

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: But as the Minister has pointed out, the meat has to be stamped in Perth before it can be sold, but in the existing circumstances no inspection of the entrails or skins is possible. We can send mutton, veal or lamb from the country areas to the metropolitan markets where it is examined before it is submitted to auction. By that means, stolen sheep can be brought in ad lib. That is why we support the suggestion that the man who buys, say, 200 or 300 sheep should have the earmarks and registered brands set out on his receipt. I support the Bill.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [8.55]: I am in accord with practically the whole of the provisions of the Bill, but in Committee I hope some more simple method will be devised for dealing with the handling of stock travelled from one part of a district to another. Reference has already been made to a practice that is extensive in the South-Western areas, that of taking cattle from the highlands to the coast. The beasts are travelled for distances upwards of 80 miles and are allowed to remain on the coast for some time. The cattle are then mustered. They have been allowed to roam away from civilisation or from townships. If the stock are found to be in a condition that makes it inadvisable to move them, the musters simply have to return to the homestead. On the other hand, it may be imperative to move the stock at once. If the Bill be agreed to in its present form, it will mean that that could not be done as the party would have to return to notify the police of their intention to move the stock.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The owner would have to inspect the stock each time.

Hon. W. J. MANN: But the owner does not always inspect the stock.

Hon. G. W. Miles: He will have to in future.

Hon. W. J. MANN: That is nonsense. The owner himself may be in Perth.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: At any rate, he would have to give notice to the police before he could shift the cattle.

Hon. W. J. MANN: This particular point requires clearing up. If the owner were given a permit to take the cattle to the coast and travel them back within a specified number of months, that should be suffi-

cient. The method suggested in the Bill is certainly not helpful to settlers.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*House adjourned at 8.58 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Tuesday, 17th September, 1935.*

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

### ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Bunbury Racecourse Railway Discontinuance Bill.

### BILL—RURAL RELIEF FUND.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—ELECTORAL.

*Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.34] in moving the second reading said: It will be recollected that towards the close of last session there were proposals to amend the electoral law. However, the session had reached a stage at which it was thought it would not be possible to have the matter adequately dealt with here and in an-

other place, and so a resolution was carried in this House that the Bill proposing alterations to the electoral law should be referred to a joint select committee of the two Houses. A message was sent to another place and, on its being agreed to, a joint select committee of the two Houses was appointed. Subsequently it became an honorary Royal Commission, which dealt with the Bill and other proposals which had been before the House but had not received legislative sanction during the past two or three years. The honorary Royal Commission has dealt thoroughly with the whole question and brought in a report which has been tabled here to-day. The Bill before us differs very little from the copy of a Bill which was attached to the Royal Commission's report. That report will be distributed amongst members; the Bill recommended by the commission will not be distributed, but will be on the Table of the House, for it would be confusing to have the two Bills before us. For the convenience of members, any departure in the Bill before the House from the existing law has been printed in italics so that members can see which provisions it is proposed to alter.

Hon. N. Keenan: The alterations are in italics?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, and the original provisions remain in ordinary print. Sections 15 and 16 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act it is proposed shall be repealed. Those sections deal with the qualifications of electors for the Legislative Council. They were in the Constitution Act, but it was considered that the proper place for the qualifications and disqualifications of electors was the Electoral Act. This was the opinion of the Parliamentary Draftsman and others, and consequently they have been inserted in the Bill. The amendments are designed to clarify the law and obviate confusion in relation to property qualifications, and also to prevent abuses. A freehold property qualification of £50 at present entitles a voter to be enrolled for the Council. It will now be provided that the right in any person to an equity of land shall be protected by some registration, whether the title in the Titles Office or the lodging of a caveat; for land frequently changes owners, and it is particularly difficult for

the Electoral Office to keep a check on such changes in property qualifications. It is thought that the freehold property qualification at least should be rightly ascertained, and the Royal Commission recommended that the qualification should be registered. Also in connection with the household qualification there is a new provision giving the qualification to the inhabitant occupier, a person bona fide occupying a dwelling house. That term "dwelling house" will be extended to cover flats which are, to all intents and purposes, houses, giving the occupier entire dominion over that portion of the house which he occupies. It will be necessary for the lease to be registered. The term does not extend to rooms occupied as lodgings. The qualification of a leasehold estate in possession to the value of £17 per annum has been retained; but here again it must be a registered lease. These provisions in regard to registration have been sought particularly by the administrative office of the Electoral Department, in order that they might get a proper check upon the qualifications. An important amendment is that made to the provision which enables a person to be enrolled because his name is on the ratepayers' list of a municipality or road board. In the past it has been obligatory on the Chief Electoral Officer or registrar to place such person's name on the roll of the Legislative Council, no matter whether that person is or is not entitled to have his name on the ratepayers' list. There may be reasons why his name should no longer be on the list of ratepayers. Consequently we have people who are not qualified by the provisions of the Act, except that their names are on the ratepayers' list, where they have remained for many years but where, perhaps, they ought no longer to be. Then the Chief Electoral Officer cannot make any proper check as to whether those persons are properly qualified; so long as their names are on the ratepayers' list, that, ipso facto, makes them qualified and they have necessarily to be placed on the roll of the Legislative Council. This will not be a qualification in the future. However, their names will be allowed to remain on the roll until the 30th June of next year, because it would be wrong to disqualify a large number of persons without due notice. So it has

been recommended by the Royal Commission that those who have had the qualification for many years shall not be wiped off the roll at a moment's notice, but shall be retained until June of next year, after which they will have to submit qualifications in accordance with the Electoral Act. The law in regard to naturalised persons being on the roll for the Legislative Council is to be brought into line with the law relating to the Assembly rolls. That is to say, instead of having to be naturalised for 12 months it will be only necessary for them to be naturalised, as on the Commonwealth roll, and fulfil residence conditions of six months. The laws affecting this qualification have been amended from time to time, one appearing in the Constitution Act and the other in the Electoral Act, the Assembly electors coming under the Electoral Act and the Council electors coming under the Constitution Act. Both these Acts have been amended at various times and so the qualifications for the Assembly are different from those of the Council. An Assembly elector, if he has put in a period of six months residence, is eligible as soon as he is naturalised, whereas for the Council it is provided that, after he is naturalised, he must put in a 12 months period of residence. In the amendment in the Bill it is sought to bring the qualifications in this regard into line with what has been the Assembly qualification for many years past. Under the existing law it is possible for more than one person to hold electoral qualifications for the same property. In many estates several interests may be created in one piece of land. The property may be leased, or sub-leased, or may form part of some contract, and both the vendor and the purchaser may claim enrolment in connection with that property. There are also equities in freeholds. The wife may be the purchaser and claim as the equitable freeholder; and the husband may claim as the householder and be enrolled as such, and the vendor of the property may claim as the legal owner. It is proposed to alter the law so that a maximum of four votes only shall be allowed in respect to one parcel of land, that is to say, four votes on account of the freehold qualification, and four votes on account of the leasehold qualification.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Does that make eight votes all told?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It may do so in connection with the equities in a

property. The property must have a value that will entitle it to carry four votes. On the leasehold side it must have a value of over £68, that is four times £17, and the freehold property would have to be worth over £200 before it would carry four votes. At present it is possible to put a number of people on the roll in these circumstances. It is thought that in the case of one block of land the number of votes should be limited to four. Any further claims for enrolment beyond the four in respect of the one parcel of land, either freehold or leasehold, will be rejected by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Would that apply to a large apartment house in the city?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Some people are paying £1 a week for a room in the city.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Such people are not entitled to be on the roll now. No one who occupies a room for which he is paying rent in any apartment house is entitled to be on the Legislative Council roll to-day.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Many of them are.

Mr. Sampson: It is not provided for in this Bill.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is possible the claims may be made out in such a way as to deceive the Chief Electoral Officer. No person who rents a room from another person is entitled to be on the Legislative Council roll even if he pays as much as £2 a week for two or three rooms. If a person has a separate entrance, or lives in a separate domain, and is a household occupier, he can be enrolled. It does not matter whether he is living in portion of a terrace of houses which are joined together on the flat system, or whether it is a house which goes up as high as four storeys, so long as he has a separate entrance and a separate domain, and has the exclusive right to occupy that particular area, he is entitled to be enrolled: but that is not so in the case of anyone who rents a room in ordinary circumstances.

Hon. J. Cunningham: If a person obtains a lease, will he be entitled to be on the roll?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That would be so in the case of a person who had a lease of a certain portion of a registered property. Only four leaseholders can claim to be enrolled in respect of one particular property. It is set out in the Bill that the person who is entitled to be enrolled, and

is both an inhabitant occupier of the property as well as the owner, must apply as the inhabitant occupier; but no person is entitled to claim enrolment in that capacity in respect of more than one dwelling. In the course of giving evidence the Chief Electoral Officer referred to the case of a man who had two or three homes in different provinces. He could claim enrolment as a freeholder, but would be entitled to enrolment as an inhabitant occupier in respect of one of the homes. Under the existing Act it does not matter how long a person may have been out of the State, he is still entitled to remain on the Legislative Council roll, provided he continues to hold the necessary qualifications. A man who was entitled to be on the roll may, after living in the State, have left it and settled elsewhere. He may have been away for 15 or 20 years. There is no power under the Act to remove his name from the roll. He is entitled to remain on the roll, irrespective of the time he has been away from the State. It is now sought to amend the law in that respect, so that a man shall be entitled to remain on the roll so long as he lives in the State, and so long as his occasional absences from it do not extend over a period of 12 months. The present situation has led to a good many impersonations and wrongful postal voting. A person may know that some property owner has been away from the State for 20 years and that his name is still on the roll, and without much fear of detection he is able to put that knowledge to his own use. It is now proposed to amend the law so that a man can only be absent from the State occasionally for periods not extending beyond 12 months, after which, if he desires to be put back on the roll, he must make fresh application to the electoral office with that object in view. Some people who own property in this State have left it for good. People have bought blocks of land and gone to live in the Eastern States, and have already been there 15 or 20 years. There is no power by which their names can be removed from the roll, which is thus being burdened with useless names and provides opportunities for impersonations. It is proposed that the value of a property that is either leased or occupied shall be assessed on its value to the tenant. If a man is paying rental that is equal to £17 a year, he is entitled to be enrolled for the Legislative Council. In cases where only a nominal rent

is being paid, the criterion will be what the premises would be expected to bring by way of rent under reasonable terms and conditions. This question has always been a bugbear in the department. At various times over the last 20 years legal officers of the Government have given a ruling on the subject. There are about 42 rulings upon the qualifications of various persons, and dealing with various aspects of this question of value. It is now sought to make the law clear so that it will be readily understandable, and that definite rulings may be given upon the sections of the Act dealing with values. Similarly, freehold land will be valued according to its worth, and the price it may reasonably be expected to fetch if put up at public auction. A new provision is in regard to a Council elector who has lost his qualification to vote after the date for the issue of the writ. It is proposed to alter the law so that in certain circumstances he may still exercise his franchise. Previously, a man has had to possess a qualification on the day of the election. Now we say that if he had a qualification on the day the writ was issued, he will be entitled to vote in just the same way as a man was entitled to vote for the Legislative Assembly. If a man is enrolled prior to the issue of a writ in connection with the Legislative Assembly, and he has been away from the electorate for three months, he is still entitled to have his name left on the roll and to vote in his electorate. This amendment will bring the law with regard to the Legislative Council practically into line with that. If a man has a qualification at the date of the issue of the writ, he will be entitled to vote. He may not have all the qualifications that he had, but if he has another qualification, he will be allowed to substitute such qualification up to the date of the issue of the writ. If he is enrolled for the qualification he had prior to the issue of the writ, he will not be prevented from voting. This question has previously been dealt with only in the Constitution Acts, but it is desired now to remove it from that statute and place it in the Electoral Act. It is proposed to repeal Section 17 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, which deals with the disqualification of certain persons, such as those of unsound mind, those in receipt of Government relief, and convicted persons. This provision was inadvertently retained in

the Constitution Acts Amendment Act. Some disqualifications for Legislative Assembly electorates appear in the Electoral Act. We think that all qualifications or disqualifications regarding electorates either for the Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly should appear in their proper place, namely, in the Electoral Act. It is proposed to retain the concessions given to British Indians by the amending Act passed last year. It is also proposed to allow half-caste aborigines the right to exercise the franchise if they can satisfy the magistrate that they are fit and proper persons to do so. This is in conformity with the Federal law. Extensive reference is made in the report of the Royal Commission to the Federal law, which relies on the ruling given by the present Governor General, Sir Isaac Isaacs, when he was Attorney General. He said that the disqualification was only in regard to persons in whom there was a predominant amount of aboriginal blood. That has been the test. Anyone who has been predominantly of aboriginal blood has been disqualified, but any person who has been half and half has been qualified. There is a safeguard to the extent that the half-caste must make application to and be registered by a magistrate.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: It is a tremendous responsibility to place upon a magistrate.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It really should be on a test of citizenship. I know of many half-castes who possess all the qualifications of citizenship, and who carry out their duties of citizenship even better than do some white people.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Yes, but I have known many cases the other way.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: They would not be registered by a magistrate. Some half-castes own property, pay all rates and taxes, and desire to have a vote.

Mr. Sampson: Half aboriginal and half European, but not half Asiatic.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. No one in whom dark blood predominates will be qualified to vote. Many of these people have been suffering an injustice in regard to their qualifications for a vote for the Assembly. I am not talking about half-castes who roam about the back blocks and the goldfields, those who live a nomadic life, but I am referring to those who are living as ordinary citizens, standing up to their responsibilities as taxpayers, and are living

as civilised people. These should certainly be allowed to vote, but nevertheless they will have to go before a magistrate before being permitted to do so. We know that the War of American Independence arose because people were taxed without representation. The Premier referred to the Boston tea merchants who started that war because citizens were being taxed without having any representation. These half-castes are taxed but have no representation. They have been disqualified from recording a vote, which would give them a say in the representative who is appointed to Parliament. It is sought to remove that disqualification, subject to the concurrence of a magistrate. Another disqualification proposed to be removed relates to persons in receipt of Government relief. Elsewhere that disqualification has gone by the board years ago. I think Western Australia is the only State to retain a disqualification of that nature.

Mr. Raphael: It is lucky that the disqualification operated only after the election, or we would not have got in.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not think it would have made much difference. Not many people are wholly dependent on State relief.

Mr. Patrick: The law has never been observed.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Still, it is there. I do not consider it desirable to have on the statute-book principles which are not generally observed. At this stage of our history we should wipe out that disqualification. Another provision of the Bill is that all sections dealing with rolls shall be kept together. This necessitates some rearrangement of the sections as they appear in the existing Act. It applies particularly to the keeping of the rolls. We now have a provision that a claim, upon being made, must remain in the hands of the registrar for a period of 14 days, during which objection to the claim may be lodged. This maturation period, as it is called, of 14 days has to elapse before any name can be placed on the roll. No such provision for maturation finds a place in any other Australian Electoral Act. It is just as easy to remove from the roll persons who are wrongfully enrolled as it is to object to them when they apply to be enrolled. Thus there is no necessity for the provision in question. It needlessly hampers the compilation of the rolls,

and generally speaking there is no advantage whatever in it. We should not perpetuate something that is of no advantage. One effect of the proposed amendment will be that persons will be able to claim enrolment for an election up to the day of the issue of the writ, instead of, as at present, having to apply 14 days prior to the election. Provision is made for the keeping of sub-province rolls of the Legislative Council, similarly to what is already provided for in the case of sub-districts for the Legislative Assembly. The law with regard to the compilation of province rolls is that there shall be combined, in one joint roll, the names of all persons entitled to be enrolled. That is singularly inconvenient for some people. Take the case of a suburban Legislative Council roll containing eight or nine Legislative Assembly districts. In future the registrar for a province will be enabled to divide it into sub-provinces—to divide, say, the Metropolitan-Suburban Province, which contains about 30,000 names, into sub-provinces on the lines of the Assembly electorates. These Assembly electorates are merely combined into a province. Everyone knows that an analogous system exists in connection with Commonwealth rolls. In the Forrest, Perth, and Fremantle Federal electorates there are sub-districts and subdivisions which are amalgamated.

Mr. Patrick: The proposal is to revert to what the law used to be here.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. The proposed system will be much more convenient in the case of, for instance, the Great Southern district. There will be a separate sub-district roll for Wagin, another for Albany, and another for Narrogin. The registrar who deals with the Assembly roll will deal with Legislative Council electors entitled to be registered for his particular portion of the province. That will be much more convenient for the Electoral Department and for everybody concerned.

Mr. Wansbrough: Would there be a combined roll?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes; just the same as in the case of Federal rolls now.

Mr. Patrick: This system obtained in Western Australia 30 years ago.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes; and it was much more convenient.

Mr. Marshall: It is certainly much more efficient and much more economical.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. There is every reason why the new principle should be preferred, and no reason why it should be objected to. Another provision is to render voting compulsory. This is in conformity with the electoral law of the Commonwealth and that of most of the other States. It is desirable that under a system of popular election a genuine expression of the popular will should be obtained, and it is reasonable to infer that those who have the privilege of exercising the franchise should have the obligation to do so.

Mr. Marshall: That will not apply to the Legislative Council?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. At the last general election we had some experience of compulsory voting. Although at that election there was no compulsory voting for the Legislative Assembly, yet it had been enacted that electors must vote on the question of secession. So, having gone to the poll to exercise their votes in that respect, the electors cast their votes for the Legislative Assembly elections as well. The result was a record poll, 90.6 per cent. of the electors voting in 1933 under those conditions as compared with 74.44 per cent. in 1930. I notice, too, that the electoral statistics of the various States where compulsory voting obtains record almost invariably over 90 per cent. of the electors as exercising the franchise. South Australia is the only State which has what might be termed a voluntary system, and it frequently records less than 60 per cent. of votes cast. Generally speaking, whatever alterations are proposed in this respect conform more or less to what exists already in the Commonwealth and in other States. A further provision might be termed revolutionary under existing conditions.

Mr. Marshall: Do not use that word, or the provision will never go through!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I will put it this way, then, that the alteration is of a highly serious character. It relates to postal voting.

Mr. Raphael: What is that?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Voting by post. Wherever it is considered to be

of advantage, the Bill brings the law of this State into conformity with what exists under the Commonwealth law. The postal voting system that exists in Western Australia has been discarded elsewhere for many years. I do not think any other Australian State has such provisions as we have. I believe it may be said that the outstanding principle in connection with elections is that every eligible person shall have an opportunity to vote, and that preferably he shall vote at a ballot box in the electorate in which he lives. But that is not possible in all circumstances. People are away on polling day from the electorate in which they live. Some people are sick on polling day. Owing to isolation, it is financially impracticable to provide a polling booth at every point—say, a polling booth for two or three electors. Therefore, some measures have to be evolved allowing such people to exercise their votes. Consequently our present postal voting system has been used for that particular purpose.

Mr. Raphael: And for other purposes.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: And for other purposes too. Hon. members are aware of the abuses which crept in under the existing system. Most of us have a lively recollection of an election which, about 12 months ago, was upset in consequence of abuses. In that election postal votes were proved to have been wrongly taken in 200 or 300 instances. It is not demanded that the system of postal voting should be perfect. Indeed, our system proves the contrary. It may, however, be said that the abuses which have occurred under the present system have been sufficiently serious to warrant an alteration of the law. A more satisfactory method, involving a minimum of inconvenience, is suggested in the Bill. In every system of absentee voting, or voting away from the polling booth, the person using it must be subject to some inconvenience. In fact, our present postal voting system is highly inconvenient. If it were carried out strictly, a person desiring to record an absent vote would have to leave his home, search out a postal vote officer, fill up a form, and then rely on the postal vote officer to send it on to the electoral registrar concerned. One of the illegal practices which have arisen is that people were supplied with

books of postal vote forms and went around collecting postal votes in a wholesale manner. That did occur, although it was illegal. Now it is proposed that in future absent voting ballot papers shall be obtainable on application to a registrar or to a Chief Electoral Officer.

Mr. Raphael: Application by whom?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: By any person who is entitled to vote. Such a person can make an application to the registrar, and he will get a ballot paper forwarded to him, on which ballot paper he can record his vote. The only restriction is that the elector's signature shall be witnessed by some other person who is either an elector, or a person eligible to become an elector, for the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Seward: Would registrars be appointed in every district? There is not one in my district, for instance.

Mr. Raphael: No. It would not be worth while.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. There would be a registrar in every district. But in the case of some places in an electorate it might be more convenient for the elector to apply for a postal vote to a registrar in another electorate. For an elector at Kulin, for example, it would be much easier to get an absent voting form from the registrar at Merredin, than to obtain it from Pingelly via Narrogin and all the way back again. Again, it would be more convenient for a Kulin elector to obtain a postal vote form from Narembeen, which is in the York electorate. The registrar applied to could apply in turn to another registrar, obtain the postal vote form, and send it to the presiding officer at the election concerned.

Mr. Raphael: And it will probably be delivered a fortnight late.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, there will be ample time for these votes to be received.

Hon. C. G. Latham: When received they can be put in the boxes.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. The only thing is that there will probably be some slight delay regarding the declaration of a poll, but that will not hurt anyone. It makes no difference whether the poll is declared at eight o'clock one day or eight o'clock the next day.

Mr. Thorn: So long as you are elected.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is so.

Mr. Thorn: That is what counts.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. It is proposed that in future absentee voting papers will be supplied on application, and that people living in isolated districts who will always, if I may use the term, be absentee or postal voters, will be able to have a standing registration with the registrar, and then when an election is held, without the necessity for such individuals to make any further application, ballot papers will be posted to them so that they can record their votes and return the ballot papers by the next mail.

Mr. Raphael: Why not make that apply to everyone, and save a lot of trouble?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If every elector chose to register himself along those lines, it could be done, but, of course, no such thing will happen. If a person is sick or knows that he will be absent in another part of the State when the election is held, he will make an application to the registrar in the ordinary way, and record his absentee vote. If, for instance, an individual had a standing registration with the electoral registrar and it was usual for him to be 50 miles or more away working on a farm or on a mine at different places, the registration of a standing address would not avail him at all. On the other hand, those who have a standing registration of their postal address will be able to have the ballot papers posted in the manner I have indicated. Another important provision embodied in the Bill concerns voting at polling booths outside the electorate in respect of which an individual may be eligible to cast a vote. That provision will probably do away with 60 per cent. of the necessity for postal voting. If an elector knows that although his work takes him outside the district in which he is eligible to vote, he can record his vote at a polling booth in another electorate, he will not bother about applying for an absentee or postal vote, but will proceed to the booth and vote where he happens to be.

Mr. Marshall: You are now referring to the absentee vote under the Federal system?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes.

Mr. Cross: How would that apply in the case of a man who may live at Nedlands but has to be absent in Perth working all day?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I presume the hon. member has in mind the seven-mile radius.

Mr. Cross: That is so. If he were working five miles away, he could not exercise a postal vote.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: But under the existing law, that man would not be able to record a postal vote. Anyone who, on polling day, is less than seven miles away from his electorate is not entitled to a postal vote. We are not altering the law in that regard.

Mr. Marshall: How will it apply to the absentee voters?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If a man is within a certain distance of a polling booth in his electorate, he is supposed to go there and cast his vote. It would not be expected that the law should make provision for people to make use of the postal voting clause, if they were required to walk a quarter of a mile only to the polling booth. In the country electorates, the majority of the people have to travel from three to five miles to record their votes.

Mr. Patrick: Much greater distances than that.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes.

Mr. Raphael: But if a man has to be absent at work, it is different.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If a man is at work, he can make application to his employer for time off to enable him to record his vote, and the law provides that that employer must grant the application.

Mr. Doney: At any rate, such a man would not be working 12 hours a day.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. We are not taking away any rights and privileges that electors possess at present. Some important changes are made in connection with the date of the issue of writs, the alterations being made with a view to providing additional time. In the North Province, for instance, mails are very infrequent, and three or four weeks may elapse between mails. If an elector required to send in an application for absentee voting papers, he could not secure them and post them back in sufficient time for the election. As the law stands to-day, the interval between the issue and the return of the writ would not provide sufficient time for all that to be done. To overcome that difficulty, we propose to extend the time between the issue of the writ and its return, and, instead of an interval of 60 days as in the



past, it is now proposed that the period shall be 90 days. All elections will be held on the same day. Nomination day for electorates in the North Province may be put forward a week or so, to allow sufficient time for absentees to attend to what is required under the Act. It does not matter so much about nomination day, so long as the elections are held on the one day. I think it undesirable that elections should be held at different times. At one stage, I believe, the election for the Gascoyne constituency used to be held a week after the general elections, the Roebourne and Pilbara elections still another week later, and the Kimberley election seven days later still.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Improvements in transport have altered the situation.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. At any rate, it is proposed to allow more time to enable electors in such disadvantageous circumstances to take advantage of the Act. No alteration is proposed with regard to the Assembly elections as to the time for the issue of the writs and for their return. There will be extra time granted in respect of any electorate that the Minister may bring under this section by proclamation. It could be made to apply to the Kanowna electorate, which extends almost from Kalgoorlie to the South Australian border. The same applies to the Murchison electorate, which also extends to the South Australian border. It may be that, by the time the next election is held, Lassetter's Reef will be on the map, and that would be 500 or 600 miles away. The Bill will allow for an extension of time so that the measure can be applied to the Murchison constituency. The next principle dealt with relates to electoral offences. The clauses that deal with them are more explicit than the sections in the existing Act. On the latest occasion the Court of Disputed Returns sat, the provisions of this particular part of the Act were, in the opinion of everyone concerned, so ambiguous that no one could say what they really meant. The provisions are contradictory and most decidedly ambiguous. Some of the offences were termed "bribery and undue influence." Others were in the category of "illegal practices." Some of the offences that appeared in our Act under the category of "undue influence" appeared in other Australian Acts as "illegal practices." Certain offences now designated as "undue influence" have been brought under the heading of "other illegal prac-

tices" and made subject to lesser penalties. For instance, interfering with an elector, either in the polling booth or within 50 yards thereof, with the intention of influencing him or advising him as to his vote, was regarded as "undue influence," whereas in other Australian Acts that offence was regarded as an "illegal practice," and the penalties provided were entirely different. The Bill brings these various provisions into line with those existing in other Australian enactments. The penalty for the electoral offence I have referred to is a fine of £200, with two years imprisonment, and disqualification of the person from being eligible to sit as a member of the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council for two years. That penalty was imposed for a comparatively small offence. Another of these offences is the personal solicitation of the vote of an elector by a candidate on polling day, and that was regarded as a more serious type of offence. It must be remembered that when a candidate is found guilty of undue influence, his election is automatically cancelled and he suffers the disqualification of not being eligible for a seat in either House for a period of two years. I have known of such practices being indulged in, and not very long ago either. Another offence is the attendance by a candidate, on polling day, at any meeting of electors held for election purposes, not being a meeting of his committee. The three offences I have referred to all come under the heading of "undue influence," but will now, in accordance with the provisions of the Bill, be classified as "illegal practices." The penalty for such offences now will be a fine not exceeding £100 or imprisonment not exceeding six months. It will be seen that the penalty does not carry disqualification as well. Another point that may be referred to in connection with the treatment of offences under the heading of "undue influence" is a variation that has been made in the law relating to defamatory statements made concerning a candidate. Hitherto this has been a summary offence. That is to say, such cases would be tried before a magistrate in a court of summary jurisdiction. The Bill proposes that a person involved in such a charge shall have the option of being tried summarily or by a jury. This is considered a reasonable provision in view of the serious consequences entailed. The Bill also

provides that if the defendant can prove that he had reasonable grounds for believing the defamatory matter published to be true, he is entitled to an acquittal. That is in accordance with the provisions in the Commonwealth law. I previously mentioned that, in order to suit the convenience of members, the Bill has been printed with the existing sections in ordinary type and the proposed amendments in italics. The Bill, which consolidates the existing law and embodies the proposed amendments, enables members to see the existing provisions and the proposed alterations. In the report of the Royal Commission, reference is made to the fact that there has been great laxity and, in some cases, abuse on the part of some persons entrusted by electors with claim cards for forwarding to the electoral registrar. The suggestion was made that it should be obligatory on the person so entrusted to give a receipt to the claimant and forward the claim forthwith to the registrar. There was a divergence of opinion by members of the commission regarding the perforation of the forms in the receipt book and, after consideration, the Government have decided that the whole position can be met by a more effective use of the provisions for compulsory enrolment by the electors themselves. There is a serious penalty for that offence even now, £50, but we propose an amendment of the law by requiring a person who receives a claim card from an individual to forward it forthwith to the registrar. At present a man may receive a claim card and keep it in his possession for three months and be subject to no penalty. In future such claim cards must be forwarded forthwith, which means within reasonable time. We do not say that the individual receiving the claim card should rush off to the post office and forward it instantly, but it must be forwarded to the registrar within a day or two. Abuses under this provision, I believe, were more apparent in the matter of canvassing for petitions under the licensing law than at election time. A man would call at people's homes ostensibly canvassing, and many of the people approached considered such a man to be an electoral officer. They were asked to fill in cards, of which the man would take possession, and a few days afterwards somebody would approach the same people and

ask them to sign a petition. If they signed the petition, the claim cards were forwarded to the registrar and the people concerned would have a vote. If they did not sign the petition, the claim cards would not be forwarded. That is one way in which the Act was abused. If the claimants were favourable to the petition, the cards were forwarded; if they were unfavourable to the petition, the claim cards were destroyed. Then when an election occurred and people found that their names were not on the roll, they declared that they had signed claim cards for somebody at the door and should have been enrolled. The insertion of the word "forthwith" will make the obligation on canvassers more rigid. Provision is made that the electoral registrar shall, on receipt of a claim card, forward an acknowledgment to the person entitled to be enrolled. If a person fills in a claim card and does not receive an acknowledgment, he will know he has not been enrolled.

Mr. Marshall: Is not there provision in the existing Act for sending an acknowledgment, though certainly it is not done?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It has not been the regular practice to forward acknowledgments, but they will be forwarded in future.

Mr. Sleeman: Electoral registrars have been forwarding them lately.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes. Some minor alterations have been found necessary. In the present Act, owing to amendments having been made from time to time, some provisions have been placed out of their proper context. Advantage has been taken of the redrafting to transfer such provisions to that part of the Bill where they should properly appear. Members, on studying the Bill and the report of the Royal Commission, which was tabled to-day, will find that the Bill is substantially as recommended by the Royal Commission. Though the commission did not make a recommendation in favour of compulsory voting, I believe they favoured it, and that provision has been included in the Bill. The only departure from the commission's report is in regard to the perforated claim card, the recommendation on which was not accepted, for the reasons given. We believe that the application of

the compulsory provisions will suffice to keep the rolls in order. I have referred to all the important matters so that members will have a proper understanding of the principles of the Bill. The minor alterations can be dealt with in Committee. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. G. Latham, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 12th September.

**HON. C. G. LATHAM** (York) [5.35]: This Bill is similar to the measures that have been introduced for a number of years. It seeks to impose the taxes necessary to give effect to the Estimates introduced to the Chamber a week ago. Members have had an opportunity to peruse the Estimates and, I presume, have found them so much like the Estimates introduced in other years that there is not likely to be any necessity for cutting them down. I do not suggest that they intend to cut them down. I believe the only difficulty the Treasurer will experience will be to find sufficient money to meet all requirements, particularly on this occasion. As the Bill represents no departure from the measures introduced during the last two or three years, there is no reason why we should discuss it. Another measure is to be brought down at a later date which may be the subject of some discussion, but this is the usual Land Tax and Income Tax Bill, and members on this side of the House do not propose to offer any objection to it.

Mr. Marshall: Cannot you offer any suggestion for improvement?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I could make plenty of suggestions for improvement, one of which would be to effect a considerable reduction in the taxes, but I cannot believe that the Premier would accept such a proposal from this side of the House. Another reason against adopting that course is that to do so would not be wise because of the demands being made on the Treasurer at the present time. I would remind the hon. member, however, that there are other taxing measures to which we might direct his

attention and probably, when they come before us, we might receive his support. This Bill, however, will receive no opposition from us.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## **BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 12th September.

**MR. SEWARD** (Pingelly) [5.38]: This Bill, as the Minister pointed out, is only a small measure, but it deals with a very vital matter. To my mind, it represents another interference with the arbitration laws of the State, and will not have the effect of improving those laws. I am and always have been a believer in the principles of conciliation and arbitration. There is not the slightest doubt that the arbitration laws of the State have accomplished a vast amount of good, and I consider they are capable of doing much good in the future, provided that they are allowed to function without interference from the Government and that their administration is left entirely in the hands of the authorities appointed for the purpose. The Bill before us, though it is very short, seeks to give legality to an illegality. Various unions have found themselves unable to function by reason of the fact that they have incorporated in their membership persons outside the bounds of their constitution and, in order to give effect to the awards, it is proposed to validate that practice. Such a course, to me, seems entirely wrong. If a plumber belongs to an engineer's union, that is not right. He should belong to the plumbers' union, and it would not be right for us to enlarge the constitution of the engineers' union in order that it might embrace him. If that procedure were adopted, it must inevitably lead to the inauguration of one big union.

Mr. Hegney: What is wrong with that?

Mr. SEWARD: Everything is wrong with it. If the hon. member wishes to address the Chair, he will have ample opportunity presently. He need only be patient, and I shall not be long in showing him what is wrong with the principle of the one big union.

Mr. Marshall: You seem to be going seaward all the time.

Mr. SEWARD: The hon. member's trouble is that he cannot keep quiet. What is obviously wrong with the one big union is that awards made to cover one such union would not apply to the various sections embraced in it. The member for Murchison, a few evenings ago, told us with great pathos of the hardships endured by miners. I do not dispute his statement, but because those men are working under arduous conditions, it would not be right to lay down that the conditions applying to them should be applicable to men working above ground. Yet that must be the effect if the principle of the one big union be adopted. Consequently, instead of passing a law to validate the extension of the constitutions of the unions, the obvious remedy is to allow men in the various callings to join up with the unions to which they naturally belong. There is ample provision in the existing Act to enable the difficulties that have arisen to be rectified. All that is necessary is for the unions concerned to apply for deregistration and then secure registration to make the awards applicable to them. That is the method which should be followed in preference to asking for validating legislation. An objection I have to the Bill is that application would be made to the president of the court in chambers without all interested parties appearing before him. There might be aspects of the question under review that others desire to place before the court. The employers might wish to raise objections to the validating of an order, and yet they would not have the right to appear before the president. Such a proposal is wrong and should not be tolerated. The Minister mentioned that organisations, with the concurrence of the registrar, had altered their constitutions and now found not only that their registration was faulty, but that their constitutions were also faulty. That difficulty has arisen because some unions have included in their membership individuals who should more properly belong to other unions. The obvious way to overcome the difficulty is for such men to link up with the unions to which they naturally belong, instead of belonging to a union and being covered by an award given to that union. As was stated by the Minister, this Bill seeks by an easy way to validate alterations to union constitutions. That does not appeal to me. To alter a constitution is a very

serious matter. It is so regarded in the domains of State and Federal authorities; in fact, many safeguards are enforced before an alteration of a constitution is permitted, and I think that should apply in every instance. It can readily be understood that to make it easy to alter the constitution may inflict a hardship on certain people. Under the existing law there may be some who belong to a large union and many of them may be of one particular calling. There may be 50 per cent. of one calling and the others may belong to various other unions. To give one section the right to out-vote the others in the alteration of the constitution is wrong, and on that ground I intend to oppose the Bill. My main objection, as I have said, is that we are really legalising an illegality, and also dragging all classes of employees into one union, and that one particular section may out-vote the other.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

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

### **BILLS (2)—RETURNED.**

Trustees' Powers Amendment.

Fremantle (Skinner Street) Disused Cemetery Amendment.

Without amendment.

### **BILL—TRAFFIC.**

#### *In Committee.*

Resumed from the 12th September; Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Acting Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Postponed Clause 5—Annual and half-yearly licenses:

**THE ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS:**  
I move an amendment—

That in paragraph (b) of Subclause 2 "in the next subsection" be struck out and "in this section" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

**THE ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS:**  
I move an amendment—

That paragraph (a) of Subclause 4 be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—

"(a) Where in any financial year a first half-year's license has not been issued for

a vehicle no license shall be issued for the vehicle for the second half-year of that financial year in any case where the vehicle was licensed—

- (i) for the preceding financial year: or
- (ii) for the second half of the preceding financial year,

unless the number plates of the vehicle were deposited with the local authority which issued the same within fourteen days after the expiration of such preceding financial year or half-year as the case may be."

Under the amendment it is quite clear that if it is desired to take out an annual license, a person may do so and he may also do so if he desires to take out only a half-year's license, in connection with which there will be no need to deposit the plates. Say at Christmas time, which is the end of the half-year—the year expiring on the 30th June—a person takes out a half-year's license. There will be no need to deposit the plates. It is where it is not desired to take out a license for the half year that a person must give 14 days' notice and lodge the plates. What was desired by members has been accomplished now by the draftsman. It is quite clear that all that will be necessary will be to apply for the license for the half-year without depositing the plates.

Mr. STUBBS: Suppose I own a motor car and reside in a certain district, and for the first six months of the financial year I am out of the State and have not licensed my car, am I right in saying that before I can apply for a license for the second half of the year, I must deposit my plates?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: If a person desired to leave the State, say at the end of the half-year, and had no intention of returning until the end of the year, it would be necessary for him to deposit his number plates before going away. He would thus inform the Traffic Department or the local authorities that he did not desire to license the car during the period of his absence. The only means the authorities have of knowing that a person has no intention of using his car is the possession by them of that person's number plates.

Mr. FOX: The paragraph says that if the number plates are not handed in within 14 days, the vehicle must be licensed for the half-year. If a man did not put in his plates for 16 or 17 days, he would be required to pay the half-year's license, and he would not be entitled to the issue of a license,

The Acting Minister for Works: Yes, he would get a license.

Mr. FOX: But it is laid down that no license shall be granted, unless the plates have been deposited within 14 days. If the Minister will interpret the Act strictly, he will find the motorist is not entitled to the issue of the license, although a later section of the Act says he shall be charged up for the balance of the year.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: He can take out a license at any time. This is where the license is for the first half of the year.

Mr. Fox: What will happen if after the first six months he deposits his plates within 16, not 14 days?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is just the point. If he does not put in his plates within 14 days it will be assumed he does not wish to license his car for the balance of the year. He has been running round for portion of the year for which he has not paid, and they give him 14 days' grace.

Mr. WITHERS: I do not quite understand the Minister's explanation. It is definitely stated that if the plates are not deposited within 14 days the license will not be granted. So the motorist could not get a license if he deposited his plates on the 15th or the 16th day. This amendment is going to stop him altogether. Then there is the question of the motorist who is transferred from one district to another. Has he to take his number plates back to the place where they were issued to him before he can get a further license?

Mr. MARSHALL: The amendment shows that the Minister has not given very much attention to those who live in remote parts of the State.

Mr. Moloney: How do you know that?

Mr. MARSHALL: Because they, like the people in the metropolitan area, will be called upon to deposit their plates within 14 days, although in some instances it might mean almost a 14 days journey. It seems to me that people in outback districts will not be able to take advantage of this provision for a half-yearly license. Yet those people outback are building up the city. That is the chief objection I have to the amendment. The Minister has travelled through some of those outlying parts

and should know of their difficulties. People in those districts will be called upon to travel hundreds of miles to the office of the local authority in order to get their plates back within 14 days after the expiration of their license periods. The local authorities are pretty generous, yet it might happen that a road board secretary would have a bit of a down on a certain motorist and make it difficult for him to renew his license in the prescribed manner. The Minister ought to give more latitude to people at, say, Nullagine and other remote centres, where communication is possible only at long intervals.

Mr. THORN: How would it be to confine the provision to municipalities in congested areas?

Mr. MARSHALL: That would not do, for we have road boards covering congested areas, such as the Perth Road Board. The proposed amendment is all right for big centres, but not for isolated districts, where there are deserving people who should be properly protected.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. RODOREDA: I doubt whether this clause will have as bad an effect on outback electorates as the member for Murchison imagines. The local authorities generally know whether a man is going to renew his license or not. It would be a simple matter for a person to acquaint the local authority with his intentions, and to intimate to it that he would send in his plates as soon as possible. The clause has been framed to catch people who have been hoodwinking the traffic authorities, and retaining their plates without any intention to renew their license. If a man does not return his plates at the due time, he should suffer the penalty.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: The local authorities have to administer the law in their districts, and may be relied upon to treat residents decently. If the period is left at 14 days people will know what is expected of them. The local authority would certainly take conditions into consideration in the event of a man requiring an extension of time.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. RODOREDA: I move an amendment—

That the following subclause be inserted:—"In exceptional

circumstances (the existence of which in each particular case it shall have an absolute discretion to determine) the local authority may grant a license for a motor wagon or trailer, as defined in the Second Schedule, for the first quarter of the financial year, and the fee therefor shall be one-quarter of the prescribed fee (including any additional fees prescribed by Part II. of the Third Schedule) for a year's license, plus two shillings and sixpence.

Provided that this subsection shall only apply to a local authority the public office of which is situate north of the twenty-sixth parallel of south latitude and to a vehicle intended to be used solely in such part of the State.

Provided further, that a license for the first quarter shall not be granted for any vehicle in respect of which the owner is entitled to the benefit of the provisions of section ten of this Act relating to payment of half fees only."

My object is to enable truck owners, who use their vehicles chiefly for wool carting during a short season, to obtain a six months' license instead of being obliged to take out two licenses for six months each for every year. The amendment will affect principally transport firms in the north-west, who use their heavy vehicles for the carting of wool, and lay them up when the season is over. There is no nigger in the wood pile, for the local authorities themselves must be satisfied that the application is a genuine one before they need grant it.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: As this concession will be entirely at the discretion of the local authorities, who are responsible for the upkeep of their own roads, I see no objection to the amendment. If the local authorities object they will of course decline to issue a license on these terms.

Mr. THORN: I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out the first proviso.

This would make the concession apply to the whole State. Why should it be confined to the north-west?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: I could not agree to this concession being made general. That would lead to much confusion, and would increase the difficulties experienced by the local authorities in getting license fees paid, and in policing the Act. Such a concession as this should apply only to the north-west. It would lead to endless confusion. The local authorities would probably discover many sets of exceptional circumstances. Save in the isolated North, main roads exist

on which the vehicles would run. If the amendment were made general, it would apply to thousands of vehicles. The half-yearly license is the utmost concession that can be made.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister might well give the amendment on the amendment further consideration. It is a wise suggestion. Timber is carted during certain periods of the year, and fruit and some mallet bark during other periods.

The Acting Minister for Works: Half fees would apply in some of those cases.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, under Clause 10.

Mr. RODOREDÁ: I absolutely and unequivocally oppose the amendment on the amendment. The mover of it appears not to have read my amendment. If his suggestion were adopted, how would a local authority know whether a vehicle was run solely within that authority's district? A vehicle that carts wheat, for instance, would not be eligible for the concession under my amendment. The exceptional circumstances to which the amendment refers are exceptional circumstances that recur annually, and at the same period of the year. In the North vehicles carting wool are used for that purpose only, remaining in the shed when the wool is finished. Local authorities in the North now endeavour to relieve the position by various efforts, all of them illegal.

Mr. THORN: The holder of a farmer's license does not come under the amendment as it stands. I fail to see the difficulty of policing the amendment on the amendment, in view of the distinguishing discs that are used. I entirely disagree with the suggestion that these licenses might be issued on the same lines as radio licenses. The outlying districts of the wheat belt, which depend on motor transport to connect with the railway system, are surely entitled to the concession for which I ask. The fact that the concession to the North is to be only for the first quarter of the year alters the complexion of the case, but why should the concession be particular instead of general? Why not grant it to the whole of the State? I adhere to my amendment on the amendment.

Mr. MARSHALL: I hope the amendment on the amendment will not be pressed. Past Parliaments have been generous, if not unduly so, to those engaged in primary production in the southern part of the State. In the North we have very few railways indeed to assist us in the transport of our

products. The amendment would be spoilt by the adoption of the amendment on it which has been moved. Moreover, a further concession is granted, under proposed Section 10a, to a farmer carting goods from his farm to the nearest town or railway station. Wool producers in the North have not had successful seasons for several years. The North asks for a comparatively paltry concession in exceptional circumstances, the existence of which has to be proved. I ask agricultural members to look a little more kindly on proposals for concessions to the North.

Mr. SAMPSON: I cannot follow the member for Murchison. If the first proviso be struck out, the member for Roebourne will get what he desires. Even if that proposal be defeated, he will still get what he desires.

Mr. Marshall: The Minister has already said he will not agree to that.

Mr. SAMPSON: We hope the Minister will give further consideration to the matter, and give secretaries of all road boards the opportunity, in exceptional circumstances, to do what the member for Roebourne desires.

Amendment, on amendment, put and negatived.

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

Clause 27—Repeal of Fourth Schedule p.a. New Schedule enacted:

Mr. THORN: I again protest against the clause because it seeks to reduce the load the iron-tyred vehicles may carry. The effect of that is to increase taxation.

Mr. Marshall: I am with you there.

Mr. THORN: Irrespective of which Government may be in power, the use of horse-drawn vehicles should be encouraged. Exception has rightly been taken to the practice of importing foreign fuel for motor traction. If the chaff market were the same as it was years ago, it would be a wonderful thing for the State. I hope the Minister will agree not to reduce the loading capacity of iron-tyred vehicles.

Mr. STUBBS: I understood the Minister agreed to postpone the clause so that he might look into the matter to ascertain whether our contentions were correct. If the clause be agreed to as it stands, it will mean that the load to be carried by farmers' vehicles will be considerably reduced.

Mr. WATTS: The principle embodied in the schedule is entirely wrong. It will considerably reduce the load to be carried by horse-drawn vehicles. The existing schedule in the Act has proved quite satisfactory. I discussed the matter with two secretaries of local authorities last week-end, and they assure me that no difficulty has been experienced with regard to the existing schedule. I move an amendment—

That the second part of the Fourth Schedule be struck out.

The Minister for Agriculture: Will some Country Party member tell me what load they suggest should be carried on what width of tyre?

Mr. SEWARD: I support the amendment and, in reply to the Minister, I would suggest that the regulations now in force be continued. There has been no difficulty in the past, and if one farmer should overload his iron-tyred vehicle, the local road board is notified promptly because the farmers themselves have to pay for the upkeep of their roads. We should encourage the farmers to go in more for the use of horse-drawn vehicles. The roads are not damaged so much by iron-tyred vehicles as by the heavily-loaded fast-driven motor vehicles.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I support the amendment. Section 35 of the principal Act provides the limit on the maximum loads to be carried according to the size of tyres. Under it a spring cart with 2-in. tyres can carry a maximum load of two tons, whereas if the Bill be agreed to, that loading will be reduced to 1 ton 8 cwt. Under the Act a dray with 4-in. tyres can be loaded with the weight of 2 tons 16 cwt. and the same weight will be permitted under the Bill. On the other hand, under the Act a wagon with 4-in. tyres can be loaded to 5 tons 16 cwt. but under the Bill the loading would be reduced to 5 tons 4 cwt., while a wagon with 5-in. tyres that, under the Act, can be loaded with 8 tons 5 cwt. will, under the Bill, be allowed to load only 6 tons 10 cwt. It must be recognised that the 6 tons 10 cwt. includes also the weight of the wagon, so that the load will be severely restricted. It is not easy for farmers to-day to meet the expense of the change-over from the narrow tyre to the wide tyre.

The Minister for Agriculture: What would a wagon of that description carry?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It would take upwards of 70 bags of wheat, representing up to 6 tons.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have not seen many 70-bag loads on a 5-in. tyre.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Plenty of them have been loaded on a vehicle with 4-in. tyres.

Mr. Seward: Yes, or 4½-in. tyres.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I know that the Minister has no desire to harass the farmers, and I think he might leave well alone. We have worked this out with information supplied by one of the leading wagon builders.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: A new principle is sought to be introduced by taking into consideration the diameter of the wheels. That has a big bearing on the load.

Hon. C. G. Latham: In theory, yes; in reality it has not.

Mr. Seward: Only on the horse.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, on the road. Take a wheel 5ft. in diameter, there is more of the tyre bearing on the road than there is of a wheel 3ft. 6in. in diameter.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: About one-hundredth of an inch.

Mr. Thorn: Which wheel would do the more damage?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: The smaller wheel. I was asked to ascertain the effect of the amendment and I obtained all the information possible. What members opposite have failed to show is how farmers will be penalised.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They will be penalised in that the load they will be permitted to carry will be reduced.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: There has always been a limitation.

Hon. C. G. Latham: A load of 8 tons 5 cwt. has been reduced to 6 tons 10 cwt., including the weight of the wagon.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: In the old days, the load was limited by the condition of the roads. It was quite usual for a good 5-horse team to carry 35 or 40 bags of wheat.

Members: More than that.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the vehicle had a sandhill to cross, it would not carry a bigger load.



Hon. C. G. Latham: But the roads now are good.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: And there must be a limitation. A principle is involved in this.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I am afraid it is a city principle inapplicable to country conditions.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: The departmental officers say definitely that a 3ft. 6in. wheel is harder on the road than is a larger wheel.

Mr. Thorn: That is all theory.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, it is the practical effect. With bulk handling farmers carry very small loads.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Do you wish to encourage the use of horse-drawn vehicles?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: Certainly, we do. If the wheel were 4ft. 8in. in diameter, which is not a large wheel—

Mr. Seward: An average one.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: The vehicle could carry 6 tons 10 cwt.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Including the weight of the vehicle.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: What would be the weight of the vehicle?

Mr. Seward: About 28 cwt.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: That would mean a 5-ton load. How many horses would be required?

Mr. Seward: Five to six, depending on the condition of the road.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: Rarely would such a load be put on. How much more do members want on that type of wagon? I am not prepared to go back to the old schedule.

Hon. C. G. Latham: If you are not prepared to go back to the old schedule, you have the weight of numbers to carry this one.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: I want members to say what they want and they will not tell me.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Let the old schedule stand.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, make this schedule fit the needs of the hour.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We will meet you half-way. You take the first part of the schedule.

Mr. Thorn: What are the needs of the hour?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: Having regard to the diameter of the wheels and the wear on the roads. Members are concerned about what a wagon may carry; I am concerned about the wear on the roads. If members will give me an idea what a wagon with 4ft. 8in. and 3ft. 6in. wheels with 5in. tyres should carry, we might revise the schedule along those lines.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Increase each lot by 1cwt. We are concerned more about the farm wagon than the spring dray.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the roads can carry the load—

Mr. Stubbs: Leave out of reckoning the weight of the vehicle.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Add 1cwt. to each of your proposals.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: How would that work out? What is the diameter of the wheel of an ordinary farm wagon?

Mr. Seward: Four feet eight inches.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is an up to date formula as compared with the old one.

Mr. Stubbs: What do you propose?

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: I want to know what members opposite desire.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I appreciate the Minister's difficulty. Two types of vehicle are used on the farm for the cartage of wheat. There is the small low table-topped type of vehicle with wheels in the vicinity of 3ft. 6in., and there is the ordinary table-topped wagon with a low front wheel and a high back wheel. Those are the only two used by the farmer for the cartage of wheat and he carries from 6 to 8-ton loads. I personally would be satisfied if the Minister made the following alterations:—

Not less than 3ft. and under 4ft., 7cwt. instead of 6cwt. per inch of tyre.

Not less than 4ft. and under 5ft. 2in., 8cwt. instead of 7cwt. per inch of tyre.

Not less than 5ft. 2in. and under 6ft. 4in., 9cwt. instead of 8cwt. per inch of tyre.

Not less than 6ft. 4in. and over, 10cwt. instead of 8½cwt. per inch of tyre.

If the Minister agreed to those variations, I think they would have the approval of the great majority of wheatgrowers.

The Acting Minister for Works: There are a lot of light lorries running on the roads.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I am speaking for the farmers. In my district farmers carry 80 to 100 bags of wheat on such vehicles, some of which have 6in., but the majority 5in. tyres. Last harvest I saw at a siding a load of 120 bags on a 5in. tyre.

Mr. THORN: I have a better suggestion. The greatest reduction under the Bill is due to taking into account the weight of the vehicle. That reduces considerably the carrying capacity proposed to be permitted.

Mr. Marshall: It is the same in the parent Act.

Mr. THORN: If the Minister wishes to make some concession, he should delete the weight of the vehicle.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment before the Committee is that certain words be struck out.

Mr. THORN: We are endeavouring to assist the Minister, and if he would delete the weight of the vehicle the position would be met. Farmers' wagons weigh from 1 ton 15 cwt. to two tons.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am anxious to have the schedule understandable and framed so that it will meet all requirements. I shall give consideration to the proposal put up by the member for Irwin-Moore.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You can recommit the Bill if necessary.

The ACTING MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, we can do that. In the meantime we can pass the clause as it stands.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

## ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1935-36.

### *In Committee of Supply.*

Debate resumed from the 10th September, on the Treasurer's financial statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Sleeman in the Chair.

*Vote—Legislative Council, £1,712:*

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [8.35]: This year's Budget might be described as a pre-election one and discloses the return of some industries to conditions approaching normal, and an improvement in the State's

financial position insofar as Consolidated Revenue accounts are concerned. Unfortunately, owing to low commodity prices, the agriculturist has not shared that improvement: in fact, since the advent of the depression the position of the farmer has been progressively worse. The Treasurer pointed out that Western Australia's return to better times has been retarded by the fact that we are so much dependent on good prices for primary products, particularly wheat. That is true; primary industries still provide the major wealth of this State, and there can be no true and lasting prosperity until such time as the real wealth producers are placed on the basis of profitable production. There is an indication, however, that this year's wool prices will be in advance of the prices ruling last year, and it is to be hoped that the recent forward move in wheat prices will be maintained. Members supporting the present Government when criticising the administration of the previous Government referred with monotonous repetition to the deficits for the two periods. I propose therefore to make a comparison to enable members to obtain a clear conception of the true position, and to ask them to endeavour to appreciate how extremely difficult were the many problems which the previous Government had to face and overcome. If hon. members had a clear conception of that position, they would not blame the past Government, as they did, for any maladministration. I agree that no one likes to boast about a high deficit. The deficit for the year 1931-32—£1,558,000—was the highest on record. I want the Committee to remember that in the following year it was reduced to £864,000, and in the year 1933-34 to £788,000.

The Premier: A million and a half in two years.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It was a million and a half, as I have just pointed out, in 1931-32.

The Premier: It was the same in the second year.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, it was not as much as that. I admit that last year the Premier finished up his financial year with a deficit of £167,000, but I have pointed out the reason for it, and it is worth repeating. In 1931-32 the receipts from revenue and loan accounts totalled only £9,415,000, or £2,700,000 less than last year's total of £12,115,000. Thus there was a great deal more money than the previous Government

had to handle. The abnormal times of course deprived our Government of revenue, and also of the inability to borrow. The £2,700,000 the present Government have had has enabled them to reduce the deficit to the figure of last year, and to provide for increased expenditure amounting to £1,390,000. This improvement has been due to several causes as pointed out by the Treasurer in his Budget, the chief of which were: Increased loan funds, increased taxation receipts, and increased Commonwealth grant. I would point out also that during our period we had additional expenditure which the present Government have not had to face. They certainly have some of it, but not to the extent that we experienced in the early period of our administration. On unemployment relief we spent £653,000 out of revenue which helped to build up the deficit.

The Premier: That was the year when there was supposed to be no unemployment.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know about that. I have never yet struck a period when there was no unemployment in the State. Further, exchange at that time was 30 per cent., and we had to find £620,000 for that alone. I admit that the Premier too has had to find a considerable amount for exchange, but it has been reduced to 25 per cent. So that there is some relief in that direction. Not only did we have less money to spend, but we were called upon to meet unforeseen expenditure, and unfortunately we were unable to do better than we did. The present Government have had a good deal of assistance because of the rise in the price of gold. We are all pleased to know that when we experience a depressed period in some industries we can fall back on another and build up from that source. The gold industry has provided quite a lot of employment, not entirely in the mines, but in the allied industries. It will be seen that the present improved although not yet satisfactory position is due very largely to the several causes to which I have already referred, and not, as Labour members would have us believe, to the special administrative ability of the present Government. I do not blame the present Government any more than any other Government for the difficulties in which they find themselves. But if we make a close examination of the whole situation it fails to disclose the same satisfactory state of affairs

that the Consolidated Revenue account indicates. If we go carefully through the accounts we will find that a lot of money is being used from loan funds that should be a charge against Consolidated Revenue. I suppose we shall hear from other members who disagree with the present borrowing policy of the Government under existing conditions, but as I said last year when the Loan estimates were under consideration, we cannot blame the Government for borrowing money when they have certain responsibilities to fulfil, amongst them being the providing of employment. And the main thing to do is to see that the money is so invested that it will return interest and provide a permanent asset for the benefit of the State. Even in the Old Country the British Parliament has found it necessary to borrow large sums of money. But the Imperial Government do not directly spend that money as we do here. Recently in London a loan of £35,000,000 was raised for the electrification of the railways and for the construction of further tubes. It is proposed to hand over that money to a board and make that board responsible for the payment of interest to the Government. In that way probably there will be better control than if the undertakings were in the hands of the Government themselves. So that probably while we dislike borrowing money at this juncture it seems to me inevitable that we must do so.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Every Government has to borrow.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: But there is a limit to the profitable borrowing of money. The main difficulties overseas to-day consist of the tremendous local debts the nations are carrying and for which they cannot find interest. I just want to point out the difficulty this State will have in paying interest. Interest up to last year, including sinking fund, amounted to £4,019,000, or 43 per cent. of all the money the Treasurer handles. It is a very large sum if we are to go on borrowing. I admit that while our industries are flourishing we will not feel the full effect of it, but when we strike bad years from time to time we shall have the same old difficulty the last Government experienced from 1930 onwards. And we are not out of it yet. So we ought.

to take stock of our position and restrict our borrowing as much as possible, and expend our money only in such avenues as will provide interest and build up an asset that will be of use in the future. The State's net public indebtedness at the 30th June last was £88,066,000, or £197 6s. 11d. per head of population. And then on top of that we have the Commonwealth debt and the local authorities' debts, all of which mean in the aggregate a big burden. So it is on account of that I say there is a breaking strain and a limit to what industries can carry in the shape of borrowed money. Since 1925 we have increased the debt per head of population by approximately £5 per annum. Those figures I have just mentioned are well worth the consideration of members.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: What does the interest amount to per annum?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have not worked that out.

The Minister for Justice: Roughly £400,000 per annum.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Our loan expenditure since 1924 has amounted, or by the end of the present financial year will amount, to £38,702,000. Of this sum the present Government are responsible for £33,345,000, expended during their nine years in office, as against £5,357,000 spent during the three years our Government were in office. I am not going to say there is any great credit due to us, because I believe that if we could have got hold of more loan money we would have been more acceptable to the people when we went to the polls in 1933. However, I ask members and the Government themselves to exercise the strictest control over these borrowings. A little time ago I mentioned that the Estimates unfortunately did not show that we were yet round the corner. I have always held that the repairs and maintenance of public buildings should come out of revenue, not loan funds. I feel sure that on the works done during last year far more was spent than is shown here. I have no objection to Government buildings being painted and renovated, but I think the cost ought to be charged against revenue, not against loan fund. I have always argued that a work such as the reclamation at the Causeway and along the foreshore ought to

come from revenue, for it cannot possibly be reproductive, and a very large sum is being spent. During the last two years, £47,900 has been expended there. It would not be so bad if it went wholly in labour, but actually a tremendous amount is going in fuel. During the three previous years we spent down there £40,486, but that included the widening of the Causeway as well. Of course there will be considerable benefit derived from this work, especially on the south side of the river where there was always the danger of floods.

Mr. Cross: Do you object to it?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, all I say is that that class of work should be done from Consolidated Revenue, not Loan Fund, because it cannot possibly earn interest. Also I suggest that a lot of that work should be done by the city, not by the State.

Mr. Cross: The city finds a certain amount.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Only £1,000 per annum. The Treasurer will have to find a considerably larger amount than that.

Mr. Cross: Yes, including the capital cost of the dredge.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The dredge is already bought and is probably a very good investment. No doubt the dredge will serve its purpose for many years to come, and carry out some extensive works down the river. I was glad the Treasurer pointed out that although there had been a fall in the value of production of our most important industries, wheat, wool and gold, the value was only £348,000 below that of 1928-29. The position is not quite as bad as it might be, because that £348,000 which we have lost has been more than made up by the fall in the cost of living, when we take into consideration the figures for 1928-29. Since then the basic wage has fallen by about £42. Consequently that £348,000 would be more than made up by fall in the cost of living. I am pleased to see that during the year the Government have been relieved of expenditure in the providing of employment for those who were previously dependent on the Government. During the year 449 men were absorbed in Government employment, leaving only 776 receiving sustenance. It is pleasing to know that those men have been provided with full-time employment and also that there has been a reduction in the number of sustenance workers who were previously re-

ceiving assistance, while the number of men on relief work has fallen to 8,355 persons, 595 being absorbed in private employment. We would like to see those remaining men employed if possible on full-time. I remember the Treasurer saying here—and probably I am only expressing what he believes—that if he could employ half of them on full-time, they probably would find employment for the balance. I agree with that, and so I say we ought if possible to get back to full-time work.

Mr. Hegney: Do you believe in that—half on full-time and they will find employment for the balance?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I did not say that. I say we should absorb all our men as quickly as possible, and I believe that if we could employ half of them on full-time probably they would employ the balance themselves.

Mr. Hegney: You think it would work out that way?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know, but we do know what has happened on the goldfields, where the large number of men employed full-time have provided considerable work for others. We have not heard so much of the Economic Council during the last year. Despite their efforts for over two years, according to the figures submitted by the Treasurer we have sent an additional £1,000,000 to the Eastern States for goods. I know the spending power of the people has increased, but still the Economic Council has not done much towards reducing our imports from the Eastern States.

Mr. Hawke: Factory employment has gone up.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I should like to know where all those new factories have come from. I have tried to check them up. I know that those new factories employ on an average seven hands apiece, but I am not sure that there are in all 197 new factories. However, we still want to carry on that policy of using Western Australian goods wherever possible. The Treasurer pointed out that the goldmining industry did not play such an important part in the State as the agricultural industry. I agree with that, but he omitted to tell us that £1,188,000 went to London in dividends which really was not sent there at all, because there was more than that amount in the new capital which came in from Lon-

don last year. So the dividends that went away from here were more than counter-balanced by the new capital received from mining development. So probably we have not had to suffer any great loss in that respect, except that the Government have to make contribution towards the exchange on the amount that comes here from the Old Country. It will be a problem some day to find exchange on money sent from the Old Country for investment here. Again, the Treasurer quoted figures by the Chairman of the Loan Council, when he informed us that we contributed only 1 per cent. to our loans and got 12 per cent. from the Loan Council. That is accounted for when the Treasurer tells us that £7,000,000 of our money goes overseas for goods which we have to bring into this State. The money is earned here, but it goes to Melbourne and the profits from it are invested in the Eastern States. From a developmental point of view this country is very new. In the city itself all the profits earned are going into development work. In proof of that, we have only to walk along the Terrace and see the new buildings going up. They are from profits, which cannot be invested two ways at once. We cannot build up our industries and loan ourselves money at the same time. That accounts for our contributing only 1 per cent.; and we do a much greater service to the Commonwealth by exporting our primary goods.

The Premier: The Chairman of the Loan Council when he quoted those figures did not suggest we were under any obligation.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is so. The figures supplied may be illuminating, but as I say, there is a reason for them. I have endeavoured to ascertain the sources of the Treasurer's revenue. The year ended with £485,000 more than he estimated. Public utilities increased by £344,000, Territorial by £63,000, and taxation was £260,000 more than was estimated. When the financial emergency tax legislation was before us, I told the Acting Treasurer that the amount he was budgeting for would be less than that which he would actually receive. The amount received was £135,000 above the estimate, whereas I considered it would be about £100,000 above it. With the prospects at the moment, I believe that taxation for the current year will exceed the

amount estimated by the Treasurer. The only disappointing feature of the Estimates is the falling off in receipts from State trading concerns. Whilst I know it is the policy of the Labour Party to foster these concerns as much as possible, I know it is due to the good sense of the Government that they have not extended them. We ought to clean up those trading concerns that do not pay their way. They do not provide any useful purpose, and do not keep down the cost of material. They are simply a drag upon the Treasury, and will continue to be so. The taxation receipts for the current year are expected to increase by only £28,000. The Treasurer does not propose to increase taxation, for which we are thankful. He estimates a drop in departmental revenue of £64,000. Probably he may not be taking into account moneys which have not been paid from the Water Supply Department. As in the case of the Agricultural Bank, there must be a large sum of money credited for the year but not actually paid. As the Treasurer pointed out, the system which has been adopted in respect to the Agricultural Bank ought to be adopted in respect to irrigation schemes in the South-West.

The Premier: And to extensions to agricultural areas; but the farmers do not pay.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: They cannot pay. They may pay at some time, and the money will then be taken into revenue. At present it is credited to revenue but is not paid.

The Premier: Perhaps they will pay some time.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The financial emergency tax will be introduced in a day or so. This is expected to produce £685,000 this year. If things go on as they are going, I think it will produce £700,000, if not a little more.

The Premier: That is a good thing.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Treasurer always has a little up his sleeve.

The Premier: He has to.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am sorry he did not say how much he obtained last year from the additional tax on gold profits. It was impossible for me to find out what that additional nest egg amounted to. I do not know even if it came up to the estimate.

The Premier: The estimate and the result were very close. The receipts were £83,000.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That was a good estimate.

The Premier: One of the best.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The tax was made retrospective to the first of the year. The Treasurer had a good idea what the actual revenue would be. The expenditure during the year it is estimated will be £9,662,000, or £163,000 more than was spent last year. This is made up principally by the restoration of the cuts that were made previously. Of the total, £3,901,000 is provided for by special Acts, over which this House has no control. The money has already been earmarked by Acts of Parliament passed long before many of us came here. Governmental services, that is, services rendered by the Government, account for £2,520,000, and public utilities account for £3,239,000. Railways will constitute the largest item. It is not proposed to re-enact the provisions of the Financial Emergency Act imposing reductions on salaries. The estimated cost of this will be £49,000 for the half year. The Treasurer emphasised how unfair it was that we should have reduced the salaries of civil servants. He said they had been picked out for special treatment. That was not so. He will remember that when on this side of the House he said we should not interfere with people in the Government service because the cuts did not apply to anyone outside it, and that the reductions therefore were inequitable. The arrangement made by the Government of the day was that there should be a general sacrifice, a sliding down of 20 per cent. This could not be confined entirely to the Civil Service, but had to be applied also to people outside. We therefore gave power to employers to approach the Arbitration Court, and we instructed that court by Act of Parliament what it should take into consideration. No doubt that instruction brought down the cost of living. In addition, there was the financial emergency legislation, the reduction of rents, the reduction of interest, the setting aside of contracts, and power to reduce wages and salaries in industry. All these things brought down the cost of living. When the Premier took over the Treasury, he found that the cuts were not applying to the ordinary man on the basic wage. The basic wage had fallen to the extent that the cuts did not apply. When the amending legislation partially restoring the cuts was introduced, it applied only to those who

were being paid 9s. or more above the basic wage as the margin for skill. Those on the basic wage received no benefit.

Mr. Hegney: You reduced the basic wage from £4 9s. to £3 11s. 8d. You also said that the reductions affected only those on the margins.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I said that the basic wage had come down, but that the first restoration applied only to those on 9s. or more above the basic wage. Thus we served a useful purpose. I believe our legislation assisted in making the sacrifice more general than it would have been. People we could not legislate for in this Chamber were also affected. At the same time we enabled them to buy their goods at a lower price than they were paying before. The sacrifice that was made by Australians materially assisted in the successful conversion of overseas loans during the last few years. Britain could not say "We are not going to assist these people when we know what sacrifices they have made themselves." Our legislation certainly served a useful purpose. I did not like the Premier trying to bait me with regard to civil servants, and was determined he should not do so. I thought there should be a restoration of the cuts made on the lower-paid civil servants last year. It is a large reduction to take £42 off a man whose income is only £230, and the civil servants have never been saved the variation in the basic wage. I am very glad to see that the Premier proposes to make the restoration. It is pleasing to me, particularly as it affects the lower paid officials. The Minister for Employment, in his second reading speech on the Financial Emergency Bill last year, made a statement, according to "Hansard," page 1082, as follows:—

When his (Mr. Latham's) Government introduced this legislation, he and his fellow Ministers were appealed to not to make it apply to private employees. . . . He was told by us at the time that he need not go outside the Government departments.

It would have been very unfair if we had not done so. It did not apply to civil servants only; they were not singled out for special treatment. I did not want the impression to get abroad that we had singled out the civil servants for special treatment. That was not done. I am aware that the Premier promised that, if he were returned to office, there would be a drastic alteration, but there has not been much of a drastic

alteration until the last two years, which was entirely due to the same difficulties that confronted us. There was this difference only, that he was more fortunate in that he had a little more money.

The Premier: The drastic alteration has been to cut it out completely.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In the first part of the period, the matter adjusted itself. Last year the Premier had to find a sum of money and this year he has to find some more. At the same time I cannot reconcile his figures. The Premier stated that we had saved £290,000 by what we did, and that the restoration was costing him £290,000 more. That is not so.

[Mr. Withers took the Chair.]

The Premier: Does not the hon. member know that the cuts imposed by his Government amount, since they were imposed, in round figures, to £1,000,000? We have cut that out. Is that not drastic?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Premier gave the figures as £290,000.

The Premier: If the cuts had not been imposed, the civil servants would have received £1,000,000 more than they have received.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is over the period of five years. I do not know whether the Premier is including the wages men also.

The Premier: No, I am taking Government employees.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Wages men, of course, would be affected by the rise and fall of the basic wage. We must have saved considerably more than that for the people, and necessity compelled us to do it.

The Premier: Well, the round figure is £1,000,000. Is not that a drastic alteration?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: According to the Premier's own figures, the restoration cost him £290,000. He said that it had cost £100,000 last year, a little less than £100,000 this year, and in the first year the figure was about £78,000.

The Premier: But you had two years of it before we came in.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, the Premier has had two years, and we had two years, so let us cry quits.

The Premier: Just £1,000,000. That is what it amounts to.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: One thing I notice in the Estimates—and I consider its inclusion very wise—is the proceeds of hospital tax collections which, of course, do not come

under the Estimates. The Premier has shown that last year £183,000 was collected by the tax, an increase of £29,000 over the collections of the previous year. I want members to realise what that means. It means that the additional income on which 1½d. in the pound was collected was £4,640,000 more than in the previous year. Hence £4,640,000 more money was circulated than previously in wages, salaries and incomes of the people. That is a fairly large amount of money. The Premier said that what was required in Western Australia was confidence, and I agree with him. There are four ways in which we can assist to restore confidence, and I commend them to the notice of the Premier. The first of these is a balanced Budget. There is no doubt that a balanced Budget has materially assisted to advertise Australia in England as being in a sound condition, and I think we should direct attention to balancing our Budget. The second is improvements for our primary producers. I say we should have a price for wheat and flour for home consumption. I would suggest a price of 5s., and would make that the minimum and the maximum. If the price of wheat rose to 9s., we should charge our own people only 5s., but I consider that 5s. is a reasonable price and would give an impetus to wheat production.

The Minister for Justice: There would be a great outcry if that proposal were carried into effect.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: A lot can be done by education. Years ago a great noise was raised over a suggestion put forward by a Labour Government, and it has since been given effect to by Conservative Governments.

The Premier: In the war years I put forward that proposal.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: But the trouble is when the hon. member gets on to that side of the House, he does not give effect to such proposals.

The Premier: We have not the power.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I think we could assist the Premier if he had the power.

The Premier: We have not got it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We fix a price for milk and for other commodities, and we might be able to fix a price for flour.

The Premier: It is a Commonwealth matter.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We know what Queensland is doing for its wheat producers.

The Minister for Lands: Why did not you do it when you were in office?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Simply because we could not. I think there is probably more discipline in the Minister's party than we had. On one occasion we made an attempt, but it failed. The Premier will find in the Crown Law files a copy of the Bill we proposed to introduce.

Hon. P. D. Ferguson: Did it not take the form of an excise duty?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, the idea was to fix the price for flour, and do what the Commonwealth have done, namely, make the millers collect it.

The Premier: There is a road to a certain place said to be paved with good intentions.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Good intentions! I consider that the roads to the Crown Law offices and to another place are paved with good intentions. I believe that the State could give effect to my proposal. The Premier ought to make good the promise he gave when on this side of the House that he would find £100,000 to be devoted to the erection of fences and the provision of water supplies so that farmers would be able to carry sheep. I agree with the Premier that not until we get the agricultural industry into a more prosperous condition can we have real prosperity in the State.

The Premier: I did not make any special remarks about that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I remember the Premier's saying that he would sign a cheque for £100,000, but he was sitting in Opposition at the time.

The Minister for Lands: We have provided thousands of pounds for chaff alone.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Government are probably giving back the farmers something that has been taken from them. The Premier, however, was going to sign a cheque for £100,000.

The Premier: I have signed cheques for hundreds of thousands of pounds for the farmers.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The one I refer to was a special cheque. We, too, signed many cheques for the farmers while we were in office.

The Minister for Lands: You make yourself a professional mendicant the way you are going on.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The hon. member did not make such remarks when he occupied a seat on this side of the House. I think he would have got on much better had he re-



mained out of the Chamber. Another suggestion for restoring confidence is full-time employment for our people, and the last but not the least, a reduction of interest on borrowed money, the Government to pass on any benefits they receive by conversion.

The Premier: Some farmers asked for sustenance, and the other afternoon in an agricultural town £48 was taken in entrance charges for a circus.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Those must have been men employed by the Government; they could not have been farmers.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Surely the Premier would not deny a little pleasure to the children!

The Premier: That was at Mukinbudin.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I suppose the money boxes of the children were raided to provide the funds. After all it is not a very large sum of money for a district like that. We should endeavour to get down interest rates as much as possible. When in England I noticed there was a good deal of prosperity, but the people in Glasgow, dependent principally upon ship-building, were in a very bad way. I was surprised to discover the number of adherents to the Douglas Social Credit system. After consulting some of the people there, I was led to believe that good grounds might exist for some of the suggestions put forward by the advocates of the Douglas system. Alberta is trying it out, and I shall watch carefully to see whether it has any beneficial effect on that State. Alberta is almost entirely a primary-producing State, and its position is the worst of all the Canadian States.

The Minister for Lands: The Alberta people must be absolutely desperate, because pretty well all of them are farmers.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is so. I do not know whether the Treasurer is passing reduction of interest on to the utilities which have had to borrow money, or whether they are being charged the old rates of interest. I refer to the railways and water-supplies, for instance. If it is at all possible, the benefit should be passed on to the people who have to meet payments in respect of such departments.

The Premier: Much of the loan money has gone in directions where there has not been any reduction in the old rate of in-

terest. Only the local loans have been converted.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The whole of the indebtedness in Australia has been converted to four per cent., and there is no higher rate payable. Further, a great deal of conversion has been effected in England. I believe that only one or two loans are now carrying rates of over four per cent. Next I propose to say something about the present position oversea. The Committee must remember that this Budget is being introduced in a year when prospects are even blacker than they were in 1914. At no period since then has the world been forced into making a decision of such magnitude. The last war was called a war to end wars; and the League of Nations, of which Australia is a member, was brought into existence for the purposes of settling disputes by arbitration. Therefore, when any of its members decides to resort to force for the settlement of disagreements, the League, unless it is to prove utterly futile, must take a stand to assert itself. Citizens in responsible positions must be guarded in what they do and what they say. I desire to assure the Committee that Great Britain is determined, by every means possible, to avert war; but in whatever stand is taken by the League, Britain and her Dominions will have to stand four-square. I believe there is still time to settle by amicable means the dispute between the two nations which seem to be keen on using other than peaceful measures.

Members: Only one nation.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am not too sure about that. It may be so. As regards the League of Nations, we are a part of the arrangement, and I do not see how we can get out of it.

The Minister for Lands: What about the case of Japan?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Japan is not a member of the League of Nations. I am not speaking of individual responsibility in the matter, but whatever happens must affect the whole of the Australian people.

The Premier: But the responsibility should not be on Britain unless the other nations stand in as well.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I feel sure they will. Great Britain could not possibly stand up to the responsibility alone.

The Minister for Lands: What about the case of China, which was a member of the League of Nations?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Japan left the League, as also did Germany. When a nation in the League does disagree with other members, it generally leaves the League. In this case both the nations are members of the League.

The Premier: The responsibility is not all on Britain. It is a collective responsibility.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes. Britain could not possibly carry the entire responsibility.

The Premier: She would be very foolish if she attempted to do so.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Britain is extremely concerned about the present position. If the League does fail, we can look for nothing but chaos in the future. Therefore we hope, naturally, that the nations involved in the dispute, and the nations associated in the League, will have such guidance as will bring about a conciliatory attitude between the two nations at issue. I hope that when the next Budget is introduced, these troubles will have cleared away. Any man to-day holding a responsible position must grasp what the future may have in store. While things seem to be peaceful and happy, and while there is considerable improvement everywhere, especially in the Old Country and in most of her Dominions, an outbreak of war at any moment is predicted, and war might plunge us into greater difficulties even than those we have encountered during the past few years. I trust that when the next Budget is introduced, all misunderstandings will have been cleared away and our position will have become even happier than it is to-day.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 9.27 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 18th September, 1935.*

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

### BILL—CREMATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and returned to the Assembly with amendments.

### BILL—STATE TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATION ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

**HON. A. THOMSON** (South-East) [4.36] in moving the second reading said: In submitting the amendment that is embodied in the Bill, I trust that the same sense of justice that actuated Parliament in the past in granting to civil servants and railway employees the right of appeal if they felt they had suffered an injustice, will permit members to grant the same privilege to a district that may be situated in similar circumstances to Kojonup, owing to a decision of the State Transport Board. The Kojonup district is 160 miles from Perth by road and 240 miles by rail. Prior to the proclamation of the State Transport Co-ordination Act, the district had the advantage of motor transport, which materially reduced the cost of goods required by the residents. Immediately the Transport Board were established, they notified the owners of the motor vehicles used in the delivery of goods, that their licenses would not be renewed. The owners appealed and the district protested. To all protests, the Transport Board turned a deaf ear, stating that they were definitely appointed to protect the interests of the State railway system. The Kojonup Road Board combated that statement and quoted Section 10 of the State Transport Co-ordination Act, drawing attention particularly to sub-paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iv), which read—

Subject to this Act, the board may of its own volition, or under the direction of the Minister, shall—

(a) make investigations and inquiries into transport matters. In making such in-