate to tell him to rent one. If the Govern-

ment is his landlord, the man will be there for life. In the circumstances, what object is there in buying a home?

Hon. F. E. Gibson: The man who buys a home secures an equity.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Of what use is the equity? When the man dies, fees have to be paid in connection with his estate. There is very little equity attached to a house valued at £1,500 or at £1,000—especially if it is a wooden house. Formerly landlords were prepared to build houses for letting purposes, but there has been such an outcry about extraordinary rents out of all proportion to the outlay and depreciation and so forth, that now the Government finds it must—and I heartily support the Bill—set to work to build houses itself because private people will not invest money in real estate to enable other persons to secure homes in which to live.

All this arises because of the trend of latter-day legislation. I trust that when the Bill becomes law, as I believe it will, the experience of the Government will be such—I regret to say it, but I cannot help thinking that it will inevitably be so—that the State will find it is bad business to be a landlord. I hope that the effect will be that the Government will ease up in its attitude towards landlords, thereby encouraging them once more to build houses for others to live in, and thereafter to allow the law of supply and demand to have full play. What happened in the past? There was never any trouble in securing workers' cottages in years gone by. The idea that seems to prevail today is that the landlord as such should not be permitted to exist. Hence the disinclination of people to build houses, and that phase has been emphasised recently by the National Security Regulations which have been promulgated under the guise of war necessities, although the war has nothing whatever to do with the matter. The National Security Regulations have been so severe that I think the authorities have already seen fit to make conditions a bit more reasonable.

Anyone who has had anything to do with the wartime regulations regarding landlord and tenant will fully appreciate how impossible the position has become. Because a relative is occupying a house, he cannot be moved, or practically cannot. Although it may be that the owner of the house is a

soldier and wants his wife to go into it, he cannot put the other people out until they find some other house. The result is that earlier in the war people wanting a tenant for their house said, "Oh, the war will not last very long; we will let you have the house at a nominal rent," and they cannot shift the tenant out of the house unless and until they find him a house at a nominal rent. Prior to the war there were all sorts of restrictions as to charging not more rent than was paid at a certain date, or more rent than would represent a specified rate of interest. People will not build houses unless they have some reasonable chance of remuneration for the investment of their money. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill, and hope the Government will build many substantial houses, which are essential for the people to live in, because private persons will not build them.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West): I support the Bill although, like most of the previous speakers, I do it with a certain amount of diffidence. I believe that the idea behind State assistance to provide homes for people—workers and other persons on small salaries—has proved most beneficial in this State. I am sure Western Australia has quite a lot to thank the men for who have comprised the Workers' Homes Board—the keen interest they have shown in their job, and their desire to ensure that buildings erected under their control shall be buildings of a substantial nature and be something of an ornament to the districts in which they are placed. Looking around some of the suburbs I have been shown houses of an excellent type, and I was surprised to find that they have been built under the Workers' Homes Scheme. I feel that the people in them are not only proud of their homes, but also proud of the fact that they possess in that way a desirable equity.

The part of the Bill that I am not so keen about is that which relates to the Government building houses to let on easy terms. If the Government had had the same experience as most landlords who have built houses of the cheaper type visualised in the Bill, and of the people who live in them, it would realise that the splendid financial record of the Workers' Homes Board will be endangered. I have no information regarding the proposed pre-fabricated buildings, and am

not in a position to say whether or not they are buildings which will prove to be of a lasting nature; but I assume that they are going to be of the type that will very quickly depreciate. I can see married people with, unfortunately, very little—shall I say?—civic pride or home pride getting into these buildings and, because they happen to be owned by the Government, not being at all careful of the way in which they treat them.

Some little time ago, in one of the suburbs, I was taken to see a house, a five-roomed weatherboard building, that had been let to a man who should have been ashamed of himself, seeing that he was a railway worker getting a reasonable salary. The man had consistently refused to keep his rent-payments up, and ultimately was told that if he did not pay the rent regularly steps would be taken to have him evicted. I understand that the man retorted, "If you evict me you will be sorry." This building was owned by a widow, and the rent of those premises was largely the money that she required for sustenance. The man was later notified that he would be evicted. He left with his family some time in the night. I was taken along a day or two afterwards, and found that the cupboard doors had been deliberately wrenched off, that some of the flooring boards had been pulled up, that the door knobs were missing, that some of the windows were broken, and that the place generally was in a shocking condition. The unfortunate proprietress had no redress. The tenant was a man of straw, and she was put to the expenditure of quite a considerable sum to make the place habitable again.

I am afraid that the Government, if it sets out to let houses and keeps a tight hand on its tenants, will find itself with quite a number of people of that description. I can also say that even though the tenant may be a decent type, most of these cheap buildings will be let to young people who in due course will have young families; and there is no class of tenant more likely, though not deliberately, to misuse premises. The parents live in them for a few years, until the children begin to grow up, when they expect to get a better home and say to their parents, "Can't we get a nicer house?" The parents will agree, and the Government will find the premises thrown back on its hands in a much depreciated condition. What is going to happen then? The Government will

have trouble in finding reasonable tenants to follow on. In my opinion the Government is not well advised in embarking on a house-letting programme.

Apart from that phase, I see virtue in the Bill. For example, there is the proposal to make advances to householders for the purpose of improving dwelling-houses. I was told recently by the head of a department of the Public Service who seemed to know a good deal of what was happening in regard to dwellings, that the proportion of homes without bathrooms or laundries and other reasonable amenities in some of the suburbs was very large indeed. Many people have expressed a wish to improve their buildings, and for that reason I see no wrong in the Government's advancing money in order that such buildings may be improved. Of course it would in the ordinary course of events take mortgages over the buildings, so that it may be protected. I cannot help thinking the Government might have moved in this direction long ago, and not waited until the present. I understand that while the Workers' Homes Board has been able to help, it has not been able to do so to the extent required. I consider it the duty of the State, if it can reasonably and advantageously do so, to assist in improving the standard of dwellings for all the people. For that reason I support the Bill. If an amendment is moved to exclude the tenancy provisions of the measure, I shall be inclined to support it.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Legislative Council (War Time) Electoral.

2, Albany Cemeteries.

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—MINE WORKERS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [8.1]: I would have been much happier had I been able to agree to such a measure as this without any criticism. I know quite well what is in the minds of the sponsors of the Bill, but I am convinced that it is not practicable and will not do what the people behind it believe it will. The Bill is

one which provides pensions, but the main object is to ensure treatment to men suffering from tuberculosis. Had it simply been a pensions Bill such a lot of attention would not have been paid to the definition of the illness of the sufferer. But when the pension is dependent entirely upon the desire to provide treatment for the individual then the definition under which the disease is classified in the measure is a very important matter.

Before speaking on the definition, let me point out that tuberculosis is a disease in the treatment of which considerable progress has been made during the last 10 to 15 years. The advance of radiography has allowed the diagnosis and classification of tuberculosis to be more definite. Whereas when the parent Act was passed in 1932 the word "tuberculosis" covered all aspects of disease, it does not do so today. It is upon this definition of tuberculosis, or active tuberculosis, that the Bill will break down. If a satisfactory definition can be set out, then the formation of the clauses will be simple. We find this definition in the parent Act—

"Tuberculosis" means tuberculosis of the lungs or of the respiratory organs and tuberculosis of the glands and other parts of the body where the cause of such disease may legitimately be attributed to the nature of their employment as mine workers.

So, the original classification of tuberculosis, upon which we are working, makes it necessary, in the first place to say that the tuberculosis was acquired as a result of work in the mines. The number of miners who develop tuberculosis without silicosis is probably equal only to the rest of the community who develop tuberculosis. The danger ensues in the case of an individual who has developed silicosis because of his work in the mines. He then becomes more liable to contract tuberculosis. But realising that silicosis, plus tuberculosis, defies even modern treatment, this Bill simply attempts to treat and to provide pensions for persons during the course of treatment of early tuberculosis. As a result it would be extremely difficult, in all cases, to prove that the sufferer developed tuberculosis because of his work in a mine. That, in itself, seems to be the object of the Bill. Later on in the parent Act tuberculosis is classified in this way—

A person shall be deemed to be suffering from or to have suffered from tuberculosis

when it is found by a medical officer or medical practitioner appointed under this Act or by the laboratory either—(a) that such person is expectorating the tubercle bacilli; or (b) that such person has closed tuberculosis to such a degree as seriously to impair his capacity for work and to render it advisable for the benefit of his health to prohibit him from working as a mine worker.

Nowhere in that classification does the phrase “active tuberculosis” appear, yet we all know quite well today—it is common knowledge since the introduction of radiology—that a number of people have actual tuberculosis scars in their lungs, but they are not suffering from tuberculosis. Closed tuberculosis, to such an extent that a man is incapacitated from carrying out his work, is a very uncommon condition.

Hon. J. Cornell: It rarely happens.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: That is so. If it is so extensive that he is no longer able to work, it is not closed. The original definition of tuberculosis, on which the amending Bill is founded, is insufficient for modern medicine. Subparagraph (ii) of paragraph (a) of new Subsection 3 of proposed new Section 13 provides—

he has submitted himself for medical examination to a medical officer or a medical practitioner appointed under this Act or to the Laboratory and has then been found to be free from tuberculosis—

A man who is free from tuberculosis is a man who has never had it. Therefore this Bill will assist the man who never did have tuberculosis. All the provisions which follow are to protect the man who has never had it. But there is the person who has had it and been treated, and reached the stage known as that of “arrested.” The difficulty is this: In medical terms we never use the words “free of tuberculosis” if the individual has once suffered from the disease. We simply use the term that the disease is arrested. This paragraph seeks to protect the man with arrested tuberculosis and not the one who is free of tuberculosis. The whole position is this: If a man is issued with a certificate to state that he cannot work, he can apply to an appeal board which can say, “Your tuberculosis does not exist; or it is not sufficient to warrant taking action, and you can return to your original work.” But under this paragraph he is to get a certificate to say that he is free of tuberculosis. No doctor would give him such a certificate if he had once had any sign of the disease.

The measure will break down on that one point alone. The difficulty is that it has been framed on inadequate medical advice. The measure nominally deals with pensions but, as I pointed out, it needs quite a lot of medical advice to ensure that it contains what is really wanted in the way of protection to the man and to the doctor who is treating him. We heard the Honorary Minister last night eulogise the work done by Dr. Henzell, and that which he was to be allowed to do under this Bill. It was suggested that Dr. Henzell and Dr. Muecke were to do this work. It surprised me this afternoon to learn that neither Dr. Henzell nor Dr. Muecke had seen the Bill.

Hon. J. Cornell: That ought to stonker it, anyway!

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: They are both in accord with me that we must have a real definition of tuberculosis before we can frame a satisfactory measure. The manner in which they have been consulted is this: A representative of the department—I think it was the Mines Department—asked their opinion about 18 months or two years ago as to what would be the cost and the length of time it would take to treat these miners. That is the only advice they have been asked to give. As a result, this Bill will not achieve what the department wants. If the advice of Dr. Henzell and Dr. Muecke, and others who, like myself, have been dealing with this subject for 20 odd years, had been sought, a Bill could have been framed to do everything that was in the back of the minds of the sponsors. We all agree that it should be done. I would even go further than what the Bill sets out to do. I still do not like the measure in this way, that it is purely a sectional attempt to cover a national need. When we attempt to cover and protect sections we must, of course, make all sorts of provisions that would not be necessary in a national measure. This is simply saying to men who develop tuberculosis in the mines that they must leave their work and undergo treatment. If we could see our way clear, we should say the same to all tuberculous subjects. For that reason, there must be provision made in a sectional Bill which would not otherwise be necessary.

But if we make these provisions, we must go back to a diagnosis or the state of the disease. If we go a little further we find this—and this is a point on which I obtained

Dr. Henzell's views, which I found fitted in with my own—that one of the difficulties we have always experienced in the treatment of tuberculosis is to persuade the sufferer, when he is in the stage of recovery, to do some work in order to refit himself slowly for his old or new job. In England it is the custom that when a man reaches a certain stage in his treatment, he does a certain amount of work. In some sanatoria, once a man has reached a certain stage, his medical adviser says, "Your job is to get some leaves into a heap. After a week or so, you move that heap in a small barrow to a fire, and later you attend the fire. So you will progress until you are eventually in the class whose job it is to build roads and pathways."

In some of the English sanatoria, beautiful gardens and surroundings, laid out by the patients, are to be seen. But here we have never been able to persuade the patient that that is part of his treatment. The idea in Dr. Henzell's mind in the formation of a colony, is that these persons should do a certain amount of work as they recover. A provision has been included in the Bill with a view to making that possible. But that will not be the effect. If a man can work, the board will have the right to say so, and during that time he will be able to receive only up to the benefits he would be entitled to under the Act. In other words, the amount of money that he could earn by his work will be deducted from his benefits.

Hon. J. Cornell: He could get the same amount without working.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Yes. What is at the back of the minds of the people actively associated with the treatment of tuberculosis? It is that later on when a man has left the sanatorium he should go on refitting himself by less arduous work—he might be able to work only a couple of days a week—but he should be able to retain what he earns from his employment. There are all sorts of anomalies of the kind right through the Bill. The measure by its wording proposes to help only those who are "free by certificate"; those suffering from tuberculosis may not be able to benefit. The point is one on which Dr. Henzell has expressed disappointment, and anyone who has worked in the treatment of tuberculosis patients will see why that is so. I admit that we must frame the law so that a man cannot earn more than he would have received in his normal occupation, but to ask a man to continue a long treat-

ment on only the amount of the benefit we can give him is wrong. We must attempt to rebuild him.

Here is another point. If a worker, having submitted to treatment, refuses or fails to continue under the treatment, he can be debited with the cost of his treatment to that date. It is essential that if we are going to provide for medical treatment, we must recognise that the patient is a human being, and that a sick human being is not a normal individual. While sick, he is entitled to raise certain objections. That is a fundamental principle in the treatment of an individual. The Bill simply gives some control over the man by providing, "If you do not continue the treatment, we will send an account for what we have done up to date." The man would be receiving only a certain amount under the Act, and if he was a careful man, he might find himself in trouble because of having to refund the money. The careless man, however, would not have to make a refund because he would not have the money to do so.

A little further on we find another anomaly. The Bill provides that a mine-worker who has received a certificate of freedom from tuberculosis has the right to be examined in future, provided the Minister consents. If a man in the mines is called up for examination and the board says he is not suffering from tuberculosis, that is the only man who would be given a certificate under the Act. Then, having been given a certificate, he is also given the right to apply to the Minister to come up for examination, subject to the Minister's approval. That is not what is intended. What is intended is that a man who has once suffered from tuberculosis, who has been treated and in whom the disease has been arrested, can go back for examination. But that is not what will happen.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Do you think that any man who ever suffered could go back to the mines?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: There is another aspect of the measure with which I should like to deal. Here I may have to digress to point out the stage at which these sufferers will be found in accordance with the Act and the examination that will be entailed. They will be men suffering from the early stages of tuberculosis. They will be men who are eligible and suitable for modern treat-

ment. In other words, they will be men whose lungs should respond to collapse treatment by putting air between the lungs and the chest walls. Such men, when looked after privately, can go into hospital for three or four weeks and then be attended in their homes for a month or so, and then they can go to the doctor's rooms and be re-filled, and in four months, if the treatment is satisfactory, a normal individual working in the metropolitan area can resume his occupation, provided it is not heavy manual labour. This means that by modern treatment early cases are returned into circulation in an average of four months.

What I see behind the Bill is this: The treatment will be carried out by Dr. Henzell at the Wooroloo Sanatorium and Dr. Muecke at the Perth Hospital. People who have had their lungs collapsed for four months must attend at regular intervals of a week or ten days; and their lungs are kept collapsed, if possible, for a period as long as three years by repeated regular refilling. We do not want those people to stay at Wooroloo Sanatorium or Perth Hospital for that length of time. Admittedly there will be only a small number of patients—three, four, five or six a year—but it is wrong in principle to take them from their homes. I think the framers of the Bill have got mixed up with the colony procedure. Dr. Henzell assured me this afternoon that he does not desire to have such patients colonised at Wooroloo. They are not the type to form a colony. The type that really forms a colony is the type that modern treatment cannot cure but can only keep at what one might term a satisfactory state with slow progress ensuing.

Therefore we must realise that there must be people associated with the Act who can continue the treatment after the patients have left Wooroloo Sanatorium or Perth Hospital. I take it the routine will be three or four weeks at the Perth Hospital, three or four months at the Sanatorium, and then discharge. While that treatment is continuing, the patient will be able to do some work, and should be able to earn as much as he can. During that time there must be someone capable of continuing the modern treatment. I understand, again from Dr. Henzell, that an attempt will be made to get Dr. Outhred, of the Commonwealth Laboratory, to continue the work.

Hon. C. B. Williams: You would not send such a patient to Yarloop to pick flax.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Such patients are capable of doing numerous jobs. In the city there are people who have lungs collapsed and who come to my rooms for a refill and go back to their ordinary occupations. It is not a universal treatment that can be carried out by every doctor in every country town, but we have in some country centres doctors acquainted with the treatment. I maintain that the Bill, good as its object is, presents so many difficulties as to need a considerable measure of review. I would attempt to remodel it, but I feel that it should be held up by the Minister until the people who are going to do the work—people like Dr. Henzell and Dr. Muecke—are satisfied with the definition of "disease" and satisfied that the provisions of the Bill will assist those patients who are going to continue the treatment. As the Bill stands, it will and can do neither. I think I have pointed out that there are enough anomalies in the Bill to warrant the making of a considerable review.

On motion by Hon. J. Cornell, debate adjourned.

BILL—WOOD DISTILLATION AND CHARCOAL IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [8.28]: I have very little to say on the Bill except to commend it to the House. For about 18 months I have watched the progress made with the investigations and research into the charcoal iron and steel industry. With other members of the Council of Industrial Development, I have been very interested in the work undertaken in this direction. I realise that members are opposed to State trading concerns but this can hardly be classed as an ordinary trading concern. Private enterprise would never have the initiative or courage to embark upon an undertaking such as this. It is a pity that all our trading concerns and all the operations of the Government in avenues of trade have not received investigation, research and attention similar to that devoted by experts of the Government, the University and the Broken Hill Pty. Ltd. to this industry.

Every avenue that could have been explored has been investigated in regard to this proposed charcoal iron industry. I hope and believe that it will be the nucleus of many industries connected with iron and steel. The Minister has told the House the full story. It is the true story; I have seen it growing from month to month during the last 18 months. Some members may oppose the measure on the ground that the industry will be a State trading concern; but when one notes all the different by-products and the various materials that are required in this industry, I am sure that even this conservative and august House will not oppose the Bill.

The Chief Secretary: Hear, hear!

Hon. L. CRAIG: The works are to be established on Crown lands; fuel is obtainable from a jarrah forest close to the works; a railway almost passes the site, while a water supply is available there. Everything points to the venture proving a success. Costs have been estimated at a high rate, while the prices estimated to be received for the iron and by-products of the wood distillate have been fixed at the pre-war or lower level. One of the by-products is selling at 12s. a gallon, but the price has been estimated as only 1s. per gallon. I commend the Bill to members. Let the Government in this case try its hand at a concern which may mean a lot for the future of the State. I support the second reading.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan): I did not intend saying much on this Bill; but I would say this, that I shall be very pleasantly surprised if the estimates which have been submitted to us are realised in practice. I shall be very pleasantly surprised if the costs do not prove to be greatly in excess of what is anticipated, and I shall be pleasantly surprised if the revenue is as great as has been suggested. There is another point which I wish to mention. I do not know whether the Chief Secretary can now answer the question I put to him just before he completed his second reading speech, as to how many men will be required to complete the construction of these works within a period of 18 months. To my mind it is an important question. I do not think it is contemplated that these works are to serve any war purpose. I do not think that is intended. I have it in mind that all the money and

all the men we can find are required for war purposes or for maintaining the already-established industries of the State during an exceedingly difficult period.

I cannot refrain from expressing some doubt as to the wisdom of investing a considerable sum of money and employing a large number of men in the establishment of an industry which is not going to serve any war purpose. The making of investigations with a view to establishing an industry of this kind is highly commendable, but I am not satisfied that it is desirable to start it straightaway, when money is so badly needed for purposes directly associated with the war and when we are finding the greatest difficulty in keeping our existing industries in operation. As I say, I do not know how many men will be required for this purpose.

There is one other point. A great deal of difficulty has been experienced—even before the war—by those industries which depend for their fuel supply on wood obtained in those districts. I do not know that the Government is entirely satisfied itself that the establishment of this industry is not going to increase those difficulties. I realise it would be rather futile to offer any direct opposition to the Bill, because we are candidly told that the work has already commenced, awaiting the consent of Parliament, apparently just as a formality not worthy of any consideration. For that reason I do not intend to oppose the Bill. I hope the undertaking will meet with all the success that has been suggested, but I cannot refrain from expressing my doubts both as to whether the estimates will be realised and as to whether it is wise at this juncture to invest a large sum of money and employ a considerable number of men in a work not intended to advance the war effort.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East): I find myself in a most unfortunate position. We have had very glowing accounts given to us of how this industry is likely to turn out and the profit that will arise from its operations. On the other hand, experts whom I have approached have a different opinion altogether. It is difficult to know who is right; it is also difficult for me, as a representative of the people, to reach a decision on the information given to us. At present, the project is at the experimental stage.

Hon. L. Craig: That is admitted.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It is an experiment which will cost a great amount of money. On the other hand, the industry will be of assistance when hostilities cease, but heaven knows when the war will end. We shall then need all possible avenues of employment. The question is, however, what this industry will cost and whether it will be carried on at a heavy loss. Western Australia is the most unfortunate of all the Australian States, because it has plunged more deeply into commercial life and trading concerns, not one of which has proved a financial success. Indirectly, some of them may have been of benefit, but the majority have been colossal failures. I speak now as a person who has had the worry of them in the past. We are now proposing to add to our State trading concerns, but this addition has some merit. Notwithstanding all the drawbacks, I feel I must support the Bill, but I have fears as to whether the venture will turn out as has been suggested. At any rate, it will provide employment when hostilities cease. I have not much faith in the proposal, but shall support the Bill, hoping for the best.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West): I merely wish to say I am surprised that an industry of this kind is to be started when we are so short of manpower. In country districts women and children are doing men's work because of the impossibility of securing labour. It seems to me this proposal should have been included in our post-war reconstruction programme. I have no objection to investigations and preparations being made, but I consider it wrong to start an industry of this kind when we are so short of labour. I am in agreement with Sir Hal Colebatch and Mr. Baxter on that point. At the same time, I feel I must support the second reading. I am sorry indeed that the Government did not include the proposal in its post-war programme and therefore avoid further shortages in the labour market.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. V. Hamersley in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 10—agreed to

Clause 11—Board of Management:

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause (2) after the word "be" the words "a worker engaged in the industry" be inserted.

As the clause stands, it provides that one of the members of the board of management shall be nominated by the workers. That is perfectly just, but the man appointed should be one of their number and engaged in the industry and not some outsider.

The **CHIEF SECRETARY:** I do not intend to raise any strong objection to the amendment, but I think the matter should be left to the discretion of the workers themselves. They are the people concerned. One can quite easily imagine one of their number engaged in the industry at the commencement being appointed to the board of management. Later, for some reason or another, he may cease his association with that particular venture and yet might still be a valuable man on the board of management.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I agree with Sir Hal Colebatch. As the clause stands, anybody outside the industry could represent the workers on the board. There is no objection to the workers being represented, but surely the representative should belong to the industry and be attached to it. I cannot think that this body of men would not have one amongst them fit to serve on the board.

The **CHIEF SECRETARY:** I must reiterate that ordinarily I would have no strong objection to the amendment, but there will not be a large number of employees engaged on these works. I expect that the man appointed on the board to represent the workers would be one of their number in the first instance, but he might not be employed by this particular venture all the time. Nevertheless he might be a valuable representative on the board. We should not circumscribe the choice of the workers. It can be taken for granted that they will see that the representative they choose is quite capable of filling the position.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 12 to 26—agreed to.

Clause 27—Application of profit:

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This clause provides that any profit at the end of a financial year, after making allowance for interest and sinking fund contributions, depre-

ciation and maintenance of plant, shall be paid to the credit of Consolidated Revenue. No business concern should attempt to work on those lines. This particular industry may operate at a time when similar industries are retarded all over the world and its profits may be substantial. Those profits will be taken into Consolidated Revenue. Then there might come a lull in business. No funds would be available to back the concern, and money would have to be taken from Consolidated Revenue. Why should not a separate reserve account be established as is the case with other business undertakings? The Committee would be wise to effect an amendment along those lines.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think there is need for a reserve account. Special arrangements have been made in the Bill to deal with the finances of this particular venture. While this clause provides that profits, after allowing for certain commitments, shall be paid into Consolidated Revenue, there is also a provision whereby, if money is required for the purpose of carrying on the business, it shall be provided by the Treasurer.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The system is wrong. It is one that applies to all our trading concerns.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 28 to 32, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—COMPANIES.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 112—Annual return (partly considered):

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported after the clause had been amended.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subclause (2) the following words be added: "and the company when presenting the same shall pay the fee prescribed in respect thereof."

This amendment has been requested by the Registrar of Companies. It applies to the lodgement of certain documents for which a fee is payable. On some occasions lawyers and others have technically complied with the Act by lodging documents without paying the requisite fees. That has been a

contravention of the Act and has led to certain action having to be taken. By the inclusion of the amendment the fact that the fees have to be paid will be brought before the notice of those concerned.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Would it not be more correct to include the amendment in the clause dealing with regulations to prescribe fees? It is not customary to deal with the matter in the manner suggested.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The object is to include the provision in the subclause so as to prevent people from getting away with what has happened in the past. As Mr. Parker knows there is a prescribed scale of fees.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Many Acts provide for certain things being done for which payments are required, and those fees are prescribed in regulations. I ask that the further consideration of Clauses 112 and 113 be postponed so that we can look further into the matter.

The CHAIRMAN: Clause 112 cannot be postponed as it has already been amended; but it can be recommitted.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Registrar of Companies is one of the few men capable of speaking with authority on this matter and it is at his request that I am moving amendments to Clauses 112 and 113. I find it rather amusing to hear Mr. Parker advocating matters being dealt with by regulations—in view of many past discussions.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I appreciate the point made by the Chief Secretary but what I suggest is done under many other Acts. For instance, a writ is issued out of the Supreme Court but the Act does not say what fees must be paid; those are prescribed in the rules of court.

The CHAIRMAN: I hardly think a discussion of this nature is helping the Committee to get anywhere.

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

Clause 113—Annual return to be made by a company not having share capital:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subclause (2) the following words be added: "and the company when presenting the same shall pay the fee prescribed in respect thereof."

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

Clause 114—Annual general meeting:

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of paragraph (a) of the proviso to Subclause (1) after the word "majority" the words "in numbers" be inserted.

My object is to make the provision consistent with that which appears in paragraph (b).

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I have no objection to the amendment.

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

Clauses 115 to 118—agreed to.

Clause 119—Definition of special resolution:

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 of Subclause (1) after the word "members" the words "present in person or by proxy" be inserted.

It is difficult to obtain the presence of three-fourths of the members at a company meeting, hence the desire to provide that the majority of three-fourths shall include those present or represented by proxy.

Hon. L. Craig: The clause provides all you want now!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I do not think it does.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The clause speaks for itself. Provided not less than 14 days' notice of the company meeting is given so that proxies can be arranged, they will have the same effect at the meeting as though the members affected were present in person. That is not the point to which I would take exception in regard to the amendment. Usually when such meetings are called, a special resolution that normally would be of some importance is due for consideration. Hence the decision reached should be by a majority of the shareholders. If we accept the amendment a small minority might conceivably carry a special resolution that might have serious effects upon the great majority of the shareholders. It seems to me the amendment is dangerous in its present form.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The amendment opens the door very wide indeed, and I hope the Committee will not agree to it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The clause is the same as the corresponding provision in other Acts.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Except for the commas, and that makes the difference.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not care to accept the alteration proposed.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The clause provides what Mr. Dimmitt is asking for. Anybody entitled to vote can be present either in person or by proxy. Proxies are used not only for the purpose of voting, but also for the purpose of enabling shareholders who are prevented from attending a meeting to obtain information of what takes place there.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: My experience of companies is that it is very difficult to get a quorum, whether in person or by proxy. My desire is purely to make companies workable.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It is only a question of the punctuation of the clause, which apparently contains a printer's error. The clause is quite clear, and gives what Mr. Dimmitt desires. However, the word "and" has slipped in, and should be struck out.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 120 to 122—agreed to.

Clause 123—Minutes of proceedings of directors:

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Subclause (4) is closely bound up with Clause 152, and I ask the Minister to agree to postpone this clause to the end of the Bill.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, clause postponed.

Clauses 124 and 125—agreed to.

Clause 126—Profit and loss account and balance sheet:

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause (1) the word "fifteen" be struck out, and the word "eighteen" inserted in lieu.

The reason for this amendment is merely to extend the time to 18 months.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This is a minor amendment. If the House thinks that 18 months is more satisfactory, I have no objection.

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

Clauses 127 to 133—agreed to.

Clause 134—Publication of balance sheet:

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of paragraph (b) of Subclause (1) the words "be furnished" be struck out and the word "inspect" inserted in lieu.

Requests are not made to furnish balance sheets in the case of all companies, but provision is made for the inspection by the shareholders of the balance sheet which is laid on the table at the annual general meeting. In many cases it is desirable that the balance sheets should not get into the hands of the people generally, including competitors of the company. The shareholders should be satisfied with the right to inspect.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Here again I hope we will not alter the clause as it stands. It is the same in all respects as in every Companies Act throughout the States and the United Kingdom. The clause does not say that a member of the public shall be furnished with the balance sheet, but a member of the company. If the balance sheet is a confidential document, then the company must trust its members. The clause seems quite reasonable.

Hon. L. CRAIG: It would be a great mistake to agree to the amendment. The shareholders are the owners of the company and as such they are entitled to all the information.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I belong to a company that does not furnish a balance sheet to the shareholders. We are given a circular advising the date of the annual meeting and telling us that if we want to see the balance sheet we can do so by calling at the company's office.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: The hon. member's statement reveals what applies in many cases in this city. The companies have articles which make it obligatory to have a balance sheet on the table at the general meeting, but not to send a copy to each shareholder.

The Chief Secretary: This only deals with public companies, not proprietary companies.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: There is a rather strange alteration here from what applies elsewhere. This provides that at any time a member of the company asks for a copy of the balance sheet he shall be furnished with it. He may have already received one, and, in addition, the company may have run out of them.

Hon. L. Craig: No.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I repeat what I have said. The provision contained in the legislation operating in the other States has been split in two, and is contained in this

Bill in Clauses 134 and 135. In the other legislation Subclause (2) of Clause 135 applies also to the provisions contained in this Bill in Clause 134. I support the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot agree with Mr. Parker. This is one of the clauses on which the Select Committee spent a lot of time. The fact that it split the clause into two should be sufficient indication to show that the clause as it appears at present is desirable for the very good reason that members of companies should at all times be entitled to get copies of the latest balance sheet, provided they ask for them.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I regret that the Chief Secretary has been misinformed. Clauses 134 and 135 are word for word with the law in all other States and in England, but because of the way that law is printed in this Bill it has a very different meaning.

The Chief Secretary: What about Subclause (3) of Clause 134?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The English Act is word for word with this provision.

The Chief Secretary: What are you complaining about?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: About splitting the English law into two sections, which gives a different effect. The English legislation provides that if default is made in furnishing a copy to any member who demands it and tenders the proper charge, the company shall be liable. In the case of public companies the shareholders get the balance sheet without tendering the cost.

The Chief Secretary: What about the Select Committee that inquired into it?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Chief Secretary misinformed the House when he said that this was to bring our legislature into line with that of England and the other States. This takes it out of line.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I hope the hon. member is not going to put that interpretation on my remarks which were to the effect that an endeavour was made to bring our law into conformity with that operating elsewhere, and that in the case of many of these clauses one would find that they were identical with existing sections elsewhere. I did not say it applied in every case.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: That is correct.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Other Acts provide that a balance sheet shall be fur-

nished and we desire to have a similar provision.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The clause does not contain what is in the legislation of England and the other States. Those Acts include a reference to default being made in furnishing a copy of a balance sheet to any member who demands it and tenders the necessary amount. It does not appear in this clause, although it is to be found in Clause 135, but that applies only to proprietary companies. In England the provision covers all companies.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This clause was drawn by the Joint Select Committee to separate proprietary companies from other companies and there must have been a special reason for so doing. I believe that every member of a company should be furnished with a copy of the balance sheet.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 135 to 137—agreed to.

Clause 138—Disqualification for appointment as auditor:

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The clause provides that certain persons shall not act as auditors, but an auditor might be ill or absent and a director or officer might be appointed to act for the time being on account of his knowledge of the company's affairs. A man of known integrity would be required to carry on. I move an amendment—

That at the end of paragraph (a) of Subclause (1) the words "except with the approval of the Registrar or by special resolution" be added.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Obviously certain persons should be disqualified from acting as auditors, and yet Mr. Parker would empower the Registrar to set aside that disqualification. A similar provision appears in all the other Acts.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Then let us improve upon it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: To accept the amendment would be to open the door wide and remove all the precautions adopted elsewhere to ensure that a person dependent upon the company shall not act as auditor.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Paragraph (d) debars as auditor a person who becomes indebted to the company. Therefore an auditor could not buy anything from his company's shop, or an auditor of Elder, Smith

& Co. would be debarred from buying sheep through that firm, but would have to go to an opposition firm. Surely the provision was not meant to apply in that way, but that will be the effect. I move an amendment—

That paragraph (d) be struck out.

Hon. G. FRASER: I believe that the Joint Select Committee fixed £250 as the amount of indebtedness that an auditor could incur and that it was struck out in another place.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am advised that in two States a sum of £250 is stipulated, while in South Australia the amount is £50. We have not provided any amount because we want the disqualification to stand against any person who may be indebted to the company.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 139—Powers and duties of auditors:

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Subclause (5) provides that every auditor shall use reasonable diligence to ascertain that the books have been properly kept, and shall record correctly the affairs of the company, etc. That is automatically the job of an auditor and I cannot see why the provision should be included. I have not found it in other Acts.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The provision is contained in the South Australian Act. If we strike out the subclause, we shall be deliberately relieving the auditors of their obligations.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The auditor is liable even if he takes all reasonable care, but why should he be the only person mentioned in the measure who has to take reasonable care? The inference is that other officers need not use reasonable diligence. I move an amendment—

That Subclause (5) be struck out.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I move an amendment—

That Subclause (6) be struck out.

By virtue of the common law, auditors are liable for neglect or omission. They are experts and are liable as such. This subclause goes further and would make them criminals. If a theft were to occur through some clever swindle which the auditor might not discover by his diligence, he himself

would be liable, criminally as well as civilly. That is unfair. Such a provision should not be incorporated in the measure.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Bill makes it an offence for an auditor to neglect to carry out his duties properly. The provision is inserted for the protection of the public. Any reputable firm of auditors would be quite prepared to accept the sub-clause.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: No. They are not happy about it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: They may not be, because it is something new so far as this State is concerned. We have had sufficient experience in the last few years to make us careful in matters of this kind. What was the reason for the appointment of the Joint Select Committee? Was it not because we had had so many cases where accounts had been manipulated and money stolen by various officers of various companies?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The auditor is already liable in money for any negligence. An auditor himself cannot possibly go through every transaction of a big company. He has no control over the officers of the company who are employed to look after the accounts; he can only keep a watchful eye on them. Should one of those officers commit a theft the auditor would become liable to a fine of £100. That is grossly unfair.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The clause makes it an offence if it can be proved that the auditor has been negligent.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 140 to 146—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, State Government Insurance Office Act Amendment.

2, Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act Continuance.

Received from the Assembly.

House adjourned at 10.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 30th September, 1943.

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

QUESTION—MEAT, AS TO SUPPLIES AND RATIONING.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER asked the Premier:

(1) Is he aware that most metropolitan butchers are complaining that they have a 30 per cent. cut in supplies?

(2) That the figures for the cut were based upon sales taken from the month of May which is the lowest month for sales?

(3) That the sales of pork which were considerable, were not allowed for when the cut was made?

(4) That the present rationing system of meat is not in the best interests of producer, wholesaler, retailer, or consumer?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Premier) replied:

(1), (2), (3), and (4) The position in this State in regard to meat supplies was some time ago placed before the Commonwealth authorities who control meat rationing and kindred matters. The Deputy Controller of Meat Supplies of this State is at present in Sydney and has been specifically asked by the Government to have this State's circumstances properly explained and given further consideration.

MOTION—GOVERNMENT BUSINESS PRECEDENCE.

THE PREMIER [4.32]: I move—

That on and after Wednesday, the 6th October, Government business shall take pre-