Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 4th October, 1927.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read, notifying assent to the undermentioned Bills:—

1, Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment.

2, Judges' Salaries Act Amendment.

3, Northam Municipal Ice Works Act Amendment.

4, Permanent Reserve.

QUESTION—WORKS AND SERVICES, SINKING FUND AND INTEREST.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: Will he supply a return giving the following information relative to the works and services referred to in financial table No. 8, contained on page 1210 of "Hansard," 1926:—1, The amount of—(a) sinking fund, and (b) interest, chargeable against each work or service for the financial year ended June, 1926? 2, The actual amount of—(a) sinking fund, (b) interest, (c) deficiency, or (d) surplus paid into Consolidated Revenue by each of the works or services enumerated, for the financial year ended June, 1926? 3, What was the amount of—(a) sinking fund, (b) interest, that was not paid by or charged to the works and services above-mentioned? 4, And from what source were these amounts paid?

The HONORARY MINISTER (for the Chief Secretary) replied: I suggest that the hon. member, if he requires the information, move for a return in the usual way.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin, read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th September.

HON. J. R. BROWN (North-East) [4.38]: This is the fourth occasion on which a Closer Settlement Bill has been brought before the Chamber. On each of the previous occasions the measure was rejected.

Hon. E. H. Harris: No.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: The first of the Bills was introduced by the Mitchell Government, but owing to a nebulous impression that the whole of the members had to vote for it and that otherwise its passage would be against the Constitution, the measure was rejected.

Hon. E. H. Harris: No.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: Another Closer Settlement Bill introduced by Mr. Colebatch, now Sir Hal Colebatch, went to the Legislative Assembly, and was rejected. In 1924 the Collier Government introduced a Closer Settlement Bill which met with success in another place but was thrown out here.

Hon. E. H. Harris: No. You should be accurate.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: I am accurate. If that Bill was passed, where is the Act?

Hon. E. H. Harris: The Bill was dropped in the Assembly.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: No; the outrageous amendments of members of this Chamber murdered it. Now we have the same measure before us again. From the speeches of various hon. members on the Bill one would imagine that it came not from the Assembly but from spielers, thieves, sharks and land garotters, or from sly practitioners who wanted to "beat" the man on the land for the results of all his work. According to speeches made here, that is the nature of the Bill. The speeches in question were nowise in conformity with the contents of the Bill, but represented the speakers' imaginary ideas as to what its effect would be. No credit is given to the sponsors of the Bill for sincerity or honesty of purpose.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Will the hon. member resume his seat? The hon. member, in criticising the Bill, is indulging in very unparliamentary language. He must not indulge in accusations and misrepresentation with regard to other members. The hon. member may proceed.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: Am I not entitled to assume that the Bill has not been placed before this Chamber by various hon. members as it actually is printed? Am I not in order in saying that various hon. members do not present the Bill as it actually is?

The PRESIDENT: That was not the language used by the hon. member.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: But that was what I wished to convey. We have had a speech from Mr. Holmes, who would paralyse the spine of any doubting Thomas who thought the Bill was going to be carried because he might hold six, or eight, or ten thousand acres of land. The pioneer of 40 years ago no doubt went forth into the wilds and took up land. Then it was as easy to get 10,000 or 12,000 acres as to-day it is to get 200 or 300. The pioneer of the early days built a shack and reared a family. He quarried stone and made bricks and other building materials, and started to build a house, but did not live to complete it. His children, however, did finish the structure; and then his grandchildren put the tiled roof on it. All round that house to-day one finds gardens and lawns, and dairy herds are gathered in the fields; and beyond are the ploughed fields; and beyond still, sheep are grazing on the meadows; and beyond the sheep one finds cattle ready for marketing; and the land beyond this, and that, and the other is the land this Bill wants to get hold of, the land that the holders are not utilising, having bitten off more than they can chew. That is the land affected by the Bill.

Hon. J. Nicholson: The Bill would take the whole of the land from the man.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: No; and the hon. member as a lawyer knows it will not. He should not attempt to put that sort of thing over the House. Mr. Holmes predicts that the word "freehold" is to be erased from the dictionary of Western Australia. I contend the word should not be allowed to appear there. No man has the right to any freehold property, because the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and the people who want to go on the land have a right to live. Why should they be denied access to land merely in order that unborn generations for the next 200 years may have a free title and free license in respect of various lands?

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Why did the Government take the money for the land?

Hon. J. R. BROWN: The Government never got the money. The present holders got their lands for a mere bagatelle, a mere song. Mr. Holmes says freehold is to be wrenched away, knifed away, taken by force. But how did these people get their lands? They paid perhaps 5s. per acre for it; none of them paid as much as 10s. per acre. If they receive £6 or £7 per acre for that land now, are not they well paid? Mr. Holmes says the board under the Bill is going to be a very bad board. One member of it is to be appointed from the Agricultural Department. He has no character at all, he is a waster. Another member is to be appointed from the Lands Department. He is no good. Then one is to be chosen by the Government, and he too will be no good. These three men are to go around the country seeking whom they may devour, tearing away every bit of land from the present holders. The man who makes excuses for a Bill like this, according to Mr. Holmes, must be guilty himself, because the French law says that when a man starts making excuses he is proving himself a guilty person.

Hon. J. Nicholson: "Qui s'excuse, s'accuse."

Hon. J. R. BROWN: I do not care a straw about "sick you" or "sack you." Mr. Holmes has land that he has never seen. I asked him by interjection whether he had not certain ground on which he had never set eyes. I have heard him referred to as a porthole politician, but I never knew before that he had land on which he had never looked. He does not know where some of his land is. This is the land that may be taken away from him. Quite right too; why should it not? Mr. Holmes pointed out that they are going to take a man's land and leave only enough for sustenance for him, and his wife and family. What more does a man want on this earth? For out of that sustenance he can always save a few bob for the picture shows and to get a pot of beer.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Is "sustenance" defined in the Bill?

Hon. J. R. BROWN: I am speaking, not of what is in the Bill, but of what Mr. Holmes said. Mr. Holmes wants to dominate the whole Council and have a Bill hung up waiting his pleasure to come down here

and give his views on it. If Mr. Holmes were to succeed in getting the whole of the votes in the North Province, which he represents, they would not be sufficient to save his deposit in any other electorate.

Hon. H. Stewart: Except that of Mt. Margaret.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: You are talking of another place, whereas I am talking of the Council. Mr. Holmes represents 614 electors.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: We are all equal in the sight of the law.

Hon. H. Stewart: It is a pity there are not 614 in Mt. Margaret.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: We are talking of the Council, not of another place. In any other province, with 614 votes Mr. Holmes would lose his deposit. Out of 68,000 electors on the aggregate rolls for the Council, Mr. Holmes represents 614. The Metropolitan-Suburban Province has 20,389 more electors than are represented by Mr. Holmes.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Are you in favour of a redistribution of seats?

Hon. J. R. BROWN: We are not talking about that. What strikes me is that the man who has most to say in this House, who hoodwinks people and throws dust in the eyes of members——

The PRESIDENT: Order! It is distinctly out of order to make offensive remarks regarding other hon. members. To say that an hon. member is seeking to hoodwink members or throw dust in their eyes is distinctly unparliamentary and out of order. The hon. member must withdraw that.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: But if Mr. Holmes does so, why cannot I say it?

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member must withdraw.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: Very well; I withdraw.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member may proceed.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: If I am to withdraw everything, there is nothing I may proceed with. I wanted to tickle them up a bit more, but you bring me to a dead-end.

The PRESIDENT. While the hon. member is speaking in this House he must observe the Standing Orders. What criticism he wishes to indulge in must be confined to the Standing Orders. He may proceed on those lines.

Hon. J. R. BROWN: It cuts all the ground from under me, because my later remarks would have been more crispy than those I have indulged in. So I have not very much more to say. I only wanted to point out that members take the Bill, put a wrong construction on it, and tell people all these bogey yarns against it. Why should a member say the Bill is going to do this and that, when it is not? The Bill contemplates the appointment of a board. Some members suggest that that is not sufficient. The board has to report to the Minister, and its report must be approved by him. If the Bill is put into operation it will settle the tardy landowner who is sitting back doing nothing, watching his land as it lies idle. If that land is not taken and cut up under the Bill, the day will come when the people will take it by force, seeing that that man has more land than he wants or can use for the maintenance of his wife and family. What more can a man want? I say this land will be taken by force if we have no legislation under which we can provide land for a man that wants it. Mr. Holmes cited the case of a man who, having 6,000 acres of land, was offered £40,000 for it. I bet that man got that land originally for not more than £250.

Hon. E. H. Harris: How much will you bet?

Hon. J. R. BROWN: As much as you will. What is that man, who refused £40,000 for his land, going to do with that land? Why should a man have more land than he can handle? Mr. Holmes declared that the Government would take an estate of 10,000 acres, put six wasters on it and spoon-feed them. The Government will not do anything of the sort. If the Government take any land, they will make it available, not to wasters who require spoon-feeding, but to men who will come from the Eastern States in search of land, men able to pay cash for it. The Government will certainly see that they get their quid pro quo. Resumed land will be given, not to wasters, but to men with money, men who will pay down their cash and then fully utilise the land. If we do not do something like this it will be done by force, and the people will take the idle land. I hope the Bill will pass the second reading. I do not object to any reasonable amendment as, for instance, one providing for an appeal board to decide whether the finding of the Closer Settlement Board is right or wrong; but I do not agree with those members who have said that the Closer Settlement Bill will

"snout" a man, chuck him out of his place, take his freehold and give it to another. Mr. Holmes said he had read the Bill carefully. So have I, but I see nothing of that sort in it. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading, and I hope members generally will do likewise.

HON. SIR EDWARD WITTENOOM (North) [4.55]: I rise with considerable diffidence, because I am certain that anything I can say will be exceedingly tame after the speech we have just listened to. However, I wish to assure the hon. member who has so frankly stated his views that I intend to support the second reading.

Hon. J. R. Brown: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Given certain amendments, I am in favour of the Bill. I have always held that people who own a lot of land without making due use of it should surrender it to those who will more properly use it. But I would not have the owner taxed out of existence or the land confiscated; what I would have done is what I think the Bill intends to do, namely, have the land resumed at market value and disposed of to other men who will use it. When I say I intend to support the Bill, I mean also that I intend to support certain amendments, two of which are already on the Notice Paper. The crux of the Bill is in the words "reasonable use." The question is, what will be considered reasonable use? If the Bill is left as printed it may not be always quite fairly operated, so I think there should be an appeal board. Two of the amendments on the Notice Paper have for their aim the appointment of an appeal board, one being by Mr. Hamersley, and the other by Mr. Baxter. I think I will support the first of the two. Another amendment I should like to see, would appear in Clause 4 where it is provided "if the board is of opinion." I should like to see the word "unanimously" inserted in that phrase. Then it could not be said that two members of the board, perhaps without any great knowledge of the country, had constituted a majority. That seems to me one position upon which we might all agree, when land is to be resumed. The next point is that we should have this appeal board. If a man is given notice that his land is to be resumed because he is not using it to its full economic value, he may entertain views quite different from those of the board, even though the board be unanimous. I know of land that many people would regard as being of no use. Probably they would say, "Plough up this land and sow it with oats or some other similar crop." I have tried the experiment, and have found that after a year or two the land was not of much use for that purpose, although when burnt off every year—it was sandplain, carrying rough scrub—it grew the very best of summer feed. Here is an instance of light land that might be resumed by the board, when the board would be better advised to leave it alone. Then take a man on 2,000 acres, a working man with a large family. He has succeeded in clearing 700 or 800 acres. That man can keep on clearing 100 acres a year, and if he has six or seven children coming on, his desire will be to make provision for them so that by the time they approach maturity there will be a couple of thousand acres prepared for them to work. That is an instance in regard to which it could hardly be said that the land was not being put to reasonable use, because the owner was improving it gradually for the benefit of his growing family. We have heard repeatedly about the immense areas of unoccupied land that ought to be dealt with. What I would like to know is where that land exists.

Hon. H. Stewart: You have been asking that question for the last five years.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Yes, and it has never been answered satisfactorily. At the same time I am prepared to say that if such areas do exist, and if the people are not making the best possible use of them, the provisions of a Bill such as this should be made to apply. I know of hundreds of thousands of acres that could not be put to any possible use at all, and much of that land is close to railways. All the same, there may be some good land, the existence of which I am not aware, that is not utilised, and which could be resumed. The Chief Secretary in the course of an excellent speech said that close to railways there were immense suitable areas that had been left in an unimproved state. I take it that means they are unutilised. Another remark he made was that there were big areas close to existing railways that were practically locked up against settlement. Unfortunately, he did not tell us where they were. If there is all this good land in existence, I hope it will be brought into a state of producton. I have

no wish to be pessimistic, but I cannot refrain from commenting on what has been said in England about our vast territory and the references made to it as though it were all good land. Even so far back as the time when I was Agent General, I heard a great deal about our million square miles of country or its equivalent of 640,000,000 acres. It must seem to people in the Old Country that this is a prodigious area of country for 380,000 people to develop, but those who are familiar with the State are aware that only a part of that immense territory is capable of development. Even Mr. Angwin got himself into hot water for mentioning the fact that we were short of first-class land. The journals of explorers like Forrest, Giles and Warburton tell us what the interior of Western Australia is like, and they never for a moment attempted to lead the people astray by declaring that there were 640,000,000 acres available for development. I quite realise that we have millions of acres of good land and that we should spare no effort to develop it. I shall watch the progress of the Bill closely and in Committee I shall vote for one of the two amendments to which I have referred, and if there are others that appeal to me, I shall give them my favourable consideration.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.5]: With the object of the Bill I am in accord. The object as I understand it is to correct a form of abuse that has grown up in the State, not to the extent to which it has advanced in the other States, but to an extent that has called for legislation for some time past. The abuse to which I refer is that of deliberately keeping in a non-productive state, good land served by public facilities such as railways, and roads and other conveniences we enjoy in these times. It is because of that, that I feel I can support the Bill. I realise, however, there is a marked difference—a sharply defined difference—between the avaricious and grasping individual who takes up land for speculative purposes, and the bona fide agriculturist. The former I look upon as a selfish person who is content to sit down and allow other people to improve their lands so that he may acquire the unearned increment. The man who sets to work and produces from the land he holds is doing something for the country that is worth while and is creating an asset that is, after all, the basis of our national wealth. But for the farmer we would have no credit on which to borrow money. The bona fide agriculturist has brought this country to the present state of prosperity it is enjoying. It is not the man who is sitting down and holding up good areas of land unutilised that has been responsible for our big wheat yields and our rich wool clips. That man does exist and we should have some machinery to enable us to see that he either does what is right by the country, or hands over the land he holds to others who are prepared to work it. I look upon the Bill as anything but a perfect measure and if I thought it was going on the statute book in its present form, I should certainly vote against the second reading. However, I think it can be made a very useful measure and therefore I intend to support the second reading. It is the duty of the Government, where abuses are proved to exist, to endeavour to end them. At the same time the Government should be careful in their endeavour to correct abuses, not to permit others to arise, abuses that will press harshly on the individual. Any Government is on delicate ground when an attempt is made to interfere with property lawfully acquired, and therefore it is essential that the greatest care should be taken in the framing of a measure of this description. The individual who has improved his holding is, above every other man, entitled to the protection of the Government, because it is only by his labour and thrift and by the expenditure of his capital that he has built up a farm for himself. The Government should be very careful not to permit any Bill to become law that will leave the slightest loophole for the penalisation of such an individual. My first objection to the Bill is to Subclause 2 of Clause 2 which reads—

> One member of the board shall be an officer of the Department of Lands and Surveys, and one member shall be an officer of the Agricultural Bank. The third member shall be a practical farmer having local knowledge of the matters under inquiry for the time being, and not in the public service otherwise than as a member of the board.

I contend that the board should be constituted the other way about. Instead of its being composed of two officers of the

Government and a practical farmer, the personnel should be two practical farmers and one representative of the Government. In such cases where the possessions of a person are under consideration, the adjudicators should be practical men who have expert knowledge that will enable them to determine the best that can be got out of the land. For that reason we should have two practical farmers on the board.

Hon. H. Stewart: It would be better to have a representative of the Agricultural Department than the two others.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I am not particular from which department that one representative may be chosen, but it is essential that there should be two practical farmers on the board. The Bill provides that the two Government representatives shall be officers of the Lands and Surveys Department. There is no qualification to the word "officer." The "officer" may be, and probably would be, a man with some knowledge of land, but I notice that there is a distinct qualification in regard to the farmer representative. Because of the word "practical" preceding "farmer," a query is raised in my mind as to the probable capabilities of the other two. I also feel sure that any action taken by the board should be unanimous, because if the board is constituted in the manner proposed, the two Government representatives could always override the one practical farmer, although that farmer may have ten times the knowledge of the other two, and be the only one capable of giving an intelligent opinion. Therefore I consider the clause should be altered. A practical man, as I understand him, is one who is particularly skilled in a certain direction, and has the ability to put his knowledge into effect. There should be something in the Bill to indicate or to make it certain that the officers of the department shall also be practical men. I have an objection to Subclause 3 of Clause 3, which reads—

> Land shall be deemed unutilised within the meaning of this Act, if in the opinion of the board the land, having regard to its economic value, is not put to reasonable use, and its retention by the owner is a hindrance to closer settlement, and cannot be justified.

I recollect that the Chief Secretary, when moving the second reading of the Bill, baulked in a jocular way at the phrase "economic value." He, so to speak, dodged round the hurdle and did not take it at all. I think his words at that stage were, "economic value, whatever that means." I will not attempt to impose a definition of "economic value" on the House, for it might be presumption on my part to do so. I believe, however, that in this application it means the degree to which land can be developed for the production of wealth to the individual and through him to the State. We can reduce it to a still more simple form and say that it means "reasonably developed." The phrase "economic value" is fairly elastic and I believe that if an unscrupulous individual was dealing with a matter and desired to do something that was not quite right, he could easily hide behind the phrase. When we deal with the Bill in Committee, I will suggest a few alterations. On this particular clause I suggest that one of two courses should be adopted. Either we should excise the words "having regard to its economic value" or we should deal with it in another way. If we agree to the excision of the words I have indicated, Subclause 3 of Clause 3 will then read—

> Land shall be deemed unutilised within the meaning of this Act, if in the opinion of the board the land is not put to reasonable use and its retention by the owner is a hindrance to closer settlement and cannot be justified . . . . .

I think that would fairly meet the position particularly in view of the fact that later on in Clause 4 the framers of the Bill practically adopt that definition, for the clause reads—

> If the board is of opinion that any land is unutilised within the meaning of this Act . . . the board shall report in writing to the Minister, and shall state in such report what, in the opinion of the board, is the reasonable use to which the land should be put.

I want to safeguard the bona fide agriculturist and to achieve that end, I suggest the excision of the words I have already indicated. On the other hand, if members do not desire to adopt that course, the interpretation clause should set out definitely what the term "economic value" means in this connection. Either one of the two courses is essential.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The phrase really means the best use to which land can be put.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That is what I think. If the phrase is allowed to remain in the Bill, there may be some confusion. Another matter I would suggest is that in fairness to a man who may hold land that is considered

:o be not reasonably used, he shall, before any action is taken in respect of the land, have some notice indicating that the board is of that opinion. The Bill does not provide for any notice being given to such a man. If the acquisition board has inspected the man's property and arrived at a conclusion, a copy of the report sent to the Minister should be simultaneously handed to the owner of the property. The owner should be given a period of, say, twelve months, within which to set about putting the land to such use as may be recommended by the board to the Minister. If such notice be given to the man and he should take no notice of it, it could be fairly and reasonably assumed that the landowner did not care and did not intend to make adequate use of the land. In such circumstances the Government would be perfectly justified in resuming the land. The lack of provision in the Bill for an appeal has been dealt with by other members and Mr. Baxter has an amendment on the Notice Paper recommending the creation of an appeal board. I believe that is a very necessary provision and we should insist upon some such provision being made in the Bill. As it stands, it is unfair. Particularly will it be unfair if hon. members, in their wisdom, decide that the board shall consist of two Government officers and one practical farmer. Should the Committee insist upon that provision remaining, then more than ever is the provision of an appeal board essential. With the safeguards I have indicated, I believe the measure can be made a perfectly useful one and that the man who is doing a fair thing in regard to the land he holds, will have no need to complain regarding the provisions of the Bill. The utilisation of unused land will be of advantage to everyone. In these days of mechanical road transport largely competing with our railways, it is essential that land served by existing lines shall be brought into productivity. It appears to be wrong to push railways out into the back country before land adjacent to existing railways is properly used. If the Bill be agreed to in the amended form I suggest, I believe it will do something in that direction. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. A. BURVILL (South-East) [5.22]: I support the second reading of the Bill. During the last six years a measure of this description has been twice before the House, once during the regime of the present Government, and once during the Mitchell Government's administration. When the present Government's former Bill was dealt with we included certain amendments that were not acceptable to the Legislative Assembly. When dealing with this question in 1924, I spoke at great length as I considered the Bill was necessary, and I had obtained certain statistics from the Lands Department that served to demonstrate that there was a much greater inquiry than could be satisfied with available land. As a matter of fact, I found out that, especially in the wheat areas, there were from 30 to 90 applicants for each block of land that was thrown open. I will admit that there was a certain amount of duplication, but on making inquiries regarding a number of men with capital who required land and could not get it, I was astonished to find that so many could not secure holdings. No doubt we could overcome that position by opening some of the large estates that are lying practically idle, or else by building additional railways. I do not think anyone can find fault with the present Government for attempting to open up land by means of railways. On the other hand, there is plenty of wheat land that would not represent an economic proposition if we were asked to open such areas without railways. At the same time it cannot be expected that men will make a living on those areas, many miles away from existing railways. All their money would be frittered away in the cost of reaching the railways.

Hon. V. Hamersley: The early settlers had to carry on far away from railways.

Hon. A. BURVILL: I have not great fault to find with the composition of the board especially if the amendments suggested by Sir Edward Wittenoom be agreed to and the decisions of the board made unanimous. It is proposed that one member of the board shall be a representative of the Agricultural Bank. It appears to me that that particular member will be useful, because once land is cut up for closer settlement purposes, bank advances will have to be made to the settlers. A great responsibility will rest with the representative of the Agricultural Bank on the board, because he will know what he must be prepared to advance on the land that has been taken and will know what the land can best be used for. To a considerable extent that board member from the Agricultural Bank will be a safeguard against tak-

ing over land not suitable for closer settlement, and he will also see that the price paid for land is not too high. There is another phase. The members of the board may make a mistake, but there is no provision for an appeal against their decisions. Mr. Glasheen suggested referring the Bill to a select committee to go into that question and one or two other points. I am in favour of that course being adopted. Certainly I will not favour the Bill being disposed of without the measure being amended so as provide for an appeal.

Hon. J. R. Brown: What about an appeal to a judge of the Supreme Court? Would you agree to that?

Hon. A. BURVILL: I will not state who should comprise the appeal board, but most decidedly there should be provision for an appeal. Later on I will deal with one or two instances in which the transactions have not appeared to be quite fair. There are other parts of the Bill that do not seem to be clear. Subclause 3 of Clause 3 refers to land being taken that is not put to reasonable use, having regard to its economic value. The terms are very wide and I think they should be made clear. We should have a much more clear definition, so that we may understand what the clause really means. Later on I will give some particulars about some land that has been cut up and when I comment upon the question, I will illustrate better what I mean. Clause 4 reads, inter alia—

> If the board is of opinion that any land is unutilised within the meaning of this Act, and has so continued for upwards of two years, and should be made available for closer settlement . . . .

The owner of land should have some latitude because there are often considerations that prevent him from progressing with developmental work. Many are willing to put their land to full use but financial troubles or sickness may prevent them from doing so. If the neglect to put the land to its proper use continued for two years, it could be taken away. I consider an amendment should be agreed to giving a land owner two years' notice. There is also scope for an amendment in Subclause 4 of Clause 6. That is the clause under which the landowner is empowered to notify the board of his intention to subdivide and offer his property for sale. The landowner is allowed to do that within a certain period after he has received notification from the board that his land is required for the purposes of closer settlement. I think the board is given drastic power under this heading. It states that the owner shall submit to the board for its approval a scheme for the subdivision of the land, make as, and when required by the board, the surveys of the land, or such portions thereof, as in the opinion of the board are suitable for closer settlement, and cause the subdivisional lots, as required by the board from time to time, to be offered for sale by auction or private contract at such reasonable upset prices and upon such reasonable terms and conditions as the board may approve. If I owned a large estate I should be very chary about undertaking to subdivide it and sell it unless I was sure it would be subdivided in such a way as to enable me to dispose of it. If we adopt such cast iron provisions, the owner will have practically no say as to the manner in which the property shall be subdivided. I agree that a reasonable upset price should be fixed, but it is not right that the owner should have to subdivide his land according to the ideas of the board. What would happen if he disposed of three-fourths of the land and could not sell the rest? He would be placed in a very awkward position. That clause should be amended.

Hon. V. Hamersley: How would it apply to the Midland Railway Company as the owners of land?

Hon. A. BURVILL: There are two other points. The Bill should provide definitely that no land at a greater distance than that accepted as a reasonable distance, namely, 12½ miles, should be resumed for closer settlement, unless it is land that will be served by a railway already authorised and to be built in the near future. It is the accepted policy of the Agricultural Bank not to grant advances on land situated more than 12½ miles from a railway, and there should be a safeguard against the board resuming land for closer settlement if it is situated beyond that distance. In districts where the land is devoted to the raising of wheat and sheep, a definite minimum area should be fixed for estates that may be resumed. The same applies to the South-West. In that part of the State there might be 8,000 or 10,000 acres of very rich land put to very little use, and it would be reasonable to resume it for the reason that it was not being properly utilised. To resume a similar area in the wheat belt, however, might not be a good proposition. I mentioned 10,000 acres, however, not as a suit-

able figure but merely to illustrate the point that a minimum area should be stipulated in the Bill. Touching on the constitution of the board, the errors into which they are likely to fall and the need for legislation of this kind, let me give three instances. The Ongerup district provides a very fair illustration of the mistakes that may be made by departmental officers. When the district was settled many years ago the settlers were advised to grow wheat. After that they kept cows, and subsequently they utilised the land for sheep. I believe it is a fact that, after the experience of the department, it is very difficult for settlers in the Ongerup district to secure an advance from the Agricultural Bank. The whole trouble was that the officials and the settlers who went there in the first place did not understand the land or the proper method of working it. This season, however, the Ongerup settlers have as good an average of wool per sheep as have those in any other part of the State, and as to wheat I doubt whether there is any district where the crops are better. That shows the need for accepting the advice of Government officers with caution, and it shows the liability of the officials to make mistakes. It is one of the reasons why we should provide for an appeal board. The Palinup estate provides an example of one of the most successful schemes of closer settlement we have. Palinup is situated on the Tambellup-Ongerup line, the blocks were settled by returned soldiers, and every settler has proved successful. If we could always get closer settlement areas like Palinup, everything would be satisfactory. The Kendenup estate, I understand, was offered to the Government some years ago, but was not accepted. Consisting of 47,325 acres, situated about 50 miles from Albany, it was bought by a man named Edmunds for £33,000. He sold it to a company managed by the late Mr. De Garis for £50,000. To sell the estate cost £14,000, bringing the total cost to £64,000. I realise that a good deal of this is ancient history, but I wish to make the point that the estate was subdivided at fairy heavy expense into small holdings of 33 acres and upwards, not sufficient to enable the settlers to make a living unless they put their holdings under intense culture. The land was sold at high prices, because the settlers thought they had a guarantee of certain prices for their produce—£10 a ton for potatoes, 2½d. a lb. for tomatoes, a fixed price for fruit and, in fact, good prices for everything over a period of 10 to 15 years. The subsidiary company that guaranteed the prices broke down, and the company that sold the land also broke down on that guarantee. Both companies were managed by the same man. The result was that a number of settlers, after investing their money in blocks at Kendenup, had to leave the district. A number of settlers remained, and their desire is to increase the area of their holdings. The trouble is they cannot get additional areas at a reasonable price. It seems to me that legislation of this kind might be made to apply to the settlers at Kendenup. The debenture holders, however, have money in the estate and they want to get it back. They invested as a speculation. At one time I believe it was calculated that the estate would realise £450,000, and would yield a net return of £302,000. What it has returned to date I do not know, but I am aware that the settlers will be squeezed out unless they can increase their holdings. The trouble is that they cannot increase their holdings unless they pay extortionate prices to the representatives of the debenture holders who have the estate in hand. If we had legislation of this kind on the statute-book, it might have the effect of preventing similar ventures in the future. I intend to support the Bill. I hope a select committee will be appointed to consider its provisions, but failing that I hope amendments will be made in the direction I have indicated.

HON. SIR WILLIAM LATHLAIN (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.41]: Let me say candidly that I do not entertain the pessimistic views regarding the probable effect of this measure that are held by Mr. Hamersley and Mr. Holmes. We should take a broad view of such legislation and consider it not only from the viewpoint of the State but from a Federal and an Empire viewpoint. To us has been entrusted a great inheritance and, while we are privileged to enjoy its benefits, a serious obligation rests upon us to ensure that the land is developed to its fullest possible extent. It is our bounden duty to settle the land with our own people, not in the years that are to come but during the years in which we occupy it. In the first place, we took the land by force from people whom we considered to be inferior to ourselves, and unless we develop it, we may prove to be unfitted to hold it and another race may

contest our right to retain it. Mr. Holmes stressed the sanctity of the contract. Everyone admits it, but surely there are two sides to every contract. Though, in the contracts in question, there may be no written stipulation about developing the land, there is a moral obligation upon holders of the land to develop it in the interests of the State and of the Empire, if only for the mutual defence of all the people. Mr. Glasheen likened Mr. Holmes to one of the old feudal barons. I cannot say whether his simile was apt, but may I remind members that even the old feudal barons insisted upon development. The greatest teacher of all time gave us one of the best illustrations when he spoke the parable of the talents. A rich man, probably one of the feudal barons, was about to leave for a far country. He called his servants together and distributed amongst them his goods and chattels. To one he gave five talents, to another two talents and to another one talent, and let me remind members that no obligation was imposed upon any of the servants. On his return he summoned his servants to give an account of their stewardship. The man who received five talents rendered unto his lord five talents more; and the man who had received two talents also rendered unto his lord two more talents than he had received. The one who had been given one talent said unto his lord, "Lord, I knew thou wert an hard man, and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth." And his lord said unto him, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I would have received my own with usury. Take, therefore, the talent from him and give it to him that hath the ten talents." In my opinion that is what this Bill is intended to bring about. The moral to be drawn is that those people who hold this land and are not developing it are to be likened to the wicked and slothful servant. If they do not intend to develop it, let us give their land to those who do intend to do so.

Hon. W. T. Glasheen: That applies also to the city.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: It applies anywhere. Mr. Holmes stated that many of these estates were gifts from the Crown. My reply is that many of the first generation who received these gifts did little or nothing with them. Many of those of the second and third generation did not deserve them. If people have developed their gifts, they have nothing to fear from the Bill, but if they have not done so, I say, let us resume them for the benefit of those who are willing to develop them in the best interests of the people as a whole. Under this Bill the slothful servant is in a different position from the man in the parable. The landowner under this Bill will be fortunate enough to receive fair and reasonable compensation for the property he is occupying, but which is not considered to be utilised to its full economic value. The slothful servant in the parable did nothing with his talent, but it was taken from him without any compensation whatever.

Hon. H. Stewart: It was not his; it was given to him in trust.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: There is nothing said about its having been given to him in trust.

Hon. H. Stewart: The other servants were asked to give back their talents.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: They rendered them back.

Hon. H. Stewart: That is evidence of trust.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: The more settlers we have the better will it be for our national defence.

Hon. H. Stewart: Hear, hear to that.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: Mr. Holmes stressed the fact that they do not pay income tax in the same way as the large landowner does. That does not weigh with me. I look upon the Yandanooka settlement as the finest example of closer settlement that exists in any part of Australia. A few years ago it was a sheep and cattle station, probably with one family only upon it. To-day there are 60 farms there, and the owners are very prosperous. I was there a few weeks ago. Whilst some of the farmers have not all the land they want, most of them have sufficient out of which to make a very good living. At the township of Carnamah four years ago there were only four motor cars, whereas to-day there are 250.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And all paid for, of course!

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: Probably the security is good. The farmer has a penchant for luxuries which the poor city people cannot afford.

Hon. E. H. Harris: They are too economical.

Hon. H. Stewart: Too thrifty.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: Most of the Yandanooka settlers are soldiers of the Empire, and are ready and willing to take their share in the defence of the Empire at any other time, if need be.

Hon. G. Potter: Was that estate compulsorily resumed?

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: No.

Hon. V. Hamersley: The Government could get any number of other estates on the same basis.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: The Government are entitled to a Bill such as this, to give them power to resume land that belongs to people who are unwilling to do anything with it. To-day all eyes are turned towards Western Australia. It is the duty of the Government, of members of Parliament and every citizen of Western Australia to strain every nerve to satisfy this land hunger, and bring people into our midst.

Hon. H. Stewart: We have nine million acres unoccupied to-day.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: There may be ninety million acres, but there is still a lot of land that is locked up. One has only to drive from Pinjarra to Bunbury to see how much land adjacent to the railway is locked up. All men have a fascination for certain things. Some men have a fad for collecting postage stamps, others old coins, and others for rare jewellery. Other men have a terrible hunger for land. They think that, so long as they can hold land, everything is all right.

Hon. H. Stewart: And some have hunger for wealth.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: But they are seldom able to satisfy it. Many people are holding agricultural land which they will never develop in the whole of their lives.

Hon. H. Stewart: How many?

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: Many are holding 5,000 acres, of which not more than 2,000 have been developed. If some of those people have an opportunity of acquiring adjoining blocks, they are the first people to seize it, although they cannot possibly develop the land they already hold. I do not view with the same apprehension as some members do the operations of this Bill. With certain modifications it could be made very efficient, and would be of considerable use to any Government whether Liberal or Labour.

Hon. H. Stewart: This Bill is different from any other we have had.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: I am glad that is admitted. I should like the Minister to define what is meant by closer settlement. Are we to assume that an area of 20,000 or 40,000 acres, such as the Wungundie Estate, is to be resumed and cut up into 1,000-acre blocks, or is it proposed to resume 5,000 acres and cut it into 10 blocks of 500 acres each? We should have some definition as to the intentions of the Government so that they may be properly recorded.

Hon. H. Stewart: Would it not be interesting to know about the freehold title?

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: Clauses 3 and 4 clearly set out that unutilised land may be resumed. I agree with Mr. Hamersley and other members that an appeal board is very essential under this Bill. It would be most unfair that two members in Government employment and one outsider should say that a man must do certain things with his land when he will have no right to appeal against these directions.

Hon. H. Stewart: That is what this Chamber has been wanting for five years.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: I would support an amendment on those lines, as well as any other amendment that we may consider necessary in Committee.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It was proposed previously.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: I was not then in the House. Some such power as that outlined in the Bill is necessary for the Government. I hope the operations of the measure will result in a great impetus to settlement in Western Australia. Some members will tell us there is one logical and reasonable way of dealing with these estates, and that is to tax them on the unimproved value. On the last day of the session last year we were discussing a closer settlement Bill. An amendment had been prepared for despatch to another place to reduce the tax on unimproved land values.

Hon. A. Burvill: On improved land values.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: It amounts to the same thing.

Hon. H. Stewart: It does not.

Hon Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: What was required was a reduction in the tax. Many people contend that a tax on un-

improved land values is a way of forcing properties into productiveness. Although I agree with many of the main features of the Bill, and with its general principles, I shall vote for an amendment outlined by Sir Edward Wittenoom and others, of which notice has been given. In the meantime I support the second reading of the Bill.

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

BILL—TRUSTEES ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Assembly without amendment.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 28th September. Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister (for the Chief Secretary) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3—Rate of income tax:

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: At the last sitting I referred to a typographical error. I will leave it to the Chief Secretary when he returns to make the necessary alteration.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Income from dividends:

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I do not propose to press a request for an amendment at this stage, but when the Chief Secretary returns and we have put this Bill through we can recommit it. I think we shall have to recommit it to phrase in a different way the amendment which has been moved by Mr. Rose. I shall move later, in the direction of pressing for amendments when the Bill is recommitted. I wish, however, to take this opportunity, so that the Chief Secretary may know the case I propose to put up against this clause and the following clause. On looking at Section 16 of the Assessment Act, it will be found that Clause 5 of the Bill is in identical words, except that the Assessment Act contains the words, "without regard to the super tax." Those words this clause omits. In the first place, the clause purports to amend the Assessment Act. That cannot be done in this Bill, because the Constitution says that Bills imposing taxation shall deal with the impositon of the tax only, and that anything else in such a Bill shall have no effect. It would not be fair for this Chamber to take advantage of people who do not know that fact, and who will be affected by the proposed clauses. In times gone by, when similar provision was made in the Assessment Act, it was quite right, because dividends from companies only paid 1s. 3d. in the pound, and the same amount of income derived from other sources might pay a good deal more than 1s. 3d. in the pound. So the Legislature enacted that where dividends were concerned and with other added income involved a rate higher than 1s. 3d. in the pound, they should be merged with the other income, and the tax rate, whatever it might be, two or three or four shillings in the pound, paid on the whole. But for the last two years the supertax on incomes has been cut out, and we have, thanks to the Government, a rebate of 33⅓ per cent. on the total tax paid. That has a far-reaching effect upon Section 16 of the Assessment Act, and identical clauses of this Bill, leading to numberless injustices as regards smaller incomes and losses as regards the larger sums which are all-important to the Treasurer. It will diminish much of the tax received by the Treasurer from dividends by about 5¾d. in the pound. I am perfectly certain that Mr. Collier, having done what he has done to relieve taxation, cannot afford to reduce the large sums derived from dividend tax by 5¾d. in the pound. I am not putting this up by way of opposition to the Government, but rather to help them and to try to straighten out anomalies. Before I come to the Treasurer, I will take the case of the ordinary taxpayer. The clause says—

> If the income chargeable of any person, together with income received by him in respect of the dividends of a company subject to duty under the Dividend Duties Act, 1902, amounts during the year ending the thirtieth day of June, 1927, to such a sum as if it were all income chargeable would be liable to income tax at a rate exceeding 1s. 3d. for every pound sterling thereof, income tax shall be payable by such person on the amount of such aggregate income, but he shall receive credit for the duty payable under the Dividend Duties Act, 1902, in respect of his income derived from a company as aforesaid.

It requires an income of £1,958 to carry a tax rate of 1s. 3d. in the pound. To be quite accurate, the tax rate on £1,958 is 15.016d. I have taken that amount because it is an income which comes under this clause, paying more than 1s. 3d. in the pound. The tax on an income of £1,958 in the ordinary case, without the rebate of 33⅓ per cent., is £122 10s. 1d. Taking off the rebate of 33⅓ per cent., £40 16s. 8d., the net tax payable on the income, being, say, mixed income derived from dividends and other sources, or all from other sources, is £81 13s. 5d. If all the amount is from dividends and does not come into the hotchpotch with other income, the tax at 1s. 3d., plus 15 per cent under the Dividend Duties Act, amounts to £140 14s. 7d. Thus there is a difference of £59 1s. 7d. on exactly the same amount of income, but depending upon the source whence it comes. Now take another case of income derived from dividends only. If the dividends amounted to £1,957, the tax rate would be only 14.999d. Therefore the rate would not be 1s. 3d., and the income would not come under this clause. The taxpayer would then be called upon to pay £140 13s. 2d. tax, whereas if the income had been £1 more he would have paid only £81 13s. 5d. Hon members will recognise that that is not just or equitable. Now to come to where the income is taxable below a rate of 1s. 3d. in the pound. Take the case of a widow who has invested what she has had left to her in a company and is receiving dividends of, say, £300 a year. She would not come under this clause, because her tax rate would not be 1s. 3d. At the dividend rate she would pay 1s. 5¼d. in the pound, or £21 10s. 11d.; whereas if her income was from other sources, and not from company dividends, her tax rate would be only 3.4d. per pound, and the tax payable by her £4 5s., which, less 28s. 4d., representing the 33⅓ per cent. rebate, would mean a net tax of £2 16s. 8d., as against £21 10s. 11d. for the identical income if it were derived from dividends. That seems to me not quite equitable. These differences below the 1s. 3d. rate exist on all incomes, taking them step by step or pound by pound, until one reaches £1,957, which is just below the 1s. 3d. rate. I could multiply instances. In fact, one can reduce the whole thing to an absurdity. Take the case of a person in receipt of an income of £1,958, the tax rate on which is 15.016d. Such a person would come under this clause, or the corresponding section in the Assessment Act, and get the benefit of the 33⅓ per cent. rebate, and in addition would be entitled to deduct the tax paid at the rate of 1s. 5¼d. in the pound which he had paid or the companies had paid for him. Of course the Treasurer receives the 1s. 5¼d. right through; but if one makes a ledger account for this taxpayer, it comes to this, that the tax on £1,958 is £122 10s., which, less 33⅓ per cent., or £40 16s. 8d., leaves a net tax of £81 13s. 4d., and this less the £140 14s. 7d. which the company have paid for him, leaves him with a credit in the Treasurer's hands of £59 1s. 3d., which amount he has to get back. Of course the Treasurer has the £140 14s. 7d.; but on this basis the Treasurer must give back to the taxpayer the sum previously mentioned, £59 1s. 3d. These provisions may have been good at one time—when there was a super-tax on incomes and no rebate of 33⅓ per cent.—but are not good now. I will now revert to the Treasurer. We do not want to diminish his revenue; and that is one reason why I am urging that these clauses be sent back to the Assembly, so that an opportunity may be afforded of considering them in the altered conditions, in the interests of both the smaller taxpayer and the public revenue. As the law stands, everyone who has an income of £1,958 or more is entitled to the rebate of 33⅓ per cent., and it follows that the Treasurer diminishes his dividend duty by 33⅓ per cent. or 5¾d. in the pound, and brings it down to 11½d., through the operation of this clause and Section 16 of the Assessment Act. Seeing that dividend duties are mostly payable on large sums, the Treasurer cannot afford the heavy losses involved in this process: these amounts it is permissible for any person to claim under the clause as it stands. I will now take the case of dividends amounting to £3,000. The tax is 1s. 5¼d. in the pound, and the taxpayer would pay £210 12s. 6d. But as the income chargeable exceeds the rate of 1s. 3d. in the pound, it come under this clause. The rate of tax to which the taxpayer is subject is, of course, the same; but coming under the clause he receives the rebate of 33⅓ per cent. That rebate amounts to £70 4s. 2d., which the Treasurer loses. On an income of £8,000 from dividends the taxpayer would pay £1,910. By making it chargeable income, the rebate would be £636 13s. 4d. Therefore the dividend duty rate is reduced to

the extent of one-third by way of abatement. In other words, the dividend duty is reduced by 5.75d. I do not want to put Mr. Collier in the position of having an Act emphasising that that is what he wants, and I draw attention to the matter now so that the Minister may consider what I have put up. I have learnt that in view of a similar section in last year's Act, the Commissioner of Taxation has decided not to accept the tax rate as at 1s. 3d. in the pound, but to say, "You shall not transfer into your aggregate income dividends unless your tax rate will be chargeable with 1s. 5¼d. in the pound, the same rate as that paid by the company."

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Before tea I was pointing out that the Commissioner in practice is now refusing to allow dividends to be merged into income, unless the taxable rate is 1s. 5¼d. in the pound. I submit that in face of the law in the Assessment Act, which says that if the chargable income rate is 1s. 3d. the Commissioner has no authority to say it shall be 1s. 5¼d., because the Government have altered the position and have made a rebate of 33⅓ per cent. on ordinary income tax. We may depend upon it that those who have large amounts paid to them in dividends will take good care that they get the full benefit of the Act. It is a rule that both our criminal laws and our taxation laws must be construed strictly in favour of the defendant or the taxpayer respectively. That being so, the Commissioner could never stand up to a Court and say he was basing his taxation on the rate of 1s. 5¼d., when the Assessment Act distinctly says it shall be 1s. 3d.. It requires an income of £2,279 to yield a tax rate of 17.253d. The recipient would be entitled to the rebate as on an income of £2,279. But the recipient of £2,278, one pound less, would only have a tax rate of 17.246d. and so would not be able to transfer his income (if the Commissioner were right), and would not get the value of the rebate. Thus we have the anomaly that an income of £2,278 would pay at the rate of 1s. 5¼d, or £163 15s. 5d. whilst the recipient of one pound more or £2,279 would pay £163 16s. 8d. less 33⅓ per cent. (£54 12s. 2d.) or £109 3s. 3d., this being substantially less than the person who received one pound less in income would have to pay. That requires to be looked into.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That is a peculiar anomaly.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Yes, the Bill bristles with anomalies, due to the fact that we have a graduated tax. It operates unfairly in some cases and to advantage in others. Certainly in this particular instance, it will act most .disadvantageously to the .Treasurer. For, if all dividends were transferred as proposed under this clause and became part of aggregate income 33⅓ per cent. would come off the company tax, and reduce it to 11½d. I am sure the Treasurer does not want that, and I am bringing this forward to help him. I have endeavoured to make a very complex matter as clear as I can. If I have not succeeded in making myself quite understood on the floor of the House, members by reading it in "Hansard" will be able to follow it better. When we have recommitted the Bill, I will move that the Assembly be requested to delete this clause. I will do that in order to bring their attention to the matter, but in the meantime I propose to let the clause pass since the Chief Secretary is not here.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—Section 55 of the Act of 1907, not to apply:

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I propose to follow the same course in respect of this clause. It can possibly have no place in the Bill. Section 55 of the Assessment Act provides that the tax may be payable in two moieties. This clause seeks to suspend or repeal for a year Section 55, but the Constitution provides that Bills imposing taxation shall deal with the imposition of the tax only. Therefore, the clause being an amendment of another Act, cannot be contained here, or being here it has no effect. So it really does not matter whether we leave it in or take it out.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It is misleading.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Yes.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It cannot be validly dealt with in this Bill.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: That is so. If the amendment is necessary, the Government must send up a Bill to amend the Assessment Act. I think such a Bill is necessary, for Mr. Horne, the secretary of the Taxpayers' Association, informed me, yesterday, that the Commissioner had received instructions not to give any extension of time for the

payment of tax and is now charging 10 per cent. for late payments of tax although they may be only a few days over. When the Legislature put 10 per cent. in the Assessment Act, I take it it was intended to mean 10 per cent. in the ordinary acceptance of the phrase. If we ask a Bank what rate it will charge on an overdraft, and it says 7 per cent., we do not interpret that to mean 7 per cent. for a day, but 7 per cent. per annum. When the legislature put in 10 per cent., it really meant 10 per cent per annum. It was never intended to fine a man 10 per cent. of his tax, if it were only a few days in arrear, which would mean, not 10 per cent., but thousands per cent. per annum. It makes it all the more necessary why we should send back this clause as well.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It is really unfair to charge 10 per cent. on a claim only one day overdue, when another man might be in arrears for a whole year.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: That is so. When we recommit the Bill, I will move that we request the Assembly to delete this clause also. But in the meantime I will let it pass.

Clause put and passed.

Bill reported with a requested amendment.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Assembly, and read a first time.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 29th September.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [7.42]: The Assembly is an important branch of the Legislature and is supposed to be a reflex of the opinions of the people of the State; therefore it is essential that a careful scrutiny should be made of any proposals to amend the electoral laws under which the members of another place are elected, whether they be elected as representatives of the people who are free, or whether they be merely elected as delegates representing their constituents. The Bill is substantially the same as one we had before us in the session of 1925, insofar as relates to 40 of the clauses. Had those clauses been put up separately on that earlier occasion, apart from the objectionable provisions that were embodied in that Bill, possibly they might have passed the House. The principle of joint rolls is approved in the main by the major portion of the public. But I submit there are certain difficulties in the way of the smooth working of electoral rolls governed by one department, although it is desirable to have them uniform. That is brought about because the methods of arriving at the rolls by the Commonwealth and by the State are different. What is applicable to the Commonwealth in some instances may not be applicable to the State. As late as 1927 the report of a select committee was laid on the Table of the Federal Parliament. That committee had carried out investigations regarding the electoral laws of the Commonwealth with a view to their being amended. It is quite possible, therefore, that an amendment to the Federal Electoral Act may be introduced in the Federal Parliament at an early date, and the State Government should be quite sure that in that amending legislation there will not be something that will conflict with anything we may do. The State boundaries are based on community of interests, whereas the Federal boundaries are on a population basis and departmental convenience. Thus the two are on different planes when we analyse the electoral laws of the State and Commonwealth. The Federal Constitution provides that the Federal boundaries shall be altered only after a census has been taken. The next Commonwealth census will be taken in 1931, and therefore uniform arrangements as regards our boundaries cannot be made until that time, if then. So that there is no immediate call for the Bill we are now considering. A similar Bill was introduced in 1925. The next State election, in the ordinary course of events, would not be held until 1930 By that time the census will not be taken, so that we shall not get an amendment of the boundaries or the subdivisions of the State districts until 1933. When the Bill now before us was introduced in another place, it was suggested that it might facilitate a redistribution of seats. The State elections cannot take place until 1930, and, as I have stated, the census will not be taken till 1931, and it is quite reasonable to say that in 1930 it will be useless trying to put through a redistribution of seats when in the next year the Federal authorities will be taking a cen-

sus. Therefore I cannot see that we shall get anything in the nature of a redistribution until 1932, and in preparation for the general elections of 1933. Consequently I cannot see any need to hasten the passing of the Bill before us. The Bill consists largely of machinery clauses which may be dealt with in Committee. They relate mainly to enrolments and objections, and there is a departure from the methods hitherto adopted. When the Chief Secretary replies to the debate, I would like him to outline the reasons for some of the new features that have been embodied in the Bill. It is the duty of the Government to make it as difficult as possible for people to break the law and as easy as possible for them to obey it. But the phraseology of some of the clauses is such that it will be easy for anyone, who deliberately sets himself out to commit breaches of the electoral law, to do so. Some of the clauses in the Bill I do not appraise at a high value. The 1925 Bill contains some very important clauses which might well have been embodied in the Bill we are now considering. I will just mention Clauses 41, 55, and 57 of the 1925 Bill. Clause 41, in my opinion is very important, and ought to have been included in the Bill before us. It reads—

> A subsection is added to Section 8 of the principal Act as follows:—"Every registrar shall act under and be subject to the control of the Chief Electoral Officer for the State, and the said Chief Electoral Officer may inspect all rolls, books, documents kept by any registrar for the purposes of this Act, and satisfy himself that the duties imposed upon the registrar by this Act are being carried out.

That clause should have been embodied in the Bill. If the Bill becomes an Act we shall have the Federal officers doing the work that is now being done by the State officers, and it is essential that our chief Electoral Officer should have the necessary power and authority. I am prompted to stress that point because of some remarks that were made by the Minister for Justice who controls the Electoral Department. I heard him deliver his second reading speech and he said that the Federal officers would have charge of this Act. It would be entirely the responsibility of the Federal Government; they would pay the salaries and control the officers. Then later on he added, "This is a Federal matter, to be controlled by Federal officers." Those are important statements for the Minister to make and they lead me to believe that it is not contemplated that our State Chief Electoral Officer shall have the power that it was intended he should have under the clause I have just read from the 1925 Bill. During the discussion that followed, the Minister made some reference to the State electoral officers being too independent. I do not know what the Minister meant by that. If ever there was a department in which the controlling officers acted in an impartial manner, particularly when feeling happened to run high, it was the Electoral Department. Much has been said of late about Federal encroachment upon State activities. We now find that the State Government are asking the Federal authorities to undertake some of the work that has always been done by the State.

Hon. E. H. Gray: On the score of economy.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: We shall see whether economy will be practised. There was another important clause in the 1925 Bill which is not included in the Bill before us, namely, Clause 57, relating to postal vote officers. At the present time the position is that any person appointed a postal vote officer may take the votes of everyone in the district, and it frequently happens in distant districts, one man is appointed, but that man is not able to record his own vote, and sometimes it is necessary for him to make a long journey so as to record that vote before another postal officer. The provision in Clause 57 was that a postal vote officer could delegate the power to someone else to take his vote and his vote only. That is an important matter that might very well have been embodied in the measure before us. I have said what applies to the State may not apply to the Commonwealth. There are five Commonwealth divisions in Western Australia but there are 50 State electorates. In the Commonwealth divisions there is an average of 30,000 electors and if, by any chance, 30, 40, or 50 road workers were run into a particular division prior to an election, their numbers would make very little difference. Not so, however, in connection with a State election, because in some of the State electorates the number of electors is very small. In one we have 265 electors and in others there are 300, 400 and 500 names on the roll. If anyone looks at some of the small majorities that were obtained at the last election, they will see that those small ma-

jorities emphasise my point. There is provision in our Electoral Act to the effect that if a person is in a particular electorate for one month, he is entitled to enrolment. I will admit that the Federal authorities, with the information that is continuously filtering through to them from various sources, have kept their rolls up to date, more so than has been done by the State department. Not that the State officers are not capable of doing the work, but it has been the policy for a number of years past to practically starve financially the State office, and consequently it has not been able to carry out important work. The Federal department consists of men who devote the whole of their time to garnering that information that assists them to keep the rolls in a perfect condition. One would naturally expect, with the material at their disposal, that they would do good work. Last week I asked a question here relating to enrolments and the work done by the State Electoral Department regarding the Legislative Council elections in 1926. One of my questions read, "Is it the intention of the Electoral Department to again take the same action in preparation for the Council election of 1928?" The Chief Secretary replied in the negative. I would like the Minister to tell us the reason why the excellent work done by the State department in 1926 and in former years is not to be repeated at the next Council elections. In 1926 the State department was responsible for the enrolment of 14,000 electors, according to a return that was submitted to us. One would have thought that the desire of the Government would be that in future the enrolment should be still more complete.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: The department is clarifying the rolls by taking off the dead men.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The department has pointed out to people that they were eligible for enrolment as freeholders, householders and so forth, but now we are told the department is not to do that any more.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: My inquiries led me to understand that the department is taking people off the rolls, and not putting them on.

Hon. E. H. Gray: The electoral officers do not put many names on the roll unless claims are lodged.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Notifications have been sent out to people saying they are eligible to be enrolled. It is not obligatory to become enrolled but in view of the statements made elsewhere during the discussion on the Constitution Act Amendment Bill one would have thought the activities of the Electoral Department would have been increased in order that a greater number of people should be enrolled. Dealing again with the 1925 legislation I sought to have an amendment included in Section 5 of the principal Act. That Bill was not proceeded with, but I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to Section 5 of the Act which reads—

> The Governor may from time to time appoint a chief electoral officer and that officer shall be charged with the administration of the Act.

I sought to amend that section by adding the words, "and who shall be responsible to the Minister only for the execution thereof." When the Bill is being dealt with in Committee I hope to submit a few amendments again. Dealing with some of the clauses in the Bill before us, I would draw attention to Clause 5—"Application of this part." It sets out that Divisions 2, 3, 4, and 5 of Part III. of the Act shall cease to apply to electoral matters relating to the Assembly. It is rather difficult to compare the Bill with the principal Act, and secure an intelligent grasp of what the amendments really mean, as the clause sets out that various divisions shall not apply. On looking up the principal Act I find that it means that Clauses 3 to 37—that is, 34 clauses of the Bill, embracing what relates to the Legislative Assembly in Sections 19 to 61 inclusive—that is 42 sections of the principal Act having reference to the Legislative Assembly—shall not apply. From the wording of the clause, I understand that all references to the Legislative Assembly will still remain in Part III. of the Act, although this portion will be known as Part IIIA which will embody all references to the Assembly. Is it intended that the whole of the wording of these sections shall remain in the parent Act, or is it intended, should the Bill be agreed to, that the Parliamentary Draftsman or Crown Solicitor will delete all sections that have any reference to the Legislative Assembly? Those who are familiar with the legislation may consider it all right, but to other hon. members it must readily occur that it is easy to make a mistake. I can see no good purpose to be served by having repeated in Part IIIA all

that is in Part III. Clause 10 is new and provides that the joint rolls shall be printed, or may be divided into subdivisions, if the Minister so directs. One of our troubles in the past has been that in so many instances power has been vested in the Minister. I believe it to be the desire of members of Parliament to take away as much power as possible from the Minister controlling the Electoral Department, thus affording the Chief Electoral Officer the necessary power and authority to make him responsible. Perhaps the Leader of the House will say why the Government desire to have the Minister vested with the powers I have indicated. Clause 13 is entirely new but it seems to me to be satisfactory. In Clause 18 there are some important alterations. One provides that any senator representing the State shall be entitled to have his name placed on the electoral roll for any subdivision or division he desires within the portion of the State he represents. I see no reference to members of the Legislative Council being entitled to enrolment for the districts they represent. We have members of this House who have apparently no qualification for enrolment, because their names do not appear on the electoral rolls. I thought that some of them might like to have their names on the rolls for the province they represent and that it could be done by extending to them the same privileges as we are asked to extend to senators. Clause 19 is important and if hon. members look at Subclause 4 they will see that provision is made that every person enrolled for any district or subdivision whose occupation is that of a boundary rider, commercial traveller, farm hand, kangaroo hunter, drover, prospector and so on, may have his enrolment protected. No fewer than 14 vocations are set out and it is provided that men engaged in those occupations shall be entitled to move about in any portion of the electorate for which they are enrolled, without having to submit claim cards or alterations of address, as other people residing in the district have to do. I do not know that there is any good reason for the inclusion of such a clause. We are asked to embody those who are enrolled on the Federal roll, but those mentioned in the vocations set out in the subclause should have their names on the Federal rolls. It may be argued that even if a person changes his address, it is provided for in the Federal Act that such a person must submit his changed address to the electoral authorities. Take the position that will apply in the Kalgoorlie division for the Federal electoral requirements. That district represents about twelve-fourteenths of the whole of Western Australia, yet no matter where a man may go, is it contended that this provision shall apply? The Federal authorities have issued a notice on their official documents setting out that an elector who is only temporarily absent from his or her place of living, although such absence may exceed one month, is not thereby deemed to have changed his or her place of living for the purpose of transfer of enrolment. That has operated satisfactorily in the Federal arena, and I see no reason why the Federal authorities administering our Electoral Act cannot adopt the same common sense idea. It is not included in the Act, nor is it embodied in regulations; it is merely a note sent out by the electoral authorities to notify people that their enrolments will be safeguarded, if they have merely temporarily changed their address. Why the inclusion of these different occupations in the clause to the exclusion of others? I notice that no provision is made for the migratory bushranger! There is provision for drovers but no reference to camel-drivers, yet there are as many camel-drivers as there are drovers in the North. Moreover, the men I refer to are not Asiatics but white men. The subclause provides for seamen, but there is no reference to officers such as engineers or ship's officers generally. Provision is made for commercial travellers, but there is none for life assurance or fire insurance agents. Surely these others are entitled to be protected equally with men following the occupations set out in the subclause. We provide for kangaroo hunters, but no provision is made for rabbit or dingo trappers, and there are as many men engaged in the latter occupations as there are at kangaroo hunting. I submit that there is no justification at all for Clause 4, and when in Committee I shall move for its deletion. Recently a form was issued by our Electoral Department having reference to the protection of the enrolment of persons whose occupations were of a nomadic character. I understand from inquiries that 190 persons made use of that form and requested that their enrolments should be protected. I submit that the Federal authorities already protect the enrolments of those people in the direction I have indicated. There is

nothing embodied in the Electoral Act nor yet in the regulations dealing with nomadic occupations. I would like to know on whose authority and on what authority these forms are being used. Had they been embodied in regulations, they would have been Tabled and we would have had an opportunity to discuss them. On the back of the form is printed Subclause 2 of Section 17 of the Electoral Act which reads—

> For the purpose of this Act a person shall be deemed to have lived within the district or subdistrict wherein he has his usual place of abode notwithstanding his occasional absence from such district or subdistrict.

If we can take the sections of the Electoral Act and put up forms such as this and say, "When you have signed this, you are protected," well, many forms could be put up that would have an effect not desired by anyone interested in the administration of the Act or the welfare of the State. That form should be withdrawn. I should like to know whether the Government are going to retain that clause. While we are amending the Act we might well insert a suitable provision to prohibit the use of that form. There are several other clauses in the Bill that call for comment, but I shall content myself by referring to only two of them. Section 52 of the Act provides that claims received 14 days prior to the writ being issued may be enrolled after the issue of the writ. I understand it is not proposed to amend that section. Clause 22 of the Bill apparently will not permit of objection being lodged to enrolments, but once a claim is admitted, the enrolment holds good regardless of whether the person is qualified. It seems to me that is a contradiction of Section 52 of the Act. Clause 23 is an innovation. The marginal note reads, "Penalty on officer neglecting to enrol claimants," and the amount of the penalty is £10. Under Section 178 of the Act the maximum penalty that may be inflicted is a fine of £200 or imprisonment for 12 months. That was inserted to steady any officer who might feel inclined to accept a bribe to leave a number of names off the roll. In a Federal division, with 30,000 names on the roll, a dozen or two would be neither here nor there if an officer neglected to put the names on the roll. The Federal Act contains a provision, Section 121, whereby a person whose names does not appear on the roll may, on signing the necessary declaration, receive a ballot paper, and if the person is subsequently found to have signed a card which was duly delivered and the claimant possessed the necessary qualifications, the paper would be counted. Consequently neglect on the part of the Federal officer would not have the same effect as would neglect on the part of a State officer where we have 50 divisions for the Assembly. The fees chargeable for objection have been altered to bring them into line with those charged by the Federal Government. Though a small item, the fees have in some instances been increased from 2s. 6d. to 5s.; in other words 100 per cent. Clause 23 reads—

> Any officer who receives a claim for enrolment or transfer of enrolment, and who without just excuse fails to do everything necessary on his part to be done to secure the enrolment of the claimant in pursuance of the claim shall be guilty of an offence. Penalty £10.

As I have pointed out, the penalty provided under the principal Act is a fine of £200 or imprisonment for 12 months. What is the justification for such a drastic reduction? Further, is the penalty of £10 intended to apply to each offence, or would it cover a thousand offences? Clause 33, Subclause (4) provides that an objection on the ground that a person does not live in the district for which he is enrolled shall not be good unless it alleges that the person objected to does not live in the district and has not so lived for at least one month last past. In Clause 36, however, reference is made to one calendar month. Thus, the draftsman has not been consistent in framing the Bill. Consequently it will be necessary to include a definition of "month." A question of what constituted a month was raised in the Yilgarn electorate during the latest election. According to a report of the 27th February, 1927, a number of men reached Southern Cross on the night of the 27th January, and claims were lodged on the 5th February. Objection was raised to 17 of the claims on the ground that the claimants had not resided in the district for a calendar month. The persons objected to attended the court and were represented by the legislator for the district who was seeking re-election. He admitted having witnessed the claim cards and forwarded the names for enrolment. If we may judge by the ruling of the magistrate, the interpretation is one calendar month. As there is frequent reference in this Bill to a month, it would be wise to define month as

meaning a calendar month. In another district, Irwin I think, there was a dispute about a number of claim cards that were alleged to have been witnessed by the same person and pre-dated. With each claim a declaration is necessary that the particulars contained in it are true, and any person of 21 years is eligible to witness the signature. If we provide that the true date shall be inserted by the person witnessing the claim, it should overcome the difficulty. Those are the chief of many points that might be mentioned. I shall await with interest the reply of the Chief Secretary to the questions I have raised and to others that doubtless will be raised by various members, and by his statement shall be guided in my attitude to the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [8.26]: The object of the Bill is to produce uniformity between the rolls for the Federal Parliament and the Legislative Assembly. The Chief Secretary, in moving the second reading, explained that the Bill would affect only the Legislative Assembly. He told us that in no way would it affect the roll for the Legislative Council. When we consider the position of persons entitled to vote under the Federal law and the position of those entitled to vote under the State law, we find a considerable disparity. Originally the Federal Act was almost identical with ours, but the Federal Act has undergone a number of amendments. If we desire to make our electoral laws uniform, it is clearly necessary, in order to prevent confusion, that the qualification for voters should be as nearly alike as possible. If the qualification of electors for the State Assembly differs materially from the qualification required for the Federal Parliament there will undoubtedly be confusion. I have given notice of an amendment, the object of which is to bring into harmony, as nearly as possible, the qualification of electors for the Assembly with that of electors for the Federal Parliament. The qualification of electors for this House is written in the Constitution Act, but in 1907 the Electoral Act was passed and it eliminated the sections of the Constitution Act that applied to the qualification of electors for the Assembly. The qualification for electors of the Assembly is to be found in the Electoral Act, 1907. Section 17 of that Act says—

> Subject to the disqualifications hereinafter set out, every person not under 21 years of age who (a) is a natural born or naturalised subject of His Majesty, and (b) has resided in Australia for six months continuously, and (c) has resided in the district for which he claims to be enrolled for a continuous period of one month immediately preceding the date of this claim, shall be entitled, subject to the provisions of this Act to be enrolled as an elector, and when enrolled, and so long as he continues to reside in the district for which he was enrolled, to vote at the election of a member of the Legislative Assembly for that district.

The disqualifications are these, and it is to them I desire particularly to allude—

> Every person, nevertheless, shall be disqualified from being enrolled as an elector, or if enrolled, from voting at any election who (a) is of unsound mind, or (b) is wholly dependent on relief from the State or from any charitable institution subsidised by the State, except as a patient under treatment for accident or disease in a hospital, or (c) has been attainted of treason, or has been convicted and is under sentence or subject to be sentenced for any offence punishable under the law of any part of the King's dominions by imprisonment for one year or longer, or (d) is an aboriginal native of Australia, Asia, Africa, or the islands of the Pacific, or a person of the half blood.

There is an express exclusion of Asiatics and others in the last paragraph to which I have referred. Strange to say, under our Constitution Act there is no such exclusion where the Asiatic may hold freehold land. We have this anomaly existing between our two Houses, that the Asiatic who may possess freehold land may vote for a candidate for the Legislative Council, but he may not vote for a candidate for the Legislative Assembly. Hon. members will agree that is a strange anomaly. That exclusion did obtain originally in the Federal Parliament, but by an amendment of the Act passed in 1925 it no longer exists. It is provided that where a person is a native of British India, or where he is a person to whom a certificate of naturalisation has been issued under the law of the Commonwealth or of the State, and that certificate is still in force, or is a person who obtained British nationality by virtue of the issue of any such certificate, that person is entitled to exercise the franchise.

I am moving an amendment embodying exactly the words in the two paragraphs I have read. The other paragraph refers to certain rights that are given under Section 41 of the Constitution Act which need not be introduced here. The amendment will serve to bring this Bill, if passed, into closer harmony with the Federal Act, and save a lot of trouble and endless confusion to those responsible for the compilation of the rolls. One can readily conceive what the position would be when these rolls were compiled, owing to the disparity between the two Acts. The Registrar, and those responsible for compiling the rolls, would require to be most careful to mark in some distinct way the particular persons who were entitled to vote under the Federal law, and those who were entitled to vote under the State law. If we are going to have a joint roll, let it be one in fact. It would not be a joint roll under present circumstances if we leave the law as it is. There are cases of peculiar hardship in this State where people who have acquired property and are good citizens, and pay taxes, are denied the privilege of voting for a candidate for the Legislative Assembly, whilst they may vote for a candidate for the Legislative Council. I ask any member whether that is right. They will surely agree that it is wrong. It is our duty to proffer this amendment, and I hope members will give it their support. There are other clauses in the Bill to which reference has been made by Mr. Harris. In regard to certain of these, I share his views. Other amendments may be deemed necessary. I will content myself by saying that I will support the second reading of the Bill, but will reserve to myself the right to make such other comments as I may think proper when the Bill is being dealt with in Committee. I hope the Honorary Minister will take note of the particular amendment to which I have drawn attention, and that he will see the necessity for bringing the present law as nearly as possible into line with the Federal law, so as to save needless confusion.

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

BILL—BILLS OF SALE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [8.40] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of this Bill is to effect an amendment to Section 54 of the Bills of Sales Act, 1899, so as to include the words shown in Clause 2 of the Bill. Section 54, which has undergone one or two amendments, provides that the Act shall not apply to any agreement, with or without the right of purchase, of any sewing machine, piano, typewriter, or gas, electric light, or water meter. Then, by the Act No. 28, 64 Vic., that section is amended by adding after the word "piano" the following: "musical instrument, bicycle. cash register, billiard table and accessories, agricultural machinery and implements." The Bills of Sale Act Amendment Act, 1925, adds some further words: "household furniture, tools of trade." These are all articles which are recognised as articles usually the subject of hire purchases. It has been deemed proper in the wisdom of Parliament during past years, since the introduction of the Act, to provide certain exemptions such as are provided for in Section 54. In the original Act when introduced there were excepted "gas, electric light or water meter." It has been thought by those interested in appliances connected with electrical works that as these are also subject to hire purchase from time to time, they should be included in this section. The Bill, therefore, proposes to amend the section by adding the words appearing in Clause 2, namely, "electrical appliances or apparatus of any nature or kind used wholly or in part for household purposes." I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

ADJOURNMENT—ROYAL SHOW.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. J. W. Hickey—Central) [8.46]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 11th October.

The practice is to adjourn the House over the Wednesday of Royal Show week. In asking members to adjourn over an additional day, I am actuated by two reasons: one being that the Notice Paper lends itself to that course, thanks to the energy of hon. members, and the other being the fact that the Leader of the House is, unfortunately, far from well at present. It is hoped, however, that the Chief Secretary will be able to meet the House on Tuesday next in his usual good health. May I take this opportunity of thanking you, Mr. President, and the Chairman of Committees and hon. members for the kindness and courtesy extended to me, especially to-day.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.48 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 4th October, 1927.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER.

Mundaring Service.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways: Will he advise: 1, The approximate cost of the extension of electric cables for light and power to Mundaring. 2, The consumption of current necessary to ensure the proposition proving satisfactory from a business standpoint?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Approximately £13,000. 2, The consumption of current, estimated on a liberal basis, 10,000 units per annum, would return £200 per annum. This sum would not of itself pay half the interest charge on the cost of the construction—apart from generating costs and costs of maintaining the line.

Nos. 1 and 2 Pumping Stations.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Water Supply: In view of the advantages offered by the provision of electric power generally, including the opportunity which would thereby be afforded in the establishment of new industries in the districts concerned, will he advise what the cost is likely to be in connection with change over from steam to electricity in connection with the Nos. 1 and 2 pumping stations at Mundaring?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The estimated cost of the change over is £16,500.

QUESTION—EGG CONTROL.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Honorary Minister (Hon. H. Millington): 1, Have voting papers promised by the poultry farmers' organisation of Western Australia, as cast by the egg producers, been received by the Minister? 2, Has a decision regarding the proposed egg control been arrived at? 3, If so, when is it intended to introduce the required legislation?

Hon. H. MILLINGTON replied: 1, Yes. 2, The matter is at present receiving consideration. 3, Answered by No. 2.

QUESTION—CLAREMONT-COTTESLOE SEWERAGE.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has he had a request from any local authority in the Claremont-Cottesloe district to extend deep sewerage to that area? 2, If so, is it his intention to take any steps in that direction?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, It is considered that no portion of the area from North Fremantle to Claremont