

Legislative Council

Thursday, 28th October, 1954.

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So I think it is necessary that the road board should have the option, if it so desires, to rate in townsite areas on annual rental values and also to be able to rate on the proved capital values in the farming areas. That covers the main points that I want to stress. The principal objection I have to the Bill relates to the widening of the franchise because I think that if that provision were agreed to, local authority elections would become a rabble. There are many people who are not interested in local government affairs.

Mr. May: If they are not interested they will not vote.

Mr. MANNING: Every householder and every person owning a piece of property in a district is entitled to a vote. Therefore, the majority of the people interested in local government affairs already have a vote and are catered for. If we widen the franchise to permit of adult suffrage, we will be providing for those people who are not interested in the affairs of local government.

Mr. May: Let them have a vote.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Let us hear from the member for Collie. I am surprised at his having the gag put on him.

Mr. May: I am surprised at anything that surprises you!

Mr. MANNING: Whilst I strongly oppose this part of the Bill I intend to vote for the second reading. I hope that the Government will accept the reasonable amendments which appear on the notice paper and which will be submitted by members on this side of the House.

On motion by Hon. D. Brand, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.23 p.m.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

LAND RESUMPTIONS.

(a) *As to Further Discussion of Motion.*

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

With regard to item No. 13 on the notice paper dealing with my motion on the resumptions of land by the State Housing Commission, does he intend to keep the item low down so that it cannot be dealt with? If that is not his purpose, will he have it dealt with at next Tuesday's sitting, if it is not reached today?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

The reason for making that item No. 13 was that it would not be dealt with today. What will happen to it next week, I am not at this stage prepared to say. The question under issue will be put on the notice paper according to the amount of business before the House, and according to the types of items and their urgency.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Why did the Chief Secretary not inform the House why it was not intended to discuss item No. 13 today?

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member cannot debate the question. The Minister has given him an answer.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Chief Secretary made a statement that the item was placed in this order so that it would not be dealt with today. I ask him now: Why was it desired that it should not be dealt with today?

The PRESIDENT: I would advise the hon. member that the Chief Secretary has the right to arrange the notice paper as it suits him.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I know that, Mr. President, but—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I would ask the hon. member to resume his seat.

(b) As to Reasons for Postponement of Debate.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

I would like to ask the Chief Secretary a further question on the answer he has just given me concerning item No. 13 on the notice paper. He said it was not desired that this matter should be dealt with today. Would the Chief Secretary inform the House why it was desired that this matter should not be dealt with today? With respect, Mr. President, I suggest that that question appears to be in order.

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

In reply to the battery of questions, I would explain that the motion was placed on the notice paper today as Order of the Day No. 13 because there are so many other matters which it is desired to put before the House. Thursday is always a short sitting day; and as this is a matter that a large number of members will probably want to debate, I purposely placed it well down on the notice paper so that it would not come up today for discussion, because I did not think there would be time available to consider it. There are several items to which it is desired to give second readings. A very important measure with which we desire to proceed as far as possible today is the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill. Further, a number of items have been on the notice paper much longer than that with which the hon. member is concerned; and, as there is no great urgency to complete the debate on the hon. member's motion, further consideration of it has been postponed till next week. Where it will appear on the notice paper then, I am not in a position to decide at the moment. Its urgency will have to be considered in relation to the urgency of other matters requiring discussion.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT
(No. 2).

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £15,000,000.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [2.24] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to obtain further supply to carry on the services of the Government until such time as the Estimates, which are now before another place, are passed. The amount asked for by the Bill is £15,000,000. The previous Supply Bill was for £16,500,000, made up of—

	£
Consolidated Revenue	11,000,000
General Loan Fund	4,000,000
Advance to Treasurer	1,500,000

The expenditure for the three months to the end of September was—

	£
Consolidated Revenue	10,982,000
General Loan	3,323,366

The deficit on Consolidated Revenue was £338,127, as revenue during the three months amounted to £10,643,854. The sum now sought includes £11,000,000 for Consolidated Revenue and £4,000,000 for General Loan. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [2.26]: In his very brief introduction of the Bill, the Chief Secretary stated the amount that is required by the Bill; and, as it is a necessary provision to enable the services of the country to continue, there is no doubt that the House will approve the measure. However, there are features of the present financial atmosphere that I think are causing people a degree of concern; and, as we have the right, when dealing with a Supply Bill, to speak on any subject we desire to discuss, the time is opportune to draw the attention of the Government to some of these trends, and to point out the need for economy and consideration of any measures that are going to make a serious drain on our financial resources.

In presenting the Estimates, the Treasurer pointed out that a considerable proportion of the revenue came from the Commonwealth. It has been explained in this House before that, under the tax reimbursement Act, the Commonwealth is the sole taxing authority so far as income tax collections are concerned, and that reimbursement is made to each State from the amounts so collected. For Western Australia, this amount last financial year was roughly £12,000,000, and there was a further grant to the State of £7,000,000 from the Grants Commission. I think members understand that, under the general financial arrangement with the Commonwealth under which the principle of the strong helping the weak is accepted, the three standard States—New South

Wales, Victoria, and Queensland—contribute to the developmental needs of the smaller States—South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania, the smaller States receiving a yearly grant to help them to balance their budgets. The amount received by this State for the past year was £19,000,000. Last year, the Treasurer budgeted for £43.5 million—that is, under the Revenue and Expenditure Estimates—and there was a further £16,000,000 loan expenditure. This year the amount is estimated at £44.9 million.

I would point out that the £43.5 million actually received last year was £4,500,000 more than was received the previous year in which the McLarty-Watts Government started the year's budgeting. The incoming Government took over and completed the year, so that Government had £4,500,000 more to spend last year than was available to the two Governments in the previous 12 months. In analysing the expenditure of the £43.5 million, I have mentioned that £19,000,000 was received from Commonwealth sources. It may be interesting to members to know how the balance of the revenue was made up.

There was £16,200,000 from public utilities as compared with £11,300,000 the previous year. There again the Government had in the neighbourhood of £5,000,000 more to spend than it had in the previous year. The balance of revenue, which comes to £8,100,000, was made up mainly of territorial and departmental fees of one kind and another, and revenue from land sales, mining and timber royalties. The actual State tax collections came to £2,900,000. In direct taxes, the State collects only £3,000,000, roughly, whereas it collects £12,000,000 by reimbursement from the Commonwealth Government; in addition to which we get a contribution of £7,300,000 by way of grant, and £400,000 by way of contribution towards the payment of interest.

Western Australia at the moment is the State receiving the greatest amount of help from Commonwealth sources. Last year we received £7,800,000 as against £8,200,000 the previous year. South Australia this year received £6,100,000 as against £6,300,444 last year, and Tasmania last year received £1,500,000 as against £1,550,000 the year before. So Western Australia is helped considerably from this source for the financing of its developmental needs. Needless to say, the remaining States are the contributing ones and they do not get anything from this particular pool.

The revenue from exports—income from outside the State—has dropped, and wool and wheat prices are dropping, so we must view the future possibilities in the light of those factors. In 1953 we received £88,000,000 for our overseas exports. Our imports from overseas amounted to £30,000,000, leaving us a favourable balance of £58,000,000. But we spent a

lot of money in the Eastern States. For the year 1953 our imports amounted to £69,000,000 and our exports to only £25,000,000. So, as far as our trade with the Eastern States was concerned, we were £44,000,000 to the bad. But as we had £58,000,000 in hand from our overseas trade, we had a favourable balance of £14,000,000, which was very good.

I am suggesting that, as prices are not what they were; and as the wheat harvest is unfavourable, and there will possibly be a drop in the price of wool; and as, because of seasonal conditions, the value of the wool clip will be reduced, the time is ripe to consider seriously the position that is developing in regard to free spending on the part of the Government. I am just wondering whether in view of our reliance on the Commonwealth to provide money that we apparently cannot provide ourselves, and because of the possibility of lower revenue from the sources I have mentioned, and the fact that the overseas revenue of the Commonwealth might reduce the assistance rendered to us by the Commonwealth, we should seriously consider this long-range development scheme and be cautious in committing ourselves in regard to spendings which might overtax our powers.

The Chief Secretary: You are wondering about a lot of things; but I am wondering whether you are going to tell us about all the debts that this Government had to pay that were left by the previous Government.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The debts we left were incurred in connection with capital expenditure from which this Government is now benefiting. That expenditure involved loan money, not revenue; and as the commitments had to be met three years ahead, and loan moneys are made available yearly, there was, unavoidably, some disturbance in that way.

The Chief Secretary: You did not mention that when making comparisons.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The goods were ordered. This has nothing to do with what I am talking about; and that is budgeting on ordinary revenue and expenditure, not loan moneys. There seems to be a tendency for the Government to envisage expenditure in the metropolitan area rather than in the country. The previous Government did embark on a scheme of development in the country.

The Minister for the North-West: Do you call Kwinana the country?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: We believed this development would result in extra traffic to the railways, and that it would go a long way towards balancing the railway budget. That was a far-seeing idea, and a sound method of trying to pull the railways together. We were not to know there would be an upsurge in the basic wage which would considerably

add to our anticipated expenditure. But I point out that in the last 12 months, at least, there has not been that upsurge in these particular costs. At this stage I am drawing attention to the need for seriously considering the expenditure we may be thinking about before we commit ourselves to it; and I do this rather as a warning than as a matter of finding fault.

The Chief Secretary: You want us not to do what you did, but to be good boys.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: We did not do it. We know that the Subiaco flats are costing £500,000.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: They are very necessary.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: They may be a contribution to the housing problem; but whether they are the right contribution or not, is a matter of opinion. Personally, I am not favourable to the idea. The point is that no help was forthcoming from Commonwealth sources to finance the project because it was not in accordance with the ideas of that Government in connection with providing necessary housing for the population.

The Chief Secretary: It is exactly the same as the Commonwealth Government has done elsewhere in Australia; and it was only the political wires that were pulled from here that stopped it.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I cannot accept that.

The Chief Secretary: I can bring magazines containing photographs of them.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I know that the basis of the Commonwealth-State housing arrangement is that consideration is to be given to people with families; but the flats will provide mainly for two and three-unit families, and will not help the people with children.

The Chief Secretary: We can show where the Federal Government is throwing out its chest because it provided money to build similar flats in other States; but it did not assist here because of the wire-pulling.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Perhaps those flats were built in standard States which carry their own financial baby. They may have certain rights which we, as a claimant State, could not expect to have.

The Chief Secretary: I am not talking about the other States—

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: We have a further £500,000 to meet for land resumptions. I am not saying for the moment whether that is right or wrong; but the financial position, generally, demands that we make a close scrutiny of these proposed spendings before we commit ourselves.

The Chief Secretary: It is a pity you did not follow those lines when you were here.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: We knew, when we embarked on Kwinana, that there might be some strain on the State's finances, but there was a glittering prize at the end. Some sacrifices were justified because the prize was worth while, and we would be the gainers.

The Chief Secretary: Do you not think this Government goes into ventures which look glittering, the same as yours did?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I cannot see anything comparable.

The Chief Secretary: You are looking through coloured glasses.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Another matter I am interested in is the Narrows bridge. Quite frankly, I cannot see the necessity for this expenditure at the present time. Projects which seem to me to be of far more urgency are the chord line; the cleaning up of the railway mess in the city itself; and the provision of adequate marshalling yard facilities. These things are all provided for by legislation which has been passed by Parliament. If what was envisaged, although it was not included in an Act of Parliament—the putting of the line from West Perth to East Perth either overhead or partly submerged—had been carried out, it would have given us a good deal of free land, particularly between West Perth and Perth; and, at the same time, it would have reduced railway costs because it would have given the department adequate room in which to work, which it has not got at present. It would have allowed a free flow of traffic between the city south of the railway and the city north of the railway. Members will all agree that the bottlenecks preventing the free flow of traffic are the main deterrent to the development of the area north of the city.

The Minister for the North-West: What would be the cost of putting a bridge there?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Our idea was that if an overhead line were constructed from East Perth to West Perth, a lot of the land reclaimed could provide parking spaces for cars. To a degree, we could do what is being carried out in Los Angeles where a parking area was made out of a park which was scooped out by bulldozers. An area was constructed underneath to accommodate 1,700 cars; and on top of that area a roof was built, and the park was put back again for use as a playground. There would be no need for us to build a park on this area; but there is no reason why we should not have an underground area for cars, and a street level area for them, too.

Hon. H. Hearn: Motorcars will be obsolete by the time that project is finished, at the rate the Public Works Department goes ahead.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: That plan was considered as part of the town planning scheme by the late town planner, Mr.

Davidson. Whatever Mr. Davidson's faults might have been, no one questioned that he was a competent town planner. The present congestion in the city is giving everyone a headache. One of the matters I am proud to say I had a hand in was the widening of Wellington-st. from William-st. to Milligan-st. I had some trouble in getting that done; and it was not until we got down to tintacks and talked the matter over at the conference table that we achieved anything; and then it was all fixed up in about a quarter of an hour. The widening of Wellington-st. at that point has tended to ease what was an ugly spot of congestion.

Another matter that requires consideration is the provision of a bus station in Perth. There again, the land that could have been reclaimed as a result of the scheme I have just mentioned, would have given us a central bus station to accommodate the omnibuses going from and coming to the city.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Would the bus operators go there?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I think they would. As a matter of fact it is quite acceptable to many of them.

Hon. E. M. Davies: They would not go in Fremantle.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: No; they would not go 500 yards from their route.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Some relief from the congestion in the city, such as the provision of car space and space for omnibuses, as everyone will agree, is a matter of high priority. Stands for buses have been provided in Murray-st., and they are a nuisance. If one drives down Murray-st. at about 5 o'clock at night, as I often do, one has quite a job to get through. These buses are certainly a traffic hazard.

Hon. H. Hearn: So are the cars in Hay-st.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: But there are no buses or bus stands in Hay-st., and as a result, there is a free movement of traffic along that street. I saw a featured article in the daily paper where the town planner, Professor Stephenson, suggested that there should be one overall traffic authority to control traffic in the metropolitan area, and that there should be through routing. He mentioned the London bus authority as one that was doing quite a good job. I shall not comment on whether it is doing a good job or not, but the facts are not quite as they appeared in the newspaper article.

That transport authority, when created, was to be entirely independent of political control; now it is under Ministerial direction. They started off with the idea that they could manage the concern better from a centralised control point than they could with individual operators. But in small cities like Nottingham and Northamptonshire particularly, the smaller operators

were running rings around the London system in the matter of efficiency and in the reduction of overhead costs. Those concerns found out by experience that an operational unit of 100 to 150 vehicles provided the cheapest service.

Hon. H. Hearn: Did not Fremantle prove that recently?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I am not commenting on that at the moment. As a result, the London bus authority split its huge fleet of over 5,000 omnibuses into operational units of 150 buses as a maximum, with the result that it is showing a profit where it previously showed a loss. If one considers the question, one can see the logic of it. In a small concern, the chap in the workshop very often knows the drivers of the buses, and is quite willing to do any sort of job for them. He might work overtime so that his friend on the bus could get under way again. But a huge concern becomes departmentalised, and a mass of statistics is required. The man on the job has no interest in the man on the road. The man in the workshop is given a job by his boss; and when he has finished it, he passes it on to another department, and there is no personal contact with the men driving the vehicles. Under the scheme of smaller operational units, there is this personal association and personal effort. Very often the boss of the concern knows every one of his employees, and that contributes towards harmonious management and effective working.

So I suggest to our friend the town planner—whom, by the way, I have never met, although I do not doubt that he is writing with a full knowledge of his own particular subject—that through routing is something that depends entirely upon the density of traffic, and the balance of traffic beyond the central point. If a bus is travelling from Perth to Midland Junction, as was suggested, more than half of the passengers for the bus are on the Fremantle side of the city. There is not the same need for the bus to go right through to Midland Junction, because there is no balance on the other side of the city. As some buses must be put out of operation and parked during the off-peak periods, I suggest that the idea I put forward about a central bus station would be the answer to bus parking problems.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Colonel Bell in the Melbourne tramways got away with the through routing idea.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: It works where there is a balanced population. I have seen it work in Melbourne. But the development between Fremantle and Midland Junction is what is called a ribbon development. In Melbourne or Adelaide—and, to a lesser extent, Sydney—the population radiates from the centre, and, as a result, through routing can be used. Unfortunately we in Western Australia are not in the same position because on one

side we have the river; and, on the other, we have the railways; and most of our development is between those two limits.

I was disturbed to see that there is a growing loss on our railway system. The time has arrived when we have to make a factual appraisal of the question of railways generally. We will be up against a huge liability if we rehabilitate the whole of our system, and we should have an expert examination of the economics of some of the less payable lines to see whether a substitute form of motor transport could do the job more effectively, more efficiently, and more cheaply. I am not prepared to say what particular lines should receive that treatment at the moment. But as a matter of commonsense, I think that something should be done. Suppose we could go to the man on one of these leads and say, "We are going to take away your railway system, but we will give you a bus service which will run three times a week, twice as fast, and go right to your door. If necessary, we will subsidise you and make up the difference between the cost of that service and what you are now paying the railways, so that your costs will be no more," then I think the man would be prepared to accept it; and if experts were put on the job, we would find there would be a great saving to the Government.

I do not think the railway service need be frightened because it would mean that those lines would be dismantled. A number of employees would have to go but they could be put to work making roads, which would be substituted for the railways. The roads used under such a system would merely be feeder roads to the main lines, which would be carrying the same volume of traffic as they do now. From my knowledge of the railways, they are not over-manned; and under such a system, the great majority of the employees working on the shorter leads could give a better and more efficient service—and incidentally a cheaper one—than they do at present.

In these days of falling prices for primary produce, the man on the land is entitled to the utmost consideration; and he should be given the cheapest and most efficient transport for his products. He is entitled to that because, if prices drop to any great extent, he will be supplying a competitive market, and unless his freight costs are reduced, he will not be able to compete. So it is in his interests, and in the interests of everybody in the State, that an expert examination of the economics of the railway system should be made.

The Chief Secretary: You try to close a country line to put in a road and see how you get on!

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: If experts were put on the job, we could say straight away what the alternative proposition was.

The Chief Secretary: They tried the alternative proposal.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: If it could be proved that the cost would be no more, I am sure they would agree. The story was never told fully before. I am not saying that all lines should be affected.

The Chief Secretary: You know the story of the line that they proposed to close.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I know the story about one line, but I am doubtful whether the facts as published were entirely correct. I am talking about the Meekatharra-Wiluna line.

The Chief Secretary: I am talking about a farming line; you were discussing lines in farming areas.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: In such cases one must take into account the potential build-up of traffic. I think we have always—both Governments—accepted the idea that there was justification for guaranteeing the cheapest possible rate for produce, so that the service could be supplied as cheaply as possible. When we are losing £4,000,000 a year, and a lot of it is made up by losses on some of these unpayable lines, something must be done. The man on the better paying line has to pay because the country man is contributing towards railway revenue. I am hoping that the costly metropolitan system will be improved to a great extent, and its costs reduced by the introduction of railcars. But it only goes to show that the whole question of our railways wants a thorough examination by experts who are able to work out these questions.

The Chief Secretary: Have you seen the figures of the proposed substitute service for that particular line?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I know that one particular firm in the State is carting loads at 5d. a ton mile and is maintaining its own roads. If that were done on a big enough scale—say under contract—at somewhere near that rate, it would be close to the actual average cost of railway operation.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: Where is that? Meekatharra?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Yes; I am talking of the Meekatharra-Horseshoe section.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: They are going broke.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I am talking of Bell Bros.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker: They have let it to sub-contractors and they are going broke one by one.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I have interviewed the people concerned, so I know all about it. If there was a large volume of goods and full loads could be guaranteed, rates could be reduced to a low figure. In the off season, when wheat and wool were not available, lighter vehicles could be used, as is done from the railways to the stations. They could start off with full loads; and by the time they had arrived at their destination, most of the loads would have been delivered. On the return journey they could pick up their loads as they went along; but, of course, using that system involves a higher rate because there is not a full load right through. There could be a differentiation of rates according to the type of service rendered. The bulk service could be used during that time of the year when heavy traffic was available.

I suggest that these questions deserve serious consideration. In view of the dropping prices for our primary commodities, and the need carefully to consider these different schemes, I think we should ask what the cost will be before we embark on any future plans. I support the Bill.

HON. H. K. WATSON (Metropolitan) [2.58]: We have just listened to a very comprehensive and, I think, valuable contribution to this debate by Mr. Simpson. I am afraid that my contribution will be almost as unfruitful as that of the Chief Secretary when he introduced the Bill.

The Chief Secretary: I am hoping to get £15,000,000; that is how fruitful I am.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I want to refer to matters of less magnitude, but still of considerable importance to the community—a number of irritants which are to be found in the Stamp Act. I would suggest to the Government that the Stamp Act—which, as most members know, has been in operation for many years—be amended. At one time stamp duty was a principal source of revenue to the Government. We had stamp duties in this State long before we had income tax; and in those days it was understandable that stamp duties were levied on a variety of documents, acts, and operations. But, over the years, with the imposition of income tax, stamp duties have become relatively unimportant. The Act has not been reviewed or altered. I would suggest to the Government that it looks at the Act with a view to removing some of the irritants contained therein. I am satisfied that the amount of revenue so derived is negligible. These duties are sources of irritation to the commercial and individual communities of this State.

Another point which may be examined is the duty imposed on interstate cheques. As long as a cheque is stamped in one State, there should not be any need to impose a double stamp duty. On a recent visit to New Zealand, I found that the payment of stamp duties on receipts was entirely

unknown in that country. There a person can make a payment and complete a transaction without chasing around for the duty stamp. They expressed surprise at the way we carry on business in this State. I was informed that the Treasury officials of that country had gone into the question of stamp duty on receipts, but they reckoned that the revenue to be derived was not worth the cost of collection.

The payment of stamp duty on receipts varies a fair bit throughout Australia. In most of the Eastern States the duty is a straight-out penny or a half-penny; but, in Western Australia, the first £1 is exempt. This provision was made in 1900. There is a duty of one penny for amounts up to £25; twopence from £25 to £50; and then threepence for every £100 or part thereof. I would ask the Government to consider simplifying and easing the stamp duties which are imposed in this State. If it was reasonable to exempt payment on amounts up to £1 in 1900, then it should be reasonable to exempt payment on the first £5 or £10 today. Further, it would simplify matters if one single amount were imposed, as is imposed on cheques.

The Stamp Duty Act warrants amendment in another direction, and that is the exemption from stamp duty of receipts for wages. At the moment the Act provides that a receipt for wages does not require stamping where the amount is £5 a week or less. That provision was inserted in the Stamp Act at a time when £4 a week was the standard wage.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: In those days, £5 a week was a good wage.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: Yes; and £4 was the standard wage. In fact, the intention of that provision was to exempt all wages and salaries from the payment of stamp duty. Although that exemption was made in bygone days, we find that today the exemption is still limited to £5, which in practice means no exemption. I would suggest to the Government that between now and the end of the session it review the Stamp Act, particularly on the question of stamp duty on receipts for wages. My own opinion is that no stamp duty should be payable on receipts for wages and salaries. If the Government does not agree with this view, then I suggest it should make the exemption reasonable so as to exempt all salaries up to £15 or £20 a week.

At an earlier stage in the session, I drew attention to another anomaly in the Act, and that related to transfers on shares in ordinary companies. The ad valorem rate is 5s. per £100. Stamp duty on building society shares, however, is £1 per £100. I understand the Chief Secretary has not overlooked that point.

On the question of charges under the Stamp Act, and on the incidental question of assisting home-building and enabling people to acquire their own homes,

it does appear to me that, even though the Stamp Act is recognised as a revenue producer on the principle that Governments must have revenue, when a wage-earner purchases a house for £3,000 the amount of £30 stamp duty charged on the transfer is too high. It is not the amount paid in fees when putting a transfer through; that amount is paid separately. When a person buys a house he has to pay £3 to £5 to the Titles Office, over and above the stamp duty of £1 per £100.

The £30 stamp duty charged for purchasing a £3,000 house is far too heavy. A person pays this amount under the general charge described in the Stamp Act as duty on conveyances of any kind—£1 per £100—and whilst I realise it is difficult to particularise, some consideration should be given to exempting home purchasers from the payment of £30 stamp duty on a £3,000 house. Consideration should be given to either relieving or reducing the amount of duty. The Government has come out with all sorts of schemes and subsidies to assist home-owners. It seems to me that the suggestion I have put up is a simple and practical method under which the Government can make a very effective contribution to reducing the cost of housing and encouraging people to own their own homes.

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

BILL—MOTOR VEHICLE (THIRD PARTY INSURANCE) ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 19th October.

HON. H. HEARN (Metropolitan) [3.10]: One is constantly reminded of the passage of time, as illustrated the other morning when I woke up and said, "By jove it is workers' compensation day." We are getting workers' compensation Bills so regularly that we can almost count the seasons by the introduction of such measures.

The Minister for the North-West: We must keep up to date.

Hon. H. HEARN: Yes; we are trying to keep up to date. In speaking on workers' compensation, it is very difficult to say anything fresh because, when one looks back over the speeches that have been made, one finds that all the points have been covered previously. So, for the benefit of the newer members of this House, I want to quote something I said previously. This is recorded on page 1567 of "Hansard," Volume 135, of November, 1953.

This quotation at least gives my own personal approach to the question of workers' compensation, I then said—

Before considering the effects of the Bill on primary and secondary industries, we should endeavour to clear up some of the confused thinking which surrounds the question of workers' compensation. Why is there a Workers' Compensation Act? There is no pedestrian Act; there is no Act giving benefits to the person who is injured during his normal activities away from his employment. Such people must sue under common law and prove negligence before they can obtain any compensation.

A worker who is injured through the negligence of his employer has his remedy at common law, but since it was found that most workers were injured either through pure accident or through their own negligence, and so had no claim on anyone, it was rightly decided to bring in a provision to allow for workers to be tided over the time of their troubles. Because their families had no just or legal claim on anyone, it was vital, in a community such as ours, that workers' compensation should be introduced.

Then came the question of who would pay—the Government or the employer. As is customary, it was decided that the employer should pay. When the Workers' Compensation Act was passed, and for many years afterwards, it was acknowledged that the benefits of the Act were a gift made with the express purpose of sustaining the worker through his incapacity. It was never intended to give him full payment for his loss. It was not acknowledged that he had any right to full benefits. It was something to keep him going, as are the social services and unemployment benefits of the present day.

It is only in recent years that we have heard of the workers' right to full compensation, and it is only in recent years that we have seen the principle of relief through workers' compensation, confused with the much older and more just rights under common law. I repeat that workers' compensation is something given to a worker who is injured through the fault of no one, unless it be himself. If any other person is at fault, then the worker has his full remedy in common law. Bearing in mind that in this Bill we, as members of a legislature, are asked to confer the benefits, for which primary production, secondary industries and the rate-payers generally are paying, it would be just as well if we examined the contents of the measure.

That is still my approach to the problem of workers' compensation. The Chief Secretary, in moving the second reading, gave no reason for the increased benefits, beyond saying that all of such benefits were much higher in the other States. I was really amazed that the Minister did not deal with the question of the economic ability of the State to pay these increases, because, after all, it is like Mr. and Mrs. Smith buying a new motor car, and so Mr. and Mrs. Jones must have one, too. I am afraid that that is the principle upon which this Bill has been introduced; and I feel that the Chief Secretary, as the Leader of this House, should have given some information as to the reasons, quite apart from what is being done in the other States, why we should at this stage of our economy increase the benefits under workers' compensation.

One must bear in mind that the honeymoon is over. I believe that business people, primary producers, and commercial interests generally realise that we are now facing up to real problems concerning costs of production in comparison with selling prices, and are also fighting in a very competitive fashion, and almost with backs to the wall, to maintain satisfactory turnovers in order to secure results which must be shown if industry is going to progress and continue to employ its full ratio of labour.

The Minister for the North-West: We have heard that said for the last five years.

Hon. H. HEARN: Yes, and if the Minister studies the figures, he will find that we are getting closer to the day of reckoning. Sooner or later we shall have to face, for the sake of everybody—the worker as well as the so-called capitalist—the question of the stabilisation of money values.

Let us look at one or two of the reasons which I suggest should at least give the Government food for thought before it becomes too prodigal with the benefits under this phase of insurance. I remind members that the largest single employer of labour in this State is the Government itself. It seems to me that we have possibly lost our keen sense of perception since we have been going to Canberra once a year to get a hand-out, and evidently on many occasions the only thing that is of vital interest to the Government is to get its proposals legalised in order that it may receive the attention of the Grants Commission.

Every member knows that the future of wheat is causing people engaged in the industry much anxiety, and those of us who wish to see the State continue in a prosperous way must of necessity feel considerable concern. Unquestionably Western Australia's economy depends mainly

upon wheat and wool. Our income from wheat exports in 1953-54 was only one-quarter of what it was in 1952-53. The forecast is that the harvest this season will be poor and that the wheat market will remain rather depressed. If the estimates prove to be correct, Western Australia will be able to sell only one-half of its current crop, and by the end of next harvest, will have the equivalent of 1½ seasons' production held in storage.

According to the statistical abstract, Western Australia's income from wheat exports in 1952-53 was £23,173,000, and for 1953-54, the total fell to £5,635,000. The same story applies to meat. The income from gold exports from Western Australia has again shown a downward trend. According to the abstract, the income from gold exports in 1952-53 was £12,399,000, and on the 22nd October we were told that the income for 1953-54 would be roughly one-half of that figure, or £6,615,000. In the 12 months the State's balance of trade has changed from a surplus of £14,652,000 in 1952-53 to a deficit of £33,560,000.

Therefore I say that such a measure as this must of necessity prove to be a levy on industry and, through industry, a levy upon the general population of the State; and because of this, one would have expected the Chief Secretary to give at least some picture of the current trends in the economy of the State.

Once again the Minister in his speech endeavoured to confuse the issue by referring to the high amount of damages being awarded under common law claims arising from motor-vehicle accidents. I observe that he did not make any mention of the many claims that had been made and had failed because the plaintiffs were unable to prove negligence against the other parties. Workers' compensation has no relationship to such claims. The benefits under this Act are given to the worker even when he is the careless or negligent party. Because of this and because the generous conditions under the Act are so open to abuse, it is reasonable to say that the benefits payable should be kept to at least reasonable amounts.

For the next few minutes, I should like to examine some of the amendments proposed in the Bill. In Clause 2, it is provided that any worker on compensation when the measure becomes law shall receive payment of weekly compensation or lump sum at the increased rates, despite the fact that his injury was caused before the passing of the measure. There is no need for me to tell members that this is contrary to the long-established and proper rule of law that no legislation should be given retrospective effect. It would increase the liability for outstanding claims against the Government, the insurance companies and the self-insurers.

In this regard, we were given no information by the Chief Secretary as to what these proposed increases were likely to cost. Admittedly the Minister in his speech did quote the opinion of the manager of the State Government Insurance Office to the effect that the whole of the increased benefits proposed would cost approximately 22½ per cent. I was interested to note that the Chief Secretary covered himself by saying that he had no doubt that those figures would be strongly contested. They will be because they are not entirely correct. I would challenge the Chief Secretary to be able even to hazard a guess as to what the cost of the retrospective provisions in the Bill would be.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: You are challenging the opinion of the State Insurance Office manager.

Hon. H. HEARN: I say it is impossible for the manager of the State Insurance Office to give us any reliable information. I maintain that the 22½ per cent. quoted in good faith by the Chief Secretary is very wide of the mark. I have made a few inquiries; and I consider that, when making general statements, one should particularise to the extent of proving them. The increase in weekly payments proposed in the Bill will cost 11 per cent. extra; the journey-to-and-from clause, which we have discussed on previous occasions, will, in the opinion of people with long experience of that obnoxious provision in workers' compensation, mean an increase of 6.9 per cent. I have allowed 6 per cent. The lump-sum settlement increase would represent 8 per cent. and the increases in death benefits, 1 per cent. Those figures amount to 26 per cent. without allowing for the retrospectivity, which is one of the most expensive phases of the Bill.

Therefore I challenge the Chief Secretary to prove to the satisfaction of the House that the statement of the State Insurance Office manager is correct. His statement was that the increases under the Bill would represent 22½ per cent. The weekly payments under workers' compensation cost 51 per cent. of the premiums paid. Thus with at least a 30 per cent. increase, we can see where we are heading. I must say it was very refreshing to find that the manager of the State Insurance Office had agreed at last that these increases would necessitate increased premiums, because on other occasions that point has been strongly denied.

I have tried to obtain some idea—it is a very difficult matter—as to what the cost would be for the outstanding claims. In the brief time at my disposal, the only thing I could do was to request six of the largest companies to take out figures for 50 consecutive finalised claims of recent origin and show the percentage increase that would be involved if the Bill were passed in its present form. The average for the six companies was 22.04 per cent.,

the highest being 27 per cent. and the lowest 19 per cent. This percentage refers to weekly benefits only, as it would appear that the second schedule increases represent approximately 60 per cent., and the only way to get a true picture would be to take claims experience over a period of 12 months from all companies, and time did not permit of that being done.

Clause 3 of the Bill seeks to extend the definition of "worker" to cover employees whose remuneration is not in excess of £2,000, instead of £1,250 under the existing Act. The practice of most employers is to cover the whole of their workers, irrespective of their remuneration; but by arrangement with the insurance companies, they pay only on the wage of £1,250, which is the maximum at present to bring a man under the definition of "worker". If this provision is agreed to, the net result will be that industry, and through industry the taxpayers, will make a substantial donation to such a place as the new building now being erected in St. George's Terrace.

This provision will hit the goldfields particularly because in that area we have mines that are working and marketing a commodity of such a nature that they cannot pass on their costs. Today, every man in the mining industry, no matter whether he is on piecework or daywork, is insured, up to the limit of £1,250; and, subject to the limiting clauses of the weekly payments, who will receive any advantage—except the assurance companies—from the raising of the figure to £2,000 per year? This is a question that the House must consider seriously.

Clauses 3 and 4 deal with dependants overseas. Members will recall that when a similar measure was debated last year, we went carefully into this question and gave what we felt was a fair concession for the dependants of workers overseas. It was then the feeling of members that if persons had come to this country and lived here for five years without bringing their dependants here, we could safely assume that it was at least problematical whether those dependants would ever come to Australia; and so, in our wisdom or foolishness, according to the point of view, we incorporated in that Bill, which ultimately became part of the parent Act, provision to pay compensation in all its phases up to five years—

The Minister for the North-West: That was agreed to in conference.

Hon. H. HEARN: That is so; but the question was debated fully in this Chamber, and those of us who took part in the conference had the feelings of the House on the matter. At present, if a worker has lived in the State for less than five years, his dependants in any country are entitled to all the benefits under the Act; and if he has lived in the State for over five years, his dependants,

not living in the State, are entitled to any benefits payable on his death so long as they reside in the Commonwealth of Australia, in any Dominion of the Crown, or in any country with reciprocal legislation which has been declared by Order in Council. Paragraph (a) of Clause 3 and Clause 4 seek to empower the Governor by Order in Council to extend the benefits to a worker's dependants living in any declared country, which means that the compensation could, by order in Council, be sent to any part of the world. Members must give due consideration to that aspect. I do not object to the payment of benefits to dependants in a country that has reciprocal legislation, but I feel that the payment should be limited to those countries only.

Clause 5 is our hardy annual, and is known as the "journey clause." It seeks to make the employer liable for injury to the worker at a time when he has no control over the worker's actions. The employer cannot tell the employee where to live, or how to travel to and from work; but, notwithstanding that, he is now asked to accept the responsibility for what happens once the worker goes outside his front door—

The Minister for the North-West: That is what we did last night.

Hon. H. HEARN: No; it is entirely different. The employer is asked to accept responsibility for the man who drives a car, and for the careless youth who travels at 60 m.p.h. on a high-powered motorcycle. I wonder whether the Chief Secretary, if he were engaged in business, would feel quite comfortable on going home to his dinner, if he knew that 10 or 11 of his employees were on motor-cycles, and were perhaps staying at one or two places on the way home. In such circumstances, would he have the peace of mind that he should have? I do not think so; but in spite of that, he says that because this provision has been accepted in three prosperous industrial States of the Commonwealth we, who are just about to become industrialised, should face the same responsibility.

The Minister for the North-West: There are many on delivery services who are covered now.

Hon. H. HEARN: Yes; but is it not thought that, in view of the small cost, the worker himself should accept the responsibility? What is wrong with that? Under a similar provision in other States, the employer has been held liable for the death of a worker who died from heart failure while sitting in a tram. Success has crowned equally fantastic claims by those injured when their bicycles collapsed under them, or when their cars capsized through the breakage of a wheel. There is no need for this provision. The worker who, through the negligence of others, suffers injury between his home and the

factory or place of work, has his remedy at common law; and the worker who is injured as a result of his own negligence is no more entitled to a preferential claim than is any other citizen.

A further thought that I will leave with members in relation to this phase is that, by adopting this provision, we would only be taking on some of the liability for which the Commonwealth social services were founded. The additional expense will be very real. The journey claims in New South Wales last year came to 6.9 per cent. of the total claims paid. We have been told that this extra benefit is extended in other States, but I repeat that they are the three prosperous industrial States that have included completely the journey provisions. In South Australia and Tasmania, a very minor extension covers journeys to and from technical schools; and I desire to say, here and now, that the insurance companies of Western Australia have always paid any claims for injury by workers or apprentices injured while going from their employer's place of business to a technical school, or on the return journey; and so, without any legislation, our insurance companies have been generous enough to recognise this as part of their liability. Sometimes, when we are told how lacking in conscience our big financial corporations and businesses are, we should remember that occasionally, as in this instance, they show a spark of human kindness.

The Minister for the North-West: Then they would have no objection to this provision.

Hon. H. HEARN: No, because it is already the practice; and for that reason I see no need to include it, although I have no objection to it. A dissection of journey claims in New South Wales makes interesting reading, and will give an idea of what we can expect if the provision is accepted here. For the year 1953, there were 226 accidents caused by trains; while motor-vehicles—including motor-cycles—caused 853. I would inform the Chief Secretary that all of these 853 persons must have been in the wrong because none of them attempted to recover at common law anything of the fantastic damages given them, the whole of the 853 being paid by industry. How stupid it is, if a man can get £2,000 at common law, to go to the Workers' Compensation Board and get the meagre amount available there! I therefore suggest that there is another side to this question of comparing workers' compensation with what people can claim at common law.

The next two items are very thought-provoking. The accidents caused by "other vehicles" numbered 971, and falls were responsible for 1,173. I wonder where the falls took place. They might have taken place anywhere, but some bar floors are

very slippery. Other causes accounted for 206 out of the total of 3,429 claims. I repeat that the employers feel that it is grossly unfair and unjust to hold them responsible for the workers when the workers are out of their control. They cheerfully accept any obligation for the period while they have control over the men in their employ.

In Clauses 6 and 7 we find an attempt to increase the limit of the employer's liability to pay compensation from £2,100 to £2,800, the limit in South Australia being £2,250; and in Tasmania, £2,350. The proposed increase would naturally add to claim costs. Again, I am disappointed that the Chief Secretary never gave any reason for the increase sought, apart from telling us what was being paid in other States. I say that if a real case could be put forward and substantiated, we would prove to be fairly reasonable people.

As time is getting on, I will deal next with the Second Schedule. Members will recall that last year, after a great deal of investigation in an endeavour to find some scientific basis for the adjustment of existing anomalies, Dr. Hislop put forward a Second Schedule. It was passed by this House, but was objected to at a conference of managers, and finally went out of the Bill. The time is long overdue when something should be done about the Second Schedule. The Government has not given us the information on which we could come to satisfactory conclusions; but I inform members that when the Bill has been read a second time, it is my intention to move for the appointment of a select committee to study the Bill, with special regard to the Second Schedule. That schedule should be completely overhauled in order to do justice to the worker and the employer and, through him, the taxpayers of the State.

There is no desire on the part of employers to chisel down the genuine case where a worker has been injured and, because of an injury, suffers a deficiency for the rest of his life. Undoubtedly, in the Second Schedule there are items on which we are today not paying sufficient; and it is equally true that there are also some instances where we are overpaying. We feel that the necessary evidence should be brought, and that a select committee should inquire into this question, so that when the measure reaches the Committee stage we shall be able to incorporate in it a Second Schedule that will do credit to Parliament and to those bringing it forward, and justice to the people who are to receive the benefits. I am going to support the second reading of the Bill, but I have already mentioned that at the appropriate time I will move for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into it.

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

BILL—ARGENTINE ANT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [3.46] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to authorise the collection and expenditure of funds for the control and eradication of Argentine ants. Because it was considered that the powers conferred on its officers under the Health Act were best suited to deal with the pest, responsibility for the control of Argentine ants was assumed by the Public Health Department in 1949.

Since 1941 the pest has spread rapidly and become a serious domestic nuisance. It is estimated that at March, 1954, the infested areas totalled approximately 40 square miles. While most of this infestation is in the metropolitan area, the ants are known to be distributed throughout the South-West and at places including Albany, Bunbury, Manjimup, Katanning, Harvey, Mandurah, Cranbrook, Rockingham, and Kalamunda. While outbreaks are recorded at these centres it is certain that more intensive surveys would reveal their presence in other centres.

D.D.T. has proved a fairly effective insecticide against the pest and was used in 1950 and 1951, when attempts were made to minimise the nuisance by spraying streets and public property and by supplying insecticides and bait at cost for the treatment of private property. However, an attempt to eradicate the pest in 1950 by using D.D.T. as a blanket spray over a large area was not successful. While this afforded householders some relief, it did not stop the spread of the ants; and at the time the Government was faced with the expenditure of £20,000 to £30,000 annually with little hope of either controlling or reducing the area of infestation.

Following promising experimental work with chlordane in 1951, a new eradication campaign was planned for the summer of 1952-53. Under this plan, large areas at South Perth and Bunbury were treated with chlordane with such satisfactory results that the Government was advised to embark on the treatment of all infested areas. At the same time it became obvious that special legislation would be necessary to control and finance the organisation of an eradication campaign. It was decided that because the diversion of public health personnel to ant control would interfere with the function of the Public Health Department, the control of the scheme should be transferred to the Department of Agriculture, which already had a staff of qualified entomologists. Another point affecting the change-over was the fact that the Argentine ant is not considered a danger to public health, but mainly constitutes a household nuisance at present.

On assuming control for the 1953-54 summer, the Department of Agriculture carried out a programme with the following aims:

- (a) prevention of re-invasion of the experimental area at South Perth,
- (b) prevention of dissemination of ants from market gardeners and woodyards,
- (c) treatment of Government buildings,
- (d) provision of spraying material to local authorities and individuals at cost.

The evidence gained from the two experiments at Bunbury and South Perth proved to be sufficiently strong to warrant the recommendation of a programme of eradication at a cost of £500,000 spread over five years.

In order to give further consideration to the financial side of this recommendation, the Minister arranged for a conference to be held on the 10th February this year, and invited the attendance of representatives of local governing authorities and the Department of Agriculture. At this conference the following resolution was carried unanimously:—

"That this conference request the responsible Minister to appoint a committee to examine and recommend proposals for legislation to be submitted to Parliament empowering the Government to collect the funds necessary to control and eradicate the Argentine ant. Such a committee to embrace representatives from the Local Government Association, the Road Board Association and the Country Municipal Councils' Association."

Following this the Minister took immediate steps to appoint a representative committee, at the same time providing for suitable Government representation. This consisted of the following:—

- Director of Agriculture.
- Deputy Director of Agriculture.
- Government Entomologist, Dept. of Agriculture.
- Chief Administrative Officer, Department of Agriculture.
- Chief Health Inspector, Public Health Department.
- Two members of the Road Board Association.
- Two members of the Local Government Association.
- Country Municipal Councils' Association.
- Perth City Council.

The Bill now under consideration was drafted after meetings of this committee. A circular letter outlining the proposed scheme and advising each local governing body of its respective contribution for the 1954-55 season was sent to country road boards and municipalities in the

South-West Land Division, by the Director of Agriculture, and this was supported by a further circular sent out by the Road Board Association. The proposed scheme has the whole-hearted support of all local authorities affected.

In order to authorise the contribution by local authorities from general rates in the current financial year it has been necessary to make the measure retrospective to the 1st July, 1954. I trust the House will be tolerant with the retrospective provisions of this legislation when it is considered.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: It is a bad principle, is it not?

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: It depends on who is affected, I am afraid. This also enables local authorities to make provision for the money when preparing their budgets. The scheme will commence from this date and the Bill provides for it to operate for a period of five years.

On the recommendation of the committee, the Minister may extend the scheme for a period not exceeding six months by publishing a notice in the "Government Gazette." It is possible that at the end of the five-year period isolated pockets of ants will exist, and the only sensible thing is to continue until these are completely eradicated. That is the reason for this provision. All local authorities situated in the South-West Land Division as defined in the Land Act will be covered.

The Bill proposes to set up a committee to be known as the Argentine Ant Control Committee which will consist of five members, four of whom will be nominated, while the fifth will be an ex-officio member and will be the Director of Agriculture, who will also act as chairman.

Provision is made for the Minister to invite nominations from the City of Perth, the Local Government Association of W.A., the Country Municipal Councils' Association of W.A. and the Road Board Association of W.A., and the nominee members will then be appointed by the Governor. Each body represented may appoint a deputy; and in the case of the ex-officio member, the Minister will appoint a deputy. All members will hold office for the duration of the scheme, but the Governor will have power to remove a member from office for various reasons.

Subject to the Minister the functions of the committee will be as follows:—

- (a) administration of the Act;
- (b) formulating and carrying out the scheme;
- (c) purchase or hire equipment and purchase materials;
- (d) employ personnel to carry out the scheme;
- (e) enter into contracts;

- (f) delegate any of its powers to local authorities;
- (g) authorise expenditure from the Fund.

A fund known as the Argentine Ant Control Committee Fund will be established, and the estimated expenditure each year must not exceed £105,000. The fund will be made up by contribution from the Treasurer up to a maximum of £35,000, the Agriculture Protection Board, £4,000; and local authorities, £66,000. When the estimated expenditure is below £105,000, the contributions will be reduced on the same ratio to the maximum. The committee will assess the amount payable by the local authorities.

The maximum contribution in the Bill for infested districts is $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ on the unimproved capital value of a property, or $\frac{5}{8}$ d. in the £ on the annual value of the property. That figure did not seem correct to me, but on checking the file I find that apparently it is.

Hon. E. M. Davies: I thought it was to be 2d. in the £.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Well, it is now to be $\frac{5}{8}$ d. In the case of districts that are not declared infested, the maximum contribution will be one-sixth of a penny in the £ on the unimproved capital value of a property or five-sixths of a penny in the £ on the annual value of the property. The 1952 valuations will be used for the purpose of the Bill and not present-day valuations. Property that is rateable under the Vermin Act, 1919, will be exempt from further contribution under this Bill. Each local authority will raise its share of the contribution to the fund by imposing rates within the maximums mentioned previously on rateable property in its district. Infested districts will be declared from time to time by the Minister by notice in the "Government Gazette."

While the committee will carry out its work with as little inconvenience and damage as is practicable, it must have certain powers such as right of entry, and authority to have certain instructions carried out; and where such instructions are not carried out within a specified period, the committee will be able to do the work and recover expenses in a court of competent jurisdiction.

The usual provision exists for the Governor to make regulations for effectually carrying out the objects and purposes of the Bill, as well as prescribing penalties for any breaches. That covers the provisions contained in the Bill, and I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [3.57] in moving the second reading said: This Bill provides for four small amendments to the principal Act. The first is to clarify the meaning of paragraph (f), Subsection (3) of Section 53 of the Act. This paragraph specifies it shall not be necessary for the driver of "any internal combustion engine or engines having an area of cylinder, or combined area of cylinders, not exceeding 200 square inches," to obtain an internal combustion engine driver's certificate.

The words in the Act do not properly meet the intention of the Act, which was to exempt from the necessity of obtaining a certificate the driver of any internal combustion engine or group of engines, when under the charge of one driver, if the area of the engine or the combined area of the engines does not exceed 200 square inches. The proposal in the Bill will rectify this. As well as meeting the intention of the Act, it also expresses the actual policy that is carried out by the Inspection of Machinery Branch of the Mines Department.

It is considered that the driver of an engine or group of engines of more than 200 square inches cylinder area and which may be coupled to compressors or to generators supplying electric power to switchboards should be a qualified certificated man. Such types are referred to as cabin-controlled cranes. It is to units of this nature that the proposed amendment relates. In such cases, the location of the driver is appreciably above the floor level and distant from the men handling the load that is being transported and positioned.

To prevent a load which is being transported along a workshop bay from fouling any obstruction and thereby perhaps causing a serious accident, the driver, from his restricted position on a crane platform, must exercise more judgment than would be necessary by a person operating a crane from the floor by a pendant control, as the latter is in a more favourable position to observe the height and the line of travel of the load. The speeds of the various motors attached to a pendant-controlled crane are not variable, and consequently have to be kept low.

The second amendment seeks to extend to the drivers of certain overhead travelling cranes the necessity to obtain a crane driver's certificate. Subsection (6) of Section 56 of the Act at present exempts from this provision cranes not fitted with jibs. The proposed amendment seeks to cancel this exemption. In some overhead travelling cranes, movements are controlled by an operator on the floor by means of a

pendant control switch-box hanging from the crane. It is not proposed that drivers of these should be certificated.

In other instances, however, the motions of hoisting, lowering, long travel, and cross traverse are controlled by drivers stationed on control platforms built on to and travelling with the cranes. For example, the crane must not travel along its rails faster than a man's slow walk. In the case of a crane to which the proposed amendment relates, all speeds are variable and under the control of the crane driver. Consequently, it is possible and customary for the various motors of such a unit to work at much higher maximum speeds. The safe employment of these higher speeds requires increased care and judgment on the part of the driver.

Taking all circumstances into consideration, it is deemed, therefore, a necessary precaution in guarding against accident that a driver controlling a crane from a position on the structure should be obliged to prove by examination that his judgment and ability are beyond doubt and be issued accordingly with a crane driver's certificate in substantiation of his qualifications. In conformity with regulations, applicants for such certificates must also pass a medical examination, including eyesight tests.

Overhead travelling cranes are employed for a variety of uses, such as manipulating steel plates, girders, large ladles of molten metal in foundries, masses of machinery, etc. In this State, cranes of this type are installed for capacities ranging generally from two to 15 tons. There are three units of much greater capacities; but these have been installed by an owner purely for plant maintenance; and consequently their use is confined to very infrequent occasions. It is therefore not proposed that conditions requiring certificated control shall apply to any cabin-controlled overhead travelling crane which is used solely for maintenance.

The third amendment would give the necessary authority in Section 82 to prescribe fees for inspection of, and the issue of certificates for, hand-powered cranes which were made subject to the Act in a previous amendment which received assent last December. Fees are authorised for inspections of mechanically powered machinery but, prior to the inclusion of hand-powered cranes within the definition of "machinery" under the Act, all hand-powered equipment being exempt from registration and inspection, provision for charging of fees has hitherto not been necessary.

The last amendment seeks authority for the making of regulations in respect to construction, inspection, maintenance and testing of lifting tackle and gear used in conjunction with cranes and hoists as sling appliances for raising, lowering or transporting loads.

At a coroner's inquest some time ago, the jury included a recommendation in a rider to the effect that regulations should be brought down for the purpose of controlling the lifting of materials. It seems that legislation is necessary to cover these various types of cranes and there is an attempt in the measure to meet the requirements. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—BUSH FIRES.

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. H. L. Roche, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clauses 18 and 37.

In Committee.

Hon. W. R. Hall in the chair; the Minister for the North-West in charge of the Bill.

Clause 18—Restricted burning times:

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Because of an amendment to Section 19, it is necessary to amend Subclause (2) of the clause under consideration in order to make it conform. Accordingly, I move an amendment—

• That after the word "writing" in line 22, page 13, the words "or otherwise as provided in paragraph (a) of Section 19 of this Act" be inserted.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: In view of the amendment that was made to Section 19 last night, it is quite obvious that the Bill would not make sense unless the amendment were carried. Accordingly I raise no objection to it.

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

Clause 37—Local authority to insure certain persons:

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I understand that in the proviso that was added to this clause last night the word "subsection" was used when the word "paragraph" should have been used. Accordingly I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of the proviso inserted by a previous Committee the word "subsection" be struck out and the word "paragraph" inserted in lieu.

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

Bill again reported with further amendments.

BILL—CITY OF PERTH SCHEME FOR SUPERANNUATION (AMENDMENTS AUTHORISATION).

Second Reading.

HON. E. M. DAVIES (West) [4.13] in moving the second reading said: This Bill proposes to amend the City of Perth

Scheme for Superannuation Act, 1941. The Bill has two main purposes. Firstly it proposes, for the wages employees of the council, to introduce a unit superannuation scheme costing 12s. per unit, on a maximum of five units, which would enable a workman, on retirement, to receive a pension of £3 per week. Such a sum would not disadvantage a married man in regard to any pension benefits to which he may be entitled. Then, the Bill seeks to raise the maximum benefits received by salaried officers of the council which are now fixed at a maximum of £8 per week on retirement to £12 per week. It will be noted from the Bill that contributions from salaried officers will be increased by 50 per cent. so that they might gain the maximum superannuation benefit.

The second main object of the amending Bill is to enable the council to subsidise the superannuation pension now received by officers who have retired. Wages employees, who now receive a pension of only 12s. 6d. a week on retirement, will have this amount increased by 50 per cent., making the total amount 18s. 9d. Those salaried officers who now receive a superannuation benefit of £4 a week will be granted an increase of 50 per cent., which will increase this benefit to £6 per week. Those officers who are on a pension in excess of £4 per week will have the amount in excess of £4 per week increased by 25 per cent.

Up to the present time, the widow of a deceased wages employee of the council has been receiving 6s. 3d. as a superannuation benefit, which is half the pension to which her husband would be entitled if he were still living. The Bill now proposes to increase that amount by 50 per cent.—namely, 3s. 1½d. per week, making a total of 9s. 4½d. per week. It is interesting to note that under this new unit pensions scheme, the wages employee contributes only one-third of the cost of a unit and the council contributes two-thirds. The schedule contains two tables showing the payments made by wages employees: one for the men who are contributing to the existing scheme prior to this Act becoming law; and another for the employees who commenced duty with the council after the proclamation of this legislation. Every employee in the service of the Perth City Council will have the option of contributing to the new scheme of superannuation or elect to continue contributing to the present fund. That, in the main, covers the provisions contained in the Bill.

The Perth City Council has also agreed to confer some extra benefits on those employees who have been in its employment for the past ten years and up to 40 years. They will be given certain concessions, which are shown in the new schedule in the Bill, and will be able to receive their

units of superannuation on a much smaller contributing scale than those who will join the scheme after this Bill becomes law.

I have a letter from the Perth City Council, setting out its views, as follows:—

The amendment has two main purposes—firstly, to make available to the wages employees of the council a unit superannuation scheme whereby wages employees of the council may elect to take up units with a superannuation benefit of 12s. per unit up to a maximum of five units and thus enable a workman on retirement to receive a pension of £3 per week. Such a sum would have no disadvantage to a married man in respect of any pension benefits and it is felt that such a scheme would not only be advantageous to the employee but would tend to stabilise the working force of the council and thus secure in the long run a better working staff.

The amendment also seeks to raise the contributing maximum of salaried officers of the council and thus make available an increase in the maximum pension now fixed at £8 per week to £12 per week, and it will be noted that the contributions from officers for a maximum pension will rise by 50 per cent. in order to achieve the new maximum superannuation benefit.

The second main purpose of the amendment is to enable the council to conform to the steps taken by the State Government to subsidise the superannuation pension of officers now retired. It will be recollected that the State Government scheme was amended in order to subsidise retired officers of the State service because of the lower purchasing value of the pound, and the council's proposal is that superannuation pensions up to £4 per week be increased by 50 per cent., viz. up to £6 per week, and that for officers who receive a pension in excess of £4 per week the amount of pension above £4 per week will be increased by 25 per cent. An example of the effect of such an amendment for a man on a £6 per week pension would be that he would receive for the first £4 of his pension an increase of £2, and for the £2 balance of his pension he would receive 10s. making a total increase of pension of £2 10s. and a total pension of £8 10s. per week.

The provisions of the new Bill still permit wages employees of the council to remain in the existing scheme on a basis of contribution dependent upon age to ensure a pension of 12s. 6d. per week on retirement and, for such employees of the Council who elect to remain on this basis and not contribute to the unit scheme, the council

proposes to increase the 12s. 6d. super-annuation pension by 50 per cent., being the same ratio as that for salaried officers, making a total pension of 18s. 9d. per week.

I may point out that the council considers that, although the contribution of wages employees for the pension of 12s. 6d. per week compares with the contribution of similar wages employees in the State Service for an equal benefit, the amount of 12s. 6d. per week as a pension does not provide any incentive for the council's wages employees to remain in the service of the council. Neither does the scheme provide the means whereby a wages employee may make an adequate contribution whilst working for a satisfactory pension on retirement and, therefore, the new unit scheme proposed, which will enable workmen to increase their contributions and their pension benefits up to a maximum of £3 per week, should greatly benefit our wages employees.

If this measure becomes law, the Perth City Council proposes to table regulations for the carrying out of the new scheme. I have a copy of the proposed regulations, and any member who wishes to peruse them may do so. I think I can confidently recommend the Bill to the House. I believe the Perth City Council has endeavoured to do its very best for those in its employ, and the proposed amendments to the Act will be valued by all sections of the Perth City Council. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

House adjourned at 4.21 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 28th October, 1954.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. Bovell and South African Water Supply Inquiries.

Mr. BOVELL: I would like to make a statement. On the 14th July, 1954, as reported on page 465 of "Hansard," the member for Greenough asked the Premier if he would authorise me to make inquiries in Africa regarding water supplies in arid areas. On the 16th July I received a letter from the Premier giving me the necessary authority. For the information of the House, I would like to