

the amendment which I propose to move subsequently were agreed to, it would clear up the point.

The Minister for Lands: I will accept the hon. member's amendment, as already moved.

Amendment put and passed.

On motions by the Hon. J. T. Tonkin, clause further amended by striking out the word "excluding" in line 9 of Subclause (6) and inserting the word "including" in lieu; and by striking out at the end of the subclause the words "but where there is an equality of votes, the chairman shall have a casting vote."

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 11—agreed to.

Clause 12—Emu and Grasshopper Advisory Committee:

On motions by Hon. J. T. Tonkin, clause amended by inserting after the word "present" in line 8 of Subclause (4) the words "and where there is an equality of votes the question is to be determined in the negative"; by striking out the word "excluding" in line 9 and inserting the word "including" in lieu; and by striking out at the end of the subclause the words "but where there is an equality of votes, the chairman shall have a casting vote."

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 13 to 33—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 11.9 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 1st November, 1950.

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

QUESTIONS.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Metropolitan Services and Meters.

Hon. W. J. MANN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What was the number of water services being provided by the Metropolitan Water Supply Department at the 30th June, 1950?

(2) How many of such services were fitted with water meters at the same date?

(3) What was the percentage of un-metered premises drawing water from the Department's mains at the 30th June, in the years 1940 to 1950, inclusive and respectively?

(4) Is the Government aware that considerable waste of water is being occasioned and consequent loss of revenue sustained because of unrestricted water services permitted?

(5) If so, what steps does the Government propose to remedy the position?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 79,835.

(2) 49,370.

(3) 1940, 36.21 per cent.; 1941, 36.91 per cent.; 1942, 36.64 per cent.; 1943, 35.42 per cent.; 1944, 35.50 per cent.; 1945, 37.31 per cent.; 1946, 38.32 per cent.; 1947, 39.91 per cent.; 1948, 39.96 per cent.; 1949, 39.35 per cent.; 1950, 38.16 per cent.

Excluding the City areas of Perth and Fremantle and only taking in the residential areas, the percentage of unmetered services at the 30th June, 1950, was 26.84 as against 28.02 at the 30th June, 1949.

(4) Yes.

(5) Meters are being procured and fixed as quickly as possible. Production by the manufacturers is being gradually increased, and it is anticipated that in the near future deliveries will be increased from 200 to 400 meters per month.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

As to Rail and Sea Freights to Esperance.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN (for Hon. G. Bennetts) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is the Minister aware that rail freight on super. to Salmon Gums and Esperance costs 30s. and £2 per ton, respectively?

(2) Will he investigate the freight charges by ship to Esperance, and if these charges are favourable to settlers, will he consider diverting a ship to Esperance with the coming season's requirements of super. for the district?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) The rail freight charge on super. from Bassendean to Salmon Gums is 30s. 2d. and from Bassendean to Esperance, 32s. 11d. per ton.

(2) No ship is available at present; and if one were, I would not be inclined to use it for the transport of super. from Fremantle to Esperance, for this reason—

Hon. R. M. Forrest: You would send it up North.

The MINISTER: No, I would not send it North, either. The reason I would not use it for the transport of super. to Esperance is that the freight would be 71s. per ton as against a rail freight of 32s. 11d. per ton. In addition to the 71s. per ton there would be handling charges from Rocky Bay to Fremantle and rail freight, and also handling charges from Esperance to Salmon Gums and rail freight. Even if the super. were shipped to Esperance, it would still have to be handled and railed off the jetty. The figures I have given show that it would not be practicable to ship super., so no investigation will be made into the question of chartering a ship.

NARROGIN SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE.

As to Purchase of Southdown Ram.

Hon. A. L. LOTON asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Is he aware that following the recent stud stock sales at Claremont, it was publicised that the Narrogin School of Agri-

culture had purchased a Southdown ram for a price in excess of 150 guineas? As there is doubt as to the correctness of this figure, will he state the price paid and who was the vendor of the sheep in question?

The MINISTER replied:

Yes. The price was incorrectly publicised over the air as 165 guineas. The price at auction was 65 guineas. The vendor was Mr. Orton of Moora.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. A. L. Loton, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. H. L. Roche (South) on the ground of private business.

BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and passed.

BILL—FAUNA PROTECTION.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clause 11—Functions of the Committee:

The CHAIRMAN: Progress was reported on Clause 11 to which Hon. Sir Charles Latham had moved the following amendment—

That a new subclause be added as follows:—

“(3) In making any inquiry as required by the provisions of this section, the committee shall refer the subject matter of the inquiry to the road board in the district of which the matter under inquiry may have effect, and shall obtain such information and advice as the road board can give relative to such matter, and the committee shall not advise or make any recommendation to the Minister unless and until a report on such matter has been received by it from such road board unless such road board neglects to furnish such advice immediately after its first meeting.”

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The effect of the amendment is restricted entirely to this clause. Mr. Parker referred to the difficulties of getting the information from the road boards, and it was with that in mind that I deliberately refrained from mentioning any period. In all the populated parts of the State road boards hold meetings at least once a month, in order to pass their accounts for payment. I have therefore provided that the committee shall wait and give the road board time to deal with the matter. However, I did not specify five or six weeks, as the mails might be more convenient in the case of one centre than in another. I hope the Committee will agree to the amendment.

Hon. G. FRASER: I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out all words after the word "effect" in line 7.

The obligation of the committee will then be to notify the local authority of its intentions in the matter. The part of the amendment that I wish to strike out simply provides that the committee shall wait until the board has met and sent the information back.

The Minister for Agriculture: The committee still need not act on that information or advice.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is so.

Hon. H. Tuckey: What notice would you give them?

Hon. G. FRASER: If my amendment is agreed to it will be up to the road boards to forward the information to the committee as quickly as possible. They will be notified that the committee is doing certain things and if they are anxious about the matter they can supply information without waiting to hold a meeting.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Why the urgency?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not know. The effect of my amendment would be that the committee would not be hamstrung if it could not wait, but could deal with the matter straightaway. In the case of some road boards the lapse of time might amount even to seven weeks, and that is a long time if the matter is urgent.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I cannot agree that there is any great urgency in this matter. We are dealing with an Act that has been in force for many years, but has never been policed. That shows how little urgency there is about it. When it is realised that from Broome to Esperance there are only eight or nine inspectors to police that area it shows the impossibility of the task. This Bill is based on similar lines to that of the Game Act. Under that Act the inspectors could search a boat and do most things which they can do if this Bill is passed. Therefore, why is it necessary now for us to have only 24 hours' notice of something which concerns the people very much.

I do not think it is reasonable to ask the Committee to pass an amendment of this nature. The amendment moved by Sir Charles is reasonable. Surely it is not going too far to fix that time so that the advisory committee might be able to obtain the best possible advice. All the information would then be there for use if necessary. I ask the Committee to agree to the amendment by Sir Charles.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: If Mr. Fraser does not think my amendment should be carried, the appropriate way to deal with it would be to vote against it, but if we agree to what he proposes, we

might just as well not have the amendment. This is one of the days when the hon. gentleman thinks that a little opposition will not do any harm, but it will not do any good, either. This Bill brings all fauna under the control of the Minister for Fisheries. Then the Minister for Agriculture, in control of vermin matters, deals with all that fauna which is taken out of the Bill and regarded as vermin. Therefore, it leaves very little fauna about which there might be dispute.

The main feature of the Bill is the provision of fauna sanctuaries. All the land in a district is reserved more or less under the control of the local authority. Because land is to be set aside as a sanctuary, it is thought advisable that reference should be made to the local authority in order to obtain its views on the matter. Yesterday evening I pointed out that there are many occasions when fauna might become a pest, and its protection would have the effect of harbouring vermin in the locality. I hope the Committee will agree to the views expressed by myself and of those members who have supported my amendment. On the other hand, if the Committee desires Mr. Fraser's amendment, the straightforward thing to do would be to vote against my amendment.

The Minister for Agriculture: The local authority would not know.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: The local authority would know in any case if the advisory committee does its job. The local authority will be advised because it will have a vermin board and it will know if a portion of its district is to be set aside as a sanctuary.

The Minister for Agriculture: It would not know unless notified.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Does the Minister mean to say that a local authority which has control of reserves in its territory would not know?

The Minister for Agriculture: The sanctuary might be on private land.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Surely to goodness that would be known by a local authority. The amendment applies to nothing but a sanctuary in the district.

The Minister for Agriculture: Mr. Fraser's amendment provides that the local authority shall be notified.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Would it not be notified in any case? I want to obtain an expression of opinion. I do not want the members of the committee to act as mere children and say to the local authority, "We are going to establish a sanctuary in your district. This advice is just to tell you that there will be one but you can do nothing about it." By the amendment, local authorities can at least be heard and if they agree with the suggestions of the advisory committee, that is all about it, but if they do not, they

can then approach the Minister with their views. If Mr. Fraser knew the country as I know it, he would not raise this objection. He has lived all his life in the metropolitan area and he looks at the position as he would if it were affecting the Spearwood district. I ask the hon. gentleman to be reasonable and let us do what is in the best interests of the country where sanctuaries are to be provided.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am sorry I am going to be dragged into Mr. Fraser's narrow ambit in not knowing the country, because I am with the hon. member in this matter. If the amendment by Sir Charles is carried, any trivial request that the advisory committee is asked to decide on must be referred to the road board. Suppose a man at Wyndham wants a permit to kill kangaroos for his own use. That would have to be referred to the local authority.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: No.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It would. If the Committee confines the amendment to sanctuaries we would be on good ground, and I would ask members to agree to it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I put the amendment on the notice paper last night.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order!

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The amendment does not make sense to me and I therefore ask the Committee to agree to the amendment moved by Mr. Fraser. I agree that road boards should know what is going on, but under the amendment they will not have any say.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Does not Mr. Fraser's amendment mean that the road board will be notified just the same?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Of course it does, but why wait for the decision? If the local authority has to wait for six months, it does not matter in the slightest under Mr. Fraser's amendment. If the Committee is desirous of tying down the advisory committee then I ask it to agree to the amendment only as it applies to sanctuaries and not have every little thing referred to it such as declaring a closed season for ducks or granting a permit to kill kangaroos. That would only be cumbersome. Mr. Fraser's amendment is quite sufficient and I ask members to agree to it.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I am sure the Minister has read this clause otherwise he would not have made the statement he did. My amendment applies to Clause 11 only; it excludes all others. Therefore, I am sure the Minister has indicated a wide interpretation that is not applicable to the amendment.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Surely the granting of a permit to kill game has relation to the conservation of fauna!

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Would the Minister ask the committee to inquire into that?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Under your amendment, it would have to do so.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No, it would not.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I say it would.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Such a matter has first to originate with the Minister or the chief warden, and it will be a matter of great importance, such as the establishment of a sanctuary.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not only sanctuaries.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: This is a last minute attempt to tighten up the law after we have introduced into the State pests that endanger our local fauna. The whole matter does not justify the argument that has taken all this time.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not the one who has worked up all the argument.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No. Arguments can develop only when we have persons with a diversity of opinion.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Minister may receive a request to extend the duck shooting season for a month. He will have to refer the request to the committee which, in turn, will refer it to the local authority. I have received requests for the granting of permits to kill kangaroos. To think that such matters must be referred to a committee which, in turn, must refer them to the local authority concerned, is just too ridiculous. If the amendment referred only to sanctuaries, I would not be so concerned.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am surprised at the attitude of Sir Charles Latham, who said that if the amendment on the amendment were agreed to, the Committee might just as well throw it all out. What I suggest would achieve just what he wants.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I want the local authorities to have an opportunity to express their opinion.

Hon. G. FRASER: How could they express an opinion if they were not notified? Local authorities would definitely express their opinion if they were notified that certain action was contemplated.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: The amendment would accord recognition to the road board concerned.

Hon. G. FRASER: But the effect of the amendment would be to hold up decisions unnecessarily. There will be notifications to boards that will be of no interest to them at all, and they would not bother to reply.

The Minister for Agriculture: I should say that 98 per cent. of them would not reply.

Hon. G. FRASER: On the other hand, the board would reply at the earliest possible moment should it be concerned about the matter dealt with in the notification.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: The board should at least have an opportunity to express its opinion.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! If members would refrain from this chattering across the floor of the Chamber, progress would be much more rapid.

Hon. G. FRASER: The amendment on the amendment meets the situation. I want to protect the advisory committee against the possibility of road boards holding up decisions. If the amendment dealt only with sanctuaries, I would be prepared to allow the opinion of local authorities to be obtained. Sir Charles did not quote the whole of the section concerned, and there is more to it than he made out. If, in the interests of the district, it is necessary to take action, the local authority will do what is required without delay. We should not agree to go beyond what is covered by the amendment on the amendment.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Mr. Fraser has clouded the issue entirely with his proposition. It does not say that the board will have even a week's grace within which to reply to any notification. Some of the steps contemplated may be of vital importance to a district, and the local authority should have an opportunity to express its views.

Hon. G. Fraser: My proposal will not prevent that being done.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Of course it would. The whole thing might be cut and dried, and whatever reply the board might make would have no effect. There are places in my district where sanctuaries are required, but there are other portions where no-one would be in favour of one being established. The main point at issue concerns sanctuaries and game reserves which might cover large tracts of country, and that might be a matter of great importance to the districts concerned. The department could very well look after small matters, such as permits for duck-shooting and so forth.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: If the Committee agrees to the amendment on the amendment, will it mean that local authorities will be notified that something is intended and they will have no say in the matter?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is it.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: And if we pass the amendment proposed by Sir Charles Latham—

Hon. G. Fraser: Local authorities will be in exactly the same position.

The Minister for Agriculture: Absolutely.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: And their advice may not be taken at all!

Hon. G. Fraser: Exactly.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: In view of the later clauses in the Bill, I suggest to Sir Charles Latham that Clauses 11, 12 and 13 must be regarded as dealing with one matter if they are to be effective.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is correct.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I think Sir Charles should give some consideration to that point.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The only difference between the amendment and the amendment on the amendment is that the former contains a lot of verbiage that is unnecessary. If it were to refer to sanctuaries, I think that would be all that is required. As Dr. Hislop pointed out, the proposal under discussion is nebulous, because sanctuaries are covered by another clause. If we include sanctuaries in the amendment, we will do all that is necessary.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Replying to Dr. Hislop, I point out that Clause 12 provides the Minister with power to carry out such research into the conservation and protection of fauna as he thinks fit, so that has nothing to do with local governing authorities. Clause 13 allows the Minister to enter into agreements with owners of land for its use as a sanctuary. There again it is not a matter of dealing with a road board but with private individuals. Should the Committee agree to Mr. Fraser's proposal, it will allow the authorities to despatch a notification to a road board today regarding what is proposed and, in the same mail, there may be posted an intimation setting out that what is suggested has been actually done. That method is adopted by some civil servants. They do what they desire and then notify the parties concerned.

Hon. G. Fraser: Are you speaking from ministerial experience?

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes, I am, and I think the hon. member has quoted various instances of that being done.

Amendment on amendment put and negatived.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I would like to move an amendment on the amendment, because I want to confine it to sanctuaries.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You will find it very difficult to do so. I attempted it, but I cannot see how it can be done.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: If we cannot make it apply to sanctuaries only, the position will be farcical. There is no necessity for small matters to go to the road boards.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They do not have to.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The second part of the clause refers to many other things such as the importation of fauna, and they all have to be referred to the local authority.

Hon. H. Tuckey: Would you include game reserves with sanctuaries?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I think so. If after the word "inquiry" we could insert the words "game reserves," I would be agreeable. At present it is a ridiculous farce.

Hon. G. Fraser: What about adding a proviso?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes. I move—

That the amendment be amended by adding the following proviso:—

Provided Subclause (3) refers only to sanctuaries and game reserves.

I hope that will please everybody.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If we pass this amendment we will send an extraordinary clause back to another place, because it refers to an inquiry on any matters, and now the amendment is to provide that it shall apply only to reservations.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I was about to point out the same thing. The original proposal of the Minister to insert these words after the word "inquiry" is the correct way to do this. The proviso is in contradistinction to the first two or three lines, as pointed out by Mr. Parker.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment on the amendment with the intention of moving another one in lieu.

Amendment on amendment by leave withdrawn.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move—

That the amendment be amended by inserting in line 1, after the word "inquiry," the words "in respect to game reserves and sanctuaries."

Amendment on amendment put and passed; amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—BULK HANDLING ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (ALLOWANCES AND SALARIES ADJUSTMENT).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [5.24]: I have not much to add to the contributions which have been made by the Minister and Sir Charles Latham. I obtained the adjournment simply because I was a member of the Rights and Privileges Committee which had something to do with the increases that are recommended in the Bill. One or two members have drawn my attention to the fact that the allowance for country members has not been increased. I do not propose moving any amendment, but I express the opinion that the allowance of £50 to country members is totally inadequate. It might be sufficient in some cases, but there are glaring instances where it is quite inadequate. When speaking on the Address-in-reply, earlier in the year, I mentioned the heavy expense that Goldfields members, in particular, are put to because of the travelling they have to do.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: And North-West members.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: These remarks apply to members representing the North-East Province, and other country provinces. I refer to the Goldfields because in doing so I am speaking of something of which I have knowledge. Take the position with respect to telephones! It is necessary for us to ring through to our constituencies on business; and our wives and families may be living there, so that it would be necessary to call them on occasions. Trunk line calls are expensive these days. Motorcar travel is becoming much more costly from time to time; and some country members, out of sheer necessity have sometimes to patronise aeroplane services in order to get over their territory and avoid unreasonable delays. I assure members that the Rights and Privileges Committee has considered all these matters and at an opportune time will try to do something about them. I shall vote for the second reading of the Bill. This debate has given me the opportunity to mention some of the disadvantages that country members have told me about, as being one of their representatives on the committee. I assure them that when the committee meets again we will endeavour to achieve some redress for them.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [5.28]: I support Mr. Heenan's remarks and I wish to add a few observations much in the same vein. I feel that the provisions applying to country members are a little inadequate. I believe that many members of this House do not really know the extra expense that country members have to bear in order to cover the

essential portions of their districts. I wish to give some figures that I have obtained as a result of covering my district, which is not one of the biggest. I do four trips a year with the idea of trying to get to as many portions of my electorate as possible, when I cannot use the railways. Petrol is an average price of 4s. a gallon over the whole district. To go to Esperance and back, including calling at various places, involves a trip of about 600 miles. That was the actual mileage I covered recently when I went to Esperance with the Minister.

The Minister for Agriculture: You cannot get petrol for 4s. at Esperance.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: That is so, but I was speaking of the average price. Forgetting hotel expenses and other incidentals, the cost of petrol and oil, with a car doing about 25 miles to the gallon, amounts to about £25 for four trips a year. There is another point. When we travel to Merredin, and that portion of the province, it costs us nearly twice as much.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: What do you mean, £25 a trip?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No, for the four trips for the year.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: You could not do it for that.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: I am not taking all the costs into account. These figures apply only to petrol and oil—nothing else. I am not taking into consideration in those figures the regular train trips from Kalgoorlie to Perth. I guarantee that every member who does that trip will say that it cannot be done under £1, and that is taking into account only the essential items. One has to put one's hand into one's pocket all the time. When giving the figure of £25, I took the Esperance trip which is the smaller one taken by members of the South-East Province. There are a hundred and one other incidentals that all have to be taken into account, and I have mentioned only the four essential trips that I do every year. I am a member who lives on his salary and I feel that the amount allowed for a country member is entirely inadequate. I support Mr. Heenan's remarks and his hopes that the Minister will give consideration to a review of this matter in the near future.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [5.31]: I did not intend to speak on this matter but after hearing the remarks of Mr. Heenan and Mr. Cunningham, I think I might just mention one trip which I recently completed. I took my car to Esperance. It is absolutely impossible for a member to contact his people in a province such as I represent unless he uses a car. My expenses for that trip were £4 19s. 6d. and on the return journey I ruined a tyre which had to be replaced by a new one. That tyre cost me about £6

9s. 6d. I have not taken the cost of food and other incidentals into the figure I have just given. I do not think a member can go into any part of his constituency—especially in the outback areas—without spending a large sum of money on expenses.

Whenever a member visits any of the centres in his district he is invariably approached by different organisations requesting donations. It is necessary for us to meet these requests and, unfortunately, I am one of those members who has no income other than his parliamentary salary. The amount allowed to country members is definitely not sufficient and I know that other country members are in the same position as I am. We travel through our provinces continuously and the salaries we receive are inadequate for us to do justice to the people whom we represent.

The people in the outback areas are the ones who should receive that consideration. The areas are scattered and it is absolutely necessary to have a car to cover all the different sections. Many of the Assembly electorates are fairly compact, but even members who represent those electorates incur heavy expenses, because they are approached by these different organisations for donations. The man who represents a country district must have a motorcar if he is to do his job properly. As members are aware, the costs associated with a motorcar are terrific and the job cannot be done properly on the amount we receive today.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [5.35]: I have not had a long experience as a member of Parliament, but I can readily appreciate the position of all members and realise that what they say is perfectly true. There is one aspect about which I am most concerned, and I want the Minister to bear it in mind and see whether it is possible to make some adjustment in the amount a member is allowed to claim as free from taxation. It seems wrong to me that a member can claim only £200 as a deductible allowance, and I know for a fact that any member living in the country, with a fairly large territory to cover, must incur, during the 12 months, expenses of at least £400. So, I emphasise that point and hope the Minister will take it into consideration and see if something can be done. That state of affairs does have some effect upon a member doing his job and doing it properly. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [5.36]: Not being reliant upon my parliamentary salary for a living, I feel that I, unlike some other members, can speak from an impersonal point of view. It seems lamentable that members of Parliament should be more or less continu-

ously looking for an increase in salaries and then finding the Bill presented grants them an increase equal only to the rise in the basic wage. The thing does not make sense.

Frankly, I do not know how some members, living in country districts, can exist on the salaries they receive. I have some idea of the expenses involved because I do a considerable amount of travelling, for other reasons. I know what these country members must be faced with in the way of expenses. Surely the governing of a country is one of the most important occupations, and we should get over the stage of members of Parliament being forced to have a Rights and Privileges Committee to see that their salaries are raised from time to time. I am not at all certain that we should not review the whole matter right from the top downwards. I do not believe that we pay our Premier an adequate salary or that we protect the office of Premiership as we should.

The salaries being paid generally in Parliament today do not attract the successful business man. A member is either a man who has made a success of his business and is no longer reliant on putting all his efforts into that business, or he is a man who has a private income; or, on the other hand, he is the type of man to whom a parliamentary salary is an increase on what he has previously been earning. There is a big class in between to which this occupation does not appeal. I feel certain that we could attract the brains of the nation, and a good deal of wisdom to Governments, if some alteration were made in the whole process of recompensing members of Parliament. If a successful business man were to forsake his business and take on the office of Premier for three years, and possibly six years, he would have a very difficult task to rehabilitate himself in civilian life.

There are many in the same position and I feel certain that at times members must refuse ministerial posts because of the difficulties that would follow. If the Rights and Privileges Committee wishes to continue, it might approach the Premier, and those responsible, on a different basis altogether, and get some fixed idea of what is a reasonable salary and allowance for a member to take him out of the class that looks for a basic wage increase to be added to his salary. It is just lamentable and ludicrous that this should be included. Take for instance, the man who is on £1,000 a year! If the rise of everything is taken into account, he must spend more, as the basic wage rises, than the amount of that basic wage rise. In other words, he has commitments which he must meet and those commitments will all increase in the same proportion. Therefore, if the thing is to be at all favourable to the member there

should be an increase in the basic wage in proportion to his actual salary. That seems to be the only reasonable way to meet these conditions.

I feel very strongly on the matter. Some alteration should take place in ministerial salaries, and in members' salaries generally. I have said in this House before that if no other way is possible then I would just as soon see a reduction in members and an increase in salaries. The Government of the country wants something which will appeal to all citizens so that they may regard the government of the country as an occupation to which they might aspire. Under conditions such as that we would see a democratic form of government in a way that is not possible at the moment. I do not want to criticise the salaries suggested in the Bill for members of the Public Service, but I want to draw some parallel. Members must not for one moment consider that I am in any way querying the amounts that are suggested for the senior public servants. They deserve these salaries, but let us look at this point. In 1947 the Auditor General received £1,000. His proposed salary, in 1950, after three years is £2,000. Yet, the salary of the member of Parliament—

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: I do not think that is correct.

Hon. L. A. Logan: He is to receive £1,700, but he can get up to £2,000.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I am sorry if the figures are incorrect, but it seems that the salary ranges from £1,750 to £2,000. I take it that the salary of the Auditor General will be somewhere within that range so that he has at least a 75 per cent. rise. The corresponding rise in the salary of a member of Parliament—

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: I still think you are wrong.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Under this Bill, his salary will be £1,550.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I am sorry if my figures are incorrect and if that is so it has taken a lot of the argument out of it. But I wanted to point out that the increase in the salary of a member of Parliament does not correspond to the increases granted to these other persons. I want to reiterate that I have no objection to these salaries being paid to our public servants, because I think they are the salaries that should be paid if we are to have in our public service the best brains available. But my argument is that the same conditions should apply to members of Parliament. In 1947 a member of Parliament received £700 and he will receive £1,075 next year, if this measure is passed. It does not work out. The amount received today will not purchase what £700 purchased in 1947. All one's capital investments and other investments have increased by amounts much in excess of that.

I have no objection to members receiving this increased salary, but as I have already pointed out I am speaking from the point of view of the government of the country. If we are to attract to this Parliament all the talent available in the State then we should make a complete reorganisation of the whole matter of the payment of members of Parliament from the Premier downwards. I have no objection to paying the Premier £5,000. We pay the King's representative £4,000 a year free of tax, but to the Premier we pay one half of that and say it shall be taxed. The whole matter could be reviewed favourably in the interests of all concerned, particularly in the interests of the government of this State.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland—in reply) [5.46]: I have been very interested in the comments of members in regard to this Bill. In essence I agree with much of what has been said. I think we must realise that there are many men who would seek parliamentary honours irrespective of salary considerations.

Hon. H. Hearn: Hear, hear!

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: There have been times in the history of our own State when members were unpaid and the initial rate of payment was fairly low.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It was £200!

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: The committee appointed to review salaries and parliamentary allowances consisted of Sir Ross McDonald and the Public Service Commissioner. They took into account many factors, particularly the comparable rates in other States.

In regard to the question of allowances to country members to cover travelling expenses I, myself, took up this matter with the Public Service Commissioner after the last salary adjustment in 1947, and he said that the members of the Commission appointed at that time were quite of the opinion that the allowance which they had set was not enough. They thought, however, that it was coming more into the province of taxation and that an approach to the Commissioner of Taxation, particularly where the member concerned was in a position to submit statements of certified expenditure, would probably secure an adjustment which would benefit the member more than a statutory allowance of a differential rate between town and country members.

We also have to take into account that there is at present in this State, and the whole of Australia, a tendency for spiralling costs and we cannot adopt the principle that we should increase our salaries commensurate perhaps with what we think they should be when they would be out of scale with those in the other States.

Hon. G. Fraser: Those in the other States are three years old, in most cases.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: These points were taken into account by the committee appointed and we feel we must accept their recommendations. In passing I would like to mention that the Public Service Commissioner, who was one of the two appointed, is also one of those whose salaries are covered by the Bill. In case members may have any doubt I want to make it quite clear that in this specific case, by Cabinet instruction, he did not have any hand in fixing the salary, and it might interest members to know that the salary which was fixed by Sir Ross McDonald is lower by £200 than the average for the five States.

The Public Service Commissioner in New South Wales gets £3,000; in Victoria he gets £2,074 and in Queensland £2,100. The rate fixed by Sir Ross McDonald for our own Public Service Commissioner was £1,850, and I would like to repeat that the Public Service Commissioner himself had no hand in fixing that amount. I trust all members will accept the recommendations put forward because many factors were taken into account by the two experienced members who constituted the committee.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Minister for Transport in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Construction:

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I would invite members to consider the implications of this clause. If it is desired to put something into the Bill arranging for automatic increases I suggest it should take a different form from that set forth. Future increases should be dealt with in precisely the same manner as in the past, that is to deal with the question when it arises. As the Minister for Transport so rightly said, the position of a member of Parliament is not merely a job, it is a position of honour; and it is rather distasteful for me to find that the Bill contemplates that a member of Parliament shall get his rise of 7s. a week when the charwoman gets her rise. I feel that the whole of the clause is faulty and cheeseparing as it can be.

Hon. G. Fraser: What would you suggest in its place?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I would omit it, and let those who brought in this Bill have another look at it. I have great sympathy with the points made by country members regarding travel and other expenses which they incur and I would like to see this amount devoted to allowances for country members. I move an amendment—

That proposed Subclause (5) be struck out.

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I trust the House will not agree to this because it strikes at the very root of the Bill which provides the machinery to make automatic adjustments in salary in accordance with the fluctuating cost of living. Otherwise it would mean that every time there was an adjustment to be made we would again have to come to Parliament and pass a Bill for that particular purpose. I hope members will not agree to Mr. Watson's amendment.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Unless we can get a guarantee that something is going to take the place of this portion of the Bill we must vote against the amendment. When our salaries were raised in 1947 they were fixed at a certain figure. The cost of living has gone up tremendously and we are still tied to that figure. I do not know whether the gentlemen who fixed what we are getting today based their findings on salaries in Western Australia or whether they worked it out on the living conditions, but they did not leave much margin. I do not think we should wait while the cost of living goes up in the next two or three years before dealing with the matter, and we must have something to take the place of this section of the measure. I am not too proud to accept the rise and fall in the basic wage adjustment. I do not see why we should class ourselves above the workers.

Hon. H. HEARN: As one who is unfortunate enough to be independent of the parliamentary salary I hesitated to take any part in this debate, but I now feel that Mr. Watson has something in his amendment. It is entirely distasteful to some of us to know that our salaries are being subject to the rise and fall of the basic wage, because I believe there is much more in it than the question of salary and being a member of Parliament. There is such a thing as public service and, as the Minister pointed out, there were days when this job was done in an honorary capacity, and done quite well. If we get to the stage where we are constantly looking at it from the point of view of income, then we are not going to attract the most successful and best men who could enter our respective Houses of Parliament.

I have every sympathy with the person depending on his parliamentary salary. I believe that some way could have been found to give even more relief to those members and still steer clear of the basic wage adjustment. I visualise the time when we shall have someone to appear for us in the Arbitration Court. The move is a retrograde one and therefore I support the amendment.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Years ago the currency was far more stable than it is today. When the value of currency fell, it was decided that members should not suffer pecuniarily any more than did

the rest of the community. Men in business could increase the prices of their commodities while workers on salaries and wages had their tribunals. This led to the Government of the day being asked to consider means for maintaining the value of members' allowances. The tribunal that consisted of the Chief Justice, the President of the Arbitration Court and the Public Service Commissioner felt that it would be rather undignified to place members on a level with wages men, whose wages were adjusted by the Arbitration Court quarterly in accordance with the index figure.

I do not know of any better way of maintaining the value of members' salaries than the one now proposed. I cannot see anything undignified about it; it is merely a basis for maintaining the value of the pound. The service that members have to render nowadays is very different from that of 1921 when I entered Parliament. Our's can be made a full-time job, especially when we have price control and housing difficulties to deal with.

The Minister for Agriculture: And agricultural shows to attend.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: We have had them all along, but I do not know that they were as exacting as they are today. If any member thinks that he can fulfil his parliamentary duties and run a business as well, he is likely to be disillusioned. Probably it is undignified to ask us to engage in these discussions. An outside tribunal has given a determination as requested, and it was as a result of representations made on behalf of members of both Chambers that the Premier adopted this method. I ask Mr. Watson to give further consideration to the matter before pressing his amendment.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: For officers of the Government, a range of salaries will be fixed as the Governor may from time to time determine. Why could not a similar arrangement be applied to members? Why a basic wage adjustment for them and a salary range for others?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What would happen if there was a fall in the basic wage?

Hon. H. Hearn: The salaries of officers would come down.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: No, they would have the salary range.

The Minister for Transport: They have a basic wage adjustment according to the cost of living.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Consideration should be given to my suggestion that we should have a range of salary to be determined by the Governor from time to time. I understand that our salary will be £1,075, but if we had a range from £1,000 to £1,300, the Governor could declare the salary from

time to time, and that would give members a possible decrease of £75 or a possible increase of £225.

The Minister for Transport: I do not see how you could possibly apply that to members.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I do not like the reference to the basic wage. It is a very poor method of adjusting members' salaries.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I hope members will not tamper with the Bill. The immediate effect of the amendment would be to deprive members of an increase of £75. The Bill fixes £1,000 as the standard salary for members, and the fact that it provides for basic wage adjustments need not cause us concern. The use of adjectives such as "undignified" and the comparing of members with charwomen can be disregarded as we all eat similar food and live under similar conditions. The proposal in the Bill would be an effective and proper yardstick for measuring the rise and fall in the value of the pound, and is the best method that has so far been evolved.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Will the Chief Justice and his colleagues have their salaries adjusted under a similar provision?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT: I cannot answer Mr. Watson's question. A separate Bill will be introduced later to deal with the judges' salaries. It is recognised that there is need for some means of adjusting fixed salaries and the formula simply means that members' salaries will be adjusted from time to time in multiples of £20 in accordance with the variation in the basic wage. I cannot agree with the remark about this method being undignified. I agree with Mr. Heenan that we all eat similar food and live under similar conditions, and therefore the cost of living is much the same for all of us. The amendment would mean that the basic salary of £1,000 would stand, but the building up over the three years, which now amounts to £80, not £75, would be forfeited, and members should bear in mind that the £80 might easily become £100 when the next adjustment of the basic wage is made.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: My remarks before tea were taken the wrong way by Mr. Heenan. What I intended to convey was that the dear old charlady, on her wage of a few pounds a week, is fully entitled to the additional 7s. 8d., but that is no reason why members of Parliament should be looking for 7s. 8d. a week increase on their salary of £1,000 a year. When I used the word "undignified," I meant it was unworthy of a member of Parliament to expect to get 7s. 8d. a week in addition to his £1,000 simply because the dear old

charlady received that increase on her small wage. Since the question has been asked as to what salary I would take, I reply that in my opinion Legislative Councillors are adequately remunerated when they receive £1,000 a year.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Would you say that if you were totally dependent on that amount for a living?

Hon. G. FRASER: I have been silent on this question, because I thought everything was going all right. The hon. member, in moving an amendment like this, probably thinks he is doing something advantageous to members, but I disagree violently. I do not know whether he realises exactly what will occur if the amendment is carried. We would not have had this Bill before us if the provisions operating up to 1947 had been embodied in the alterations made in that year. If we carry the amendment, we shall be placed in exactly the same position as that in which we found ourselves between 1947 and 1950.

Prior to 1947, our salaries were adjusted according to rises in the basic wage. In 1947, the salary range was arrived at, but the basic wage adjustment was omitted, so that we find ourselves lagging behind again. If the amendment is carried, it will mean a loss of £80 a year to each member of Parliament. But we will not only lose £80 a year immediately but will also lose any increase that is granted in the basic wage within the next year or two. Unless we retain this provision, we shall find ourselves on the £1,000 range until some future Government decides that there shall be a further adjustment.

Our idea is to obviate that sort of thing. To my way of thinking, this is the main basis of the Bill. To some small extent it will keep our salaries in accord with rising prices. I did not want to speak on this adjustment, because I am dissatisfied with the alterations being made; and I did not wish to strike a discordant note. Because this provision was not made when the 1947 alterations were effected, we have lost something like £155 by way of basic wage increases.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Can the hon. member enlighten me as to how the provision came to be omitted?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Yes, because the judges advised that it should not be included.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, they fixed a certain salary but made no provision for adjustments later on. The ordinary unionist has other methods of securing adjustments, but we members of Parliament have not. We can have any committee we like to put a case to the Government of the day, but it is still left to the Government whether it will do anything in the matter. This provision sets down the basis upon which we shall be awarded our salaries. My view

is that the provision should not be removed but that there should be an alteration that would provide an increase. As it is, we shall receive a £20 rise on an increase of 7s. 8d. per week in the basic wage. That is the same rise that is given to a person on the basic wage. We shall receive the same ratio on a much higher salary.

I think Dr. Hislop made the suggestion that our figure should not be based on the increase in the basic wage, but that we should receive an increase proportionate to our salary. That is a much better method than the one proposed. However, it might be fatal to attempt to amend the Bill, and I am prepared to accept half a loaf in lieu of a full loaf. I hope the amendment will be defeated.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: In view of the very earnest and eloquent remarks of Mr. Fraser, and particularly his explanation that this provision was in the Act up to 1947, I do not propose to press the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 and 5, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [7.42]: I am very pleased with the Bill. It represents an improvement on the Act, both to me and to many members of this House—particularly country members—because there are weaknesses in the legislation, and we have been considerably relieved in going through the Bill to find that it has covered most of the loopholes that exist.

There was a time when some people attending fires in the capacity of fire-fighters were not covered by insurance. The Bill provides that local authorities, or the Forests Department—whoever may be handling a fire in a particular area—shall be compelled to insure persons who come within the scope of the definition of fire-fighters. I think, however, that there is a possibility of women being left out of consideration. It is the practice in quite a number of country areas when a fire occurs which lasts over a number of days, as was the case in the Great Southern last year, for the ladies in the district to be called upon to provide refreshments for the fire-fighters.

In some cases, too, children are employed to carry foodstuffs and other refreshments to men fighting the fires. I would therefore ask the Minister if those people will be covered by this measure. I am not

sure, from my reading of the Bill, that they will be. Three of us who went through the Bill this morning thought that certain minor amendments could be made to the measure. There is a reference to fire breaks in which the term "plough" is used. It is provided that a person must plough, burn or otherwise clear a fire-break. Quite often it will be found that there are no ploughs available, and it is thought that cultivators or scarifiers could be used.

The Minister for Agriculture: Would that not be covered by the words "or otherwise clear"?

Hon. A. R. JONES: That means to take away the debris from the top of the ground and to remove anything that is likely to burn. It might be done by raking or grading it off, or it could be done by means of a plough, cultivator or scarifier. The measure contains no definition of the word "plough," but that could be dealt with when the Bill is considered in Committee. Another amendment might be necessary where the Bill states that if an officer of the bushfire brigade is not available when a decision has to be made with regard to back burning against a fire that is devastating an area, the captain of a fire brigade or one of his senior officers may exercise that authority. It could easily occur that no such person was available.

A further point with which I do not altogether agree is the exemption of tractors, working in orchards or in forests, from the necessity of being fitted with spark arresters. It would be dangerous to allow tractors working in the forests or bulldozers falling timber—such as members saw recently in the South-West forests—to operate without spark arresters. It would be dangerous to allow a tractor to work in an orchard without a spark arrester in the summer months. Any such tractor—particularly when working in the forest where there is so much debris of all types on the ground—could easily be responsible for starting a fire through a piece of heated carbon being exhausted from the motor. I would like the Minister, when replying to the debate, to give some reason for those exemptions that are included in the Bill. Generally speaking, the Bill makes provision for the protection of those concerned in burning off for seed gathering purposes, and I think it is a good, healthy measure. When it is considered in Committee, however, I think certain amendments should be agreed to. I support the second reading.

HON. A. L. LOTON (South) [7.50]: The most important clause of the Bill is that mentioned by the Minister last night, in which the fire control officer is given the right to withdraw permission to light a fire on certain days or under certain conditions. I and many other members endeavoured for some time to have that pro-

vision inserted in the legislation, and at last the advisory committee of the Road Board Association has deemed the provision necessary. In the past it has been possible for a person to give two days' notice to his neighbours and to notify the local fire control officer and, after complying with the necessary requirements, to light a fire under any weather conditions.

If this amendment is agreed to it will be necessary to give four days' notice to neighbours, to notify personally or personally deliver notice to the local fire control officer, who must acknowledge in writing the application to burn, and so on. That officer reserves the right, between the day of application and the time of lighting the fire, to cancel the permit if he deems it necessary. Two years ago, in a certain area, the local firefighting unit had to go into the district of another road board to combat a fire that had got out of control there. The fire control officer knew that a fire was to be lit on a certain day in his own district and he sent word to the person concerned, advising him not to light the fire on account of the strong north wind that was blowing.

The reply from that person to the fire control officer was that he would light up, as he had complied with all the requirements. The fire got out of control but, despite the warning issued by the fire control officer, this person had complied with the provisions of the Act and the officer could not withdraw the permit. Mr. Jones has dealt with some of the other points in which I am interested. I come now to the enlarging of the Fire Prevention Board. With four members appointed by the executive of the Road Board Association, there will be brought to the Fire Prevention Board a wide knowledge of bushfire prevention requirements in country areas.

It is difficult to devise a Bill that will meet the needs of the whole State. There were devastating fires in the lower part of Western Australia last year and in the northern districts, with lower rainfall and medium forests, fires can also reach dangerous proportions. Open country with grass and stubble always creates a fire hazard when a strong hot north wind is blowing. It is under such conditions in the early morning that the fire control officer will issue a warning that no fires are to be lit. I do not know whether arrangements could be made for such warnings to be broadcast over the radio when the weather forecast is that the fire hazard is great. It may not always be possible for the fire control officer to contact persons in distant parts of his area by any means other than the radio. I realise the value of the warnings that are issued daily by the Weather Bureau in summer time, giving the anticipated fire hazard for that and the succeeding day. Such announcements are valuable to fire control officers and I think we should make further use of the radio in that regard.

More local broadcasting stations are being set up, and in the areas covered by them greater use could be made of this medium of spreading the warnings, with advantage to all concerned. Overtures have been made to the Postmaster General for a better use of telephone facilities in country areas and it has been possible to arrange, under certain conditions, that some districts are given priority in the matter of fire warnings by telephone. However, fires may start on Saturdays or Sundays and where the area is served by an allowance post office, the work of the fire control officer may be thrown out of gear if the office is not functioning. It might be possible in such cases to install an emergency switch, for which someone could assume responsibility, in order to facilitate the work of fire control officers.

The provision for the advertising of the burning of clover areas is a wise one. Burning of clover is supposed to take place only in certain portions of the burning season, and the permit is subject to the approval of the Minister, but it is possible for four or five fires to be lit in a district on the same day and, although the fires may be under control, confusion is easily caused when people see smoke arising in several different directions. If communication is left to telephone messages or word of mouth, it is hard to spread the information that someone is lighting a fire on a certain day and a lot of worry is caused when smoke is seen. Unless telephone facilities are almost 100 per cent. effective, confusion is bound to arise under such circumstances.

Provision should also be made to control the burning of large areas, such as those met with under the war service land settlement scheme. Members recently saw, in the Rocky Gully area, 6,000 acres that had been bulldozed within a short space of time, and they will realise that if that area were burnt in one piece it would require all the firefighting equipment in the State, under certain conditions, to prevent it getting out of hand. I think it should be laid down that an area of not more than 500 acres should be burned at one time. Once the first 500 acres had been burnt off, there would be something to burn back on to.

The Minister for Agriculture: Might not a fire get away accidentally on purpose on a good burning day?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Yes, and that would increase the danger. There is no provision in the Bill, as yet, to give the fire control officer authority to limit the area that can be lit. I think a 500-acre limit would be sufficient.

The Minister for Agriculture: It might be better to provide that a certain number of people should be in attendance, according to the area to be burned.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I am agreeable to that, but members must realise the danger involved where big areas are being burned.

At 10 a.m. the wind may be favourable, but by 3 p.m. it may have switched around to another quarter and if the fire is burning on a big face it is very hard to prevent it getting out of control. I support the second reading and hope that when the Bill is dealt with in Committee the amendments I have placed on the notice paper will receive full consideration.

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

BILL—RESERVE FUNDS (LOCAL AUTHORITIES).

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 24th October of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Authorisation:

Hon. G. FRASER: I was wondering whether the Minister has something to say on the point raised during the second reading debate in regard to a local authority submitting a request to any meeting of ratepayers. It appears to me that a meeting of 20 ratepayers can upset all the plans of a board.

Hon. H. Tuckey: How can they do that?

Hon. G. FRASER: They can reject the board's proposals. The powers in this Bill are entirely different from those under the Road Districts Act. That measure makes provision for an ordinary ratepayers' meeting to be held, but no matter what they decide, the final decision rests with the road board.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Not in regard to money.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am speaking of the Road Districts Act, under which ratepayers have no power at all. This Bill is revolutionary because it gives power to a meeting of 20 ratepayers to upset anything the board may wish to do with regard to reserve funds. I had hoped that the Minister would make a reply along those lines during the second reading.

Hon. H. Tuckey: I think they can only call a meeting.

Hon. G. FRASER: No, the hon. member should read the Bill. The decision made at a ratepayers' meeting is final.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: The council which I represent has approved of this measure and has asked me to support it. It is quite satisfied with this particular clause.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: I think what Mr. Fraser means is that if a man calls on a road board to hold a meeting, it must do so if 20 members request it.

The Minister for Agriculture: No, it is the other way around.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: If only 20 attend that meeting, then their decision is carried.

Hon. G. FRASER: I want to point out to the hon. member that the clause definitely sets out that the local authority must seek authorisation from the ratepayers' meeting.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is correct.

Hon. G. FRASER: But if 20 ratepayers fail to attend, an application can be made to the Minister. On the other hand, if the meeting is fully attended by 20 ratepayers, any decision they arrive at is final.

Hon. H. Tuckey: That gets back to what I said before. If people do not attend, an application is made to the Minister.

Hon. G. FRASER: Would the hon. member say that when 20 ratepayers attend a meeting, no interest is shown? That is a weak point.

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson: It only needs a majority of 11 to upset the road board's proposal.

Hon. G. FRASER: As Sir Frank Gibson has said, that is quite correct. It would only require a majority of 11 out of 20 ratepayers attending. I want a little more satisfaction on that point. It does not worry me in the least that the Kalgoorlie council agrees to this clause. I want to satisfy myself.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is not only the Kalgoorlie council that approves of this Bill, but, in fact, the majority of local authorities. Now that the safeguard exists the local authorities want to strike a rate to create special reserve funds. They might want to do any number of things. Someone mentioned the building of a hall, but I do not think that would enter into it. If a meeting of ratepayers is called, it is just too bad if only 20 turn up. All ratepayers have the right to attend. This is a safeguard to prevent any road board running amok and establishing reserve funds for all sorts of things. I do not see any danger in it.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I do not think Mr. Fraser has read the Road Districts Act. Section 299 deals with money controlled by the Government in exactly the same way as this Bill seeks to do with reserve funds.

Hon. G. FRASER: That refers to a referendum, which is a different thing altogether.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: That is so, but 20 ratepayers may ask for this to be done, and it then needs only 20 members to vote.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is, if it were a referendum.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: There is nothing compulsory about the section.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It is compulsory to have a referendum.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: Yes, but it is not compulsory for members to vote. It is exactly the same as that already provided for, but in a different manner. If the road board wants to create a reserve fund, it must call a meeting of ratepayers and set out its proposals and if they agree to it, well and good, but if they do not, the board can go to the Minister.

The Minister for Agriculture: It cannot go to the Minister if 20 ratepayers turn it down.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: No, I did not mean that. I meant that if fewer than 20 ratepayers attend the meeting the road board could then go to the Minister to seek his approval. The idea is to create a reserve fund to pay for any project in the future when labour and materials are available.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: This clause is most dangerous. I know of a road board district in which there is a considerable amount of friction on this question, because 20 per cent. of the ratepayers provide 80 per cent. of the revenue by the payment of rates on unimproved values.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Is that road board in the metropolitan area?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Yes.

Hon. G. Fraser: It would not be in the West Province.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It is partly in the West Province. It is where I reside. The position is that certain of the lands are rated on a very high unimproved value and others on very low valuations. I have a block of three-quarters of an acre with one house on it and I am charged £60 a year for rates. A prominent hotel down the road from me is valued at £1,250 and is rated proportionately. A house containing six flats is valued at £440. It is rather interesting to note what this Bill provides. Clause 11 reads—

In addition to the powers conferred by the Road Districts Act, 1919-1948, and notwithstanding any rating limits thereby imposed, a road board may in any year impose and levy upon the ratable land contained within the whole of its district, or within any portion of its district . . .

It then goes on to say that the rate shall not exceed 3d. in the £ on the unimproved value of ratable land and I will pay 3d. in the £ on £2,000 and the hotel will pay 3d. in the £ on £1,250 and the flats in question will pay 3d. in the £ on £440.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is that on the unimproved land values?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Yes. Clause 4 states that an authorisation may be sought and conferred and the local authority shall resolve to seek the authorisation.

Hon. G. Fraser: It has to have a majority at the meeting.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: There are only five members on my road board. All local authorities have to deal with absentee ratepayers. In the road district where I reside considerable friction has arisen owing to the inequality of the rates. Meetings have been held to decide upon a fair and proper way for fixing the rates on the annual value as is done in the municipality across the road where the rates payable are considerably cheaper.

At Peppermint Grove people living on one side of the road pay one-third of the amount of rates payable by those living on the other side. At a meeting of ratepayers the voting power is different from what it would be in connection with a referendum. Furthermore, it must be remembered that there are a far greater number of lower valued properties than of those to which high values attach. It is an open secret that a number of members of the board have said they want to hit up the rich, among whom, I am happy to say, I am included. In one instance, a man has let his house at a rental of £1 per week and his rating is £3 4s. 10d.

Hon. E. H. Gray: What is his land worth?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is where the catch comes in. I cannot complain of the value placed on my land, but in the case of the man I referred to, who has let his house at £1 a week and pays £3 4s. 10d., his rate is based on a valuation of £75. That shows the inequality of the rating. Any 20 ratepayers could come along and hit up the unimproved capital value of properties that overlook the river. I claim the clause is most dangerous and we should not allow the Minister to be placed in the position of having to accept the dictates of any 20 ratepayers. It is absolutely wrong.

The Minister for Agriculture: What percentage of the ratepayers would you regard as satisfactory.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I think it should be a matter of a referendum, as is adopted with regard to borrowing money.

The Minister for Agriculture: But this is a matter of striking a rate.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: In our case, it is a matter of stealing it.

Hon. L. A. Logan: How many road boards rate on the unimproved value?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am speaking of the position in the metropolitan area, which I regard as absurd and ridiculous. Why should there be this differentiation in the case of one suburb as against another?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Land values are different in the various suburbs.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Land is rated on a different basis in the different suburbs.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Not in some road districts.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Some adopt one valuation and some another valuation.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Most of them adopt the Taxation Department's valuation.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: And some do not.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Is not the solution of your difficulty to be found in an alteration of the membership of the road board?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I think the more simple way would be to alter the Act. In the Mosman Park road district the general rates have been reduced from 9d. to 6d. in the £ but despite that, whereas I paid £40 in rates last year, this year I have paid £65, because of the increased valuation applied to my land. The unfair part is that the increased values apply only to a portion of the district.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Is not Mosman Park the highest rated section of the metropolitan area?

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But there is a limit to the rating imposed by the Act.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The provision will allow the creation of a reserve fund to provide amenities for those occupying lower valued properties not commensurate with the amenities provided for those occupying the higher rated properties. For instance, we have no footpaths at all. I object strongly to the clause, and I object strongly to any 20 ratepayers being able to force a board to provide a reserve fund. It really means that only 11 certainties are required, and it does not matter what the other nine may think.

The Minister for Agriculture: You could apply that to your own election to the Legislative Council because only 35 per cent. voted!

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Minister is wrong. In my case only 21 per cent. voted because the other 79 per cent. were perfectly satisfied.

Hon. G. FRASER: My motive in dealing with this phase was from an entirely different standpoint.

The Minister for Agriculture: Yours was from an entirely opposite point of view.

Hon. G. FRASER: I objected to any 20 ratepayers being able to override the decision of a board and render the Minister powerless. Once 20 ratepayers make their decision, the Minister cannot intervene. It is a lopsided arrangement.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: The provision regarding 20 ratepayers has been included in the Act for as long as I can remember, and I am not aware of any trouble having arisen in consequence. Years ago it was considered that 20 ratepayers were sufficient to authorise the convening of a meeting. If, in view of present-day circumstances, it is considered the number should be increased, the Act should be amended accordingly. The clause will apply to the raising of loans and other matters as well. I do not think ratepayers would take advantage of the provision to defeat the decision of a road board.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: The rest would not be interested, or they would be present at the meeting.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Reserve funds were found very useful, for instance, during the war period. Some such provision is necessary to make provision for the purchase of expensive machinery or the undertaking of large works.

Hon. G. Fraser: But this proposal is something entirely new.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Mr. Parker referred to his experience but the fact remains that boards adopt different systems of valuation and are legally entitled to do so. If this year they decide upon a higher rate than is necessary, it means that next year the rate will have to be lower because they are not allowed to budget for a surplus. I see no danger in the clause.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I suggest the Minister reports progress on the clause. I appreciate the fact that reserve funds are necessary, but I would like to frame an amendment along the lines of what applies to the raising of a loan.

The Minister for Agriculture: You have in mind a referendum instead of a meeting of 20 ratepayers.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Yes.
Progress reported.

BILL—PRICES CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT
(Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [8.30] in moving the second reading said: The sole provision in the Bill is to authorise the continuance of the operations of the Act for a further 12 months to the 31st December, 1951. In speaking to the Bill I would like first to quote the Minister controlling the Act who said, in another place, that the administration and control of prices is a most difficult and arduous task,

and one which no State Government would willingly undertake, unless it was felt that by doing so, material benefit would result to the community.

The decision to continue control for another 12 months has not been lightly made, and it is one with which all States of the Commonwealth are in agreement. As members are aware the recent conference of Prices Ministers took such a serious view of the present position that controls have been re-established on many articles of a necessary domestic nature. There have been seven conferences of Prices Ministers during this year and their discussions have enabled uniformity of action and co-ordination to be maintained between the States. This has provided a stabilisation of prices throughout the Commonwealth, which otherwise would not have occurred. This has been seen particularly in regard to matters affecting the economy of the country, in which the position of overseas markets plays a big part. These matters have required much attention and negotiation with the Commonwealth Government.

When prices control was transferred to the States, it required little imagination to realise the attendant problems. A rise in prices was inevitable, for wage pegging no longer operated, the 40-hour week had been established, and substantial marginal increases had been granted to industry. To provide members with a few examples of the increases in margins for skill, as affecting Government employees, I will mention that since 1947, margins in the engineering trade have increased by 53½ per cent.; in the building trade by 61.4 per cent.; cabinet makers by 38 per cent.; carters and truck drivers by 60 per cent.; for the timber industry by 80 to 100 per cent., and for the Government Printing Office by 76 to 90 per cent. Private industry has been affected similarly.

I am not debating the justification for these increases, but want the House to realise that they have contributed towards the problems faced by the Prices Ministers. The annual report for 1950 of the Governor of the Commonwealth Bank contained the comment that part of the increase in prices was directly or indirectly attributable to higher prices for imports or exportable products, but that most of it appeared to be due to the continued pressure of internal demand on domestic production operating largely through increased pressure for, and willingness to grant, wage increases.

For the information of members I will quote an example of the setbacks that the Prices Ministers have had to face in their efforts to stabilise prices. On assuming control of prices, the States agreed that a most important aid to such stabilisation would be the payment by the Commonwealth of a subsidy on wool, which was used on the home market. This proposal

was vetoed by the Commonwealth, but when the States attempted, with the support of woven-goods manufacturers, to organise a stabilisation fund, the Commonwealth mulcted the fund of a large amount in the form of taxation.

The upward surge of price levels has been due to—

- 1, Wage increases.
- 2, The high price of wool.
- 3, The effect that high overseas prices has on the home consumption price of many of our export products.
- 4, The impact on our primary and secondary industries of the high price of many imported articles.

Members may appreciate a brief resume of the assistance price control has been to the consumer. The high prices obtaining overseas for Australian products has had a marked effect on prices on the home market. These overseas prices fall into two general groups—

- 1, Where the home price is lower than that obtained overseas.
- 2, Where the home and export price are the same.

Included in the category where higher prices obtain overseas are such major commodities as butter, wheat, lead, zinc and meat, but the lower home market price is obtained through price legislation and a certain degree of co-operation by producers.

At the 29th August, 1950, the fixed price of lead in Australia was £35 per ton compared with £140 overseas. Since then the local price has been increased to £65, still less than half of the price abroad. Referring to zinc, the home fixed price is £40, while overseas it is £159 7s. 6d. The British Ministry for Food pays around £130 per ton f.o.b. for our tallow, which is sold in bulk in our capital cities for £27 to £36 for inedible tallow, and £37 to £42 for the edible variety. It is obvious then the stabilisation schemes carried out by the States Prices Ministers, in collaboration with the Commonwealth, have been of great value to the working people of Australia.

The lack of a stabilisation scheme and the non-payment of a subsidy have resulted in the public being forced to pay high prices for woollen goods. For instance, wool top prices at the 28th July, 1950, were from 206 to 406 per cent. more than at the 30th June, 1938, and these increases are reflected, of course, in the high prices of yarn, piecegoods and clothing.

The value of price control to the citizens of Western Australia is seen in a comparison of the upward trend of prices throughout Australia. During the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1950, the per-

centage increase in the index figures for Perth for clothing, clothing materials and drapery was 11.7 compared with an average of 14.5 for the six capital cities. These increases have been granted owing to the impact on manufacturing costs of basic wage increases and the increased costs of raw materials, such as wool, rayon, cotton, etc. In addition, the prices of wool and imported yarns and piecegoods have increased as a result of the devaluation of sterling.

In the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1950, the percentage increase in food and groceries in Perth was 8.6, a little below the average of 9.5 for all the capital cities. A brief reference to some articles of food may be of interest. An increase of 4d. was granted in the price of a 2lb. loaf of bread. This was not unreasonable when it is realised that the present price is only one-third greater than before the war, and that production and delivery costs have increased most substantially.

The price of tea rose from 2s. 9d. to 3s. 4d. per lb. as from the 3rd July, 1950, an increase of 7d., of which 1d. was granted owing to increased packing and handling costs. The balance of 6d. resulted from the Commonwealth's decision to maintain the subsidy on tea at a fixed amount, instead of assessing it on the amount of tea consumed. As a consequence any increase in the consumption of tea results in a reduction per lb. of tea in subsidy.

Sugar was increased 4d. per lb. following representations by the Queensland Government, but the price still compares favourably with that of the pre-war period. The price of jam, although still high, was reduced during the year. The retail price of potatoes was increased from 7d. to 9d. per half stone, as a result of an increase to growers of £2 5s. per ton, and a minor adjustment in wholesale margins. Onions increased by 4d. per lb. owing to higher production costs, which were also reflected in the Australia-wide increases granted to the soap industry.

Price control over meat must also present difficulties unless some workable scheme for control at the source is devised, and this has not been possible as yet. A Select Committee has been appointed in another place to inquire into meat supplies, and its report is to be submitted on the 8th November next. The task of policing meat prices has proved difficult. However, a large number of prosecutions have occurred, and a number of severe fines imposed.

There are other figures which I will not quote, but they all reveal that the rise in prices in this State has been less than that of the average of all States, and only Tasmania can show better figures. There is no doubt that for the time being the increase of prices cannot be halted, but it can be kept within reasonable bounds

by price control. In this State a special section of the Prices Branch deals with the checking of prices. In the 14 months ended the 31st July, 1950, some 9,126 checks were made, an average of 652 per month. These checks covered manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers in the metropolitan and country areas, and as a result 912 charges were laid, covering 170 traders.

I trust that the House will agree with the Government's wish to continue price control for a further 12 months. As I have said, recent circumstances, including the high price of wool and the recent substantial increase in the Federal basic wage, have indicated the wisdom of continuing controls. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th October.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Suburban) [8.43]: The Bill, which is rather important, is somewhat similar to a measure that was introduced here some time ago. As members know, the law now provides that anyone suffering from T.B. is bound to comply with certain requirements and to undergo treatment. If he does not comply with the orders issued, all sorts of drastic action can be taken.

The measure merely provides that the authorities—the department—may direct any person or section of the community to be x-rayed to find out whether he or they are suffering from tuberculosis. I personally think that is a good thing because I understand that one of our dread diseases is T.B., and the only way to wipe it out is to treat all those who suffer from it, and prevent them from spreading it. Unfortunately, due to human nature, I suppose, certain people have a great dread of the disease; I suppose we all have. Some people fear that they have got it and they are afraid to be x-rayed in case the examination showed that they were suffering from it.

Those are the people that sometimes have it, and they are those who are a source of danger to the community. It is very bad luck and unfortunate in some respects that we will have to go to these people to get them to be examined; but if they do not have the disease, then the result of the x-ray will be a great relief to them. If they have the disease, it will be a fearful shock to them to find out, but at least treatment can be undertaken to check it immediately. It is no worse than a person discovering that he has leprosy, or perhaps has acquired syphilis in some indirect way, or even some other dread

disease. These people have to be treated so that they will not affect the community at large.

I was pleased to hear Dr. Hislop say that it was most improbable that a person would contract T.B. from another person dealing with foodstuffs. But there are many occupations in which persons are engaged and they could pass on T.B. if they were suffering from it. A clerk, or someone employed in a factory where people work close together, could perhaps pass on tuberculosis. I imagine that a waiter or waitress who leans over customers might pass on the disease. For instance, any one of us might have a meal in the same place every day and come into contact with the same waiter or waitress. There is an opportunity for passing on the disease. There are all sorts of places, such as tearooms, theatres, buses and so on where people sit next to each other. According to the letter from the B.M.A. read by Dr. Hislop, it was stated that x-ray examinations should be encouraged, and that every person should be x-rayed. All the Bill states is that the department, if it has reason to suspect a person is suffering from T.B., can say, "Very well, we would like you to be examined." That would probably include all the person's family as well.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: There is power for that in the Act now.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: To examine them?

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Yes.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Compulsory examination?

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Yes.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: What section is it?

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Section 293.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am surprised to hear that, because I was under the impression that Dr. Hislop was speaking against compulsory examination. However, I am pleased to hear that it is already part of the law. Nurses in general hospitals seem to be more prone to contracting T.B. than those engaged in nursing at Wooroloo. The reason is that a patient may enter a general hospital with a fractured leg, or something like that. Maybe it turns out afterwards that the patient has T.B., but no precautions are taken by the nurses in the general hospital, with the result that the incidence in those hospitals is greater than it is at Wooroloo. All precautions are taken at Wooroloo, and the incidence is much lower. I do not know whether it is done now, but it was the intention to x-ray every patient who went into a public hospital, to protect other patients and the nurses. If it was discovered that a patient had T.B., he could be treated immediately and cured.

I wrote to the president of the B.M.A. to find out if that association had any medical reason for objecting to compulsory x-ray

examination. So far, I have not had a reply, but apparently that is because there has not been sufficient time. Compulsory compliance with the requirements of medical science is nothing unusual in connection with measures on the statute book. There is compulsory vaccination of infants and vaccination against smallpox has wiped out the disease in Australia. Also, a person must be vaccinated if he carries on certain occupations. If a person is in the habit of going on to ships coming from overseas, or if a person has a desire to travel, he must be vaccinated.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: It is international.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Yes. Take people like hairdressers—the barber who is shaving us or cutting our hair. That man might have T.B. and do not members think he should be examined to find out if that is so? He is a possible source of distribution, and if it is discovered that he has T.B., the trouble can be checked. It was suggested as essential that all new Australians should be examined when arriving in this country. I entirely agree, but so should everybody who comes into the country. Everybody entering Australia should be examined, and I do not know why we should stop there, because people coming into the country are likely to contract the disease after they have been here for some time. There is no discomfort and no trouble about being x-rayed. It takes only a few minutes after a person arrives at the clinic, and after all it is only a matter of a tram ride to the clinic. No-one has any need to fear compulsory x-ray examination.

If a person has T.B., then it is a god-send to find it out so that he can be cured before the disease gains a hold. If a person has not the disease, then it is great relief to his mind to know it. I think it is essential that we should have compulsory x-raying and not make it voluntary. It has been said that even under the voluntary system the clinic is too busy. I hope the clinic is busy but, if necessary, we must enlarge it or first examine those people who are likely to be affected and do the others afterwards. I cannot see much difference in compelling people, and I think it is far more drastic to compel people to undergo treatment than to ask them to calmly go along and find out if they have tuberculosis. I have Section 293 of the Health Act in front of me. It states—

When an approved medical officer appointed for a district suspects that any person resident in the district is suffering from tuberculosis, he may require the person to submit to such x-ray examination for tuberculosis as the Commissioner shall direct.

That goes half-way but the Bill is asking that a person be examined even though it may not be suspected that he has T.B. If the Bill is passed, it will not be necessary to wait until a medical officer sus-

pects. I do not know that we would get a medical officer to say that the fellow over the road had T.B. That would apply only when a patient went to a doctor and a doctor said, "This fellow apparently has T.B. and I think we ought to get him x-rayed." This Bill goes further and says that it does not matter whether people are suspect or not.

A most important matter is the question of increasing the fees under the Health Act. The Bill provides that the fee shall be increased by allowing a higher rate to be charged. In dealing with another measure I mentioned the question of rates in the district in which I live. It is not the district I represent, but I know a lot about it. As the Minister stated, the money is required for the purpose of service—that is, providing inspectors, and so on. I have no objection at all to increased expenditure when we are looking after the health of the people. It is essential that a great many places, not only in the city but also in the suburbs, should be cleaned up. But that requires money. It is wrong that one district should pay one amount and another district a different amount on comparable dwellings. I am not speaking of the rate in the £ but in one district a person is rated one way and in another district in a different way. Take Peppermint Grove, for instance. That is a small area which is fully developed and which requires only a small rate. Therefore the board values its properties—the land values—at a low rate. No-one can appeal against the value of his property because it is well below the selling value. But it is on that low value that the people pay their health rates. I do not know whether it is 1½d. or 2d. in the £.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: I think 1½d. is the maximum.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: They pay their health rates on the low value of the land. Yet we go across the road and find comparable land is valued at a much higher rate because that road board requires more money to develop its district, to provide more roads and so forth. Therefore, the people in that district have to pay higher rates and to do that the road board puts up the value of the land. The value placed on the land by the Mosman Park Road Board is definitely not the selling value of the land—it is well below it. If the full value was placed on the land they could have a lower rate in order to get the necessary sum of money. But here we have a high value as compared with the adjoining road district, and we have the rate for health purposes, which is for a service.

I will mention some of the anomalies that have come to my notice. There is a man who has a residence in which he lives with his wife, son and daughter. Last year he paid rates on that house amounting to £12 0s. 6d. That included the general rate

of 9d., the loan rate of 3½d. and the health rate of 1½d. This year the general rate was dropped from 9d. to 6d., the loan rate to 3½d. and the health rate remained the same. Thus instead of paying £12 0s. 6d., he now pays £17 12s. 11d. because they have increased the value of his property from £208 to £440.

The same gentleman has some vacant land which was valued at £75. Last year he paid £4 5s. 3d., but this year he pays £3 4s. 10d. He also has a house which he lets. I do not know the rental, but I think it is over £1 a week. The unimproved value is £70. Last year he paid £3 18s. and this year he pays £3 0s. 6d. On another property which he lets he paid £3 18s. this year. The anomalies are terrific. I think all members will agree that a health rate is for a service, and I think it will also be agreed that the health rate for an hotel would be infinitely more than that for a residence, yet the Oceanic Hotel has a valuation of £1,260 and my small place on a three-quarter acre block of land has a valuation of £1,995. Because it has a river view, a higher rate must be paid.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Is not a hotel rated on an annual rental?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No. General Motors pay on a valuation of £1,155 and a house containing six flats is valued for rating at £440. Surely six flats require more attention by the Health Department than the residence of an ordinary person! Do not think my place has the highest rate. It has not by any means. A lot of these properties are on two blocks, and they have to remain on two blocks, and they are paying all these extra rates because of the higher value of the land as assessed by the road board.

I am informed that the value of some, if not all of the road board land, has been fixed by the Taxation Department. Anyhow, the owners of these highly rated lands cannot appeal because the land is not valued at its present selling price. Furthermore, I would point out that if they so desired, they could put these lands up to the selling value and then we would find that 20 per cent. of those people who have these high values will be paying even more than 80 per cent. of the rates at the present time and, of course, that would apply as regards the health rate. For the time being I am dealing only with the health rate. Hence, throughout the metropolitan area, the health rate, which is paid in respect of a service rendered, should all be based on the same type of valuation. There is no difficulty about it. It is done by the Water Supply Department, which does not take any notice at all of the local authority's values, therefore the health rate and collections should be on the same basis as the water rate.

What should happen is that there should be no such thing as a road board in the metropolitan area and there should not

be all sorts of little anomalies where rates are not comparable. In connection with the State Electricity Commission Act, the main argument of the Government was that one suburb should not get cheaper electricity than another and the same amount should be paid in one suburb as another. I say it should be exactly the same in regard to the health rate. I propose to support the second reading, but I intend to move an amendment which I have on the notice paper. I trust members will give it consideration and that they will feel that the same should be paid for health service whether one resides in the city or in a suburb.

On motion by Hon. H. K. Watson, debate adjourned.

BILL—ROADS AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE STATE HOUSING COMMISSION AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 26th October of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL — WOOD DISTILLATION AND CHARCOAL IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. E. H. GRAY (West) [9.12] in moving the second reading said: This is a short Bill but one of great importance, and I think that when members understand the objective they will have no hesitation whatever in passing it with the least possible debate. It is proposed by means of the Bill to amend legislation dealing with the industry which was established at Wundowie. This industry is of great value to the State. It has cost a large amount of money, and I will quote some of the figures given by the Minister for Industrial Development in another place, because I do not wish there to be any misapprehension about the position. The loan funds involved totalled £830,000 to the 30th June, 1950, and interest to £87,191, making a total of £900,000. That is the present capital of the concern.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is the liability, is it?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: As at the 30th June this year. Last year this industry produced £80,706 worth of charcoal pig iron; and £56,000 worth of timber, charcoal, acid, etc., while returns from sundries amounted to £1,924. Stocks on hand as stated by the Minister are worth £32,000.

Hon. H. Hearn: What would be the total value of their products?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I have not the total here but it would approximately be £170,000. The losses on this industry have been very great, but the indirect benefit to the State has also been very great. I have no hesitation in saying that a tremendous loss would have been sustained by foundries and engineering shops had the works at Wundowie not been established. Last year the production was 6,500 tons of charcoal iron while sales amounted to 6,623 tons. Sawm timber was produced to the extent of 3,130 loads and the sales totalled 2,905 loads. The production of acetic acid was 40,000 gallons and the sales amounted to 27,640 gallons. Of methanol the production was 48,000 gallons and the sales 1,685 gallons.

Hon. H. Hearn: What was the loss?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The loss was £90,505, but the loss to the State would have been probably five times as great save for the existence of these works.

Hon. H. Hearn: How do you estimate that?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: The loss would have occurred had all the foundries and engineering shops been held up for supplies. I have been informed on good authority that in the last 12 months there was no hope of receiving adequate supplies from Newcastle to keep our industries working. In saying that I am not quoting my own opinion; I am quoting the Minister in charge of the department who said that the contribution of the works to industry warranted the expense.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: Is any exported?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Yes, some to Victoria and South Australia.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: What about Chamberlains at Welshpool?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I can quite understand the hon. member's making that reference, because it is our duty to expand secondary industries in order that one of the great objects in view when the works at Wundowie were started might be achieved, namely, the development of a big iron and steel industry in the South-West. This is something that should appeal to country members. If we can carry on the industry at Wundowie, there is every possibility within a short period of an industry being started in the South-West that will produce, not 12,000 tons, but 100,000 tons a year. What greater object could we have in view than that? But for the Wundowie industry, we could not have carried on during the last 12 months without great loss to the engineering shops and foundries and other industries of the State.

The former Minister, Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, who was largely responsible for the progress of this industry should be a very proud man. I believe the day will come when the people will realise what a great investment this has been. We can afford to ignore the fact that, owing to the rapid rise of prices following the war, the original estimates have been falsified, but I agree with the Minister for Industrial Development that the Wundowie undertaking is well worth while for the assistance it has given to the industries of the State. I expect representatives of the South-West to support this proposal solidly.

The Minister for Agriculture: Only those members?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It is well worth while looking ahead and visualising the decentralisation of population that would follow the establishment of a large industry in the South-West. The one object of the Bill is to require any Government, whether Labour, Liberal or Country Party, in the event of offers being received to lease or buy the works, to seek the sanction of Parliament before anything is finalised. The member for Northam, as well as others of us, are concerned over what has happened at Chandler. I have no wish to discuss that question tonight. That would not be fair because it is the subject of discussion in another place, but we do not want a repetition of what has happened there.

Members of this Chamber complain of the executive powers that Ministers often exercise. Therefore, if any proposal emanates from an outside source for the lease or purchase of this industry, what better safeguard could we have than that the Government should be required to obtain the sanction of Parliament before taking any action? I hope members will give the Bill favourable consideration. The proposal is fair, just and necessary and is in the interests of the progress of the State and its industries. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. N. E. Baxter, debate adjourned.

BILL — NATIVES (CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North) [1923] in moving the second reading said: This is a simple measure to remove an anomaly under the Act whereby, when parents become citizens, their children are still deemed to be natives. The first amendment proposed is to Section 5 and the object is to reduce the time permitted to the Commissioner of Native Affairs in which to object to an application for citizenship rights. The position is that application is made and the Commissioner

is informed of the lodging of the application, and seeing that he has officers in every town and district of the North-West as well as a record of the natives the maximum time for objecting should be reduced from two months to one month.

In some instances, cases in the North have been adjourned for two months. This has not aided the department in gathering evidence any more than one month would have done, but the effect has been to hold up both employer and employee for a longer period than was necessary. This applies particularly to a half-caste working in the bush. A new subsection is proposed to be added stipulating that a magistrate may include on the certificate the names of any children not of full age, of whom the applicant is the responsible parent, and provision is made for a definition of the term "responsible parent".

The main amendment proposed relates to Section 6 and is designed to empower the magistrate to endorse on the certificate granted the names of the children belonging to the applicant. Under the existing provision, a magistrate may withdraw the citizenship rights of a native and also of the children whose names are endorsed on the certificate. This means in effect that a child suffers for the sins of the father. Amongst the children there might be some quite good citizens, but if the responsible parent loses the right of citizenship, the child may lose its right also. Later on I propose to move an amendment to permit a magistrate to exercise control over the cancellation of a certificate just as he is empowered to exercise discretion in the granting of a certificate.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What are the advantages of citizenship rights?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The intention is to uplift the natives.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: In what way?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: To make them useful citizens, just the same as migrants.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What rights does citizenship confer?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The same rights as the hon. member enjoys.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: They could go to a hotel and demand liquor.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Not unless they were 21 years of age. I think I understand the point the hon. member is trying to make. It is a fact that under the Act, citizenship confers the rights to obtain drink and exercise the vote, but only on attaining the age of 21. If the children are deemed to be natives from birth, they have not much opportunity to

become good citizens, because they have to wait until they have reached the age of 21 before they can make an application, and by that time some of them at any rate will have become convinced that they will be gaining only the right to drink and to vote. I agree with the hon. member that this is a weakness in the existing Act and it has been very noticeable. It is desired to remove that by giving the children of these citizens a fair go, a clean start.

The Minister for Agriculture: Suppose they are not desirable children of 20 years of age. What about that?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: They can lose their rights. If this Bill is carried, the magistrate will have the power to cancel the rights of a parent or child or anybody endorsed on the certificate. The object of the amendment is to give the magistrate that power.

The Minister for Agriculture: Would it not be better to do that in the first place and not to allow them to become citizens?

Hon. L. Craig: They can refuse the right to children under this Bill.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Yes, the right can be refused to children or anybody else or there can be a cancellation.

The Minister for Agriculture: I thought they automatically came in.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: No, they do not automatically get citizenship rights. They must go to the court and the magistrate has to approve of them. There are several points which members should bear in mind. In almost every instance the children of these people are near-white. In my experience in the North I have met only one full-blooded native with citizenship rights. He owns his house in Port Hedland and does not drink or mix with undesirables. I rang the Native Affairs Department today to see whether I could obtain statistics in this connection. The clerk in charge said that it would not be possible to secure them under a few days, but he assured me there were no more than five or six full-blooded natives with citizenship rights, and most of them are down in the South-West.

Another point we must recognise is that this Bill does not deal with natives but with the children of citizens—that is, with native children whose parents have already obtained citizenship rights. These people are citizens and have had to prove their fitness in court, which is not easy. They require to have two references from reputable citizens as to their good conduct and their ability to carry out the duties of citizens. These children are not aborigines in the true sense. They are children of aborigines and whites and are near-

white. Under the Act they are in a class of their own; a class distinction exists in that the parents are citizens but the children are natives. Members can imagine the psychological effect upon the youngsters. They are constantly reminded of the fact that they are deemed to be natives, because the inspectors of the Native Affairs Department are continually checking up on them. They have a hopeless outlook. They sit in schools with white children and play with them, but the day comes when they realise that there is a distinction. And they are very sensitive; they have feelings the same as other children.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do you not think there will always be a distinction whatever you do with them?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: No; I think that by making the family all one, the children will have an opportunity to forget, because they will not be deemed to be natives.

The Minister for Agriculture: You cannot make them white. They will always be dark.

Hon. L. Craig: The hon. member is trying to point out that the children have not the same rights as their parents.

The Minister for Agriculture: I know.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Chinamen are dark and so are Indians. There is no colour bar in England. When our representative goes to New Zealand to sit in the parliamentary congress he will be mixing with negroes, with Africans and with people of all colours. The object of this Bill is not to make all natives citizens. It is to remove the anomaly which exists, whereby, although parents are citizens, their offspring are classed as natives under the Act. Eventually the children of these people will become white because the white blood predominates. As caste and caste inter-marry, the white will eventually dominate, according to what scientists say.

The Minister for Agriculture: Then they will not come under this provision because they will cease to be natives.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: They are natives, as I have explained. There are 435 citizenship rights certificates in force today. Of the 435 people concerned, only five are full-blooded aborigines. Of the total, 201 are north of the 26th parallel and 234 are below it. Five certificates have been cancelled since 1944, and 100 applications have been rejected by the magistrates. The increase of the hybrid race is astounding. In 1901, half-castes in this State were fewer than 1,000. In 1934, the number totalled over 4,000; and in 1939 it was 6,039. Members will appreciate that

the rate of increase will be accelerated greatly. In a space of 15 years half-castes have increased by more than 50 per cent., so we can expect quite a jump in the future.

Something needs to be done. It is a question that will always confront us. We must attempt to take these people into the community in the same way as coloured migrants who come here are absorbed. Otherwise we shall have a first-class social problem. It is interesting to note that the principal Act is a direct negation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights propounded by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. On that occasion it was declared that all human beings are born free and equal without distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, politics, origin, property or birth.

That international declaration was upheld and subscribed to by Australia. Only Russia and her satellites refused to sign it. Californian courts have held that State laws which conflict with this Charter are invalid. The Bill does not go the full length of the United Nations Charter but it is a step in that direction. I believe that if the natives here are to be uplifted as the Charter envisages, they should be given citizenship rights at birth. It will be a long time before that can take place, because the evolution of the natives into our way of life will take many generations to achieve.

This Bill does not seek to do anything like that. All it proposes is to remove the unfortunate anomaly under which the children of native citizens find themselves—children who sit and play in the State schools with white children. North of the 26th parallel they predominate, being three to one in most schools; and something should be done for them. I have a lot more figures that I could quote; but the hour is getting late and I shall leave them for my reply. I hope that I have given a clear outline of the Bill, which is a very simple one. It is only a matter of giving children the same right as their parents and of giving the parents control over the children. Today the Commissioner of Native Affairs is the legal guardian of all these children until they are 21. There are some ridiculous restrictions surrounding them, to the extent that they are almost in bondage. Frustration is the first thing that confronts them and they are never free from rules and regulations. Just imagine some of those restrictions being placed on bright and intelligent children! Take the provisions of Section 44 of the Native Administration Act, for instance—

The Minister for Agriculture: You know why that was included?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Yes, and then there is the provision that no marriage of a native according to the laws of the State shall be celebrated unless and until

the prescribed notice in writing shall have been given to the Commissioner. There are many other ridiculous restrictions that affect these children.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What would happen to such children if they became orphans?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: The Bill covers only the children of parents who have received citizenship rights—

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: The hon. member misunderstands me. Who would look after these children if they were given citizenship rights and then their parents died?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: If both parents died I suppose, just as in the case of white children, the Child Welfare Department would have to take care of them. Far from being illiterate, these children are very apt in their studies. Schoolteachers in the North have told me that they compare well with many white children in this regard. They are quick at learning and are well-dressed and well-kept. Some of them are the children of returned soldiers—men who fought for this country during the recent war.

Imagine the feelings of such returned soldiers who, on their return, find that their children are deemed to be natives—and that is how the Act applies at present. The majority of the parents of these children have satisfied the magistrate before receiving their citizenship rights. They are well-educated and some of them own businesses. I know of one who is a foreman in the P.W.D. He has white men working under him and is respected by them. He is as good a citizen as there is in the town. I know of another man who was a sergeant in the 7th Division before leaving Australia. He went over sea and was killed in action. Such men have to mix with their fellow soldiers and most of them are very popular.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Of what caste was he?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: He was a half-caste, classed as a native. It is of the children of that type of parent that we are speaking. We are not dealing with bush natives because, as I have explained, it would take generations to make good citizens of them. In their ability and aptitude these children are the equal of white children, but they are deemed to be natives and the knowledge that they are classed as natives often leads to degeneration. That is the position that this Bill is designed to overcome. It will make life much easier for both the parents and the children. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. R. M. Forrest, debate adjourned.

MOTION—MINING.*As to Government Advance to Prospectors.*

Debate resumed from the 19th October on the following motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan—

That this House is of the opinion—

- (a) that the weekly amount of 30s. per week advanced to prospectors under the Government prospecting scheme is quite inadequate for present day requirements; and
- (b) that with a view to assisting bona fide prospectors and reviving interest in prospecting, the scheme generally should be revised and in particular the weekly advance of 30s. should be substantially increased.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT
(Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [9.51]: I was interested to note that this motion moved by Mr. Heenan has received the support of most speakers, but there seems to be some lack of knowledge on the part of members as to the extent of the assistance rendered to prospectors by the Mines Department. That assistance is on a reasonably generous scale and includes—

- (a) sustenance payments for food, 30s. per week;
- (b) free explosives;
- (c) free loan of tools, from windlass and rope to dolly pot and pestle;
- (d) rail passes to the railhead;
- (e) cartage subsidies granted to enable ore to be carted to treatment batteries;
- (f) mobile drilling units loaned at nominal rates;
- (g) when a mine is shown to warrant it, financial assistance to sink, drive, crosscut, etc., and to purchase plant is provided by way of loan; and
- (h) State Batteries are provided in all centres to treat prospectors' ore.

Treatment charges, despite heavy increases in the cost of operation, have remained the same for many years, and this in itself is a form of assistance. Mr. Heenan drew the attention of members to the fact that practically every goldmining town of any consequence in the State owes its existence to the efforts of prospectors. He also instanced the decline in fortune of many goldmining towns and mentioned that the prospectors were no longer in evidence in such areas, but I do not think the decline of Goldfields towns can be attributed to the shortage of prospectors.

It is true, unfortunately, that practically all of the easily located ore bodies have now been discovered and prospecting today is a more scientific matter, carried out by means of geological surveys, air reconnaissance, deep drilling, etc. Such methods

are necessary in order to locate deposits of which little or no surface evidence exists, but the individual prospector still has a niche to fill. He may locate and operate small shows that are not extensive enough to interest the goldmining companies, but by means of which the individual can contribute towards the State gold output and help to increase Australia's dollar credit.

Even if the weekly payment to prospectors were increased, it is doubtful whether many men would be attracted to that field of endeavour. There is a great shortage of labour on the Goldfields today and all except the older prospectors have taken advantage of the lucrative employment offering on the mines. The Government has nothing but admiration for the man who is prepared to face the risks and hardships associated with prospecting. It realises that 30s. per week today cannot be compared in value with that sum pre-war. Should the motion be agreed to, the Government will give it every consideration, without delay.

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

House adjourned at 9.55 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 1st November, 1950.

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