Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: Yes, in this State.

The Minister for Agriculture: No, you have not!

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: If this legislation had been introduced sooner, that would not have been necessary.

The CHAIRMAN: Will the hon. member please resume his seat. We are discussing an amendment and the hon. member should not make a second reading speech.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I bow to your ruling, Sir. I ask that the amendment be agreed to because I do not think that the 800 tons provided for will be sufficient, and the Minister should have power to increase the quantity if occasion arises.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I cannot accept the amendment and hope the hon. member will not persist with it. There is an honourable understanding between the Ministers for Agriculture in Australia that we will not do this sort of thing. Immediately it was permitted, New South Wales or any other State with big industrial concerns would flood the market with margarine, and there would be no control over it at all. It is doubtful whether we will need at any time in the next three or four years the 800 tons the Bill provides for.

Hon. A. R. Jones: There will be plenty of butter; we will not need it at all.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I wish I were as sure of that as the hon. member is.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I understand that the quota allowed in Queensland has rapidly increased since the meeting of the Agricultural Council to which the Minister referred. Does that mean that Queensland has had to bring down a Bill similar to this to obtain the increased amount?

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not want to delay the Committee but I would like to indicate that what I said about the future of this industry was not hot air, after all. Already we have one member who would throw the thing right open.

The CHAIRMAN: I am afraid we are not discussing the hon. member's speech, but an amendment.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I am giving my reason for opposing it.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: My suggestion does not throw it wide open as the hon. member suggested. However, I ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 5.58 p.m.

Legislative Council

Tuesday, 21st October, 1952.

CONTENTS.

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

QUESTIONS.

HOSPITALS.

As to Albany Regional Site.

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

(1) In what year did the Government resume land in Albany for the regional district hospital?

(2) What was the cost of the various resumptions?

(3) What are the costs to date covering survey work, checking of levels and preparation of plans and specifications for the building?

(4) Does the Government now propose abandoning this site overlooking King George Sound; if so, does it consider it an economical course to adopt in view of the expenditure to date on the present site?

(5) On what site does the Government now contemplate building this regional hospital?

(6) Will the change of proposed site delay the commencement of building?

(7) What are the reasons for the change of site and what are the advantages?

(8) What saving in expense is contemplated by changing the site at this late date?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Resumption was gazetted on the 6th July, 1945.

(2) £3,235.

(3) £441 9s.

(4), (5), (6), (7) and (8) In view of the growth of the population in the Albany area, further consideration is being given to the number of beds to be provided in the new regional hospital, and also to the suitability of the present site for a hospital of the size required. These investigations are still in progress and, consequently, a decision has not yet been made.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

As to Complaints of Variable Quality.

Hon. A. R. JONES asked the Minister for Agriculture:

In view of the many complaints from superphosphate users as to the variable quality of superphosphate, will he ask Cabinet—

(1) To look carefully at the Act with a view to making the water or moisture content the minimum and to compel manufacturers to make a uniform-quality super?

(2) To ensure that until a more uniform sample of superphosphate is manufactured that a careful check is kept and analyses taken of samples at frequent intervals, so as to prevent as far as possible the smashing of farmers' machinery with green or moist super?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, but this is the responsibility of the Minister for Agriculture and his departmental officers. Already provision exists in the Act and regulations to ensure this.

(2) A careful check is continually made and samples are already taken for analysis at frequent intervals.

BILL—MARGARINE ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—RAILWAY (MUNDARING-MUNDARING WEIR) DISCONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 14th October.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [4.38]: Since obtaining the adjournment of the debate I have perused the Bill and find I am compelled to support it, although, in principle, I do not agree with the pulling up of railway lines which are serving the public and which are still of some use. I have discovered that this small link has outlived its usefulness because it was built for purposes connected with the construction of the Mundaring Weir. Until the advent of road transport, this line served a good purpose, but at the present time, as the Minister for Railways has said, the rails and other materials can now be used to better purpose than they are now. Therefore, I have no alternative but to support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

HON. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM (South-East) [4.40] in moving the second reading said: The object of this small amending Bill is to remove anomalies that exist today in the Mining Act and militate against the treatment of ore by mines for prospectors and tributers. The principal Act was last amended in 1933 and, as members will understand, conditions in the mining industry have altered considerably in the interim. The result has been the slow killing of the possibility of mining operations in the form we know as tributing.

It is necessary for members to understand that tributing differs slightly from most other forms of mining inasmuch as a man takes out an actual lease of a certain location or ground, known as a block, in what may be an existing mine that, for one reason or another, may be worked only partially by a company. The amendment proposed is to Subsection (3) of Section 123 and the object is simply to remove those objections. For many years this form of mining has been in the doldrums and it has been usually engaged in when for some reason a company has decided to close down its operations. It might be that costs have become too great to operate a comparatively small deposit on a big scale.

What usually happens in a case like that is that experienced miners take up a block of land on tribute and carry on mining operations according to their own experience at their own expense, and pay a certain rental for the right to mine the ore. Members will appreciate that in the early days of goldmining the ore, as we know it on the Golden Mile, largely comprised oxidised ore that over millions of years had come in contact with the air and, as a result, had resolved itself into a very simplified form.

No complex minerals remained in that ore, in consequence of which the treatment was simple. The ore was merely crushed and reduced to fine powder. The mineral dust was washed away and the residue was treated by amalgamation. That basically was the method always used in dealing with that simplified form of oxidised ore. As the years went by and the mines on the Golden Mile were taken deeper down away from the surface oxidisation, a transformation took place in the ore bodies and they became what are known as sulphides or refractory ores. It must be understood that up to this time the large goldmining companies were able to obtain the gold easily and economically from the large bodies of oxidised ore and were able to do so with a good margin of profit. That continued until their opportunities in that respect were restricted with the treatment of the refractory sulphide ores.

The extraction of gold became harder and harder, and the recovery of the metal was not sufficient in quantity to warrant a continuance of operations. Then a further problem injected itself into the industry in the form of minerals about which little, if anything, was known. Those minerals were there in great profusion and at the time they were mistaken for a form of pyrites. It will be appreciated that pyrites in its many appearances varies from golden yellow to the deepest black, similar to galena or lead ore. At that time, this telluride ore, as we know it, was mistaken for pyrites.

Thousands of tons of that mullock, as it was described in those days, was thrown away as so much waste. It was crushed for use as road metal or it was availed of in the erection of buildings and was also used for fireplaces in prospectors' shacks. Indeed it was made use of for any purpose for which stone or rock was suitable. Not a great deal of interest was taken in the matter as it was not known exactly what the material was. However, one man experimented with it and he was a very eminent assayer and geologist, whose name escapes me at the moment.

Hon. G. Bennetts: You are referring to Mr. Holroyd.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes, that was his name. He experimented with the material, but his method of dealing with it did not represent an economic proposition for any mining company, so his method of treating the ore remained a secret from that standpoint. In those days, the mining industry went downhill completely and the large mines on the Golden Mile ceased operations.

There was one group that kept the heart of the goldmining industry beating, and that comprised tributers who took up blocks of land containing deposits of oxidised ore and probably even sulphide ore bodies that were comparatively rich in gold content that responded reasonably to the recovery of gold by the application of ordinary methods in a small way. There was still a great percentage of the gold being lost in the sands which were allowed to run away, as it was considered the gold was not recoverable.

As the years went on, mining experts and engineers, assayers and metallurgists continued with their respective researches and slowly evolved a method of treating this material. Though it was not altogether economical and the percentage of recovery was poor, they persevered. As a result of their work, we now have in Western Australia one of the most modern and up-to-date forms of gold recovery known in the world, despite the fact that the industry in this State is treating ore more complex than is dealt with in any other country. It is more complex in every way.

Two very important developments followed. One was the finding of a way to calcine or to roast the ore economically, thus burning out many of these unwanted minerals and leaving a calcined concentrate which was much more amenable to cyanidation and the recovery of gold. For many years it was thought that roasting had to take place by means of subsidiary combustion, through wood or coal fires, until another mining man in the industry found that once a fire had been started and a certain temperature had been reached, the pyrites content, the sulphur, was sufficient to carry on combustion, and it was not necessary to continue firing the furnaces with wood, coal or some other combustible material. The roasting reduced the concentrates to a form amenable to gold extraction. That was an advancement on the original fire assay of the scientist Holroyd who discovered the secret of telluride.

The second discovery was what is known as the flotation principle in goldmining whereby, with certain chemicals, tellurides in the form we know them reacted favourably to oil solution and the gold floated off in oil. The problem that has cropped up is this: The tributers who own blocks in the mines that have closed down or have been let to them are limited in their operations to what we know as lousing or selective mining. They are picking out the parts they can use and treat and leaving very valuable ore in the mines that should be worked.

The difficulty is that the State batteries, whose sole purpose is to treat prospectors' and tributers' ore, can treat only oxidised ore, free-milling gold material. No matter how rich may be the telluride ore submitted for treatment, the returns would be pretty well nil, and very rich gold-bearing ore would run away to waste. The Government is not in a position to install sulphide mills

in the country as they are wanted, because that is an expensive proposition. In any event, the amount of ore available would probably not warrant the maintenance of such costly equipment. They can only be economically used if they are run continuously. Once a furnace is started in the roasting section, it cannot be allowed to die out and then be lit again at the beginning of another week. Some of the vats, agitators and so forth, are filled with a very thick solution, and once the rotation of the arms is stopped, that solution sets like concrete and the whole thing, in such circumstances, would have to be dug out by hand. So the process must be continuous.

For many years there was at least one company on the Golden Mile that was prepared to treat tributers' and prospectors' ore for a given charge. Just prior to the war the company went downhill. Now that revival after the war has brought the goldmining industry back into its own a little, costs have mounted so greatly, without the return for gold mounting with them, that companies are not prepared to treat prospectors' ore, for a very significant reason. The Act limits the amount that a company may charge a prospector to 40s. per ton of ore treated. That is well below the actual cost, so obviously companies are very reluctant to undertake the work and, in fact, will not listen to such a proposition. There are other restrictive sections in the Act, which were necessary in the days when certain concerns did not enjoy the excellent reputation of the existing companies. Those sections were protective.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: What do the State batteries charge? Are they limited?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Yes, there is a fixed charge, and I could give the hon. member the figure if he is interested. This work is not acceptable to the State batteries. Nothing would be taken from them in any way because a battery manager would not accept such ore as I am dealing with.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: The State batteries have no provision for treating it.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: No. As a matter of fact, I have a report here of an assay of some samples, which I will show members later on. The report states—

> The ore samples you have recently submitted for gold assay and said to have come from the Paringa Gold Mine, Fimiston, W.A. in many instances have contained tellurides of gold and silver.
>
> In view of the presence of these tellurium minerals the ore would not be treated to the best advantage for gold content at a State battery as this particular ore is not amenable to treatment by amalgamation followed by direct cyanidation.

It might be said that if this Bill were allowed to go through, it could injure the State batteries because the companies might be prepared to treat large tonnages more cheaply. There is a natural safeguard against that. Where any ore containing ordinary oxidised material is introduced into a system of oil flotation treatment, frothing immediately takes place and wastage becomes apparent. The company will immediately stop every ounce of such ore going through the plant because it would be detrimental to the economical working of the plant. Companies would not receive ore that could probably be treated by a State battery.

The Bill proposes to raise the minimum charge to a prospector, which is at present 40s. to 60s. per ton. That would be a very handsome proposition because the company would be treating ore that it did not have to bother about mining. It would be getting the same margin of profit from ore, which it did not have to worry about handling, as it would receive if the ore had been its own. So it is a handsome proposition for the companies; and it is a welcome proposition for the tributers, because they will be able to have ore treated which is at present useless to them.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Would the tributers be satisfied with a charge of 60s. per ton for treatment?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The suggestion for a charge of 60s. came from the representatives of the tributers. In making my remarks, I have had in mind instances that have occurred on the Paringa mine at Kalgoorlie. Up to 12 months ago that mine was in full production, but because of rising costs and the shrinking of ore supplies, the mine closed down. There are several tributers on that mine holding blocks of land which contain thousands of tons of refractory ore. Owing to the limited facilities available at the State batteries, this closing down has had to take place. I intend to mention two of the parties who are vitally interested and show what it means to them.

There is the case of Messrs. Taylor, Softly and party, whose block is estimated to contain some 40,000 tons, most of which is payable sulphide ore. Even if it were all free-milling oxidised ore, capable of being treated by an ordinary crushing mill, and they had access to a five-head mill—most of the State batteries are in groups of five stamps—it would take such a mill eight years' continuous running to treat the tonnage that is available. Their agreement is liable to cessation at the end of six months if the management so desires, and members can therefore realise their concern at not being able to get the ore treated and their anxiety to see this measure passed.

The gold treatment mills on the Golden Mile are, without exception, oil flotation plants and, with the present bar removed from the Act, any of the companies would be in a position to accept for treatment on a profitable basis ore from tributers or prospectors. There are many deposits of sulphide ore out in the bush, but they are not large enough to be worth working by a big company, though they are handsome propositions for a party of two or three miners who know the game. The difficulty is that these ore bodies are too small to justify the erection of a mill on the site, but if the Bill is passed, the prospectors or tributers will be able to go to a company and say, "We have an estimated 20,000 tons of sulphide ore that we would like you to treat at 60s. per ton," and I am certain that most of the companies would be prepared to take it on.

Most of the gold-bearing ore on the Goldfields is a quartz dolerite greenstone. It is a heavily mineralised ore, with a high silica content—it is the silica which causes most of the miners' diseases mentioned in this House from time to time—and has roughly a flat 5 per cent. pyrites content. That is the ore that is being treated in the present oil flotation mills. For the information of members, I have had mounted samples of several of the types of ore that I have mentioned. Members can inspect them later and they will see the close resemblance between the pyrites and telluride ores, which often led to confusion in the early days. If members inspect these specimens, I think they will understand better the points I have endeavoured to bring out today.

I think I have made clear the reasons why the Bill has been brought down, and I have endeavoured to explain why prospectors and tributers desire this legislation to be passed. I understand that the Mines Department welcomes it and believes it will simplify what is at present a complex part of the Act. If the measure is acceptable to the mining companies—as I am sure it will be—it will greatly improve conditions on the Goldfields, and will be to the advantage of the industry as a whole. Most of the tributing parties are at present limited to half-a-dozen men, but if the Bill is passed and the mining companies agree to treat the ore, most of the tributing parties will be able immediately to put on 20 or 30 men, and that will mean a great deal to the industry. There has been some retrenchment on the Goldfields, and this plan would provide work for a large number of men. I am convinced that, if passed, the Bill will result in the opening up of mines that at present are suffering a severe relapse.

An interesting point is that the mine I have mentioned, the Paringa, and others, such as the Broken Hill Proprietary, were treating up to £20,000 worth of gold per month—a very valuable contribution to the industry—but are today no longer able to carry on. The ore is in the ground but it cannot be treated, and I hope that this measure will provide the avenue by which the ore from such small mines can be treated by the larger companies under an agreement eminently satisfactory to all concerned. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South-East) [5.7]: The Bill, if passed, will be of considerable value to the goldmining industry. The treatment plant mentioned by Mr. Cunningham is one of the most up to date on the Golden Mile and is capable of putting through large consignments of ore. Mr. Cunningham has already told the House how the ore is treated. Two of my own boys are on the roasters at the mine he mentioned, and I can assure the House it is a very modern plant. We have been trying for many years to have a sulphide ore treatment plant established on the Goldfields to deal with the prospectors' and tributers' ore from as far out as Marvel Loch and Southern Cross. Ore could even be brought down from some of the shows in the North for treatment at such a plant.

The prospectors would be agreeable to paying the extra cost of treatment if it meant that they could get the ore put through. I can remember when the method for the treatment of telluride was discovered by Mr. Holroyd. Before that time, telluride ore was put into the roads in Kalgoorlie, and it was used in part of the top end of Hannan-st. and many of the footpaths in the early days. I understand, from one of the old assayers at Kalgoorlie, that on one of the big mines the gold room and the concrete engine beds were built with telluride ore. That sort of thing went on until it was discovered that telluride was one of the most valuable assets of the Golden Mile. I support the Bill.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [5.10]: In the days when I was conversant with the mining industry, there was a long-felt need for a measure such as this, and I have no doubt that the need has increased greatly with the falling off of gold production since 1935. I would like Mr. Cunningham to explain the system by which the companies compute the value of the gold in any particular parcel of ore. Do they keep each parcel separate, or do they take an assay before each parcel goes through and compute the value from that? I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

HON. R. J. BOYLEN (South-East) [5.12]: The main purpose of the Bill is to allow the managements of mining companies to make provision for treating re-

fractory ores at a price that will be payable to them. As Mr. Cunningham has pointed out, there are many prospectors and tributers working country where there is only sulphide ore available. As the Government batteries make no provision for treating such ore, these men must be able to have it treated by the mining companies. Even if the Government batteries could treat sulphide ore, they would have to raise their charges. The maximum charge allowed under the Act as it stands at present is not payable and therefore the mining companies are refusing to treat parcels of stone for prospectors and tributers.

An increase in the maximum charge is essential, not only for prospectors and tributers but also for the proper development of some of the mines that are being worked on tribute. At present, the position is such that tributers have to by-pass a lot of ore and go further in order to reach stone that can be treated by the State batteries. Should the time come when many of the mines that are being worked by tributers are taken over again and worked for the companies—as happened in the case of the Perseverence years ago—a lot of developmental work will be necessary if the present position is allowed to continue. If the sulphide ore can be treated economically by the mining companies, much of the trouble will be avoided. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

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

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—PHARMACY AND POISONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 14th October.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [5.17]: I secured the adjournment of the debate in order that I might have a look at the Bill and in doing so I found that it is more interesting than I thought it would be. One of the prime reasons for the measure is to allow people who have come to live amongst us to practice pharmacy in the State, provided they have the qualifications and can speak English. I think the time has arrived when we should say yes to a provision of that nature. In doing so, I might quite well be charged with allowing one of the ancillary sciences to be practised by newcomers without permitting them to practise medicine. I feel the time has come—having regard to the number of years that have elapsed since the end of the war—to review that attitude as well.

Only recently I had the opportunity of writing to the Minister to the effect that the long term of seven years for regional registration should be radically altered. I believe that if this were done it would be far more just. There are a number of other provisions in the Bill of which one or two are quite necessary, but there are others the need for which I do not understand. A new clause is to be added to make it encumbent upon a pharmacist who is asked to take charge of a pharmacy for three days and upon the person so engaging him, to notify the council and the registrar of such action. All through, the principal Act lays down quite definitely that no pharmacy can be maintained which is not in the complete charge of a qualified pharmacist.

It seems strange to me that if a man wants three days off from his business, he should have to notify the council. There may be some reason for it, and if there is I hope the Minister will explain the position to the House. From a professional point of view, I feel it is hardly necessary. I would resent it myself if I had to notify the Medical Board when I was appointing a locum in my place for three days. We have never been called upon to do that sort of thing and the putting in of a qualified locum is something which is expected of us under the regulations. A pharmacist would surely do the same thing. There must be some reason why it is proposed to add this new section to the Act.

There is also another provision in the Bill which I am not sure is necessary and that is in paragraph (b) of Clause 4, which states—

> by adding after the word "regulations" being the last word of paragraph (c), the words "which certificate or diploma was issued to him to show that he has passed an examination conducted in the English language . . . .

Yet, with reference to the registration of pharmaceutical chemists, Section 18 (c) says—

> holds a certificate . . . or is a chemist recognised by the regulations.

So the regulations could have been quite easily altered to cover this point. I doubt very much if this does more than make it necessary for the examination to be held in English, and I am not sure that is of great use.

Comparing the Bill with the main Act, I feel there are one or two matters that could have been given much wider attention. I would like to know whether I

am wrong, but the registration of pharmaceutical chemists, according to the Bill, has to be conducted by the Pharmaceutical Society of Western Australia. That society consists of all the chemists, because it must take them in immediately on registration. There is no actual controlling hand over the method of election of a body which is not only going to lay down the course of training for pharmacists but is also going to set the code of behaviour for pharmacists.

I wonder whether the Pharmaceutical Society itself would not do well to have a look at this and see whether some change would not be better. The training of medical men is not laid down entirely by members of the profession but by the university and medical faculty upon which the public is represented and upon which there are also representatives of other professional bodies. Why I mention this at all is that I see a desire on the part of the pharmacists themselves to obtain some form of recognition by diploma or degree which will make known to the public as much ability as they possess. I have referred to this matter in the House before.

On some chemists' shops one sees the name of a chemist and one is prepared to believe that he is a registered chemist; he must be, otherwise he would not be practising. On the next pharmacy, one will find the letters M.P.S. which mean member of the Pharmaceutical Society and which, under the Act, he becomes automatically on his registration. Then again on the next pharmacy we find the abbreviated signs "Ph.Ch." which stand for pharmaceutical chemist. I think it would be preferable if the whole of the registration of pharmacists were to be in the hands of what might be termed a pharmaceutical college or board and that that body should be allowed to grant a diploma rather than a license to a pharmacist on registration.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: That is done now.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: It is not actually done in so many words. For example, there is no means by which a pharmacist can designate himself as such. Another interesting feature is that when one reads through the Act all the way one can find reference only to the Pharmaceutical Council, and the pharmaceutical register of Western Australia is still maintained by the council. But when it comes to the registration of pharmaceutical chemists, it will be found that the Bill provides that the examination must be, "in the opinion of the board", satisfactory. I can find no other reference to the board either in the Bill or the Act. I do not know whether this is merely a typographical error or whether a board does exist, which lays down a standard of examination for pharmacists.

Another feature of this provision is that the council can do practically all the Medical Board can do. It can deregister pharmacists for certain actions, and yet I can find no provision protecting the actions of the Pharmaceutical Council as a whole. I understand another measure is to be brought before the House very soon to protect another section of an ancillary service so that the members of that body cannot be charged as individuals but only as a body; nothing they may do is open to action. I see no protection for the Pharmaceutical Council in the Bill and that is why I think the council might well review the whole position to ascertain whether this cannot be put in a different way insofar as the action of the council is concerned.

This would help to raise the status of pharmacists considerably. The council has all sorts of work to do; in some cases it can deregister and in others it can recommend to the Governor that action be taken. It can also renew licenses which have been cancelled and do other things of a similar nnature which would be rather open to action were they in any way thought to infringe the Act. I have risen to speak to this Bill only because I have such a great respect for pharmacists. My father before me was a pharmacist and my grandfathers too, I think, were called alchemists. By placing this whole method of registration and control on a more statutory basis, the profession itself can take its rightful and just place.

On motion by Hon. R. J. Boylen, debate adjourned.

BILL—RENTS AND TENANCIES EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th October.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [5.30]: This Bill proposes to continue in their entirety the whole of the provisions of the existing Act until the 31st December, 1953. Although this House during the past four or five years has urged the Government to take progressive steps towards easing the control to which the property-owners have been subjected, no such attempt is made by this measure.

No attempt is made to ease the position of property owners and give them control of their own premises, or to decide whether they shall or shall not continue with an existing tenant, no matter how undesirable he might be, or the extent to which he may be knocking the propery about. Neither is there any attempt to ease still further the rent restriction in the parent Act or to permit property owners to bring their permitted rents up to a figure which, having regard to the general cost of building and of repairs and maintenance, is nearer to the economic rents for the premises.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Some of them get a fairly high rent.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I disagree with that. Of all the landlords, I should say that the State Housing Commission alone is the landlord that is obtaining a fair economic rent for its premises. It seems extraordinary that a Government authority should have the power to fix its own rents and control its own tenants while other property owners are expected to subsidise their tenants. This state of affairs has been going on for years and the proposal under this Bill is to perpetuate it.

In reply to the interjection made a few moments ago, I would go so far as to concede that apparently in some apartment houses exorbitant charges are being made for rooms and beds. If that is so, it shows that these charges are being made notwithstanding the existence of the Act and that, even in respect to that particular class of accommodation, the Act is not workable. On the other hand, I point out that apartment houses are in a class of their own and must be considered separately from the ordinary tenancy arrangements for houses and flats. If it is true that apartment houses are charging fees for rooms and beds that are unconscionable, let us have special legislation setting out precisely the maximum fees to be charged.

Hon. G. Bennetts: And you would support it?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I would. We have the Workers' Compensation Act in which Parliament has laid down the amount to be paid when an employee loses a limb or an eye and so forth. I suggest that it would be a comparatively simple matter to introduce a Bill providing that the maximum price to be charged for a bed shall be so much and for a room so much. In that event, there might be some anomalies, but it would prescribe a definite figure, and we would get away from the obnoxious system of having a rent inspector going into these houses. I would prefer to leave this matter to the administration of the Police Department. Let Parliament say what the maximum charge shall be, but do not let us confuse any overcharging by the keepers of apartment houses with the broad general principle of the ordinary relationship of landlord and tenant with respect to houses and flats.

Hon. G. Fraser: You know that the maximum would become the minimum.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: And the same for business premises?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Business premises come into the same category as houses and flats. It seems ridiculous to include in the same measure the price that a person shall pay for a bed or a room and the rent that a man shall pay for a shop.

Whatever may be said about the high charges made for beds and rooms, it is clear that the rents permitted to be charged by private owners for houses and flats are far and away below the rents which the State Housing Commission charges for its houses and which are not excessive. Those rents are only fair, but in many instances, they are twice a much and more than twice as much as the rent a private owner is permitted to charge for similar accommodation.

Hon. G. Bennetts: What would the Housing Commission charge for a three-roomed house?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I read recently that at Roebourne the rental for two substandard houses—I understand they are three-roomed houses— is £5 a week.

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson: What did they cost to build?

Hon. H. K. WATSON: In the vicinity of £7,000 for the two substandard houses. They are pre-fabricated homes. I am opposed to continuing the Act on the statute book. If necessary, special legislation could be introduced to deal with apartments and, as I have already indicated, I would be quite prepared to support such a measure. Section 33 of the principal Act provides that this legislation shall continue until the 31st December, 1952, and no longer. In Section 21—the last section of Part IV which deals with the recovery of possession of premises,—it is stipulated that the provisions of this part shall continue in operation until the 31st October, 1952, and no longer.

The position therefore is that, if we reject the Bill now before us, Part IV of the Act—the part dealing with the recovery of possession of premises; in other words giving the landlord control over his own property—will cease on Friday week, and the rest of the Act—the rent restriction part —will cease on the 31st December next. On the other hand, if the Bill be passed with Clause 3 retained but Clause 2 deleted, the position will be that rent restriction will continue until the 31st December of next year and control respecting recovery of possession will cease on Friday week.

I intend to vote against the second reading, but if it is carried, I shall vote against Clause 2 in Committee. The rejection of Clause 2 would ease the position to this extent: It would mean that the existing restriction on any increase in rents would continue until the 31st December of next year, but that a landlord would regain possession of his premises and be able to deal with any unsatisfactory tenant.

The present Government has very many achievements to its credit. During its term of office, it has done many things of which we can be proud, but on the question of easing or abolishing tenancy and rent control, it seems that the Government has displayed a deplorable at-

tack of cold feet. The Opposition in another place has shown that it is quite prepared to sell its soul for votes. When the legislation was last before us, this House inserted Section 21 so that, if, as has happened, a continuance Bill was introduced, we would at least have an opportunity of saying whether the whole of the provisions of the Act should be rejected, or whether they should be continued for another 12 months, or whether the rent restriction only should be continued for another 12 months while the restriction against landlords' obtaining control of their own property should cease on the 31st October.

That is the position in which we find ourselves today. We have at least a little more choice in arriving at a decision as to what should be done than otherwise we would have had. Instead of being put to the test of deciding whether the whole Act should continue without alteration for another 12 months, those who felt that the rent restriction should continue for another year could vote for the Bill and, in Committee, they could vote against Clause 2, thus enabling property owners to obtain control of their premises and the right of determining what particular tenant should occupy the property.

This is very necessary, because it is a common experience for owners to find that, when property has been let for a few years, they are confronted with heavy costs for repairs. I heard of a case the other day of a property that had been occupied for four years at a rental of 30s. a week and, during that time, the tenant had knocked the place about to such extent that the local authority has condemned it. The cost of the repairs that had to be effected, in order to make it habitable again, was £350. The owner had to pay that amount for the privilege of having a bad tenant at a nominal rent of 30s. a week.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: That is an isolated instance.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: It is not. It can be taken as a typical instance. What is an isolated instance is when a property owner has the money to pay to have his house repaired. The general position is that many property owners—widows and others who are dependent on the income from their properties—find themselves with a repair bill of £100 or £200, but have not the money to spend, with the result that the house becomes uninhabitable and is then one more which goes out of circulation. Therefore I intend to vote against the Bill because I believe it will perpetuate a gross injustice which has been inflicted for far too long on one section of the community.

I also oppose the Bill on other grounds, namely, that I believe rent restriction is one of the greatest single factors in creating and aggravating the housing shortage in Western Australia. For the reasons I have just mentioned, I am of the opinion that it reduces houses to such a state of disrepair as to make them uninhabitable. The Minister, when moving the second reading of the Bill, mentioned as an argument in support of the measure that provisions such these were in operation in the United Kingdom. It is true that in the United Kingdom there is, and has been since the first world war, an Act not dissimilar to ours.

As a matter of fact, I think it was the English Act which was copied when the rent and tenancy restrictions were introduced in this State. I would say that the position in England offers, not an example to be followed, but one from which we should learn before we get into the same position as England is in today, because the position there is reaching the stage of a first-class scandal. This became very clear to me during my recent visit there, and just to illustrate my point I would like to read an extract from an article which appeared in the "John Bull" editorial of the 30th August, 1952—within the last couple of months—as follows:—

> As the winter draws nearer, millions of the families who live in rented houses and flats are examining their draughty doors and windows, tumble-down roofs and unpainted walls—and are crossing their fingers. Their landlords refuse to act. With rents pegged at prewar levels while repair costs have risen 300 per cent, many cannot afford to do so.
>
> The result is that houses in Britain are falling into decay at the rate of 200,000 a year. Both the former Minister for Health, Mr. Aneurin Bevan, and the National Federation of Property Owners, agree on that figure. There is no agreement, however, on what must be done to prevent half the houses in the country from becoming slums.
>
> Landlords are agitating for a rise of 50 per cent. on all fixed rents. Meanwhile, some of them want to give their property away. Lord Silkin was offered a row of houses as a gift because the owner could not afford to keep them up for the 7s. 6d. a week rent each yielded. Lord Silkin turned the offer down. To put such houses into thorough repair after perhaps 20 years of neglect would take several years' rent—and landlords, however unpopular they may be as a class, still insist with reason that they have a right to live and need money to live on.
>
> It has been estimated that the average weekly amount spent on repairs for the ordinary small house let at between 6s. and 10s. a week was—in 1939—between 1s. 3d. and 2s. Today, 5s. is the minimum, and many

> landlords have to spend an average of £1 a week to keep their houses habitable. A seventy-year-old widow in Abergavenny owns six houses. She gets £16 from all of them each six months. "After repairs, I received a balance of 1s. 9d. in one quarter," she says.
>
> Five years after the first World War a limited rise in rents was permitted. But while the cost of food, clothes, and other necessities is so high today and wages are kept down to ward off galloping inflation, it would be hard on many tenants to allow a similar increase now.

Notice the emphasis on the fact that wages in England are being kept down. The wage position is entirely different there from what it is here, where it has trebled itself in the last 10 years.

Hon. G. Bennetts: It is only chasing foods costs.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The editorial continues—

> And neither the last nor the present Government has dared to risk the wrath of the millions of rentpayers by proposing such a rise. Yet houses must not be allowed to crumble away—and make nonsense of our building programme by creating as many homeless as newly housed.

That is what is taking place. There are as many houses falling into disrepair and disuse as there are new houses being erected. The editorial concludes—

> Britain cannot afford to lose 500 houses a day because the politicians are afraid to lose votes.

That is a summing up of the position in the United Kingdom.

Just before I left London there was an agitation for something to be done somewhat after the style of what this House did 12 months ago, but the limit to which the Government was stirred to action was this, that the Minister for Works, Mr. Eccles, just two or three days before I left, came out in the daily Press with a public appeal to every tenant to search his conscience and to go along to his landlord and pay him a fair and decent rent. Being in the United Kingdom, although I felt almost inclined to participate in the discussion, I considered it would be improper for me to do so, but this afternoon I would say to our Government—"Search your conscience and see if you can reasonably and conscientiously ask this House to continue the measure for another 12 months".

HON. G. FRASER (West) [5.55]: I did not intend to speak on the measure as it is a continuing Bill; and we have had these arguments down the years, but I could not let the speech of Mr. Watson pass without drawing attention to the fact that, to a large extent, he has misled the Chamber. In the first place, he mentioned that one reason why no houses were being built today was because of this Act. Does the hon. member know that building houses for rent ceased in 1929—long before there was any rent restriction legislation? The hon. member does not need me to tell him that. He could count on the fingers of his own hands the number of houses that have been built in the metropolitan area for purely rental purposes since 1930.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: There are a lot just below me.

Hon. G. FRASER: Houses have been built for selling, but not for rental.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: No, for rental.

Hon. G. FRASER: Many of the houses being rented today were originally built for the use of the owners, but, through altered circumstances, they are now rented places.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Where do your statistics come from to support what you say?

Hon. G. FRASER: Never mind about statistics; go to the places where this occurs. I guarantee that in Fremantle there have not been five houses built for rental purposes since 1930. I tell the Chamber this because the hon. member said the Act had slowed down the building rate. That is misleading the House.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Do you suggest it has accelerated the building rate?

Hon. G. FRASER: I am suggesting there has been no building for rental purposes in the last 20 odd years. If the hon. member makes investigations, he will find that is correct.

Hon. H. C. Strickland: Many flats are going up now.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, and what are the rents that are being charged for them?

Hon. L. Craig: The same as the Housing Commission charges.

Hon. G. FRASER: The hon. member suggested that the Housing Commission was getting twice as much for houses as was the private owner. That is not the true position, either, because the whole of the Housing Commission charges are based on the cost of erection. The rentals for Housing Commission homes vary between 25s. for the earlier homes and £3 a week for those that have been erected in the last year or so. That is an entirely different picture. He mentioned the question of flats. The only flats I know of that the Housing Commission draws a rental from are those at Naval Base, and the ones in the various camps. The rent of a flat in Melville Camp is about 18s. 6d. a week. Is that double the amount of rent

paid to the private individual? The rentals of the Naval Base Flats are about 22s. 6d. a week. Statements, apparently, can be made that do not bear investigation.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Well, don't you make any more.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am making statements that can be checked. The Housing Commission started building Commonwealth-State rental homes in 1945-46. The cost of building has gradually increased since. How many privately-owned homes have been built during the last three or four years for rental purposes that are bringing in only half the rental of a present-day Housing Commission house? The hon. member can check on what I say either by a question in the House, or by investigation at the office of the Housing Commission. He will then find out what rentals these people are paying, and he will learn that what I am telling him is correct.

The rental for the houses that were originally built by the Housing Commission at a cost of £900 or £1,000 would be 25s. to 30s. a week, and, as the building costs have increased during the years, the rents are now up around the £3 mark. That is a different statement from the one made by the hon. member. The rents are assessed on the cost of the dwelling. It is quite unfair for Mr. Watson to make a statement to the effect that the Housing Commission is getting twice the rent that the private individual receives. How many private owners today are drawing rent from premises that have been built in the last few years? One would be safe in saying that at least 90 per cent. of the places from which rent is drawn by private individuals today are houses that were built 30 or 40 years ago.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: That does not matter. It depends on their present-day value.

Hon. G. FRASER: The owners were getting rentals that were quite satisfactory to them right up until recent years —until this legislation came into operation.

Hon. L. Craig: It is the maintenance that is the trouble.

Hon. G. FRASER: They were free, up to that time, to charge what rent they liked or what they could get; and generally the rent was reasonable.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Some of them would not get any at all now if there were more houses.

Hon. G. FRASER: Since then, maintenance of those places has been the only cost to the individual owners. As an offset against that and rising costs, we have in the past permitted, by the introduction of the parent Act, an increase of 32½ per cent. That increase has been allowed on premises from which rent has been drawn for a number of years. There is no comparison between those rents and the rents charged by the State Housing Commission for homes it has built in recent years, and I know of no hardship being suffered by any individual who owns a house and rents it. I stand to be corrected on this point, but I think that houses built after this Act came into force do not come within its scope.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Of course they do.

Hon. G. FRASER: From a rental point of view?

Hon. H. K. Watson: Yes.

Hon. G. FRASER: Then who assesses the rent?

Hon. H. K. Watson: The fair rents court.

Hon. G. FRASER: Has not the hon. member any faith in the fair rents court? That court would determine a fair rent for premises which have been erected since the Act came into operation.

Hon. H. K. Watson: The court's style is rather cramped.

Hon. G. FRASER: If a person went to the fair rents court in this State and produced figures to show the cost of erecting his dwelling, I am quite sure he would get a fair go in the assessment of the rent. It is only arbitration all over again.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Do you know, talking of rents, that the rents in High-st., Fremantle, as assessed by the court, are very much lower than rents in St. George's Terrace?

Hon. G. FRASER: That is what one would expect.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I mean they are very much higher.

Hon. G. FRASER: And they are assessed by the court?

Hon. H. K. Watson: Yes.

Hon. G. FRASER: Then they are getting a fair deal, are they not?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Who? Those in St. George's Terrace?

Hon. G. FRASER: I can see no harm in continuing this legislation; in fact, I think it would be a catastrophe if it were to go overboard.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Why?

Hon. G. FRASER: I do not say that every tenant is a Good Samaritan and that every landlord is a big, bad wolf; there are good and bad on both sides. I know that a number of tenants have taken advantage of the legislation but I also know that a number of landlords are not the little tin gods that the hon. member would have us believe. A large number of people, particularly those who own flats, are waiting for the day when this legislation goes overboard in order to make whoopee so far as the letting of their flats at increased rentals is concerned. We have to

do something to protect those who will suffer if this legislation is not passed, and I will do anything the hon. member wishes if it will give the landlord and the tenant a fair go.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is all I am trying to do.

Hon. G. FRASER: That will not happen if we defeat this Bill. I will do whatever I can to give the genuine landlord the right to get into his own home, because I know of a number of tenants who are playing on that. We do not want to help that type of person; but we should assist the genuine type, whether it be a landlord or tenant. While some injury may be done to some landlords if the legislation is passed, a greater injury will be done to tenants if it goes overboard. So it is necessary that we continue this legislation for another 12 months. I support the measure.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [6.5]: I do not intend to speak for long in this debate but what I do have to say will be in opposition to the Bill, despite the argument put up by Mr. Fraser. Most people seem to have the idea that if the measure goes overboard, landlords will immediately increase rents to such an extent that tenants will not be able to pay the increases. I ask members, in these days of rising prices, how many house-owners could put their tenants out on the street and in their places get tenants who are better off financially? There would not be very many, and no landlord would evict a tenant when he had the prospects of getting a worse one in his place. It does not make sense. The number of tenants waiting for houses and who can pay more rent than is now being charged, is limited.

Hon. H. K. Watson: They are not entitled to pay more under the Act.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: If the Bill is defeated, and it looks as though it might be, few people will be able to pay any increases in rent. Within six months the the whole position will right itself. Economics come into the picture, too, because no man can afford to pay as rent more than he is earning.

Hon. G. Bennetts: If you put the tenant out, where will he be able to go?

Hon. G. Fraser: You try to get a house and see how hard it is.

Hon. E. M. Davies: There are thousands of migrants coming into the country.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There are not many people who can afford to pay more rent than is being charged now. That in itself will balance the whole position and I have no doubt that within six months it will right itself. The Bill will not help to increase the number of houses being built.

Hon. H. L. Roche: What effect would it have on business premises?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The same thing would apply there. The days when a landlord could ask for fantastic rents has gone. The money is not available to pay fantastic charges.

Hon. G. Fraser: What about a man who has to pay £8 a week rent when he earns only £12 a week? If that is not fantastic, then I do not know what is.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There may be one or two like that, but very few are paying those fantastic rentals.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They have to do so. They have nowhere else to go.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: No landlord would put a good tenant out on the street because he would not be able to get anybody to take his place. That is why I intend to vote against the Bill.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South) [6.8]: I feel that the Government, in introducing the Bill in its present form, has not been fair to the political principles it is supposed to espouse; it has not been fair to its supporters who, in the main, believe in encouraging the individual to acquire something for himself and it has not been fair to the owners and investors in this community who have followed the principle of trying to provide for themselves.

At the same time, while I do not like the legislation, I will vote for the second reading because I think we are in the unfortunate position that some control on rents must still be exercised. I regret that the Bill has been introduced in its present form because it does not permit of any alteration to the rents that can be charged and I think we have reached the stage when some further percentage increase could be granted. As has already been pointed out, such an increase could be controlled by the court or we could grant a flat rate increase, which, to my mind, would be the fairest way to do it.

However, unfortunately, all we can do is pass that portion of the Bill which we think should be passed without being able to effect any amendment in the direction I have indicated. Actually, I think the Government would have only itself to blame if the Bill were defeated in this House, in which event it would be in the same position as it was last year. However, it is somewhat late in the session for that course and maybe that is why the legislation has been brought down at this stage. I am afraid that the position is such that if we remove all control on rents it is likely to get out of hand, particularly with regard to business premises in such places as the city areas of Perth and Fremantle.

Few business premises and little office accommodation have been built since befor the war and if this legislation were thrown overboard, we would see abuses

in many directions. That position, to some extent, also obtains in regard to housing. All the terrible things we were told would happen, when this House dealt with the legislation on a previous occasion, have not occurred but if the control on rents is removed altogether, an unfortunate position might arise. I am all in favour of giving an owner the control of his own premises but at the same time I think we should have some control over rents. Unfortunately we are not able, under the Bill, to grant an owner any increase in rents.

I want to make my position clear because I have never been enthusiastic about the continuation of wartime controls, but in this regard there should be some control over rents. However, I think, if possible, we should vote against Clause 2, which still takes from the owner the right to say who shall be his tenant. I do not fear any abuse in that direction because an owner will not get rid of a satisfactory tenant.

Hon. L. Craig: They really want to get rid of them to sell their places with vacant possession.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Why should not an owner be able to do that? I do not think there would be any rack-renting going on in that regard, because if there is still control over rents, an owner will not get rid of a satisfactory tenant in order to replace him with someone who may not be as good. I repeat that I do not think the Government has been fair to itself or its supporters in presenting the Bill in its present form. However, I will vote for the second reading in the hope that we will be able to delete Clause 2.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

HON. F. R. H. LAVERY (West) [7.30]: I rise to support the second reading of the Bill for many and varied reasons. I have not been a member of this House for very long but for a considerable number of years I have been a resident in the province which I represent. In that province the Housing Commission faces the greatest difficulties that exist in any part of the State. One of the reasons is that since the war the district has become a highly industrialised centre, and quite a number of country people have transferred to Fremantle. In addition, as Mr. Davies said a few nights ago, a great many of the migrants who have entered the State have settled in that district.

I want to emphasise the fact that I am not worried so much about the individual home-owner—I do not mean the big landlord who owns large blocks of flats or 16 or 20 houses—because he is protected inasmuch as all he has to do is to apply to the court for repossession after making a declaration that he requires the property for his own use, or for the use of a member of his family, and the magistrate has no option but to grant an order for eviction forthwith.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Provided he gives a certain period of notice.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: That is not correct. When an owner assures the magistrate that he requires a house for his own use—

Hon. L. Craig: He has to own the place for some time.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: That is correct. However, when a court order is granted, I am sure that the declarations made in many cases do not always represent the truth. That is proved by the example of one house, which, to my knowledge, has been vacant for almost 12 months after an eviction was granted.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Would they not be committing perjury if they gave false evidence before the court?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: Those concerned have not let or leased it, but have gained repossession of the house for their own use. The other point I wish to make is that if the Bill is not passed, I shall be greatly concerned about where the evictees are to live. It is not a question of the actual rental, but the fact that the Housing Commission cannot supply any more homes. The Fremantle members of Parliament have always received the greatest courtesy from the officers of the Housing Commission, and we try to reciprocate, but those officers have informed us that the position is worse today than it was three or four years ago.

About a month ago I called at the Housing Commission to inquire about two-unit and three-unit families, and was told that it was absolutely impossible to provide homes for them. Following that visit, I asked two questions in this House and the answers I received did not seem to be in accord with the facts. There are between 6,000 and 7,000 applications at the Housing Commission at present from two-unit and three-unit families, which cannot even be considered. Two or three months ago the Minister issued instructions to the effect that it was impossible to provide homes for these families. In September, I asked the following questions.

> (1) (a) How many three-unit, and (b) how many two-unit families in the metropolitan area had eviction orders made against them by the court during August?
>
> (2) How many of such families applied to the State Housing Commission for accommodation?
>
> (3) How many three-unit and two-unit families were given accommodation by the State Housing Commission during August?

The answers to those questions were as follows:—

(1) Not known. Information only in respect of those families that apply to the State Housing Commission.

(2) Of those against whom orders were made, nine three-unit and seven two-unit families made application to the State Housing Commission.

(3) Three-unit, 20; two-unit, 15.

That was the information given to me in this House, yet only a week before the parliamentary liaison officer at the Housing Commission told me it was impossible to grant any accommodation to two-unit and three-unit families! If this continuance Bill is not passed, there will be absolute chaos in regard to housing south of the river.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: We have heard that for the last two or three years.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: I am not interested in what anybody has heard; all I am interested in are facts. For three or four years I have been associated with the housing problem in Fremantle, together with other members of Parliament, and I have a fairly clear picture of the position. I do not wish to deal in suppositions, but to speak only of facts; and the facts are that, knowing the Bill was to be introduced in this House, I spent considerable time last week calling on all the known apartment-houses and land agents in Fremantle and surrounding areas, and I was not able to find even a vacant room.

It may interest members when I state that I know of one elderly couple who had come from the North-West and had paid £9 a week for hotel bills. They were in such dire straits that Hon. J. B. Sleeman and I paid their fares to Perth so that they might attend the Child Welfare Department, the officers of which would attempt to find accommodation for them in the metropolitan area for a few days. Accommodation is definitely not available, and if people are evicted from their homes, I dread to think what will happen. For instance, an Italian family who had bought a property comprising two semi-detached houses in South Fremantle, asked one of the tenants, a man with a 17½-year old son, to shift from one side of the property to the other. They then repaired the house they were living in and the roof of the other, and finally asked this man to move out altogether. He was evicted forthwith.

Hon. E. M. Davies: He was a tenant subsequent to the 31st December, 1950, and was not protected.

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: That is so, and it was impossible to do anything for him. However, Hon. J. B. Sleeman and I made further approaches, and the Minister for Housing promised to do something for him. Despite what Mr. Baxter has said, the Housing Commission, which was allocating to the man's sister-in-law a war service home that would not be completed for another three weeks, put extra men on to the job to expedite its construction and suggested that she take her brother-in-law and his son in with her.

Hon. L. C. Diver: Did not the sister-in-law volunteer to do that?

Hon. F. R. H. LAVERY: No, she did not; the Housing Commission requested her to do so. Imagine that number of people occupying a two-bedroomed house, and the difficulties under which they would be living. Like the Government, I do not believe in restrictions any more than is necessary, and I know it is part of the Government's policy not to impose restrictions. I know also that the Government is worried about the chaos that will follow if this Act is not continued for a further period. Conditions in this State have changed so rapidly in the last two or three years that if the Bill is not passed, I, like the Government, will be greatly concerned about the chaos that will result. I do not know whether it is correct, but I am led to believe that a continuance Bill cannot be amended and I therefore support this measure, knowing as I do that there is not one vacant building in the West Province to provide accommodation for the people who may be evicted from their homes.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [7.44]: I oppose the Bill and intend to vote against the second reading. We have heard a great deal about the chaos that will result if the Bill is not passed. I have heard that cry ever since I have been a member of this House. Even last year when there was a big upset over this legislation, there were claims that chaos would follow if we changed its provisions, but we have yet to see it. I am satisfied that there will be no such chaotic conditions.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: The Government will not take that risk.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The Government will not face up to the issue, and yet, on the other hand, it is prepared to let things slide. Until quite recently the tariffs operating in hotels and boarding-houses were subject to control. Members will possibly remember that control was lifted in respect of hotels but not as regards boarding-houses.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: And hotel tariffs have increased.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If the hon. member were to inquire, he would find that the increases in hotel tariffs have not gone up to the extent he would suggest.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: They have been substantial.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Far from it. Members do not realise that although there have been slight rises in hotel tariffs since control was lifted, no such increases were permitted during the period when there were five rises in the basic wage!

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Yes, there were.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: There were no increases during that time.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: Members are wrong in their suggestion that the increases have been exorbitant.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: That is not so.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: References were made by some members to what they described as restrictions on rooming-houses. The trouble in that respect was that there has been no proper policing of the situation. Those premises could have been controlled, just as were ordinary boarding-houses and hotels. I cannot understand those who support this legislation saying that rooming-houses were under control. They should remember the position regarding the private home-owner who is not allowed to secure control of his property. That indicates that they are not genuine in their attitude.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: I am genuine in my attitude.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If they are genuine in their desires, why not go the whole way towards socialisation?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Is it socialistic that we should desire to house the people?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: References have been made to certain increases allowed to private home-owners, but little mention has been made of the increased rentals charged by the State Housing Commission for its properties. Those rentals have increased by 20 to 25 per cent., and that fact is known to members who support this legislation.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: That is wrong.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: It was said in explanation of that fact that the State Housing Commission wanted more rent to cover the capital cost of their properties.

Hon. G. Fraser: The trouble is that the Government allowed the cost of building to get out of hand.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That is certainly wrong. The increased cost of the houses cannot be put up as the explanation. Mr. Fraser in his remarks referred to the cost of house-building and maintained that the State Housing Commission was entitled to the rental charged in view of the present building cost.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: So is every other home-owner.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I think the rental should be based on the capital cost.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is quite different.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: That is not different at all. If a man's property is assessed at a decent value, he is entitled to a fair return on his investment, just the same as the State Housing Commission is entitled to a fair rental.

Hon. G. Fraser: You believe in the unearned increment.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: No, I do not, but I believe, in view of the inflation that has been apparent ever since the war years, a man is entitled to an income from his property equivalent to that which he received before inflation made itself felt.

Hon. G. Fraser: He gets 32½ per cent. more.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: If the hon. member can point out one case to me where the home-owner is receiving a 33⅓ per cent. increase on the rental paid, I shall be glad to hear of it.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: It was said that there had been a 32½ per cent. increase.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: In my opinion, the rental dealt with in this legislation should be based on the capital value. I point out to West Province members, who have started a hue and cry about the rents charged on what they describe as substandard and condemned homes, that if they agreed with me that the rentals should be based on capital values, the rentals charged for such premises would be much more fair. In adopting such an attitude, those members are showing that they are far from genuine and they are simply pandering to the public for votes.

Hon. G. Fraser: What are you doing?

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: I think this legislation should go by the board, and I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. H. C. STRICKLAND (North) [7.53]: I am certainly not pandering for votes when dealing with this legislation.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: But you have no houses built up your way.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: In the North we have been waiting for a long time for houses to be built. I cannot understand country members having a grudge against this legislation. Mr. Baxter knows that farms are exempt from the operation of the Act which also exempts hotel licences, dairy farms, poultry farmers, apiarists and others specified in the measure. What have country members to complain about? Apparently they are not interested in the workers in their constituencies, for they are to be allowed to pay exorbitant rents.

Hon. A. R. Jones: They do not pay exorbitant rents. They do not pay any rent at all if they work on farms. You do not know what you are talking about!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I differ from Mr. Watson who stated that the rents charged by the State Housing Commission were what he described as "fair rents". I cannot for the life of me make out how he can support such a contention. That body is also exempt from the Act. I would cite the position in the North-West. A house built in Roebourne, which is approximately 1,500 miles from the city, is let at a rental of £5 a week, whereas a similar type of house erected at Willagee Park or elsewhere in the suburban area is worth only from £2 to £3 2s. a week.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Would the same argument apply to the basic wage?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It appears to me that the individual who lives far away from the metropolitan area has to suffer the worst of conditions. The State Housing Commission deals with the rental position in a rather novel way. Government officials secure rentals on a satisfactory basis whereas an ordinary casual labourer employed by a Government department gets no consideration at all. There is an instance applying to two houses at Port Hedland. They are the only two Commonwealth-State rental homes that are occupied. In one a departmental officer lives and the other is occupied by an ordinary worker employed by one of the local firms. The houses are of the same size, yet one man pays a rental of £3 14s. a week—it may be a shilling one way or the other—while the other pays only 30s. odd a week. The way the Government gets round it is for the department to rent the house for its official. The department pays the State Housing Commission the full rental in accordance with the terms of the agreement between the Commonwealth and the State, and then sublets the house to the officer, who is charged what is described as the fair rent. The other poor chap who works for a firm in the town, has to pay the full rent.

Hon. L. A. Logan: And yet you want to continue this legislation!

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: It is a pity the State Housing Commission cannot be brought within the scope of the Act.

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson: What labour costs were involved in the construction of those homes?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: We have been told that the total cost of the two homes at Roebourne was £7,000. They are pre-fabricated dwellings. That cost of £3,500 per home was incurred not so much in respect of the houses themselves. It was very bad business on the part of the State Housing Commission to accept such a price. The two homes in Roebourne which are rented at £5 a week provide a striking instance of what can happen in the North. The contractor did not complete the erection of the dwelling-houses. An inspector of the State Housing Commission would not pass them and finally a gang of Public Works Department employees had to be sent up to dismantle and replace the flooring and carry out the joinery work.

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson: It must have been most unsatisfactory work.

Hon. L. Craig: I understand that has had to be done elsewhere as well.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: But why pay contractors for such a job? Would any private individual enter into a contract and, if the job were not done properly, pay for the work carried out? Certainly he would not! The trouble is that the cost of such extra work always goes on to the rentals charged for the homes. Apart from the premises erected at Wittenoom Gorge, we have had fewer than 45 houses built in the North by the State Housing Commission. I venture to assert that one officer alone has made at least 50 air trips north to inspect those houses. He has made those trips in connection with progress payments.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Did you say fifty times?

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I said he had made at least fifty trips by plane to the North.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: And he is still doing it.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Yes, to make progress reports. Each trip must cost at least £50 and indeed the Commission would be lucky if the cost is not greater. It is all very well for members to say that this legislation should not be continued. If it were removed from the statute book, Western Australia would probably be the only place where some such protection was not available for the people. This very question is one of the prominent issues in the current presidential election in the United States of America. We know that all other States have some such legislation, and it is necessary. If the time were ripe and there were sufficient houses to meet the demand, certainly we should discard the legislation; but until that stage is reached, I am not prepared to do so. Mr. Baxter was rather astray when he spoke of rooming-houses not being under control. They are under control.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: I did not say they were not under control.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: I understood the hon. member to mean that.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: I said that they were under control that could not be policed, or that they were not policed.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: Any tenant is entitled under the Act to apply—

Hon. L. Craig: They get notice to quit. That is the unfortunate thing.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: That may be so. That is a point we argued previously, but nobody listened very hard to us.

Hon. L. Craig: They are frightened to apply.

Hon. H. C. STRICKLAND: However, I am sure that the Act should be continued for another 12 months, and I support the Bill.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [8.1]: I have given a lot of consideration to the Bill and I do not really know yet what to do. I know what I would like to do. I would like to do the same as most members of this House—wipe out the lot. But knowing the abuses that are taking place at the moment, I think that would be wrong.

Hon. L. A. Logan: The Bill will not stop them, will it?

Hon. L. CRAIG: No. I know several Dutch people who are paying £5 for a room and the use of a kitchen and others who are paying £4. They are chiefly migrants. That is a dreadful state of affairs which, if we did not continue this measure, would be legalised. Where at the moment an odd tenement owner is abusing the position, it would be made legal, and everybody would think he was justified in charging an exorbitant rent. Unfortunately, that is a fact. Nine out of ten people want to keep the law. It is only the tenth who will abuse it.

It is all very well to say that tenants are protected by law. That is so. But my wife was talking to quite a number the other day at a Save the Children Fund meeting. She said to them, "Why do you not appeal to the court?" They replied, "We are frightened because we would get notice to quit." That is what would happen; it is unfortunately true. Do what we like about it, it is true, and if we do not continue this legislation, that practice will become law. It would be a recognised thing to get as much as one could out of a tenant. I do not think we want any abuses of that sort.

Hon. L. A. Logan: What happened before 1939?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Because of that, I must agree that the measure should be continued. With regard to rentals, what Mr. Fraser said was right. There are few landlords today who are not getting a fair return not on the value, but on the capital invested, because nobody has bought a house to rent for a good many years—I would not like to say how many, but a great number of years. Nobody wants to buy a house to let today. So the people who have owned these houses all these years, although they are not getting the true rental value, are not getting a bad return on their investment.

Rents, I believe, could be raised another 12½ per cent., to bring them to 50 per cent. above the basic 1942 rent in order to enable landlords to cope with the exorbitant and fantastic costs of maintenance. I believe it would require that extra money to enable owners to maintain their properties. But nobody who has bought a house in recent years has done so except to use it for himself or for the use of his family. If the Act were not continued, it would enable the owners of houses to sell and give vacant possession for the sake of receiving more money. They would give notice to tenants and put the houses up for auction with vacant possession.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Would many be sold nowadays?

Hon. L. CRAIG: I suppose those tenants who could do so would buy the homes themselves, but generally the overall picture would not be altered. Smith would go out and Brown would go in, because Brown would buy the place for his own use. Nobody would buy a place for letting. Nobody would be so foolish as to do that on today's prices. So the buyers of houses would be people who wanted them for themselves. I am not sure that it is a very bad thing to allow people who can afford to do so, or who can raise the wind, to buy for themselves. But unfortunately, we cannot do anything like that with this Bill. We have to extend the Act or allow it to lapse. That is all we can do.

Looking at the picture as a whole, which is the greatest evil, or which does the greatest good? I cannot believe that the continuation of this Act would do as much harm or harm as many people as would be the case if the Bill were rejected. That is the only basis on which I can come to a decision, for there are anomalies, injustices and nasty tricks being played on both sides. But I believe that, all things considered, it is better to allow the Act to continue and see what will happen in the next 12 months. In those circumstances, I support the second reading.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [8.8]: I think the Bill is too important for a silent vote to be recorded. We are supposed to be living in a free country; yet we find here a Bill that seeks continuance of an Act that, in the first place, will deny the right to an owner to say who shall be his tenant, and, in the second place, will deny him a fair and equitable return on his investment when the cost of repairs and maintenance is taken into consideration. It seems to me that of the various types of landlord one in particular has been singled out, and that is the person who owned a property before the Act came into force

some ten years or so ago. He is not allowed to increase his rent over and above the two previous increases.

Hon. L. Craig: Rents are higher here than in the other States.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I admit that, but costs of maintenance and repairs have increased. Mr. Watson read out a report concerning what is happening in England. I do not say that the same thing will happen here; but why does not the Government allow a reasonable increase for these people? It is not afraid to increase its maintenance rates. Take irrigation and drainage! Three years ago the charge for irrigation was 7s. 6d. per acre; now it is 11s. 3d., and we are told that that represents purely and simply increased maintenance rates.

Why cannot the Government treat the poor unfortunate landlord the same way and allow him something reasonable on which to keep his house in suitable repair? I do not think the Government has given these folk a fair go in any way whatsoever. I believe it was Mr. Fraser who mentioned that 98 per cent. of the houses were old houses—that is, those in existence prior to the Act. Why should those people be singled out? Nobody has told us yet. But unfortunately they are being penalised for their thrift. Is it a crime to save and invest in real estate?

Hon. A. R. Jones: It is today.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Is it a crime to do that and yet a virtue to invest in Government or semi-Government loans? It is the same sort of money and yet in one case we are trying to keep values down to those of ten years ago and in the other case we are taking present-day values.

Hon. G. Fraser: Properties are not worth the amount they were ten years ago but prices are higher.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: In taking the lid off rents, I am inclined to think we might be opening something that would get beyond our control. I remember that in the past we heard horror tales of what would happen when we eased things a bit. Those horror tales have not been repeated in this debate. But I think we would be opening up something far greater than in the past if we discontinued the Act. As Mr. Craig said, it may be only 10 or 20 per cent. of the people who would take advantage of the complete lifting of controls, but they would create so much trouble that I am very chary about voting other than for the continuance of the control of rents.

But once it comes to control of premises, I think we are on slightly different ground. Other members have mentioned how the cost of maintenance and upkeep generally has increased. Could we not show some consideration to those people who have not good tenants? We could ease their lot by allowing them to get rid of such tenants. I do not think there is any harm in that. If a man is not worthy of protection, why should we give it to him? The fact that we have done it in the past does not mean that we should continue to do so for all time. It would not make one whit of difference to the number of houses available, but I think it is a good thing that a landlord who is receiving an extremely low rent should have a chance to choose his own tenants. It would be only fair if we were to refuse a continuance of the Act on that basis. However, on the other point, we should agree to continue it for another year, and I therefore support the second reading.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [8.15]: I intend to oppose this continuance measure as I did last year, and for the same reasons as I gave then. The only people to whom protection should be afforded are the aged and infirm, the wife or dependants of a soldier, a war widow or dependent mother of a family. I think those are all the people we should aim to protect. It is not the obligation of the individual, but of the State and Commonwealth Governments to bear the brunt of housing the people.

While those Governments shirk their duty, I think this House should protect the landlord to the extent of placing the onus on the Government. I believe we should do on this occasion what we did last year and refuse to pass the Bill, thus forcing another place to draft legislation more acceptable to us. Members who have spoken to the debate on this measure up to date have been agreeable to only some of its provisions. I was not a landlord when a similar Bill was before us last year and I had no axe to grind at all, but the situation has now changed, inasmuch as I am a landlord now.

Hon. G. Fraser: And so you are vitally interested.

Hon. A. R. JONES: A person approached me and said he was being evicted and that he, his wife and children, were being put out on the street. He asked if he could occupy the house in the country that I was leaving. I told him that one of the share farmers on the property was to be married and would then occupy the dwelling, but this man pleaded and eventually I let him into my house. The result is that after six months' occupation of it the damage done to the property is, I believe, to the extent of between £120 and £150. The tenant is paying me a rent of £2 per week and, as that is unearned income, after meeting taxation, my return for the house is exactly 15s. per week.

I now have the opportunity of viewing the position from the landlord's side and I have added reason to refuse to support the measure, as I did last year. I will not

go into the question of whether or not I can get that tenant out. As members know, I have been in hospital over the last few months, but as soon as I can I will get that tenant out. I believe the landlord should be protected—

Hon. N. E. Baxter: He should have the right to protect himself.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I know of a war widow with three children, who is protected under this Act and who feels her position keenly because she is keeping an old couple out of their home and the rent she is paying them is preventing them from receiving the old-age pension. She does not want to stay in the house and the old people who own it wish to occupy it, but they cannot as she is a protected person. She has been to the Housing Commission and to the member for the district in which she lives, but cannot get any satisfaction.

When we have legislation which allows a situation such as that to arise in our midst, I think it is time we got rid of it and reached a basis upon which an owner could do what he liked with his property. The person requiring a house should be given more incentive to do something for himself. Although the position is difficult for anyone wishing to build today, many are not making much effort, and they will not make any great effort until these protective measures are lifted. If all the restrictions were removed, I think there would be chaos for a matter of months only.

In the course of his remarks, Mr. Craig said that possibly 10 per cent. of the people would suffer hardship. That might be so, but I believe that within three months there would be a levelling out and the hungry landlords would find themselves without tenants. There would still be the same number of houses available and perhaps even more because there would again be an incentive for people to build houses for letting purposes. It may be said that building costs are too high to permit people to invest money in that way and receive payable rents; but if a fair rent were allowed, I think many people would still invest in house building. Even if the rents were a shade high to begin with, it would not be long before sufficient houses were built to meet the demand and then, within a couple of years, rents would become lower.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are dreaming.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am not given to dreaming, though the hon. member may be. He said that the present Government had allowed the cost of building to rise very steeply, although he knows perfectly well what really caused building costs to rise.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Bricklayers at £25 per week.

Hon. A. R. JONES: It has been caused to a large extent by high wages and more particularly by the fact that very few people are working a decent 40-hour week. Unless everyone in the community gets back to doing a fair day's work, we will continue having to pay more for everything we want. I trust this House will view the Bill carefully before making a decision on it as this is the third time during my three years here that we have had this continuance legislation before us. It is now practically eight years since the war ended, and I certainly will not support the Bill.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [8.25]: I have listened carefully to the speeches of members for and against the Bill. I was struck particularly by the comments of Mr. Craig, who said that there was a certain amount of overcharging being practised at present and that there were only a small minority of bad landlords. If that is so, it is all the more reason why the legislation should be discontinued, thus giving the great majority of honourable landlords an opportunity to conduct their business in their own way. Mr. Strickland mentioned the costs incurred by the State Housing Commission in building rental homes. If there are many examples of that nature it is obvious that the sooner we get away from controls and allow private enterprise to come into its own again so that greater economy may be practised, the better, and the sooner we will have available cheaper houses for those requiring them.

The present position simply shows that what in years gone by was thought to be ideal, has broken down when thrown into the melting pot of practical economics. It is the shortcomings of humanity that are to blame. I, as a country dweller, do not believe in controls. I feel that all our people should be entitled to own their own homes, and the best way to attain that object is to release these controls.

Hon. L. Craig: Most people can buy houses today if they want them. There are hundreds for sale.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Yes, for sale at a price, but the costs today are such as to be beyond the capacity of many who want homes. If prices came back a bit, private builders would come into the field as they did before the war and build houses on nominal deposits. That would be preferable to having the whole of the community looking to the Government as a fairy godmother.

Hon. C. H. Henning: What deters private investors from building now?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: The hon. member knows, as well as I do, that it is the cost of building. Members know the tremendous amount of money that has been made available through the State Housing Com-

mission and the ridiculous prices that have been tendered and accepted. I admit that if controls were lifted, there would be a period during which things would be pretty tight but they would stabilise—

Hon. G. Fraser: Do you know that the Housing Commission builds houses cheaper than you can buy one privately?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: No, I do not know it, and I would challenge the statement.

Hon. G. Fraser: I will give you proof.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: If the hon. member can prove it, I will be very interested, but I do not think it is a fact because I have had some experience of seeing a substantial brick and tile house built in the metropolitan area during the last 18 months; it was built for at least £1,000 cheaper than the State Housing Commission could have erected it.

Hon. G. Fraser: I can reverse that.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: The hon. member should get another contractor! Another aspect is that a number of these houses in which landlords have tenants are at present situated not only in the country districts but in the metropolitan area as well. The position is that local authorities from time to time find that while these houses were built at a very cheap price, their value has gone up considerably and in striking their rates the road boards find that another dwelling right alongside is valued on the books at twice or three times more than an old residence. Consequently, these authorities are waking up and are having revaluations made. This is causing more trouble for the landlords.

It may be contended that they are old structures and are not worth this and not worth that, but so far as the tenants are concerned they are worth a considerable sum on the rating basis, and the landlords have to pay those sums. For these reasons I oppose the Bill. The other points I had in mind have been covered by previous speakers, and I do not propose to go over the ground again. I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. McI. THOMSON (South) [8.33]: I regret that the Bill is as short as it is. Because of the brevity and the contents of the two clauses we are going to extend for another 12 months conditions as they exist at present without an opportunity being given for rents to be increased as has been the case in previous sessions. For this reason I must oppose the second reading. I do so because there are many added costs to the landlords by way of maintenance, water rates and land tax. If we are to continue this sort of legislation, when will we get back to the stage about which we talk so much and for which we long so much, namely, that of being free from controls? As long as we keep this sort of legislation on the statute book, so long will we have controls.

The main reason I intend to vote against the second reading of the Bill is that it does not provide for the added costs which the landlord has to meet. I agree with Mr. Jones that there are certain members of the community whom we should protect, but unfortunately the Bill does not give us the opportunity to do so. Reference has been made to building costs and I agree with other members that if we could get back to the stage of encouraging a builder to erect houses for rental purposes, it would be a great help to the community. Under the present conditions, and legislation, this cannot be brought about. Therefore, I propose to vote against the second reading.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [8.35]: I would like to do with this Bill what I did with the previous one last year, but I, too, find myself in a similar difficulty, namely, as to how far one can go at the present stage. I have always objected to continuance Bills of this nature being brought down; year after year we have been told that each occasion would be the last, and that the next year there would be no need for these types of measures. It is beginning to look like a Kathleen Mavourneen affair. I admit that there are difficulties but the Government is unwise to bring down a continuance measure like this, knowing the temper of the House last year.

These continuance measures are an attempt by a small body of the elected representatives of the people to say how Parliament shall act. They attempt to say, "You must do as we say or you will produce what we consider to be chaos; you shall not amend, you shall not alter and you shall not express your views for any practical purposes. We have made a statement as to what shall happen." This is a very unwise attitude and it is something about which I have protested before. The sooner the Government realises that is is on unsound ground when it attempts to dictate, the better it will be. This House has made it clear over the years that there is a desire on the part of members to see that justice is done.

The Minister for Transport: The Bill was framed along the lines that this House designed only 12 months ago.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Surely conditions have altered!

The Minister for Transport: In 12 months?

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: Surely what we did last year was not perfect and we certainly did not give full protection to those who deserve it. This is the sort of thing that has been keeping the basic wage down and it will be found from the East-

ern States that the basic wage is being kept down because landlords are not getting an equitable amount for their premises. That is known all over the Eastern States.

Hon. G. Fraser: For the calculation of the basic wage, the amount allowed is 23s. for rent.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: If it rises in the Eastern States, it will have a marked effect on the basic wage. I would like to have seen some measure brought in, as other speakers have said, to control the leasing of rooms or apartments because, from my own contact with the public, I realise that it is not the cost of homes that will soar but the cost of rooms which will go to skyscraper dimensions. In some cases today the charges on rooms are exorbitant and action could be taken—if not by this measure, then by separate legislation—to see that some control is exercised over those who keep houses, fix the rent based on a prewar investment, and then begin to let rooms on cheaper than present-day values.

I know of an instance where the owner of a house is getting a totally inadequate return and the tenant is reaping a harvest from subletting rooms. This is one aspect we should not allow to continue. It becomes more and more obvious every day to me from the statements of individuals who tell me what they are paying for such accommodation.

Hon. G. Fraser: You can get over that by allowing the inspector to come in.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I do not think it is as easy as that. As Mr. Craig has said, these people are so frightened of being evicted that they will not take that course. I am going to vote for the second reading of the Bill, but I will give great consideration to the possession clause because I feel this is a measure we should consider well instead of making a hasty decision. Possibly if we allow possession at this stage, we will not cause any great chaos at all because the rent will remain the same, and owners of properties will only change their tenants for some good and adequate reason.

If we allow both the rent and possession clauses to go at once, then I feel it will be a greater evil, particularly as affecting the business community. This restrictive legislation is only continued because of the other restrictions we have. For years, nobody has been allowed to build business premises in the heart of our city. In consequence, if we let this legislation lapse, there will be a tremendous demand for places in the Terrace and in the city block generally, and I think a great deal of injustice will be done to people. To my mind, if we allow the possession and rental clause to lapse, the matter will adjust itself in a very short time. That is my present attitude. I will vote for the second reading but will do so with the greatest protest that the Government should bring down continuance measures like this. Having voted for the second reading, I will consider how I shall vote when the Bill reaches the Committee stage.

On motion by the Minister for Transport, debate adjourned.

BILL—PHYSIOTHERAPISTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 14th 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—MARKETING OF ONIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. Sir Charles Latham—Central) [8.45] in moving the second reading said: This is a very short Bill. All it seeks to do is to enable the Onion Marketing Board to vary the price paid to growers for their onions, and bring it into line with the Potato Marketing Act. At present, the Onion Marketing Act requires that the board shall pay growers the same price throughout the season. There is the cumbersome alternative that the board, by a series of proclamations, can declare a number of pool periods. However, seasonal conditions and growers' programmes vary from year to year, and it is practically impossible for the board to foresee the period during which a different pool should be constituted and defined by proclamation. This Bill will permit the board to determine on what basis payment shall be made to growers.

It is considered that, by adjustment of the board's payment to growers, they will be encouraged to provide more onions during the period of short supply. This will benefit consumers who, at certain periods of the year, have to rely on imports from the Eastern States or from oversea. It will be possible to compensate the growers for the cost of storing their onions and encourage out-of-season production.

What happens now is that onions are produced over a very short period, and we grow a very soft variety that will not keep. In the Eastern States, onions are grown under different conditions. Mostly, onions here are grown under irrigation, particularly towards the end of the period, and during that time there is a suitable market for them, except when there is a surplus in the Eastern States and onions are sent here. That had not occurred for some time until this year.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: When do onions mature here?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: About the present time. We produce quite a lot of white onions and, although we have encouraged growers to produce them under similar conditions to those prevailing in Victoria, we do not get summer rains, and they have to be grown under irrigation. Last year, in order to absorb some of the surplus grown at this season, we placed five tons in cold storage at Kalamunda and, after paying the cost of the cold storage, we returned to the producers a profit of £69. I am hoping that next year we shall be able to arrange to select the best onions during the time of plenty and cold-store them against the period when there is a shortage.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: All the onions required can be grown in the North.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: At one period of the year, there is a dearth of onions, and consumers have had to pay as much as 1s. 6d. per lb. for onions imported from Egypt and Japan. Naturally, we wish to obviate that. The object of the Bill is to encourage producers to grow out-of-season onions, if I may so describe them, and enable the board to fix a price that will encourage them to do so. At present, onions are about 4d. per lb.

Usually, at this period of the year, the price is about 9d., but there have recently been large importations from the Eastern States. I should like to see onions produced here under conditions similar to those applying in Victoria and other parts of Australia. This year, it is proposed to procure seed of the brown Spanish onion and see whether this type cannot be grown with success. Mr. Barker referred to what can be done in the Kimberleys, but it would be a long way to bring onions from the Kimberleys.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Have you seen the onions grown at Esperance?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I shall be pleased if, when we visit the district at the end of next week, the hon. member shows me some of them. If that district could provide supplies in the short season, we would not need this legislation. I should like the House to approve of this measure speedily to give the board an opportunity to take up some of the surplus onions which are now on the market and which are being sold at less than the cost of production. If we can ensure that growers will receive a better price later on when there is a scarcity, it will be a great boon to them. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [8.52]: I was pleased to hear the reference by the Minister to the cold storage experiment, but I should like him to know of an experiment attempted many years ago because it might be worthy of receiving consideration again. During the depression years, some of the men who had been growing onions in the Spearwood area set out with the idea of bridging the gap when supplies are short. Spearwood produces a very good onion, but, on account of its needing artificial watering, it will not keep throughout the whole year. These men, after experimenting on their own plots, hit on the idea that if they could find an area where there was natural moisture, onions might be produced in sufficient quantity to bridge the gap.

Hon. L. Craig: That could happen.

Hon. G. FRASER: I was asked to spy out land in the 40-inch rainfall country and land was selected at Hay River, in the Albany district, but the Government of the day would not play ball; the men had only their own financial resources and could carry the experiment no further. If the Minister took up this matter with his department and arranged to continue the experiment where those men left off, it might be worth while.

The Minister for Agriculture: The department will be willing to do it.

Hon. G. FRASER: That would be preferable to making experiments in cold storing onions.

The Minister for Agriculture: The experiment we made was successful.

Hon. G. FRASER: I understand that 2lb. out of every 100lb. were lost.

Hon. L. Craig: This is a very expensive crop to grow and the work involved is terrific.

Hon. G. FRASER: If onions were grown on land having natural moisture, I believe they would be better than cold-stored onions. I am not sure whether the present Minister for Agriculture was not Minister for Lands at the time we asked for assistance.

The Minister for Agriculture: We sent some men down there to produce onions.

Hon. G. FRASER: Other departments would not play ball, and the scheme fell through. The solving of that difficulty would mean the saving of thousands of pounds to the State.

HON. C. W. D. BARKER (North) [8.55]: I support the second reading of the Bill, which I am sure the Minister has introduced with every good intention, but I hope he will give consideration to the possibility of growing onions in the North. He said it was too far away, but if that attitude is to be adopted at all times, the North will never go ahead. In that part of the State we can produce good onions of excellent keeping quality. I have seen them grown at Fitzroy Crossing, tossed under the house and drawn upon as required during the whole of the 12 months. I must order a case to be sent to the

Minister to show him what can be grown there. It is only fair that some consideration should be given to this matter. The only drawback to our producing onions there is that we cannot get access to the land on which to grow them. Given the land, we would be able to bridge the gap that now occurs down here.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [8.56]: I have not had time to do more than glance at the Bill, and in a way I feel somewhat fearful of it. The Minister explained that at present there is a surplus of onions, but this measure will leave the door wide open to the board to do as it thinks fit. The Bill provides—

> The board shall make payments on such other basis as the board may determine, but the board may, in determining the amount of the payments, take into account any other circumstances which it considers relevant.

Owing to the action of the board in the past, we have frequently been very short of onions.

The Minister for Agriculture: That has not been the fault of the board.

Hon. N. E. BAXTER: The board must have been to blame somewhere for the price factor. This Bill will leave it open to the board to settle with growers for any price at all, and I do not see that it will help in any way to maintain a normal supply. I have not had time to consider the scope of the Act, but my impression is that this Bill will leave the position wide open. Perhaps the Minister will be able to offer some explanation when he replies.

At the moment, the Bill does not appear to me to give the grower much of a go. I am concerned about the growers rather than the board. The original Act is a good one. We have had a fair experience of boards which, in some instances, have not been greatly to the benefit of the growers. I hope the Minister will explain how this measure will be advantageous and not detrimental to the growers.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [8.58]: I can assure Mr. Baxter that he has no need to be concerned regarding the measure because if the public require onions in the off season, they must be prepared to pay for them. I take it that the effect of the Bill will be to enable the board to compensate growers for the extra work involved.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is the exact intention.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is so, and I agree with the Minister that we must find some way of producing onions during the off season. This, of course, will entail additional cost, and that must be taken into consideration. I believe that this small amendment to the Act is a move along the right lines.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. Sir Charles Latham—Central—in reply) [8.59]: I thank members for their reception of the Bill. The position at present is that all the onions are pooled and the market price obtained, but, in the latter part of the year, onions are not being grown because the cost of producing them is so high and the pool price does not pay. Further, super is difficult to obtain and expensive, and irrigation for the crop means additional expense. In the circumstances the price on the local market is the highest price growers can obtain. A little later, when they have to do a great deal more watering—particularly those people away from the coastal areas where they irrigate by pumping—it becomes very costly. I am fearful that we will not be able to give sufficient encouragement to produce all the onions we want, but at least this measure will give me an opportunity next year to find out whether we can get onions grown here in the slack period.

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—LAND AGENTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [9.2] in moving the second reading said: The principal reason for the introduction of the Bill is to obtain control over the activities of those persons who describe themselves as letting agents—that is, they carry on the business of letting houses or tenements. I think it probable that all members have some knowledge of several of these persons' transactions with the public. It is a regrettable fact that in times of shortages and hardship, a species of person emerges who takes great pains to turn other people's distress to his own advantage. The intention of the Bill, therefore, is to protect the public from the unscrupulous conspiracies of these self-styled "letting agents." Many devices are used to extort money from unfortunate people seeking homes. Very often substantial deposits are demanded and persons sent to view accommodation, which the agent is aware is quite unacceptable. On rejecting the accommodation, the applicant is fortunate to have any part of his deposit refunded to him.

There was a recent case where an elderly widow, after seeing one of these agent's advertisements, telephoned him to advise that she could let part of her home to an elderly couple. She stipulated that she could not take young people owing

to her age, and that she did not desire the money, but the company of people her own age. Notwithstanding these explicit instructions, the agent sent six different families, most of whom were young people with children, to the old lady, well knowing she would not accept them. The agent collected a fee of £12 10s. from each family prior to sending them to the house, and refused to make any refund. He thereby gained £75 by what could be described as false pretences.

In another case an agent obtained a fee of £30 for finding a house for a client, but failed to advise her that the premises were available for a fortnight only. Evidence has accumulated of numerous similar cases, but under present circumstances no punitive action can be taken against the offenders, although many of the cases have been reported to the C.I.B. I have been informed by the Real Estate Institute, which is extremely worried about these activities, that similar occurrences, although on a larger scale, took place in the Eastern States, and resolute action was required to bring them to a halt. It is possible that some of the Eastern States' people are now operating in Perth. In my case, the methods adopted here are the same, on a smaller scale, as those in the Eastern States.

Under the principal Act a person desiring to carry on the business of a land agent must obtain a license from a court of petty sessions, and must deposit a fidelity bond of £500 with the court. The Bill proposes to enlarge the definition of "land agent" to include letting agents. To achieve this purpose, it will also be necessary to include in the Act an interpretation of the phrase "land transaction." This will enable the jurisdiction of the Act to be extended to leasing and letting, and the acquisition, under lease or letting, of land.

The Real Estate Institute, which is a body corporate, has submitted that it would be in the public interest if the institute were represented at the hearing of each application under the Act for a license. The institute feels that in certain cases it might be able to provide information that would assist the court in its decision. To enable this to be done, the Bill proposes that when an application for a license is lodged at the court, the clerk of the court shall send copies of the application and testimonials, as provided in the regulations. If this is approved, regulations will be made to ensure that copies of the application and testimonials are forwarded to the Real Estate Institute and the Police Department as well as being advertised in a newspaper and in the "Government Gazette."

The court is required, under the Act, to satisfy itself that a successful applicant is a fit and proper person to hold a license. This necessity has been widened to ensure that the applicant is 21 years of age and that his character and financial position are suitable, in the public interest, to his being granted a license. The Act specifies the manner in which an agent shall apply moneys received by him in connection with the sale of land or the collection of rents. It is considered advisable that the same conditions should apply to money collected as apply to interest on mortgages, and the Bill proposes that this shall be done.

A land agent's license may be cancelled for various breaches of faith, such as the fraudulent conversion of trust moneys, the rendering of false accounts to his clients, etc. It is considered essential that land agents, as persons in continual contact with the public, should be of good character. They are required to handle a considerable amount of people's money and are often called on to give advice. The Bill, therefore, seeks to include as grounds for the cancellation of a license, a conviction for moral turpitude or for an offence dishonouring the offender in the eyes of the public.

The Bill also proposes to give the court power to cancel the license of a land agent convicted of any offence if the court is satisfied that the offence warrants such action. Cancellation may be made at the court's own volition or on the application of the Real Estate Institute or any other person as provided in the regulations. Under the Act no land agent can take legal steps to recover any commission or remuneration in regard to a land transaction unless he is licensed under the Act and has a written authority to carry out the transaction. As a land agent cannot properly be described as such unless he holds a license under the Act, the provision is amended to read that a person cannot sue for commission, etc., unless he holds a license under the Act.

I trust that favourable consideration will be extended to the Bill by members. As I have explained, its main provisions are to protect the public from certain unscrupulous activities which, under existing legislation, cannot be stopped. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. N. E. BAXTER (Central) [9.10]: I am rather pleased to see this legislation because I have discussed the matter with several well-known and trustworthy land agents in the city and they have assured me that it has been required for some time. One rather surprising feature of the measure is what the Minister had to say when referring to the non-licensing of accommodation agencies. I asked a question on this matter on the 15th September last, and it was answered next day by the Minister According to what he said, the Government was not then

aware that these people even existed. It is rather surprising that the Government should make such a smart move. We are not yet to the end of October, but we have legislation before us to deal with these people. I commend the Government for introducing the legislation so promptly, and I trust it will do the same in regard to other measures. I support the Bill.

HON. C. W. D. BARKER (North) [9.12]: I support the Bill which, I consider, is long overdue. A person in a position of trust, who is handling large sums of public money, should certainly have to submit character references before being allowed to carry on business. I do not know of any provision in the Act which says he should put up a bond, and I think there should be one.

The Minister for Transport: The Act provides that he has to put up a bond of £500.

Hon. C. W. D. BARKER: I am pleased to hear that. I support the Bill.

On motion by Hon. R. J. Boylen, debate adjourned.

BILL—CHILD WELFARE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 14th October.

HON. G. FRASER (West) [9.13]: This is a very good Bill. I do not intend to deal with the amendments it contains because I think everyone who has read the Bill will agree that they are worth while. There is only one that I am not too happy about and that is the amendment to Section 68. Provision is sought for the Children's Court to make maintenance available after divorce, but I would like the Minister to explain why it is that a person must wait three months before making application. I listened to him very carefully when he introduced the Bill, but I did not hear any reason given for having to wait that length of time.

Some 12 months ago I discussed this matter with the secretary of the Child Welfare Department, and I cannot recollect any explanation having been given then. I am quite in accord with what the amendment sets out. The only objection I have is to the three months' wait, after the decree absolute, before application can be made to the Children's Court for maintenance. I would like some explanation on that point. Following on the same lines, I notice that an alteration has been made regarding the maximum amount of maintenance and it will be increased from £1 to £2 10s. per child. I know that costs have increased tremendously in recent years, but I assume that that sum will be the maximum and that it will not be awarded in all cases. I would not care if the department were to pay the £2 10s. but near relatives can be charged with a child's maintenance and an increase like this could cause great hardship to certain people. However, I am prepared to leave it to the good judgment of the court as to what amount shall be awarded. I have no objection to the Bill; in fact, I welcome it because I think it is long overdue. I hope that further amendments will be made to the Act in the near future to bring it completely up to date. This measure will cover a lot of the ground but there is still a good deal to be done.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. Sir Charles Latham—Central—in reply) [9.18]: The first inquiry raised by Mr. Fraser is in regard to Clause 6 which relates to Section 68. Clause 6 states—

> Where after the expiration of three months from the date of the final order or decree absolute for dissolution of or nullity of marriage made under the provisions of the Matrimonial Causes and Personal Status Code, 1948, or the Supreme Court Act, 1935-1950, if there is no order in force in the Supreme Court in respect to the maintenance of a child, proceedings for such maintenance may be taken under subsection (1) of this section.

Section 68 of the principal Act reads as follows:—

> (1) Upon complaint that any persons are near relatives of any child, and are able to pay or contribute towards the maintenance or past maintenance of such child, such persons or any of them may be summoned to appear before the court at a time and place to be named in such summons, to show cause why they or he should not pay for or contribute towards the past or future maintenance of such child.
>
> (2) All complaints under this part of this Act relating to a ward, except where otherwise expressly provided, shall be made by or on behalf of the secretary.

I think that the indication is that it may take some time.

Hon. G. Fraser: Why put in any time limit?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I think the reason is that under the Divorce Act the parties have three months after the decree absolute to apply to the Supreme Court.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Is it not a right of appeal?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: It is not a right of appeal but a right to apply for maintenance.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This applies only where the Supreme Court has not made an order.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: That is so, and they have three months after the decree. They have to wait for the time to expire before the Children's Court can come into it.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In regard to Mr. Fraser's other query, it is a maximum amount only and very seldom does the maximum apply. I am pleased with the reception that the Bill has received and with what Mr. Fraser had to say about it. It is a most necessary measure.

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.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Section 4 amended:

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: There is one point I would like to make on this clause and what I am about to say may sound completely altruistic and impracticable. I think we should devise some way of taking the stigma away from these children. The child is not destitute; it is the parents who are destitute.

Hon. L. Craig: The child is destitute if it has no means of subsistence.

Hon. J. G. HISLOP: I do not want to get into a long argument on this point, but I thought it might be possible to take the label away from the child and put it where it really belongs, because it is not the fault of the child that it has been left destitute.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is not easy to define a name that would satisfy everybody. None of us likes to brand a child, but it would be difficult to find another word that would suit. After all, the child is a destitute child, and I do not know any better term that could be used. It is not a harsh term unless we view it harshly because after all we have destitute people. However, I will approach the department to see if it is possible to coin a word that is not as harsh as this may sound.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Is not every child destitute?

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 to 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Section 69 amended:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move an amendment—

That paragraph (c) be struck out.

I am advised by the department that this is already provided for in the Act. It will cloud the issue if it is left in the clause.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am not too sure about this point. It could mean that they were collecting £2 10s. from four persons but if this is struck out it might be possible to collect £2 10s. from each one.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is not right.

Hon. L. C. Diver: It says "child," not "children."

Hon. G. FRASER: I know, but it is calling on near relatives.

The Minister for Agriculture: Have you read the first part of Section 69?

Hon. G. FRASER: I have not yet had a chance.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: At the beginning of the section it states—

> At the time and place appointed for the hearing of such complaints the court may adjourn the hearing, and may summon any other persons alleged to be near relatives to appear at the adjourned hearing; and may, at the original or any adjourned hearing, if the court is satisfied that the persons so summoned, or any of them, are near relatives of the child, and are able to pay for or contribute towards the past or future maintenance of such child, order payment to be made by such near relatives, or some one or more of them in the case of a ward to the department or a governing authority, or, in the case of any other child, to the department, or to the complainant, or any person whom the court shall select, as the court may think fit—
>
> (a) of such sum for past maintenance of the child as may seem sufficient; and
>
> (b) of such sum for future maintenance, and for such period as may seem sufficient, but not being more than two pounds ten shillings per week.

It is limited to not more than £2 10s. a week, or will be when this Bill goes through. All paragraph (c) will do will be to duplicate what is already provided for.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am still doubtful about it.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: It says, "in the aggregate."

The Minister for Agriculture: It is not more than £2 10s. in the aggregate.

Hon. G. FRASER: Yes, I can see it now. It says, "such persons in the aggregate."

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

Clauses 8 and 9, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (Hon. C. H. Simpson—Midland) [9.30] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of the Bill is to provide the Commissioners of the Fremantle Harbour Trust with power to make regulations to regulate, control and prohibit the entry, or the remaining of any person, upon the precincts of the Fremantle harbour, as well as similar control over any action within its boundaries. The Commissioners are desirous of making regulations for such matters as the preservation of order, the control of vehicular traffic, the sale of goods, the closing and partial closing, when necessary, of the wharves, and the consumption or presence of alcoholic liquor on harbour property.

Although Section 65 of the principal Act provides the Commissioners with exclusive control of the harbour and charges them with the maintenance and preservation of harbour property, and Subsection (53) of Section 65 enables regulations to be made for the general control of the harbour, grave doubt exists as to whether the regulations the Commissioners desire could be validly made. For this reason, the Commissioners have asked that they be given the definite authority contained in this Bill.

The Crown Law Department advises that although the power asked for is rather wide, it is not possible to be more specific. It might be necessary at any time to take steps to counteract some unanticipated contingency that had arisen, such as, for example, the bringing on to a wharf of a possible fire hazard, or some particular type of vehicle, etc. It would be a far better proposition to be able to deal with such unexpected matters by regulation than by attempting to identify them by legislation, or in due course having to amend the Act to cover an instance which had not been thought of. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—SHEEPSKINS (DRAFT ALLOWANCE PROHIBITION).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. Sir Charles Latham—Central) [9.34] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to bring sheepskins into line with what was provided for wool some years ago. All sheepskins sold in Western Australia are subject to a deduction in weight of 1 lb. in 1 cwt. as a draft allowance before the return to the grower is calculated. This became a practice in the past when weighing machines were relatively crude and some allowance was deemed necessary to protect the buyer from short weight due to the inaccuracy of the old type of machines.

With the modern scales, subject to periodic testing by the Weights and Measures Branch of the Police Department, there is no possible justification for a continuance of this allowance. Faulty weighing does not now exist owing to better and more modern scales being used. The Government excluded wool from this impost by having an Act passed which came into operation on the 1st July, 1938, known as the Wool Draft Allowance Prohibition Act, 1936: but skins were overlooked and were not provided for in that Act.

The draft allowance deductions on sheepskins is therefore unnecessary in view of the accuracy of scales now being used, and the fact that agents make an estimated deduction in weight on skins which are not considered thoroughly dry. The abolition of the draft allowance on sheepskins was discussed at a meeting of the Agricultural Council in July last, when Ministers for Agriculture representing all States agreed that there was no justification for the continuance of the draft allowance on sheepskins, which has already been abolished in most other countries.

The total number of sheepskins exported and used locally in Western Australia in 1950-51 was 1,400,000. The total weight is not recorded, but on the assumption that the average weight per skin was the same for the total as for those exported—6 lb. —the total weight of skins was 8,400,000 lb. The draft allowance on this would be equivalent to 8,400,000 divided by 112 lb. —that is, 75,000 lb. At present the value is about 3s. per lb. for half-wool skins. The sum involved would approximate £11,250.

There are many skins sold that are almost full-wool and when we take into consideration that the price of wool has been up to £1 per lb., we can appreciate that 1lb. of wool in 1 cwt. of skins represents a considerable sum of money to have deducted. In view of the fact that a deduction has been made on wool since 1938, we should consider allowing a deduction for the wool that is on the skins instead of permitting to continue what has taken place in the past. Most of these skins are sent to Marseilles and the buyers there certainly have reaped the benefit to date. So, in future, when skins are exported they will have to meet the cost of that 1lb. per cwt. themselves. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [9.38]: I am pleased to see the Minister for Agriculture bring this measure down, but when he spoke of the agents having to accept

responsibility of the extra weight when sending skins oversea, I would like to draw his attention—

The Minister for Agriculture: The agents do not accept it; we do.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: The Minister said that they would in future.

The Minister for Agriculture: I said that the buyers in Marseilles would have to accept it.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: There is an appreciation in the weight of the skins.

The Minister for Agriculture: That has always happened before to their benefit.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Yes, but lately there has been a suggestion, in dealing with wool, that on woolpacks, the agents are considering tare increase of from 11 lb. to 12 lb., and I would like the Minister to watch the position closely.

The *Minister for Agriculture*: I will do so.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [9.39]: I do not want to labour the position, but I would like to point out that during the period the draft allowance has been in operation, the producer has been losing by this deduction. I would like the Minister to proclaim the Act as soon as possible. Most of the lambs being killed for export today are in the wool and unless this legislation is proclaimed quickly, the producer will not gain the advantage of the proposed amendment. Therefore, I repeat that I hope the legislation will be proclaimed at the earliest possible date.

The Minister for Agriculture: That will be done.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned 9.42 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 21st October, 1952.

CONTENTS.

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

STANDING ORDERS AMENDMENTS.

Message.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received a Message from His Excellency the Governor notifying approval of the amendments to the Standing Orders recently adopted by the Legislative Assembly.