

BILLS (11)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Electoral Act Amendment.
- 2, Police Act Amendment.
- 3, Judges' Salaries Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Justice.
- 4, Constitution Act Amendment.
- 5, State Insurance.
- 6, Sinking Funds.
- 7, Permanent Reserve.
- 8, Land Tax and Income Tax.
- 9, Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Railways (for the Premier).
- 10, Transfer of Land Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Justice.
- 11, Inflammable Liquid.
Introduced by the Minister for Mines.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT.*First Reading.*

Introduced by the Minister for Railways (for the Minister for Lands) and read a first time.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILL—HOSPITALS.*First Reading.*

Introduced by the Minister for Health and read a first time.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

House adjourned at 11.9 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 23rd August, 1927.

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

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Hon. A. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

QUESTIONS (2)—WHEAT, DAMAGED SHIPMENTS.*Legislation.*

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Lands: Is it the intention of the Government to introduce legislation this session to prevent damaged wheat being shipped from this State as good wheat?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: This matter is receiving consideration.

Official Report.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Has he received a report from his officer on the North Fremantle wharf regarding damaged wheat shipped from this State? 2, If not, will he call for a report? 3, If so, will he make the report available to the House?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1. No. 2, The Department only inspects wheat for which a certificate is required, and no damaged wheat has been shipped in these cargoes. 3, Answered by No. 2.

QUESTION—FEDERAL ROAD GRANT.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (for Mr. C. P. Wansbrough) asked the Minister for Works: What is the total amount of the Federal Aid Roads grant that has been spent in each road board district each year since the inception of the grant?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: If the hon. member will treat the question as a motion for a return, I will regard it as formal, and supply the return.

BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

1. Fire Brigades Act Amendment.
2. Fremantle Municipal Tramways and Electric Lighting Act Amendment.
Introduced by Mr. Sleeman.
3. Criminal Code Amendment.
Introduced by Mr. Mann.
4. Bread Act Amendment.
Introduced by Hon. W. D. Johnson.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT.*Second Reading.*

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.42] in moving the second reading said: I was about to remark that this Bill requires no introduction whatever, and certainly very little explanation at my hands, more particularly as the personnel of this House is almost identical with that of the last Parliament. A similar Bill has been introduced and passed through this Chamber, I forget how many times, but certainly a great many times.

Hon. G. Taylor: This is exactly the same as the last Bill.

The PREMIER: It is the same familiar little Bill. I hope that by persistence we shall at last achieve results.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: You are an optimist.

The PREMIER: I do not think so. The two succeeding general elections have shown that the people of the country have endorsed a Bill of this kind. That being the case, I am sure that those responsible for its defeat in the past will withdraw their opposition to-day. The Bill is exactly similar to the one that was brought forward last session and passed through this House. As will be evident to members, it merely seeks to substitute household franchise for the

Legislative Council for that of the £17 clear annual value. That is the only alteration it seeks to make, with the exception that it also proposes to abolish plural voting, which is the right of the elector to vote in any one of the 10 provinces for the Council. This applies, of course, to the elector who has the necessary qualifications in more than one province.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Minister's nomad form would suffice instead of this.

The PREMIER: I do not know that the nomad form has any relationship to this. In the minds of some people, all are considered nomads so far as the franchise is concerned. For the purpose of full rights of citizenship nomads run into scores of thousands, and it is time we abolished this undemocratic principle.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is not as bad as selection ballots.

The PREMIER: The hon. member should be careful lest he offend some of his friends. As a fact, selection by executives, which takes place in some parties, is much more undemocratic than selection by members of organisations. I wonder who selected Senator Carroll for the last Federal election?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The people selected him.

The PREMIER: But who selected him in the first instance? Who was responsible for his endorsement?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: On two occasions his was the only nomination received.

Mr. Sleeman: All fixed up!

The PREMIER: It was an extraordinary appreciation of outstanding ability that no one else offered his services.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Senator Carroll's selection was endorsed by the people.

The PREMIER: Yes, but they had no other choice if they were voting for that particular side in politics. However, I am not dealing with selection ballots.

Mr. Sampson: No. Democracy is the note!

Hon. W. J. George: With a capital D!

The PREMIER: Surely the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) will not contend that we have pure democracy in this State while such a large proportion of our citizens are denied the franchise for one part of our Legislature. Surely it cannot be contended that that is democratic.

Mr. Sampson: Electoral matters as regards this House have been a little baggy at the knees.

The PREMIER: Possibly, but I shall have something to say about what I think the hon. member has in mind when making that remark. I shall be glad indeed to hear the hon. member's defence against what I hope to establish.

Hon. W. J. George: The defence will not come from this side.

Mr. Sleeman: It should.

The PREMIER: A property qualification for electors of another place has been in existence ever since responsible government has obtained in Western Australia, and the present property qualification has ruled for the past 20 years. Therefore I venture to say we are utterly lagging behind the times. The qualification is antiquated and completely out of date. We have not marched with the events of the past quarter of a century. We have not kept abreast of democratic progress in other parts of the world by retaining such an absurd proposition as the property qualification.

Mr. Thomson: There is plenty of democracy in New South Wales.

The PREMIER: I know that for some months New South Wales has been an inexhaustible theme of discussion, but I should prefer a Legislative Council constituted like that of New South Wales to one with the qualifications of a House such as our Council. According to members opposite an anti Labour Government are quite justified in adding members to a nominee House, but directly that is done by a Labour Government it is called packing. The hon. member interjecting knows that large batches of appointments to the Upper House of New South Wales have been made during the past 60 or 70 years by successive Governments of the day.

Mr. Thomson: Our Legislative Council is highly democratic.

The PREMIER: No. A nominee House is more democratic, and can be made responsive to the will of the people—certainly much more responsive than can a House elected on a restricted franchise.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No.

The PREMIER: Yes. Over and over again there have been instances in the history of the British Parliament where, the electors having given a pronounced decision in favour of certain legislation, the

Government of the day have secured the enactment of that legislation by the appointment of supporters to the House of Lords.

Hon. W. J. George: That does not make the thing right.

The PREMIER: If we believe in constitutional, representative and democratic government, it is fundamental that the majority of the people should make the laws of the country; but how can it be said that the people of a State are making the laws when one branch of the legislature is representative of only one-third of the adult electors of the State? How can it be said then that the people are governing? The hon. member knows that another place has the last say, may reject or amend or alter all legislation sent to it.

Mr. Thomson: Do not you think all our Governments have occasionally thanked God for the existence of our Legislative Council?

The PREMIER: I do not know.

Mr. Thomson: It is very advantageous.

The PREMIER: Even the most evil thing, if I may use the word "evil" for the mere purpose of illustration, has its advantages occasionally. I am not here to denounce another place, or to assert that another place has always acted in an undemocratic way. I am not charging members of another place with being Conservative. What I am saying is that it is a wrong principle which denies to two-thirds of the people full citizen rights. I have previously asked, and I ask now, what virtue there is in a rental of £17 per year, any more than in a rental of £18 or £16?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The great thing is that the householder is a married man.

The PREMIER: Some highly estimable citizens of this country are not married.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They ought to be.

The PREMIER: Possibly; but this qualification denies to numbers of married people the right to vote for another place—considerable numbers. As a fact, this is a geographical franchise.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Oh no!

The PREMIER: It is. Any dwelling-house at all in the metropolitan area would be worth more than 6s. 6d. per week, and therefore even the humblest metropolitan householder would be entitled to vote for the Legislative Council. But on the gold-

fields many of the dwelling-houses are not worth the £17 annually which would qualify the occupier for the Legislative Council franchise.

Hon. W. J. George: Those people live in their own tents.

The PREMIER: There are places in the hon. member's electorate where the weekly rental does not come up to the minimum stipulated in the Act. In the timber country there are many substantial four-roomed houses for which the rental is only 3s. or 4s. per week.

Hon. W. J. George: A shilling a room a week.

The PREMIER: People who happen to live in localities where rents are low are denied the Legislative Council franchise as against dwellers in the cities, where rents are high. The same thing applies to parts of the goldfields, where rentals are very low indeed, especially in recent years. Therefore the franchise is an accidental and geographical one.

Hon. W. J. George: Are any of the tents around Kalgoorlie rented?

The PREMIER: Some are.

Hon. W. J. George: I doubt it. In any case, they are not structures of a permanent character.

The PREMIER: The occupiers may own the tents, which, however, are not of the minimum annual value. The question of permanency does not enter into the matter.

Hon. W. J. George: It does under your Bill.

The PREMIER: The hon. member knows I am talking about the present qualification. He asked was there anyone on the goldfields paying rent.

Hon. W. J. George: No. I asked with regard to people living in tents. Any number of people on the goldfields pay rent.

The PREMIER: Not so far as I know. However, I am not aware of any actual tents for which rent is paid. Still, I fail to see that that has any bearing on the question. We are asked to maintain a position in which we say to two-thirds of the people of this State that they are outlanders. We put them in the same category as aliens, and even more so, because to-day, while the young Australian who does not happen to own property or to rent a house qualifying him for the Council franchise is denied that franchise, the Asiatic, be he a Japanese or a Chinese, who becomes naturalised and owns land in fee simple to the value of £50

may become enrolled for the Legislative Council.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We should alter that.

The PREMIER: I agree. The one thing in the minds of those who drafted our Constitution was the value and importance of property.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Oh no!

The PREMIER: It is so. It matters not from what part of Asia an Asiatic comes, so long as he owns property worth £50 and is naturalised he is entitled to vote for the Legislative Council. That is the position.

Mr. Stubbs: Is not the underlying principle of this Bill the absolute abolition of the other Chamber?

Hon. G. Taylor: It might have a tendency that way.

The PREMIER: The member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) must know that in the British Empire there is no more impregnable institution than our Legislative Council. Probably it can never be abolished under our Constitution unless there be first of all a majority in this House desiring the abolition of the Council, and then it can only be done with the consent of a majority of the Legislative Councillors themselves. If the people of Western Australia elect to this House a majority who believe that there ought not to be a Legislative Council, and elect to the other Chamber a majority who believe in its abolition, who shall say that then the Council is not to be abolished?

Hon. W. J. George: If you had a majority there, would you abolish the Council?

Hon. G. Taylor: Be careful!

Mr. E. B. Johnston: In that case some of the Legislative Councillors might be missing, as was the case in New South Wales.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Interjections are disorderly.

The PREMIER: If both Houses, as representing the people, say that a Legislative Council can be done without, why should anyone stand in the way of its abolition? How can anybody stand in opposition to such a proposal if he believes in the people governing? There are, of course, men who do not believe in the rule of the majority of the people.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We do not go to the electors on that single question. In Queensland there was a referendum, at

which the people voted against the Legislative Council, and that House was wiped out.

The PREMIER: I know that, of course.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The abolition of the Legislative Council is not the Order of the Day.

The PREMIER: No, Sir. It is but very remotely associated with this Bill.

Hon. W. J. George: It sticks out a foot!

The PREMIER: That is the bogey always raised when this question is under discussion. People say they do not mind liberalising the franchise, but, as they do not want the Legislative Council abolished, they regard our proposal as a step in that direction.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The abolition of the Legislative Council is a plank of your platform.

The PREMIER: It does not matter what is on the platform.

Hon. G. Taylor: It has been there for a long time.

The PREMIER: Perhaps I could retort that as we have three years ahead of us, it does not matter. However, what is on our platform and what may become law are two different matters.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are apt to forget, of course.

The PREMIER: It is the people who should say, but in this instance the members of the Legislative Council are themselves masters of the position.

Hon. G. Taylor: And they have expressed their opinion on several occasions.

The PREMIER: I know that. I doubt whether any of them would be prepared to accept the will of the people on the question of the abolition of the Legislative Council. Personally I would have no hesitation in allowing the question to go to a straight-out vote of the people throughout the State. If the people then said they did not want the Legislative Council, it should be abolished.

Hon. W. J. George: Why worry the people? They have enough troubles of their own.

The PREMIER: If the people favoured the abolition of the Upper House, there should be no power to stand in the way of the accomplishment of their desire. I would have no objection whatever to the people deciding the question. I need not remind hon. members of the fact that for 25 years we have had no property qualification imposed upon electors for either House of Parliament in the Federal arena. The Constitution set it out clearly that there should be

the full franchise for every adult. That was the clear provision made in the Commonwealth Constitution originally and it remains there still.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And it is not of much use.

The PREMIER: Who would venture to say that the Federal Parliament has not just as important, and in many respects more important, functions to perform than Parliament has in this State?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are changing a bit.

Hon. G. Taylor: Yes, you are slipping.

The PREMIER: No, I am not.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are the Prime Minister of this country.

The PREMIER: Whatever fault there may be with the Federal Parliament, I do not think the personnel, nor the legislation passed, would have been improved had either House been elected on a restricted property qualification.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I would like to try it.

The PREMIER: I do not believe any present member of either Federal House or any aspiring political candidate for a seat in the Federal Parliament would dare to go to the electors with a suggestion that the Constitution should be amended to impose a property qualification for the Senate.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What I had in mind was that the Senate has become a party House, and as such has become useless.

The PREMIER: I believe it has become a party House, but that is apart from the question of the qualification of electors.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But the qualification means something, and leads to something.

The PREMIER: Will the hon. member say that members of the Legislative Council elected on the property franchise are entirely free from party politics?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, with the exception of your Labour members.

The PREMIER: But the president of the United Party is a member of the Legislative Council!

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course, he must belong to some party, and the party he belongs to is the best in this State.

The Minister for Mines: That is why you are where you are!

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course, the people do sometimes reject what is good for

them. That is the way of the world and is in accordance with the scripturus.

Hon. W. J. George: At any rate there are more people with us on our side than there are with Labour.

The PREMIER: I do not intend to say anything about the hon. member's political party; I am merely drawing attention to the fact that the president of his party is a member of the Legislative Council.

Hon. G. Taylor: But he drops the party aspect when he takes his seat in the Upper House.

The Minister for Mines: Of course, he does!

The PREMIER: In view of the fact to which I have drawn attention, I do not think the Leader of the Opposition can say that the Council is a non-party House. If we turn to the enrolments for Assembly seats and compare them with some of the enrolments for the Council provinces, glaring anomalies are at once apparent. Take the Metropolitan Province, for instance. For that province there are 6,894 electors, whereas for the four Assembly seats included within the boundaries of the province, there are 25,678 electors. That means to say that in the Metropolitan Province alone there are 18,784 adult electors for the Assembly who are disfranchised for the Legislative Council.

Hon. W. J. George: What, 18,000 odd electors paying less than 6s. a week in rent!

The PREMIER: That means that practically two-thirds of the adults entitled to vote in the four Assembly electorates are disfranchised for the Legislative Council.

Mr. Ferguson: But are not many of them eligible to become enrolled?

The PREMIER: I do not know that they are. It must be borne in mind that a considerable number eligible to be enrolled for the Assembly are also not enrolled. As against that there is the question of duplications. It does not always mean because a certain number are enrolled for an electoral province that there are that number of electors. There are many who have a vote in a number of provinces because they own property in various provinces. Some people have a vote in each of the ten provinces.

Hon. W. J. George: But none has two votes in any one province.

The PREMIER: No, but I was demonstrating that though there may be 5,000 names on the roll for a province it does not follow that there are 5,000 voters, because some of the names represent duplications. If we take the Metropolitan-Suburban Pro-

vince we find there are 20,930 names on the Legislative Council roll, as against 60,991 names of electors on the rolls for the five Assembly seats included within the boundaries of that province.

Hon. W. J. George: Quite a number of people have the right to be enrolled, but do not take the trouble to become enrolled.

The PREMIER: We always hear that assertion! We can simply take the rolls as we find them. I do not know that it would profit us much to go into the realms of speculation as to how many are entitled to be enrolled but are not enrolled, either for the Council or for the Assembly.

Hon. W. J. George: There could be three times the number enrolled in the Murray-Wellington electorate that there are now. They did not claim their votes.

The PREMIER: I do not know that that is so. In that particular instance, however, there are 40,061 in those five Assembly seats in the Metropolitan-Suburban Province who have no vote, and are not enrolled for the Legislative Council.

Mr. Stubbs: Could not many of those people be enrolled if they applied?

The PREMIER: I do not think they could, because they have not the necessary qualification.

Mr. Chesson: Can the lodgers who help the landlord to pay the rent, get a vote for the Council?

Ministerial Members: No.

The PREMIER: There we see the same anomaly again. If we take the South-East Province, we find that there are 6,200 electors on the roll, whereas there are 20,724 electors on the rolls for the Assembly seats included within that province. Thus there are 14,524 Assembly electors who are disfranchised for the Legislative Council. If we turn to the South-West province, we find there are 7,274 electors on the Council roll, as against 26,179 on the Assembly rolls for seats that are included within the boundaries of the province. That means to say that there are 18,905 whose names are not included on the Council roll.

Hon. W. J. George: Fully 10,000 of them could get on the roll if they applied.

The PREMIER: What nonsense! Ten thousand indeed!

Hon. W. J. George: I know it.

The PREMIER: That is merely a wild irresponsible guess.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The Minister for Justice: They are not on the ratepayers' roll.

The PREMIER: In the Forrest electorate there are 2,869 electors and yet there are less than 100 electors from that constituency whose names are on the Council roll.

Hon. W. J. George: There is an explanation for that.

The PREMIER: Our Constitution debars them. Probably I would be correct if I said that the member for Forrest (Miss Holman) is not entitled to exercise the franchise for the Legislative Council.

Hon. W. J. George: That may be so.

The PREMIER: That in itself should spur hon. members on to rectify such an anomaly. It proves my contention that the present qualifications are mostly geographical. A large number of timber workers in the Forrest electorate live in houses of an annual value considerably less than £17.

Hon. W. J. George: That is not because of the annual value, but because of the low rents charged by the timber companies.

The PREMIER: That is why the timber workers are not enrolled.

Hon. W. J. George: They would sooner have cheap houses than a vote for the Council.

Miss Holman: Would they?

The Minister for Mines: They would sooner have cheap houses and the Council franchise, too!

The PREMIER: Every adult man and woman in the State should be entitled, as a citizen, to a vote, irrespective of any question of rent or annual values, but merely by his natural human rights. Each should be entitled to a full voice in the making of the laws of the State. One should not be restricted to a voice in the Lower House, with no say in the Legislative Council. When it comes to a question of defending the State, there will be no property qualifications governing enrolments then!

Mr. Marshall: There will be no question of a stake in the country then.

The PREMIER: Of course not. In such circumstances, nomads and all will be accepted.

Hon. W. J. George: Some did not go.

The PREMIER: I do not know that much can be said along those lines regarding Western Australia or Australia as a whole.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I know a good few.

The PREMIER: There may have been a few, but there will be no qualification imposed for enrolment if men are wanted to fight.

Hon. W. J. George: There should not be, either.

The PREMIER: And there should be none, either, to debar a man from helping to make the laws of the country. As I have already pointed out, Asiatics can become enrolled and have a vote for the Legislative Council but Shakespeare or Burns, if they were resident here, would not be entitled to exercise the franchise. It is well known that poets, artists, and painters are proverbially hard-up and most of them would not be entitled to vote for the Legislative Council, as they would not possess any property.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Burns owned a house and so did Shakespeare.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! They are not under discussion.

The PREMIER: There are many excellent citizens in Western Australia who do not own any property. They do not go in for that form of investment. Many of them have large investments in Government bonds, in stocks, or in shares. They live in the best hotels in the City, but they do not own a block or rent a house. Such people are disqualified from exercising the franchise for the Legislative Council. That is in the Constitution.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is in your Constitution too.

The PREMIER: We heard a good deal recently—I think the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) had it in mind when he interjected—with regard to the unequal balance of electors in various constituencies in Western Australia. We had Menzies held up as the awful example of undemocratic electoral enrolments.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is pretty dreadful!

The PREMIER: At the other extreme the Canning electorate with its 17,000 electors was quoted and we have had people, during the last few months, comparing the relative voting strengths of electorates, such as Canning, Guildford, and other large centres, with distant constituencies, because of the fact that their fellow citizens situated in Menzies or elsewhere had twenty or thirty times the voting power of electors in large constituencies. But the people who have

quoted those figures, in an endeavour to show the people of Leederville and of Canning how bad is the distribution of electors, are the very people who would deny their fellows votes for another place.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Do you say it is right to have so many electors in Leederville? We ought to reform ourselves.

The PREMIER: We are entitled to ask for reform where it is most urgently needed. Surely it does not rest with members who vote for two-thirds of the electors of this State being debarred from voting for the Council.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What has that to do with it?

The PREMIER: It has everything to do with it. The hon. member cannot escape the logic in it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is no logic whatever in it.

The PREMIER: But there is. The hon. member and his supporters last session voted to deny to 140,000 electors any vote for the Council. Yet he complains about the inequality of the Assembly electorates. At least everybody in the State is entitled to vote for the Assembly, although in unequal numbers, taking one district against another. Still, nobody is disqualified; everybody is a full citizen. However, the Opposition say the present distribution should not be permitted to remain for another moment, although they do not mind people being disfranchised when it comes to a vote for the Council. I say the time is over-ripe for an alteration of the Constitution.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The situation in respect of the Assembly is rotten.

The PREMIER: Well, let us deal with both situations; do not let us leave either of them rotten. Let us have perfect equality. Let us not have the spectacle of Canning with 17,000 voters and Menzies with 270. "That position cries to heaven for alteration," say our friends opposite. But apparently there is no need for any alteration in another situation a thousand times worse.

Mr. Latham: Let us try this one first.

Mr. Marshall: If there is a wrong way of going about anything, you are bound to start that way.

The PREMIER: When we have 140,000 men and women disqualified for voting for another place, that position cries out for amendment first.

Mr. Latham: But there is compulsory enrolment.

The PREMIER: It does not matter. The hon. member would deny that large number of people votes for the Council.

Mr. Latham: Until we put our own house in order.

The PREMIER: How virtuous! The hon. member wants to reform himself first.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You want to take which suits you first.

The PREMIER: We will take both.

The Minister for Lands: That is what the Opposition do not want.

The PREMIER: It is what the Opposition are opposing. It is the very essence of insincerity for any section of the community to complain about the unequal distribution of Assembly electors, while denying such a large number of people any votes at all for the Council.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You give preference to married men.

The PREMIER: The hon. member, I know, would like to see everybody married; but, surely, single people are entitled to some consideration.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Oh, certainly.

The PREMIER: When it is a question of a citizen's rights, there should be no preference as between married and single. The single men have to pay taxes and obey the law, just as the married men have to do. The laws applying to married people apply also to single people. Therefore it is in the last degree unjust that so considerable a section of our people should be denied the right to vote for another place. The only real defect in the Bill is that it does not go far enough. It is the most modest little measure I have known.

Hon. G. Taylor: It fails because of its modesty.

Hon. W. J. George: Why not make enrolment compulsory?

The PREMIER: Thanks for the interjection. I understand the United Party at its recent conference decided to include in its platform compulsory enrolment and voting for the Assembly.

Mr. Latham: We have it already.

The PREMIER: But do not let the beggars have a vote for the Council at all! The United Party say to the large army of disfranchised people in Canning, Leederville, Guildford and other big constituencies, "We are going to enact laws to compel you to

vote for the Assembly, but you shall not have a vote at all for the Council." The latest and newest platform of the Leader of the Opposition's party provides—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not know your own.

The PREMIER: No, and it would be a genius who could know the whole of the hon. member's platform, for it is the most nebulous thing ever put up. They say, "We will have compulsory voting for the Assembly, but all you people there are not entitled to a vote at all for the Council."

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Nothing of the sort; it does not say that.

The PREMIER: But it does say it.

Mr. Latham: No, only the Premier says it.

The PREMIER: And the president of the party that supports the policy of compulsory voting for the Assembly will be the very man to lead the attack on this Bill in another place.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: This Bill does not give anybody a vote.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member will come along with me, we will give them all a vote. I have tried all kinds of Bills with which to enfranchise the people of this country in respect of Council voting, and they have all been opposed by the hon. member and rejected in another place.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not ask for a vote for anybody.

The PREMIER: Will the hon. member agree to give them all a vote?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not ask for a vote.

The PREMIER: I have asked for it time and time again. Are members going to oppose the Bill because it does not give everybody a vote?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We will not ask you, nor the Minister for Lands, what we shall do.

The PREMIER: The hon. member suggests the Bill does not go far enough. Will it get any support if it goes further?

Hon. W. J. George: Why not put the rolls in order?

The PREMIER: There is no denying the fact that in Opposition circles politically there exists a strong determination to deny to a large body of citizens the right to vote for the Council, whilst at the same time pretending to so much concern about equal rights in the electoral boundaries for the Assembly.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We do not pretend anything of the sort.

The PREMIER: The figures for the Canning and the Menzies electorates have been quoted in this House.

Mr. Latham: So they ought to be.

The PREMIER: Yet the hon. member does not see any inconsistency—

Mr. Latham: I know we can rectify that position.

The PREMIER: But are we not entitled to rectify the greater anomaly?

Mr. Latham: It is not greater.

The PREMIER: Of course it is. This attitude is the last one would expect from the hon. member, a young man who should still have ideals.

Mr. Latham: My ideal is to put this House in order first.

The PREMIER: First things come first. The franchise of another place is all-important. The hon. member seems to regard it as a very light matter that 140,000 citizens of the State should be denied the right to participate in the making of the laws of the State.

Mr. Latham: I do not regard it as light.

The PREMIER: Yet it is of tremendous importance that there should be a rectification of any anomalies in the electoral boundaries for this Chamber.

Mr. Sampson: We are obsessed by the influence of this Chamber.

The PREMIER: I am obsessed by having to listen to the interjections of the hon. member. He is another who will talk of the Assembly boundaries, but will not let one more name get on the roll for the Council. It is the last ditch of conservatism. I do not care what laws might be passed by us or rejected by another place, but I say another place should represent the will of the majority of the people of the State. We are branding ourselves as reactionaries and Tories of the worst description. I know it is quite a humorous situation that these 140,000 people should be outcasts in their own country, having not a vote for the Council. They are in just the same position as Asiatics or foreigners, in fact in a worse position.

Mr. Latham: The Council is not of very much importance, for I notice that its abolition is on your platform.

The PREMIER: That has nothing to do with it. The hon. member is beyond all hope of redemption.

Mr. Sampson: Still, his remark is quite apropos at the moment.

The PREMIER: It does not matter what may be on platforms. Every citizen has an inalienable right to full citizenship, regardless of what may be on party platforms. Surely you are not going to deprive people of the rights of manhood and womanhood because some political party has on its platform something of which you disapprove! What is on the platform of the Labour Party regarding the Legislative Council has nothing to do with the merits of this Bill. The real fundamental merit of the Bill is to give every citizen a full voice in the making of the laws of the country, and the fact of there being something on the platform of a political party should not deprive any citizen of his right.

Hon. W. J. George: You are doing pretty well.

The PREMIER: I hope that members of another place will at least withdraw their objection to the Bill and allow us to get some way along the road to giving the vote to a larger number of people.

Hon. G. Taylor: I doubt it.

The PREMIER: I do not know; in the past the members of the Council have shown a pretty conservative attitude, but I am hoping they will modify their opposition on this occasion. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [5.32] in moving the second reading said: This Bill formed portion of a measure that was introduced a couple of years ago and was debated pretty fully by the House on that occasion.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is not the same, is it?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The principle of amalgamating the State and Federal electoral rolls met with such general endorsement by Parliament and the country that we consider it desirable to give effect to the wishes of the people. We have confined this Bill to that principle in order to get uniformity so that the amalgamated roll may prove successful and efficient. There

are one or two proposals to make the qualifications uniform, but there are no additions of importance. The alterations of the qualifications and disqualifications are so slight that I do not think they will occasion much debate. The main object of the Bill is to obtain efficient enrolment. Every member has been concerned in elections and has had experience of the confusion that arises from the fact of having separate rolls for the State and Commonwealth. People have gone to the polling booths and declared emphatically that they were enrolled, only to be informed that they were not. They have approached the returning officer with a bearing of confidence and called out their names, but the reply of the returning officer has been, "No, you are not on the roll." Some of the people that have had that experience have been able to give the name of the person who witnessed the claim and to state the time when it was lodged, and investigation has frequently proved that the claim was for an entirely different roll. When Federal elections occur, people who consider that their names are on the Federal roll find they are on the State roll only, and when State elections occur, people who consider they are on the State roll find their names on the Federal roll only. I have seen people produce a receipt signed by the electoral officer, and they have been utterly confused because they considered that, having forwarded a claim and obtained a receipt, they were entitled to vote for any election.

Hon. W. J. George: If they send in one claim they think they should be on the roll.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: All that this Bill proposes to do is to obviate confusion of that kind. Therefore I shall expect the support of the member for Murray-Wellington. In fact, I do not contemplate any opposition to the measure. It cannot be termed a party Bill.

Mr. Sampson: There will be a saving of expense.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The saving will not be great, but the point is to ensure that people who have a right to be enrolled shall be able to exercise the franchise.

Hon. W. J. George: Is it proposed to have a three-monthly revision as at present?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It will be a six-monthly revision. The Bill provides that the electors already enrolled either on the Commonwealth or on the Assembly roll shall form the basis of the new roll. All who have sent in a claim card for

the Assembly roll will be placed on the new roll. That is a novel provision, but it has been tried in various States—Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, I believe—and has proved successful. No party has expressed any desire to revert to the old order of things. It is considered that many advantages have accrued to the people through the adoption of this system, and there has been a general desire to retain what has proved to be undoubtedly an efficient roll.

Hon. W. J. George: I suppose you will withdraw the regulation dealing with nomadic voters?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There is nothing in that regulation to affect the Commonwealth.

Hon. W. J. George: Yes there is. Such persons cannot apply to the Commonwealth, and a jolly good job, too.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The Commonwealth authorities do not seek to disfranchise a qualified person any more than we do.

Hon. W. J. George: They recognised that the nomadic provision was wrong.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The Commonwealth recognise that, because a man might have to wander from one portion of a subdivision to another, he should not be debarred from exercising the right to vote.

Mr. Kenneally: Does it provide that he may enter any polling booth and vote?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The chief advantage likely to accrue from the passing of the Bill is that there will be one claim card, one receipt and one roll.

Mr. Davy: There cannot be one roll on account of the differences in boundaries.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Provision will be made to deal with those differences, though there is nothing in the Bill to provide for any alteration of boundaries.

Hon. W. J. George: You will have to do that, or the roll will not be effective.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is provided that wherever possible the Commonwealth and State boundaries shall be made coterminous. For instance, it would make very little difference to the Kalgoorlie division whether the boundary extended right to the north of the State or stopped short at Derby or Broome.

Mr. Sampson: There will be a number of sections.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, and they will be coterminous with our existing electoral boundaries.

Mr. Sampson: The Federal roll may contain three or four State electorates.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, and the idea is to make the Commonwealth electoral boundaries conform to ours as much as possible.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A Commonwealth division might include an electorate and part of an electorate.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, and there is provision in the Bill whereby such a contingency might be met. The electorate of Leederville might present some difficulty.

Mr. Sampson: The names of the electors would have to be re-assembled; otherwise you would have two or more alphabetical sections.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The chief known advantages likely to accrue from the conclusion of such an arrangement may be summed up as follows:—(a) Common units for the purpose of registration; (b) One claim form for enrolment or transfer, containing a declaration by the applicant that he is not disqualified for State and Commonwealth enrolment or for either as the case may require; and (c) the appointment of one electoral registrar to act for both Governments in each registration area. In order that members might be fully informed of what has transpired in other States, I have obtained copies of the agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the Victorian Government. Those copies have been distributed to members so that they will have an opportunity to study them when considering the principle of the Bill. So far as I can ascertain, the agreement has proved eminently satisfactory in the other States, and there is no reason why it should not operate satisfactorily here. If in the beginning there had been co-operation between the Commonwealth and the State, the scheme of a single roll could have been accomplished without much difficulty. Unless something is done the position will grow worse with each redistribution of seats. When we are re-arranging our boundaries we take no cognisance of what is happening in the Federal divisions, and when the Federal Parliament have a redistribution they do not worry about the State boundaries. The Bill provides that cognisance shall be taken of existing Federal or State boundaries when a redistribution is contemplated. That, however, does not mean that we must adopt the same boundaries. No Government would tie itself up to that extent.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And no Parliament, either.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is so. If the Commonwealth boundaries interfered with the requisite quota or with community of interest, they would have to be disregarded, but where they can without disability be made coterminous, it will be done. The Leederville electorate is included in the Fremantle division, and I cannot see that community of interest would prevent its being included in another division if so desired. That point, however, would not be raised under this measure. If the Commonwealth have a redistribution of seats, as they probably will after the census of 1931, they will probably make their boundaries coterminous with ours. The duplication of claim cards and of rolls has caused endless confusion. An elector in a certain district goes to a certain polling place for a State election, whereas for a Federal election he has to go to another polling place. If he sets out for the polling booth late in the day and makes a mistake, he has not much time to reach the proper polling place and record his vote. That has caused considerable confusion and discontent as well.

Hon. G. Taylor: Make it 8 o'clock.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Someone might be in a Commonwealth subdivision of Perth, and on going to vote at a State election he might find that his name is on the West Perth roll. Under the proposed legislation the boundaries will be made coterminous so that people may vote in the same place and in the same way, as far as possible. The agreement follows the lines of that entered into with Victoria. It was accepted at first by South Australia, then by Tasmania and later by Victoria. There will be no misunderstanding in the future, and if a man is on one roll he will be able to depend upon it that his name will appear on the other roll. There will be greater efficiency because everybody who has put in a claim card at one time or another will find he is entitled to enrolment in both cases. It is estimated that there is a difference of about 5 per cent. in the personnel of those on the different rolls—about 2½ per cent. are not on one roll, and about 2½ per cent. are not on the other.

Mr. Davy: There were 800 names on the Federal roll in my electorate that were not on the State roll.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That cannot be taken literally because the bound-

daries may to some extent have been different.

Mr. Davy: They were not.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Perhaps not in that area. That would indicate what I have been arguing. Either there has been greater efficiency by one office more than the other and consequently greater enrolment, or laxity has been displayed and names that should not have appeared on the roll were allowed to remain there. With the efficiency that can be brought about by united action on the part of the Federal and State Departments, it is expected that the rolls, when completed, will be as nearly perfect as it is humanly possible to make them. The Commonwealth, in their system, have what is known as a habitation index. A record is kept of each house and the number, and a periodical check is made. Then the services of postmen are enlisted. If a postman takes a letter to deliver to an individual at a certain house, and finds that that individual's name is not on the roll, he makes inquiries, and if the individual is entitled to enrolment, the postman will see that the enrolment is effected. The postman receives a small remuneration for this—I think it is 1½d. for each registration. That in itself does not amount to much, but if 20 or 30 registrations are made weekly the postman adds a little to his income. At any rate, the remuneration makes the postmen take an interest in the work. If a comparison were made between the State and Federal rolls, in point of efficiency, I think the State roll would suffer by the comparison. To an extent the efficiency of the Federal rolls is due to the work of the postal authorities. Postmen are also paid for names that they strike off. They are occasionally responsible for the removal of names because they discover that people have left residences they formerly occupied. The various registrars also work with the end in view of making the rolls efficient. In the State, the work is carried out by electoral officers, the police and agents. Therefore the combined efforts of the two sets of individuals should result in the preparation of a roll that should be almost perfect. There will be five divisional returning officers and 27 registrars. All will be Commonwealth officials and will be paid by the Commonwealth. The State will pay half the cost of printing the rolls,

book forms and the materials that will be necessary. The Commonwealth have agreed to find half the cost that will be involved in the payment of the State police when their services are used for joint electoral purposes. This will result at the outset is an economy of perhaps £500 or £600, but as time goes on the amount saved will be considerably more, and in a few years' time it is estimated that the annual saving will be some thousands of pounds. Under the proposed legislation everybody will be given the opportunity to enrol. The first joint roll will be the existing Commonwealth roll. If any person has filled in a claim card in connection with the State roll, and the name does not appear on the Commonwealth roll, that claim card will be accepted for Commonwealth enrolment. The present boundaries not being coterminous will make for some disorganisation, but that will be overcome after we have had a little experience. Those boundaries have not proved an insuperable bar in connection with the amalgamation in the other States. With the experience of the other States we should be able to prevent difficulties occurring. In order to secure efficiency, it is proposed to amalgamate subdivisions. That work will be done at the expense of the State, because it will be entirely for the convenience of the State. It would be rather awkward to have, say, three subdivisions in big electorates like Leederville and Canning, and to compel an elector to hunt through all to find out whether he was entitled to vote. Therefore it may be necessary to make provision for a special roll for election purposes to prevent delay and inconvenience. Probably before the next elections take place there will be a redistribution of seats, and wherever possible, without sacrificing other principles such as community of interest, or affecting adversely the electoral quota of a district, the boundaries will be made coterminous, and so the system will become more efficient. We have heard a good deal about the qualifications of nomadic electors. The Bill provides that electors of nomadic occupations shall not be struck off the roll in a division or a subdivision merely because they are not at the address given on the claim card, provided, of course, that they still live in the division.

Mr. Thomson: If a man moves from one subdivision to another he will not be struck off.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If a person should be working on a fencing contract, he can notify the registrar of his change of address, and then he can be correctly enrolled. He will be fined if he does not do that. In order to have complete uniformity, the qualifications for enrolment should be exactly similar. Our qualifications differ from those of the Commonwealth which provide for residence in Australia for six months. Our qualification provides that the residence shall be in Western Australia for six months. Our law was passed before that of the Commonwealth was brought into existence, and it will be sought to amend it now to provide that a person shall have resided "in Australia" instead of "in Western Australia" for six months, and shall have resided for one month within the subdivision. Now that we all have the one ideal in regard to the Commonwealth, a person should not be disqualified because he has lived in another State and has not spent the requisite period in the State in which he has gone to reside. Political problems are very similar in all the States and it should not take a new arrival in one State any length of time to assimilate the political thoughts in the State in which he has decided to make his home, and cast an intelligent vote. The existing State law will be amended by inserting "lives" before "has lived." This is not very important, but it will make the position quite clear. It is intended also to make some alterations in respect of disqualifications. At the present time a person who is wholly dependent on State relief is disqualified from voting. I do not think there are very many in Western Australia at the present time who are wholly dependent on the State for relief, but in any case such persons may have been pioneers who have given good service to the State and who, through extreme stress of circumstances, cannot provide for their own subsistence. Those persons should not be penalised. The State subsidises institutions like the Old Men's Home where some of the inmates, though not many, are entirely dependent on the State.

Mr. Davy: Do not they vote now?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. Some are in receipt of the old-age pension

and may be disqualified by reason of their being wholly dependent on the State.

Hon. G. Taylor: How many are disqualified?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I cannot say. It is considered that there are very few in Western Australia who are disqualified on that account. There is no reason for retaining that disqualification and we propose to strike it out. It has worked harshly against some people, notably pioneers, in receipt of State relief. These people may be, and under our Act should be, disqualified from voting. I think we can shift that into the limbo of the past without hardship to anyone. We propose that this disqualification shall not remain in our Electoral Act. A further disqualification in the State Act says that anybody who is convicted and is under sentence is disqualified. Our Act also says "or is subject to be sentenced." That does not appear in the Federal Act, and I do not think it should appear in our own. It works out in this way: in the case of many people who are first offenders, recognizances are entered into by certain parties that such offenders will be of good behaviour. Those people are subject to be sentenced. If they do not carry out the provisions of the bond, or misbehave themselves again during the period of probation, they are liable to be sentenced. According to our Act such persons are not entitled to a vote.

Mr. Thomson: Has anyone been debarred from voting on that account?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There have not been many such instances. Those people who are disqualified under that clause and know the law, would not make application to be enrolled. I do not think the electoral officers went out of their way to object to such people being qualified to vote, although the Act provides that the Electoral Registrar shall be notified by the Court and be placed in a position to object to the enrolment if he so desires.

Mr. Lindsay: The names are crossed off the roll.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The individual himself may know, that because he is subject to be sentenced, he is not entitled to get upon the roll, and that he would be committing an offence if he filled in the form for that purpose, as he would not be qualified to do so. In filling in forms people have to make a declaration that they are qualified to be enrolled. This sort of thing

occurs in such a few instances, that it would make very little difference to our electoral laws if the provision were not retained. In order to make the provisions of the law uniform, it is as well that that particular provision, which has remained in our Act for so long, should be wiped out.

Hon. G. Taylor: So long as it does not apply to those who ought to be sentenced.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Many people should be subject to various disqualifications. The cardinal sin under our Criminal Code is that of being found out.

Mr. Sampson: Breaking the eleventh commandment.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There is one provision in the Commonwealth law that is not contained in ours, namely, that persons of half blood are entitled to vote. In this Chamber we have spent hours and hours discussing that point. I think the general opinion of the House was that the disqualification should not be removed from our Act.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is right.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Rather than waste time upon the subject, and possibly jeopardise the passing of the Bill, the Government decided to allow this disqualification in the Act to remain.

Hon. G. Taylor: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That will mean that certain distinguishing marks will have to be placed on the Commonwealth roll, if necessary, to distinguish those people who are of half blood and are not entitled to be placed on the State roll. When the distinguishing mark is placed opposite their names on the roll, the State officials will know that such people are not entitled to vote at State elections. There is one other provision which will mean an amendment to our Act if we wish to secure uniformity. This deals with something that occurred at the last election, and over which a lot of political capital was made, although there was no justification for it. Members will recollect that the Government thought it advisable that claim cards should be lodged on a certain day. The Solicitor General was asked to state at what time people ought to be allowed to put in their claim cards. The Solicitor General ruled that if the claim cards were received at any time during that particular day the electoral office would of necessity

have to accept those cards. Under the ruling of the Solicitor General, which was given entirely without any lead from the department or the Government, the electoral office would have to remain open until the end of that day for the purpose of receiving claim cards. On the hustings the Leader of the Opposition made a great song about this. I corrected him, and told him the procedure, but he persisted in saying we had done something we should not have done when we allowed the claim cards handed in at the electoral office to be accepted up to midnight on that particular day.

Hon. G. Taylor: On Sunday.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The particular day does not make any difference. The law says that any man who puts in a claim card on that certain day is entitled to have his name enrolled for the particular electorate. The Government went to some expense to see that those people who were entitled to be enrolled for the elections, even though they had not put in their claim cards until 11.30 p.m. on the last day, were not debarred from exercising their right to vote.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Were the Electoral officers in their offices until midnight.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Arrangements were made whereby a box was fixed outside for the depositing of late claim cards, and the box was cleared about midnight. All the cards that had been lodged on that particular day were accepted for the purpose of enrolment.

Hon. G. Taylor: Were there many?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not think there were many.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I said it was done to enable certain persons who had been sent into certain districts to qualify.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It was done to give those people the opportunity they were entitled to under the Act of recording their vote.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Some people could not put in their claim cards until late.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is evident that the hon. member did not believe my contradiction of his statements. In the Bill we seek to alter the present position. We have made provision whereby all claim cards that are handed in up to 6 p.m. on the day of the issue of the writs, shall be accepted, and the claimants, if everything is in order, shall be entitled to be enrolled for that parti-

cular electorate. That is the Commonwealth law, and it has operated satisfactorily for years. It sets up the time to the last minute when these claim cards can be accepted. If they are not lodged by 6 p.m. on the day of the issuing of the writ, they are out of court and the names of the claimants will not appear on the roll. If they are received before 6 p.m. they will be accepted and the names will be placed on the roll. This makes a difference to our ordinary procedure.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Objections can still be lodged to the claims.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Where?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The same provision applies in the Commonwealth law, and it has worked satisfactorily. Of course it may appear very ingenious to the hon. member, but I would point out that similar conditions apply in Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania. I do not think it is necessary to have our own special procedure here merely because we have had it in the past. Instead of the cards taking a fortnight to mature, the claims will be dealt with forthwith, and the names will be placed on the roll.

Hon. G. Taylor: From the date of the issue of the writ?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: From 6 p.m. on the day of the issue of the writ.

Hon. G. Taylor: How long will be allowed for objections after that?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The ordinary provisions with regard to objections will apply. This Bill deals entirely with the amalgamation of the rolls. I have given rather a full explanation of the Bill, though I hardly think that was necessary as we had the Bill before us two years ago. The personnel of the House has not changed to any extent, since then, and we all understand the Bill and consider it essential and desirable in the interests of the people who wish to be enrolled for each electorate. In the circumstances I hardly think there will be any opposition to this measure either in this Chamber or in another place. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Davy, debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.10 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—CLOSER SETTLEMENT.*Second Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [7.32] in moving the second reading said: This Bill also is an old friend in this Chamber. It has been considered previously on three occasions, and twice has it received the assent of the members of this House. On the last occasion of its introduction by a former colleague in the previous Parliament, Mr. Angwin, it received, I think, general support; but unfortunately it never yet has received that particular support which would entitle it to become the law of the land. I noticed that at the last general election there was almost unanimous agreement regarding the necessity for closer settlement legislation. All parties supported it; and if there is one measure more than another that can be said to have received the sanction of this country, it is a measure of this nature. With three exceptions, all the previous members have been returned to this House; and as they all advocated a closer settlement measure, we can, I believe, on this occasion expect the Bill to receive the support of everyone.

Mr. Thomson: Provided the statutory rights of landholders are preserved.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: If I remember rightly, the hon. member interjecting supported a closer settlement measure during the election campaign.

Mr. Thomson: That is right.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: And so did his colleagues. On the previous occasion the Bill was defeated, or dropped, because the Legislative Council made a number of amendments to which this House could not agree. If those amendments had been agreed to, the Bill would have become valueless. The Bill is to-day more necessary than ever, because the demand for land is so much greater. In addition to the inquiries for land by ordinary applicants, there are inquiries by people coming to this country with a fair amount of capital. The cheap land and generally the opportunities existing in this country have encouraged people to come from the Eastern States, bringing considerable capital for investment in our lands; and it is highly desirable that other people of the same type should be induced to come here. Frequently such land-seekers have not sufficient

capital to buy a property, but they have sufficient capital to take up a farm and develop it under a scheme of the nature proposed by the Bill. I repeat, we ought to encourage the migration to Western Australia of people of that type. The object of the Bill is to bring into use land that is at present unutilised; that is to say, land held in particularly large areas and which does not produce all that it could reasonably produce.

Mr. Mann: That is to say, under this Bill much sheep land will be diverted to wheat-growing.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: Just so. Unutilised land may, of course, be land which to-day is used merely for grazing sheep, but which could produce large quantities of wheat and other cereals. The more production we can have of the latter character, the more population will the country be able to sustain, and the greater will be the wealth it produces. Those results, it is hoped, will be brought about by the Bill. The board to be appointed under the measure will include a practical farmer having local knowledge. This feature I regard as highly important. Numerous people have ideas about the use to which the land should be put, but in many cases their ideas are not sound. I know country which does not appear to be utilised, and which the ordinary observer would regard as unutilised, but the clearing and utilisation of which would be attended with disastrous results to the future of the farm. In portions of Western Australia, the wheat belt particularly, the effect of utilising such land is to make the country salt. I have known lands become salt owing to the fact that the country was cleared of timber where the timber could have remained to advantage. I am in that position myself. I have some undeveloped country, and people ask me why I do not clear it. If I cleared it, it would become salt in the course of a few years, and my water supply would suffer. My dams would become salt, and the farm would then be valueless for stock-raising. Therefore it is necessary that one member of the board should be a practical farmer having local knowledge of the country dealt with by the board. When we have such a man on the board, the board will not be likely to fall into error. The other members of the board will be public servants, as provided in the pre-

vious Bill. There are in this State at present large areas of land which can be truly said to be unutilised in the sense that we are not getting from them the value we ought to be getting in the way of production. Such land should be subdivided and made available for settlement. If it is not subdivided through resumption by the State, there should be some means to compel the owner to subdivide it and make it available for settlement. In the electorates represented by some members of this House, the members for York (Mr. Griffiths) and Beverley (Mr. C. P. Wansbrough) for instance, and also the members for Moore (Mr. Ferguson) and Irwin (Mr. Maley), there are large areas of land which cannot be described as unutilised.

Mr. Mann: Also in your own electorate.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: To a lesser extent. However, owing to the fact that the Midland lands are private lands and that settlers on them could not be assisted by the Agricultural Bank in the same way as settlers who took up Crown lands, large areas along the Midland line were sold to people who had money and could afford to develop them properly. Whilst those settlers did considerable service to the State and developed what the ordinary individual without capital could not develop, it would be a very fine thing for Western Australia if the Midland lands could have been settled in 1,000-acre farms as Crown lands in various portions of the State have been settled within the last few years. In that case the Midland country would have carried a much larger population and would have had a much greater production. If we can utilise the lands in question and bring them under closer settlement without doing injury to the present owners, they will support a large number of families who to-day are clamouring for land. In addition, those lands can be settled without the provision of the usual facilities for settlement, because those facilities already exist. In older areas, where large estates are to be found, there are railways, water supplies, schools and all the other advantages which people get as the result of settlement. If these lands were available, the State would not be put to the expense of providing railways, water supplies, schools, police, medical facilities, and all the other services that make for the well-being of a community. Compulsory acquisi-

tion is not new in Australia or, to be more correct, in Australasia. A measure for the compulsory acquisition of land has been passed in all Australian States except our own, and also passed in New Zealand. Advantage has been taken from time to time of that legislation to make homes for new settlers. I do not think the State has ever given up the claim that it is entitled to utilise its resources for the good of its people. Whilst we may talk about freehold and the advantages of freehold, in reality there is no such thing as freehold in Australia, because all the land, freehold or otherwise, the State enters upon and resumes for public purposes, and also taxes whenever Parliament deems taxation to be necessary. If land were freehold in a real sense, there could be no resumption, and there could be no further progress in regard to taxation. This State has never given up the right to resume; in fact, the State in many other countries has never given up that right, not even in those countries where hereditary landlordism has been an established fact for centuries.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Land tenure is subject to alteration by law.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: After the war in most European countries the Governments resumed land. Large areas were resumed in all the States which had been engaged in the war, the object being to meet the demand for homes. That occurs whenever there is strong pressure of public opinion, whenever there is necessity for re-establishing the State in the interests of the great mass of its people. The Bill does not propose to interfere with the owner who is working his land to the best advantage. Under the measure land will not be acquired in such circumstances. Land can be acquired only if it is not deemed to be put to its full economic use.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That, of course, is very wide.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It may be wide, but it is as much as can be set forth in a measure of this character. The question will have to be determined by the board. Legislation of this character is necessarily of a wide type. It is wide because the ultimate decision is left to the board. Parliament cannot determine such questions. Parliament can only determine the test.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The security of land tenure must not be disturbed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think that can possibly occur under this measure. I feel perfectly sure that under a measure of this character the interests of the landholder will be conserved.

Mr. Thomson: But who is to determine whether the land is being properly utilised or not?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The board.

Mr. Thomson: Suppose the owner considers he is utilising his land properly and the board do not think so; surely he ought to be able to appeal.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know how that can be provided, or how hard and fast conditions can be laid down in that respect. Somebody must determine such questions, and I think the people are reasonable enough. One is not entitled to suspect that there will be appointed to a board of this nature men who are otherwise than fair and unbiassed. They will be men of standing in the community, men of knowledge, men who should be in a position to decide. The Bill will apply only to rural holdings, and of course, like the previous measure, will have no application to pastoral leaseholds. The Bill covers conditional purchase holdings as well as freehold lands. In a country like this, where so much land is in process of alienation, it will be necessary to provide for more effective and more economical subdivision. Many conditional purchase holdings are not being utilised to their full value, having regard to the possibilities of the land from a wealth-producing standpoint. In the Bill there is no restriction as to the area that can be resumed, and there is no restriction regarding distance from railways or other facilities. It may be necessary to resume land along the route of a proposed railway, in order to secure effective settlement. The Agricultural Lands Purchase Act enables the Government to purchase land up to 20 miles from a railway or an authorised line, the route of which has been approved by Parliament. The same principle is embodied in the Bill because it may be necessary to utilise land some distance from an existing railway, or which may be served by a railway in the future. The total area held in fee simple in Western Australia is approximately 12,093,622 acres; the total area held under con-

ditional purchase and homestead farm conditions 8,355,833 acres and the total area held under grazing lease 10,658,213 acres. This gives a total area of 31,107,668 acres. The total area cleared is 8,277,700 acres and the total area under crop, 3,351,183 acres.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Those are last year's figures.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, for last year's operations. The total area under artificially sown grasses, is 128,781 acres; the newly cleared acreage prepared for the next crop is 527,474 acres; the area under fallow, 1,677,372 acres; the area previously cropped and now used for grazing, 2,592,887 acres; the area ringbarked or partially cleared, 2,223,165 acres. Apart from the 2,223,165 acres ringbarked and practically cleared, there is a further area of 8,277,700 acres in use, leaving 22,829,968 acres of land alienated or in process of alienation. Some of that land may be suitable for closer settlement purposes.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A lot of that land is held under grazing leases.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I admit that. A considerable area is held under grazing leases, but at the same time the Leader of the Opposition will realise that there are over 20,000,000 acres, consisting of land held in fee simple, under conditional purchase conditions and as homestead farms.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is the Midland Railway Company's area, of course.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It can safely be stated that the greater portion of that land can be used for closer settlement purposes and greater production. It may not be necessary to give the figures or other particulars from the report submitted by Mr. Surveyor Lefroy. They have been quoted in this House on several occasions.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Is that the report on the Avon Valley?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Mr. Lefroy was wrong.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot say he was wrong. Apparently he was instructed to put in this return, and I have no returns or other information in the Lands Department to controvert his statements. No subsequent report was received, nor was one asked for. I cannot say that there has been any refutation of Mr. Lefroy's statement.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If you were to investigate the position, you would find that

there are not 2,000,000 acres of land in the Avon Valley served by the Avon River.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He referred to land within seven miles.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: How much of that land is suitable for closer settlement purposes?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not going to say. I know that a considerable portion of the area is now being used for grazing sheep, whereas it is suitable for closer settlement.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: That land may produce more in the form of wool and mutton than it can in any other direction!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member will not deny that there is a lot of land there capable of producing up to 40 bushels of wheat to the acre.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: But quite a lot of the land that produced 40 bushels of wheat to the acre is now producing more wealth in the form of wool and mutton than it did formerly.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am doubtful regarding the accuracy of that statement. The hon. member is imposing too much upon my credulity when he asks me to believe that a few sheep will produce more wealth than the land was accounting for when it produced 40 bushels of wheat to the acre. With wheat at its present price, I cannot accept any such statement. I admit that wool production is very important, and that the land I refer to is probably being used to its greatest capacity in carrying sheep, but if the land were used for the production of cereals as well as for grazing sheep, the wealth production would be considerably greater than it is at present.

Mr. Davy: Is the theory to be followed, that land not used for growing crops is not utilised within the meaning of this legislation?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Within the meaning of the Bill unutilised land is that which is not producing to its full capacity.

Mr. Davy: Producing what?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Wealth, whether wool, wheat or any other commodity that the land is capable of producing.

Hon. G. Taylor: And the members of the board are to decide?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Someone has to decide the question. It cannot be left to Parliament or to some one individual; it must be left to some authority and the board will have to decide. If hon. members take

up the attitude that the board are not capable of doing that, and if they claim that no authority is capable of deciding the point, then it is foolish to introduce the Bill. Throughout Australia, however, boards, assessors or some authority undertake the greater portion of the responsibilities I am outlining.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We will peruse the Acts passed in the other States.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have the Acts. In some States the owner submits the value he places upon his property as well, but in the Bill now before hon. members, the owner will have an opportunity to appeal against the value placed upon his holding by the board. The first-class land in the Avon Valley within seven miles of a railway totals 1,123,270 acres, while the second-class land totals 519,980 acres, and the third-class 685,160 acres, giving a total of 2,328,410 acres. The area cleared is 985,170 acres and the area uncleared, 1,343,240 acres. According to the return submitted by Mr. Surveyor Lefroy, the first-class land comprises 1,123,270 acres, yet only 985,170 acres have been cleared.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Pardon me! That report is years old. It must be upwards of nine years old.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It may be, but I think it will be admitted that if there is one part of the State where less improvement has been carried out during recent years, it is in the Avon Valley.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are quite wrong.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am quite right. There has probably been less land cleared in that old established area than in any other portion of the State in recent times.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are quite wrong. It is practically all cleared.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The people go in for sheep raising mostly, and where they do that, they do not as a rule bother about cereal production. The uncleared land includes 404,660 acres of first-class country. No hon. member would argue that first-class land included bad land, or land that could not be brought to a state of production!

Mr. Ferguson: But the bulk of the uncleared land is rough, stony hill country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is not first-class land, and therefore is not included in the area I refer to.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: It is included in that return.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is not so. It is further stated that the 404,660 acres of first-class uncleared land would, if brought into production, be reasonably expected to carry at least 400 additional farms. The area of second-class uncleared land totals 331,290 acres. I need not bother about the uncleared third-class country because it is probably only grazing country. The land I refer to is mostly freehold property held for many years. The fact remains, however, that a considerable area of the land in this older settled part of the State has been alienated and has not been worked to its full extent of production. The Bill now before hon. members is along similar lines to that of the measure introduced in 1924. It provides for the appointment of a board to be called the closer settlement board. The board shall hold office for such time as the Governor may direct, and shall receive such fees as are prescribed. The business of the board will be to inquire into the suitability of any unutilised land for closer settlement and the board shall have power to enter upon any land, appoint assistants, and report to the Minister regarding the suitability of the land for closer settlement purposes. Land shall be deemed to be unutilised if, in the opinion of the board, the land, having regard to its economic value, is not being put to reasonable use. The word "reasonable" infers that the board cannot act in an arbitrary manner, but must take a reasonable view of the question. In their report to the Minister the Board shall state what, in their opinion, the land can be utilised for in order to make it more productive, and copies of their report shall be furnished to the interested parties if applied for. When land is deemed to be subject to the provisions of this legislation, the board must give notice in writing to the owner and to all persons who have an interest in the land. It is incumbent upon the owner to cause a copy of the notice to be served upon any person who may have an interest in the land but whose interest is unregistered. Within three months after the board have reported to the Minister, the owner of the land in question will have the right to notify the board of his intention to subdivide his property for sale. Therefore the owner has that alternative. He may say, "Well, apparently you deem this land fit for closer settlement and I give you notice that I propose to subdivide the land and sell

it myself." In such a case the owner will be required to submit to the board his scheme for subdivision for the approval of the board. He must also make lots available for sale at auction or by private treaty, as the board may approve.

Mr. Thomson: If the owner subdivides, will the board state the price at which he is to sell?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, for unless that were done it would be quite easy for the owner to evade the spirit of the Act by putting an impossible price on the land. It is not desirable that we should leave such a loophole. If, after notice has been given by the board, the owner fails to notify the board within the prescribed time of his intention to subdivide the land, the Governor may, by notice in the "Gazette," declare that the land, or a defined portion thereof, has been taken for closer settlement. The land referred to shall then be absolutely vested in His Majesty. But if the Governor takes any portion of the land for closer settlement, the owner is entitled to insist that the whole shall be taken. That provision is only fair, for without it the owner might be left with the least valuable part of his land. So it would not be reasonable to deprive him of this protection, given in the Bill. If, after having notified the board of his intention to subdivide his land for sale, the owner does not in the opinion of the board comply with the Act, the board may serve upon him a notice of default, and thereupon the owner shall be deemed to have failed to comply with the conditions, and the land may be declared by notice in the "Gazette" as having been taken for closer settlement. But in this case the owner is given two months from the service of such default to appeal to a judge of the Supreme Court, who may either confirm the action of the board or direct the withdrawal of the notice of default. The decision of the judge shall be final. Members will admit that the owner's interests are thoroughly well safeguarded.

Mr. Thomson: It will be rather a costly process, the appeal to the Supreme Court judge.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, the owner need not take that course. That is only in cases of default. When notice has been issued in the "Gazette" that land has been taken under the Act, the board shall cause a copy of such notice to be served upon all persons having any interest in the land. In the Bill of 1924

compensation was based on the unimproved value, plus the value of enhancements, with 10 per cent. added, subject to appeal to arbitration under the Arbitration Act of 1895. In the Bill before us compensation to be paid for land taken under the Act shall be arrived at as provided in the Public Works Act, which was amended last session; but any appeal against such valuation shall be determined under the provisions of the Arbitration Act, 1895. Under the Public Works Act an appeal is determined by arbitration by a judge and two assessors, but under the Bill we are now dealing with any appeal will be determined by private arbitration under the Arbitration Act, 1895. I think these provisions must appeal to members as being entirely reasonable. The methods of arriving at compensation are already provided in the Public Works Act. That measure was passed by Parliament, and has been in operation for many years. I do not think it can be said to have been of disadvantage to any citizen. In view of the experiences we have had in this State, I do not see how members can object to the manner in which compensation is to be arrived at under the Bill. Land acquired under the Bill may be disposed of subject to the provisions of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, 1909, and the board may exercise any of the powers conferred on the Lands Purchase Board. The Bill provides that the Treasurer may, with the approval of the Governor, expend for the purposes of this Act such funds as, under the provisions of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, are available or as may be appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of this Act. Finally, the board shall keep a record of its proceedings and of evidence taken at all inquiries, and the annual report of the board shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament. I think that sums up the purposes of the Bill. Sooner or later a measure of this character must be passed by the Parliament of Western Australia. Similar measures are in operation in all other States of the Commonwealth and in New Zealand. Western Australia is the only State without its closer settlement legislation. If we desire to settle the country and make the State as productive as possible, it is time we passed such a measure. In years to come, when we have the State more fully developed, land in the older-settled areas will become far more valuable than it is to-day. When that happens, the Government will find it extremely

difficult to resume the land on a monetary basis that will enable new settlers to make a livelihood. Settlers from the Eastern States are arriving here steadily, not because land cannot be secured in their own States, but because when the Government of New South Wales or of Victoria resume an area the price paid for the land is so high that the settlers to be accommodated upon it are quite unable to make a livelihood off it in addition to meeting their financial obligations. If we do not take time by the forelock, the same thing will happen in Western Australia. We hear a good deal of talk about the empty spaces and the need for settlement; but members must bear in mind that much of the empty space in fertile Australia is due to the fact that the settler is not able to get the land. New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia have not been able to enter upon a vigorous immigration policy, beyond bringing out some farm labourers, because it has been impossible to get sufficient land. Opposition members who, in their constituencies, deplore the rise of the cities and the exodus from country districts into those cities, will realise that most of the exodus to the cities is because there are no opportunities in the country for the young people who would like to take up land. The greatest curse of Australia is high land values. I like to see a reasonable price offering for land, but when the price soars too high new settlers going on the land find it utterly impossible to make a livelihood.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It all depends on the prices they get for their produce.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But, as I said the other night, such schemes as the Paterson butter scheme have been called into being because land in the Eastern States is too dear.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: So too with the dried fruits scheme.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, that has arisen because the grower has not a local market for his produce, and so has to send it overseas at the best price he can get. But, as I say, in the butter and other allied industries the trouble is the high land values.

Mr. Davy: What fixes the price of land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When an established community is built up and the young people want land, their demand creates a value. The extraordinary demand for land in the Eastern States has raised values to an extraordinary pitch. In many

instances settlers, paying down as much as £2,000 for their land, have to borrow the rest of the money from banks and other financial institutions. So those banks cannot afford to let the land depreciate in value. They have to keep up the pretence that the land is of a very high value.

Mr. Davy: You mean that the banks keep up the price?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, the whole of society endeavours to do that.

Mr. Davy: The effect of supply and demand.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Land on which butter is produced in Australia has got beyond the law of supply and demand, and the butter producer has had to levy on the community to the extent of £2,000,000 to enable him to make a living.

Mr. Thomson: That argument applies to many other things.

Mr. Davy: If by awarding bonuses you make it more profitable to produce butter, you increase the value of dairy land, because more people want to go into the butter industry.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Of course the demand for land increases its value. That has been very noticeable in the Eastern States. Even in Western Australia land values have increased, despite the great area of Crown land made available for settlement every year, and owing to the good prices we have been getting for wheat and wool.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Our land values are not too high yet.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, and it is a good thing for Western Australia. That is what is making this State so attractive and getting it so well spoken of in the Eastern States. That is why we are receiving hundreds of inquiries by letter and from persons coming here in search of land; it is because our land values are not yet too high, and men who go on the land in this State have a chance to make a livelihood. However, if we delay the passing of this measure, every year will make the position more difficult. It will become impossible to resume these large areas, for the cost will be so high that the new settler will not be able to pay the price. That will be bad for the would-be settler and bad for the State also. I hope the Bill will have a cordial acceptance in this Chamber, and that on this

occasion it will also meet with the endorsement of another place. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—HOSPITALS.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [8.15] in moving the second reading said: I do not intend to detain the House very long in explaining the provisions of this Bill. Though it contains 38 clauses, it is purely a machinery measure. We have a Hospitals Act on the statute-book that was passed in 1894, but since then no legislation dealing with hospitals has been passed. The Act of 1894 applies to only two hospitals in the State, namely, those of Perth and Fremantle. Other hospitals are not governed by any legislation. I think I am right in saying it is the desire of the people in this State that we should have legislation to govern our hospitals. We have 77 hospitals and over 75 of them there is no legislative control.

Mr. Marshall: Some of them have got on very well without it, too.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I am prepared to admit they have, but some of them would have got on much better had there been some legislation. On two occasions during the last seven years hospitals Bills have been introduced, the main object of which was to raise revenue for the maintenance of hospitals, and it was on the question of the method of raising revenue that nearly the whole of the controversy took place. The Bill introduced by the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) contained every machinery clause to be found in this measure.

Mr. Sampson: It would have been well if that Bill had been passed.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: If that Bill had become law, I would not be nearly so well off as I am now. On the figures supplied by the hon. member when he was moving the second reading, the hospitals would have benefited to the extent of only £13,000 per year. At present I obtain more than that from the entertainments tax, and the people are paying no extra taxation to provide it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The people pay more than before by way of entertainments tax.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Had that Bill been passed and the whole of the money derived from it been applied to the hospitals, our hospitals would have been much better off, but it was intended to decrease the amount of the Government subsidy to hospitals by at least £100,000 per year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, £50,000.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No, the hon. member reduced the subsidy by £50,000 for the half year, proving conclusively that his intention was to reduce it by £100,000 for the full year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That Bill went to a select committee.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: But the select committee recommended a tax of 1d. in the pound on all income, the proceeds to go to the upkeep of hospitals. They did not recommend that £100,000 of the proceeds should be utilised to relieve consolidated revenue.

Mr. Sampson: It was a unanimous recommendation.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: We are not discussing that Bill at present.

Mr. Latham: It was a jolly good Bill.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: If the hospitals had received the benefit of the whole of the money, it would have been a good measure, but unfortunately the Treasurer of the day intended that consolidated revenue should benefit from it. The people were to be asked to subscribe £113,000 per year, of which £13,000 was to be devoted to hospitals and the balance to reducing the deficit.

Mr. Sampson: Those figures are wrong.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: If that is so, the hon. member gave wrong figures when moving the second reading of the Bill. Those figures were quoted by him from his seat on this side of the House.

Mr. Sampson: There was provision for free service, too.

Mr. Chesson: You would like to forget that now.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: We need not discuss that Bill any further. All the controversy at the time centred on the scheme for raising funds for the maintenance of hospitals. This Bill is designed to govern hospitals and to give local authorities the right to contribute towards the cost of erecting hospitals.

Mr. Latham: In other words interference by the Government without any financial assistance.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Nothing of the kind. As a matter of fact there will be no compulsion with one exception. There might be five local authorities in a declared hospital district, and the Bill provides that if three-fourths of the local authorities ask for Government assistance to build a hospital and are prepared to find their quota, the Minister may compel the other local authorities to join in the scheme. If there is no such request from the local authorities, there will be no obligation on any local body or number of local bodies to do anything towards the provision of hospitals.

Mr. Sampson: Then this Bill will not provide for uniform legislation throughout the State.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: It will.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It cannot if it is optional for the local authorities to make that request.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: So far as possible I want everything connected with hospitals to be optional. Some people, if they had their way, would give the control of hospitals wholly to the Government. They argue that it should not be necessary for the public to take an interest in the hospitals and that it is the duty of the Government to care for the sick. I should be sorry if the day arrived when that view was taken. I believe that the feeling of the people generally towards hospitals and the interest they take in local hospitals is better than it ever has been, and that is the spirit I wish to see created throughout the State.

Mr. Sampson: Some districts are looked after and some have to look after themselves.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The hon. member cannot point to any one district that is not looked after by the Government. So far the hon. member has not been right in any one of his interjections and I doubt whether he will be.

Mr. Sampson: The variation in the treatment of Government hospitals is well known.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The hon. member cannot cite one hospital that is not receiving assistance from the Government.

Mr. Sampson: Quite so, but the assistance is not always on the same basis.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The Government are paying a subsidy of £39,000

a year to the Perth Hospital. Would the hon. member suggest that a similar sum should be paid to the nurse at Kalamunda?

Mr. Sampson: That is beside the mark.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Of course there is a difference, because the work of the nurse at Kalamunda cannot be compared with that of the Perth Hospital.

Mr. Sampson: And there is a difference between the committee hospitals and those controlled by the Government.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I admit it.

Mr. Sampson: Then why dispute it?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: There are hospitals controlled by the Government that to my way of thinking should be controlled by the local authorities. We are endeavouring to get local committees to take charge of hospitals that are Government hospitals, and I hope that we shall succeed all round. We have succeeded in two or three instances.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In Perth?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I do not want that to apply to Perth Hospital, which I do not wish to see controlled other than by the Medical Department. The Perth Hospital is a training school not only for nurses, but for medical men, and it is only right that it should be, to a fairly large extent, under the control of the Medical Department. On a bed basis there are hospitals that receive a greater subsidy than does the Perth Hospital. The last report I saw stated that 27 per cent. of the beds in the Perth Hospital were occupied by people from outside the metropolitan area, so the Perth Hospital is a Western Australian hospital.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: If there are two hospitals near to a local authority, will you allow them to decide which they will support?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes; they may do it now, and they will be able to do it under this measure. The Bill will enable boards of management to be appointed for each existing hospital and will permit of the constitution of such boards being varied in accordance with the needs or peculiarities of each district. Hospital boards so created will be given the usual powers of incorporation, may sue or be sued, may make rules for their own proceedings and may make by-laws for the general conduct of their hospitals. Such boards will have power to manage hospitals and to collect revenue in respect thereof. The lines of expenditure are laid down in Clause 21.

The Bill also provides that the Minister may, if he thinks necessary, direct the holding of an inquiry into hospital matters, and officers appointed under the measure will have the powers of inspectors. The department on various occasions have received complaints from members of hospital boards and committees to the effect that the management was not what it ought to be. At present there is no power to make even an inquiry into the management and general conduct of committee hospitals. The only power we have in the event of serious objection being raised to inspection or inquiry on behalf of the Government is to stop the subsidy. That has been done in one instance since I have been Minister. There were two other occasions on which we sent officers to make inquiries. They were unable to make the inquiries, and unfortunately for the district concerned, those hospitals have been left lamenting because we had no power to make an inquiry or demand an audit of the books.

Mr. Brown: Does this Bill compel road boards to strike a rate?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Road boards have that right at present. This is giving municipalities the right to find their own quota of the cost. We have on two occasions built fairly large country hospitals, namely at Katanning and Collie. In both cases the Government provided the capital, and an agreement was arrived at with the local authorities that they should pay interest and sinking fund on one-half of the capital cost. Three other districts have agreed to a similar proposition for their hospital requirements. Unfortunately the municipalities have no legal right to do this, but the Bill will give them the legal right, and legalise the action of the other two districts, Katanning and Collie, which have already done this.

Mr. Mann: Is there any provision for taxing those who are not holders of property?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: There is no provision for taxing anyone. The Bill does not raise revenue for hospitals. Power is given to prescribe a system of accounts which shall be followed by the hospital boards, and there is also provision for an annual audit of such accounts to be made by any officer or officers appointed by the Minister. Members will agree that such a thing is necessary. There have been three cases already in which, had we possessed this power, the hospital committee concerned

would not have found itself in the position it did. When the Government have found part or the whole of the money, they should have the right, when informed that things are not as they ought to be, to have an inspection and audit made of the books. Most of our hospitals have been labouring under the delusion all these years that they had some legal standing in the matter of debts owed by patients. If a person had been accommodated in one of those hospitals, had received proper medical and nursing attention, and had been restored to health, and was in a position to pay but did not pay, the committees of hospitals in the country districts, and even the management of the Government hospitals, were under the impression that they had the right to sue for the fees that were due, and they assumed that right.

Mr. Latham: The Roebourne hospital did.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Furthermore, they obtained the money.

Mr. Latham: They gaoled an unfortunate fellow.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: In cases where the department sued on account of departmental hospitals they, too, received the money. If anyone raised the point, not one of those Government hospitals, or committee hospitals outside Perth and Fremantle, could claim one shilling.

Mr. Mann: So that a person who was in prison for such a debt would be imprisoned illegally?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I should say so, but I do not know the case to which the hon. member referred.

Mr. Mann: Did you not see it in the newspapers?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: I did not read about the case referred to. There is no legal power at present to sue for money that might be owing to any hospital in the State with the exception of those in Perth and Fremantle.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: It is a pity to mention it.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No. I am making provision in the Bill that debts owing at present to hospitals will be brought under the Act. It is right that members should know this.

Mr. Heron: Hospitals have bluffed over that for a good while.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes, and many of them did not know they were bluffing. Many thought they had the legal

power to sue, and I believe they should have it. The Bill makes provision for the local authorities to contribute their share of the capital cost of the erection of a hospital. That is purely optional, and the local authorities may ask for the right to do this. We cannot force the hand of any local authority in this matter, and I am not asking for power to do so.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is the maintenance as well.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: They may contribute towards the maintenance also if they like. We are not asking for anything in the Bill to give local authorities power to strike extra rates.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They will strike them all the same.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No. In cases where we have had requests from the local authorities we understand that they are prepared, out of the rates collected by them, to pay interest and sinking fund on one-half of the capital cost of the institution. They say they will be able to do this without increasing their rates.

Mr. Sampson: Many of the road boards are already on their maximum rating power.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: They have not struck any extra rate. I do not know of any road board that is likely to apply to have a hospital built solely for itself. Even if that were so, the board would be in a position to meet the obligation represented by interest and sinking fund on one-half of the capital cost, out of the rates. There are districts where five local authorities are interested in one hospital. Four of them have unanimously carried resolutions asking that the conditions that have been offered to and complied with by Katanning and Collie, and which will be complied with in three other districts when this Bill goes through, should come into operation with respect to them. One local authority refused. There may be some cause for the objection, but I do not know it. I cannot see what logical objection can be raised to the proposal. All the arbitrary power I am asking for in the Bill is that where such a thing happens the Minister may compel other local authorities to pay their quota towards the interest and sinking fund of the capital cost of the institution.

Mr. Sampson: Is it really the duty of the local authority to look after roads?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: It is as much the duty of a local authority, be it

municipal council or road board, to look after its sick as it is to look after its roads.

Mr. Marshall: Where is there a road board that does not take over health matters in its own district?

Mr. Sampson: We should make provision for funds, and not look to the local authorities for the money.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The Bill also includes the Old Men's Home, and the Old Women's Home at Fremantle. At present we have no legislation governing either of those institutions. They are under the same Minister, and always have been.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Do you expect the road board to look after them?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: No. All I am asking is that the Minister shall be given some statutory authority over both institutions. At present he has none. It is not advisable that we should go on any longer controlling and running those homes without statutory authority to do so.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You give the inmates 5s. 11d. worth of food every day without statutory authority.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: We are giving them better food than the hon. member gave them when he was in office, and there are fewer complaints now than there were then.

Mr. Mann: No notice is taken of the complaints now.

Mr. Latham: We do not go there to find out whether frozen meat is given to the inmates.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: That interjection is uncalled for.

Mr. Latham: That is what did happen.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Members of the visiting committee report to me much more frequently now than they did when the previous Minister was in charge of those homes. I am advised that one or two of the members of that committee make frequent visits to the Old Men's Home during meal hours. The reports we receive are most favourable. Quite recently three of the old men came to Perth, and waited for 2½ hours with the object of interviewing me. When they saw me all they wanted to say was that the meals provided for them were better than they had been in the past. They were well satisfied.

The Premier: All these departments have been greatly improved since the hon. member left.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There has been more to say about them.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The Bill sets out that the department shall provide, when asked to do so, uniform sets of regulations and rules for the government of hospitals. At present each hospital committee can have a set of rules to suit itself. These vary with each institution. The majority of the hospitals have asked us to make this provision in the Bill, so that the department may compile a uniform set of rules for the government of committee-controlled institutions.

Mr. Marshall: I would not like to agree to have rules framed in Perth for the government of hospitals far removed from Perth.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: The hon. member is mistaken in the matter.

Mr. Marshall: I hope so.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: We are not going to lay down precisely how each hospital shall be run. Each hospital committee will be a body corporate. It will have the right to manage its own institution with two exceptions, namely, that we claim the right to inspect or visit the institutions if we so desire, and again if we so desire it, to have an audit of accounts. Outside of that each hospital committee will be a body on its own and will manage its own affairs.

Mr. Chesson: No committee will object to that.

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Most of the committee-run hospitals have asked to be provided with a set of rules. We will provide those rules, but if the hospital committee in which the member for Murebison is interested, does not desire to fall in with the idea, we will not compel them to do so. The last thing the Bill provides for deals with instances where medical funds are in existence. In the case of most of the committee hospitals on the goldfields and in the timber districts, the principal source of income is the medical fund which is controlled by the workers in the district. They pay so much a week for the right to have hospital treatment for themselves, and their wives and families in some instances. The conditions vary in accordance with the benefits obtained. The Bill provides for the encouragement of medical funds everywhere. Wherever medical funds exist, the price charged to patients varies. Most of the hospital committees give a reduction to those who are on a medical fund, which amounts to so much a day. We are providing in the

Bill that where medical funds exist, those who contribute shall have a definite reduction of 20 per cent. on the ordinary charges. I should like to see medical funds of that description associated with hospitals throughout the State.

Mr. Mann: Will that apply to friendly societies?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH: Yes, if they so desire. Friendly societies have formed medical funds in agricultural districts, and by arrangement with the management of these funds we give contributors to it a reduction at our Government hospitals. The railway employees have for, I think, the last 15 years received a reduction in fees for their members at the Perth Hospital on account of the possession of a medical fund. I wish to encourage that spirit wherever possible. Men should have inducements to become members of medical funds. Wherever medical funds are provided, there is to be a reduction of 20 per cent. on the scale of fees charged to ordinary patients. This is purely a machinery Bill dealing with the management of hospitals only, except that, as I have stated, it gives local authorities legal power to contribute towards interest and sinking fund for the building of new institutions. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Sampson, debate adjourned.

BILL — NORTHAM MUNICIPAL ICE WORKS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [8.47] in moving the second reading said: This is quite an innocuous little Bill. It has to do with the Northam municipal ice works. In 1921 an Act was passed authorising the municipality of Northam to raise a loan of £5,000 for the purpose of establishing ice works. During the past five or six years the town of Northam has progressed so greatly that the works in question are now found to be insufficient. Therefore it is desired to duplicate the works; and to do it speedily so that they may be ready, together with additional cool storage, for the coming summer. The Bill really authorises the municipality of Northam to raise an additional £4,000, subject to the usual conditions. I believe they are well on the way with the works now, having to

some extent anticipated Parliamentary approval. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.48]: In supporting the Bill I may mention that the Northam iceworks have, strange to say, paid very well indeed, showing a considerable profit. The ice plant is now altogether insufficient for the growing town of Northam, a highly important centre. The works serve Northam with ice, and also supply ice to a good many people in the back country. It is now desired to double the output of ice and also to double the cool storage accommodation. Therefore an additional sum of £4,000 is required. Northam has been particularly fortunate in the management of its iceworks, which, as I previously mentioned, have returned a considerable profit.

The Minister for Mines: Last summer they could not make sufficient ice for Northam requirements.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Oh yes.

The Minister for Mines: Did they not get some ice from Kalgoorlie?

Mr. E. B. Johnston: They send ice all over the wheat belt.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The cool storage is used by farmers and other individuals, and in many respects proves advantageous. I am indeed glad that the Premier has brought down the Bill so early in the session. The Northam municipality want to get on with the work in order to be ready to meet the needs of the coming summer. As the Premier said, they have anticipated approval to some extent. The necessary notice has been given of intention to borrow, and the ratepayers will deal with the matter in the ordinary way; that is to say, the ratepayers will have to approve the expenditure even if the Bill is passed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVE.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [8.51] in moving the second reading said: Although the title of the Bill is a Permanent Reserve Bill, the measure really has to do with the head office of our State Savings Bank. In the Act passed last session power was given for the use of funds

to purchase land and erect buildings. The present headquarters of the bank in Hay-street, I think it will be agreed, are somewhat dilapidated and antiquated.

Mr. Mann: They are unsuitable.

The PREMIER: I believe they were originally the Legislative Council chamber.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Legislative Assembly.

The PREMIER: They were remodelled in order to meet the bank's requirements, but the volume of business transacted there has now grown so much that the building is entirely unsuited for the purpose. In addition, seeing that Perth has been practically rebuilt during the past eight or 10 years—even fairly substantial buildings having given way to new and more commodious premises—we consider that the State should not lag behind in the matter of its public buildings in the capital city.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: And in the country.

The PREMIER: Yes. Incidentally I may remark that since the passing of the Act giving authority to purchase land and erect buildings, two or three buildings have been in course of erection, and that it is intended to follow the policy of the bank providing, in the progressive and growing towns of the country, its own buildings rather than carry on in the manner of past years. The present headquarters do not provide sufficient accommodation either for the bank's clients or for its staff. As many as 1,100 clients do business at the establishment daily. I am pleased to say that the bank's operations have greatly increased in recent years, due, I believe, in some measure to the advertising campaign launched during the past 12 months. Whether that has had any considerable influence on the bank's business or not—

Mr. Davy: You take unlimited amounts now.

The PREMIER: Yes. From whatever cause it may arise, it is certainly gratifying that the volume of the bank's business has grown and is growing substantially. Not more than £1,000 was expended on the advertising campaign for the whole year, and I am sure we have got all our expenditure back.

Mr. Sampson: You put up some very forceful advertisements.

The PREMIER: I believe the success attained was due mainly to advertisements inserted in certain provincial papers.

Mr. Mann: The money was judiciously spent.

The PREMIER: A wise selection was made of journals in which to advertise. In 1920 the number of the bank's accounts was 164,000, and this had increased in 1927 to 225,000, or an increase in the seven years of 61,000. During the same seven years the deposits increased from £6,070,000 in 1920 to £7,095,000 in 1927, or an increase in those seven years of £1,014,000. Those increases I regard as most gratifying. During the past two years the increase has been more significant still. The number of accounts has grown from 205,000 to 225,000, an increase of 20,000: and during the same periods the deposits have increased from £5,832,000 to £7,095,000, or an increase of £1,262,000. The amount standing to the credit of depositors in 1920 was £5,784,000 and in 1927 £6,965,000, an increase in those seven years of £1,180,000. The increase during the past two years has been £994,000, or almost half a million pounds annually.

Mr. Davy: It is very handy.

The PREMIER: Very handy indeed. It is now desired that the bank should acquire land in the city and erect premises of its own. It is thought that an up-to-date building consisting perhaps of six or seven storeys might be erected, with sufficient accommodation to meet the requirements of other departments, which of course would pay rent for floor space to the savings bank. In that way the pressure on accommodation in some other departments would be relieved.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Is that proposed?

The PREMIER: Nothing has been decided yet. This has been considered, but nothing has been decided definitely.

Mr. Thomson: This might be an opportunity of bringing the whole of your offices under one roof.

The PREMIER: It would help in that direction, as will be apparent when I indicate the situation of the block on which it is proposed to erect the savings bank building. The difficulty was to find a suitable site which would be central, and not too expensive if private property had to be acquired. However, it is thought that the site selected will meet all requirements. That site is known as the old police court, situated in Barrack-street between Hay-street and St. George's-terrace. It lies between the present Town Hall and the Government offices.

Mr. Mann: That land was once promised to the Perth City Council.

The PREMIER: The buildings now on it are the Tourist Bureau and the Electoral Department, and a few others. As I say, it is a very fine block of land lying between the Town Hall and the Treasury buildings. It has a frontage to Barrack-street of 154 links with a depth of 152 links.

Mr. Angelo: Could additional storeys be added to the present Government offices?

The PREMIER: I am not sure on that point.

Mr. Angelo: It would look rather ungainly to have a 6-story building erected alongside the existing offices.

The PREMIER: That may be so, but I do not know whether additional storeys could be erected as the hon. member suggests.

Mr. Angelo: It would be worth inquiring into.

The PREMIER: Yes. I do not favour sky-scrapers in a city, but the demands for accommodation may necessitate buildings of that description. The present buildings are entirely unsuitable. They are not modern, neither are they up to date. Considerable alterations have been effected since the old post office buildings were taken over by the State Government. Hon. members who have visited some of the departments located in that building will be aware that the accommodation is not what it should be.

Mr. Marshall: The Lands Department is a regular rabbit-warren.

The PREMIER: Yes, and particularly the Lands Titles office. That part of the building reflects no credit upon any Parliament or any Government.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: There is a lot of waste space.

The PREMIER: Yes. I have already given the frontage and depth of the block. The depth is 152 links where the block adjoins the existing Government Offices but it has a depth of 206 links on the Town Hall side. That is to say, the depth is greater on the Town Hall side than on the Treasury building side. In area the block comprises 1 rood 6 perches.

Mr. Sampson: Roughly it is about 100 ft. square.

The PREMIER: Yes. It is a fine block of land. The depth would be 3 links longer than the depth of the existing Town Hall building. The departments accommodated in the existing building, for which provision

will have to be made elsewhere during the construction period, are the Electoral Department, the Immigration Department, the Tourist Bureau, and the Council of Industrial Development. As I mentioned earlier, it is proposed to erect a building that will be much larger than is necessary to meet the requirements of the State Savings Bank, and therefore accommodation for those departments will be found in the new building.

Mr. Angelo: Would not the old post office chamber make a good banking chamber, and new public offices could then be built on the site you have indicated? The post office chamber would do admirably for banking purposes.

The PREMIER: Yes, but it is very usefully employed now for revenue collecting. If we adopted the hon. member's suggestion, it would mean that the purposes for which the chamber is used now would have to be provided for in the new building.

Mr. Angelo: That is so.

The PREMIER: The hon. member will recognise that if we erect a new building, we shall be able to provide space and accommodation to meet requirements better than we could in the old post office building.

Mr. Angelo: There seems to be a lot of waste space there.

The PREMIER: I do not think so. The old post office chamber is fully utilised, and an immense volume of business is transacted there daily. That will be patent to any hon. member who pays a visit to the premises.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: At any rate there is space for two floors wasted overhead.

The PREMIER: The building is well occupied now. We have been searching for accommodation to house Government departments for years past. Nothing has been decided so far, but certainly we cannot go on much longer without providing additional accommodation for the Land Titles Department. It may be that the old building now used by the savings bank can be taken down and a new building erected there. I do not know whether the foundations will permit of additions to be made.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would not do. You would have to pull the inside out of the existing buildings.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You could not convert the old premises into a modern building.

The PREMIER: In any case the building where the Lands Department is accommodated now in Cathedral-avenue, extends to Hay-street and it was intended to continue the building along Hay-street towards the Town Hall, because it was left in an unfinished state on the savings bank side.

Mr. Corboy: The present building is a rabbit-warren.

The PREMIER: This will afford an opportunity for the erection of a substantial building for the savings bank, a building that will be worthy of the part the bank is playing in the development of the State. We can also provide for the erection of a substantial building where the old savings bank is now situated. If that were done, it would overcome much of the difficulty now experienced in finding accommodation for the various departments.

Mr. Thomson: It is to be hoped that whatever is done will form part of a comprehensive scheme.

The PREMIER: I do not know that it is possible to design anything more comprehensive for that block.

Mr. Thomson: No, but to make the building part of a comprehensive scheme.

The PREMIER: There is also the block where the University is now located. The University authorities contemplate transferring entirely to the Crawley site in two years' time. The block at present occupied by the University is a large one, having frontages to Hay-street, Irwin-street, and St. George's-terrace. It would be very suitable for the erection of large Government offices, but the suggestion has been made to the Government that an exchange of that block might be made with the University people for 25 or 30 acres of University endowment land in Subiaco. That exchange would be made for the purpose of erecting a new general hospital. In all, the University has about 90 acres of endowment lands fronting upon the Nedlands tram track and opposite King's Park. That is conveniently situated, and it is suggested that it would be suitable for a new hospital.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is a new general hospital.

The PREMIER: Yes. If that exchange were effected, it would mean that the University could derive some revenue from the

block by the erection of shops and other buildings, and it would be a source of annual income to the University.

Mr. Thomson: Does the Irwin-street block belong to the University?

The PREMIER: No. It is Government property and will revert to the Government as soon as the University is transferred. The suggestion is to give that block to the University in exchange for portion of the endowment lands at Subiaco for hospital purposes. The block I have been describing is a Class A reserve; hence the necessity for Parliamentary authority to utilise it for any purpose. It is desired to exempt the block from the possibility of any ordinary sale. That would probably defeat the end we have in view. If it were sold by public auction and purchased by other people, it would pass out of our control. It is intended in issuing the title to provide for a permanent right-of-way giving access to the rear of the present Government offices but the new building will be erected over the right-of-way. The bank must have a title before it can invest its own money in a building such as it is proposed to erect.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The £40,000 would go to revenue.

The PREMIER: It could go to revenue.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It could go to the Lands Department.

The PREMIER: That would be another windfall!

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would be a payment to yourself of the £40,000 involved.

The PREMIER: If it is thought the money should not be made available to help the surplus, we could use it in some other direction.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Why not give it to the bank in exchange for the present site?

The PREMIER: But it belongs to the Government.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The savings bank belongs to the Government.

The PREMIER: The whole thing belongs to the Government. It is as broad as it is long. Any profits derived from the operations of the savings bank come to the Treasury.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The bank does not make much profit.

The PREMIER: Some good investments have been made lately.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The old investments did not show much return. Of course,

I know money can be borrowed at a low rate of interest for public works.

The PREMIER: The bank is getting better rates of interest now. The block in question has a frontage of approximately 100 feet, and it is valued by the land resumption officer at £400 a foot, giving a total value of £40,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The building is not of much value, as it will have to be removed.

The PREMIER: That is so, but that is the value placed upon the land by the land resumption officer.

Mr. Thomson: That is cheap.

The PREMIER: It does not seem cheap having regard to the price land is bringing in the neighbourhood. I do not know what price land in Barrack-street is bringing now, but in Hay-street land costs between £700 and £800 a foot. There can be no doubt that the Barrack-street block would be ideal for the headquarters of the bank. Besides being an ornament to the architecture of the city, the building would be centrally situated and undoubtedly premises do much to attract business. Most people realise that, when they see the enormous sums spent by companies and firms in the erection of substantial buildings. Anyone who has been to Melbourne recently must have been surprised at the buildings that have been erected. I, who know Melbourne well, was greatly surprised during my recent trip at the spectacle of the magnificent buildings that have been erected. Government savings banks have been erected in various parts of the city.

Mr. Lindsay: The finest one of all is in Sydney.

The PREMIER: I have not seen it, but in Melbourne a splendid savings bank building has been erected in Elizabeth-street and another one in Spencer-street.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: There is another in Swanston-street, too.

The PREMIER: Yes. It shows that it is considered good business to erect fine premises. A shoddy uninviting place such as the premises where our savings bank business is carried on now, does not tend to attract patronage.

Mr. Sampson: At present it is a case of business in spite of premises.

The PREMIER: That is what amounts to.

Mr. Davy: It would be very difficult to fit in any building with the neighbouring style of architecture.

The PREMIER: That is so. You could not fit in anything with the Town Hall, and there is not much style at all on the adjoining Treasury building. It is conspicuous for its lack of style.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is highly respectable looking, and solid.

The PREMIER: It is indeed. Moreover it is a place where many mighty men have held sway; although "I says it as shouldn't." But if a conspicuously fine building were erected it would tend, having regard to its surroundings, to be a great advertisement for the Savings Bank. I know that would savour of desecration with some of my old friends, so far as it might relate to the Town Hall building. There is a sentimental regard for the old Town Hall building. Undoubtedly when you stand back and survey it properly it is a very fine piece of architecture. Of course it has been greatly improved by those brilliantly lighted shops installed along the front!

Mr. E. B. Johnston: A piece of civic vandalism!

The PREMIER: I am not prepared to try to describe it. I should be immediately ruled out of order if I were to express my feelings about that desecration of the old Town Hall corner. As for this money, in ordinary circumstances it would be taken into Lands revenue. I am not prepared to say I would desire to take advantage of that. I think perhaps it might be earmarked for the erection of the new building, or portion of that building on the present Savings Bank site. It would be a very large sum to go into revenue in one year from one particular source.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, if you got £400 per foot for the whole lot, it would meet all your difficulties.

The PREMIER: If we had disposed of that old corner in the lean years, when we were troubled with big deficits, we should have wiped out the lot in one stroke. But then we should have had to go out into the park and camp in order to carry on the business of the country. In any event there would not be very much gain, because it would cost an equal amount to erect a building elsewhere. What I have in mind for the moment is that this £40,000 might be used as a contribution towards the new building on the present site of the Savings Bank.

Mr. Angelo: Why not apply it towards finishing Parliament House?

The PREMIER: That is another matter, and one worthy of serious consideration.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In the meantime we can let it go down into revenue, and get it out again when we want it.

The PREMIER: Yes, we might put it into suspense in order that we might get it out at need. I certainly think the idea of erecting new and up to date headquarters for the Bank will commend itself to everybody, and is long overdue.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What will be the cost of the building—£100,000?

The PREMIER: I have no idea. A six or seven storied building covering the whole of that block would mean a very considerable cost. A large part of the floor space would be required for the Bank, of course, and if other Government departments were housed there, they would have to pay rent to the Bank. I hope the Bill will be favourably received. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [9.20]. This is an ingenuous way of getting revenue. The State Savings Bank, a Government institution, occupying premises in Government buildings, owned by the Government, is to buy part of a Government building for £40,000 and pay the money to the Lands Department, which means that the money will go into revenue. So the Government is to sell to itself £40,000 worth of its own land, converting the land into cash, and putting the cash into revenue.

The Premier: Unless we put the money towards the cost of the building.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not know why we should change over from the present system. After all, the building occupied by the Bank will be owned by the State. Whether it will be erected by the Bank or from the Treasury funds, precisely the same position will be arrived at.

The Premier: It could be erected from the Bank funds, and owned by the State.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It will be owned by the State, anyhow. So, of course, in providing for the sale of this land by the Government to the Government we are not altering the position very much, except that it will take from the funds of the Savings Bank £40,000 on which the Bank will not in future earn interest; whereas, of course, if it lends the money to the Government, in the ordinary course of business the Government

will have to pay 5 per cent. on that money. But by these means we will get £40,000 into revenue, and will not have to pay interest to the Bank on that sum. Of course, it is only reasonable that the departments using the premises of the Savings Bank should pay rent. Even so, that only means that the rent wanders from the Treasury over to the Savings Bank and comes back to the Treasury as profits from the Savings Bank. I do not object to the Bill, but I object to the money being paid into revenue. We should not sell our own lands to ourselves and pocket the money. That is wrong. This money certainly should not go into revenue. I do not care how much we legitimately get into revenue, so long as it is not through increased taxation.

The Premier: I think the money should be used for the building.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think so. I hope when the building is erected it will be a modern structure, properly designed and equipped for economical working. I am quite certain that if we built offices under the most approved plan we should save very considerably in the cost of administration. Also, we should convenience the public, who would not then have to wander all over the country seeking the various offices. I believe the interest on the cost of a new and up to date building would be met by the leasing of those premises in Barrackstreet. They cannot be converted into an up to date building except at terrific cost; for they consist of very many small rooms, utterly inconvenient and unsuitable for the work of public departments. To-day Ministers are scattered all over the place. I do not suppose the Minister for Works sees any of his colleagues, save those who happen to come here for luncheon, and when he meets them in Cabinet. Then the Chief Secretary is stuck away half a mile from the Premier's office, and so, too, are other Ministers. That is very undesirable, and means a great annual cost. The departments are always looking for more accommodation. God knows why. Apparently all are short of accommodation, no matter how many temporary buildings are put up about the place. It would be far better for the Premier to have an up to date building, not too far away from Parliament House. Of course it could not be erected on any land the Government have at present, for it would require a considerable area. It would be better

to acquire land in the most suitable place at a reasonable rate.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Some of that land in Irwin-street.

The Premier: I do not think the block is big enough.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, nor do I think it is in the right position. I am not going to say where I think the building should be, but certainly it should be much nearer to Parliament House than is the Irwin-street block.

The Premier: Working west along Murray-street would be a suitable locality.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But you must have a considerable area. For when we set out on this work of providing buildings we ought to obviate the scattering of departments to all points of the compass. To-day money is too valuable to be put into buildings. We want all the money we have for increased production and increased revenue for the State. Last year our exports were less by three millions than were our imports, which means that we have to increase our exports considerably. However the position is that we can scarcely afford to use even borrowed money for the purpose of erecting these new buildings.

The Premier: Still we could acquire the land before the price goes any higher.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but no more money should be spent on temporary buildings of any kind just now. The buildings we put up are altogether unsuitable for the needs of a business of any sort. Before more money is spent I hope the matter will be inquired into, the cost of building ascertained, and the probable revenue from the magnificent site in Barrack-street estimated.

The Premier: I heard that some years ago the estimate of the rent from those buildings would pay interest on the cost of all the new offices built elsewhere.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am certain that the rent we should get from those buildings, plus the economy, would pay the interest and sinking fund. I do not know whether the Premier has been in the Commonwealth Bank in Sydney. That is an up-to-date building where the work is done as cheaply as possible. One does not see boys running about with papers and files and dashing up and down stairs. The accommodation is provided over a limited ground space, but the building is so conven-

ient that the work is simplified and cheapened.

The Premier: The passages and corridors of our old building are crowded with officers moving from one place to another and half their time is wasted.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And the public experience difficulty to find the officers they want.

The Minister for Mines: There is one I have not found yet. I do not know where some of them are housed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have not been informed that the Minister has been missed.

The Premier: Look at the Forests Department and portion of the Lands and Titles offices.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I sympathise with the Minister for Mines if he has not yet learnt to find his way about the premises.

The Minister for Mines: One needs a guide to find his way to the Titles Office after 4 p.m.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. It is fortunate that our offices are so well situated. I think we could do something with them, apart from using them for the present purposes.

The Premier: I shall do nothing under this measure, if it is agreed to, without consulting the House.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Savings Bank would have to be located in a good position.

The Premier: Yes, and it could be separated from the other Government offices without inconvenience.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so. It is one institution that would have to be kept apart. It is a business quite independent from the ordinary work of the Government. It would be a splendid site for the State Savings Bank, and if we are to compete with the Commonwealth Savings Bank we cannot afford to hide our light under a bushel. We must have a decent building to house the State Savings Bank. It is right that the £40,000 should not go into revenue. I do not know what the Premier will do with it.

The Premier: I think it should be used for building, for which loan funds would otherwise have to be raised.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope that will not be done until the whole question of the housing of departments has been investigated. It would be a waste of money

to adopt a piecemeal policy. I am glad that the State Savings Bank is doing so well. Of course the Act authorising an increase in the limit to deposits must have had some effect. Savings Bank money is very useful money.

The Premier: I think our people are appreciating the State Savings Bank more and more every year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But they put a tremendous amount of money into the Commonwealth Savings Bank. While they paid £500,000 into the State Savings Bank, they paid £2,000,000 into the Commonwealth Savings Bank.

Mr. Thomson: The Commonwealth Savings Bank has better facilities.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It has banking facilities that we have not got. The money that goes into the State Savings Bank is used entirely in the State.

Mr. Sampson: The service of the State Savings Bank is being improved all the time.

The Premier: It dates from the moment we started to advertise.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Savings Bank money is never quite as cheap as the public are inclined to think, because the bank has to hold big reserves and the expense of running the institution is considerable. It is only right that small savings should be safeguarded and that interest should be paid on them. The money is useful to finance development work. We shall have many discussions on finance this session; in fact the session will be largely devoted to the consideration of financial matters, and so I need not speak at much greater length tonight. I am glad to know that we have got so much money in the last two years. When the Commonwealth Government raised their loans in Australia our Savings Bank suffered. Every loan used to absorb about £150,000, which kept our Savings Bank very short of funds. Now that has changed because the Federal Government are not raising so many loans. I hope the Premier will not take this money into revenue. I am glad to hear that the Savings Bank is to be properly housed. It is an institution that should have proper banking accommodation and the Treasurer should be protected by the provision of modern strong rooms.

The Premier: Of course the Titles Office is taking great risks with its strong rooms.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But that office is better provided for than any other Government department.

The Minister for Justice: If there was a fire, that part would be flooded, with consequent damage to the securities, as there is no outlet for the water.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The accommodation is unsuitable and proper provision should be made for safeguarding the records and other documents that naturally must be preserved. I dare say this is one of the few Bills to be introduced that I can whole-heartedly support.

The Premier: You will support the next one.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not know what the next one is, but I think I can lay the Premier a shade of odds that I am not likely to support it. There are not many on the list that I can support, but the one before us is an exception.

On motion by Mr. Thomson, debate adjourned.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [9.41] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill that the Leader of the Opposition can and will support.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You cannot expect us to deal with all these Bills on Thursday.

The PREMIER: I am prepared to allow members reasonable time.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I feel like moving to postpone it. Had I known I might have spoken longer on the previous Bill.

The PREMIER: This is a measure without which we should have to shut up the whole work of the State.

Hon. G. Taylor: And this place, too.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would be better for this place than for the whole country to shut up.

The PREMIER: This is the usual taxing measure that has to be brought down every year. I do not know what the reason is, but for many years Parliament has not given Governments a free hand in the matter of taxation. It has granted taxation only annually. Perhaps that is wise in order that Parliament might retain its hold on the purse, especially as regards taxation.

Mr. Corboy: Treasurers as a rule have used the annual chance to increase taxation.

The PREMIER: Oh no.

Mr. Thomson: You need to be careful.

The PREMIER: There have been times when Treasurers have felt compelled, owing to the circumstances of the State, to increase taxation. Let me at once relieve the minds of members and assure them that I do not propose to increase taxation this year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We propose to decrease it.

The PREMIER: I thought I was meeting the House very generously by deciding to carry on with the same land tax and income tax that operated last year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We will show you differently.

The PREMIER: I am sure the hon. member will support the Bill. It is merely a Bill to impose the tax. When I was in opposition it was one of the Bills I always supported.

Hon. G. Taylor: You knew the value of it.

The PREMIER: I do not remember one occasion on which I opposed the member for Northam when he asked the House for the annual land tax and income tax. In fact, I believe I went to his rescue occasionally when there were some members on my side that were rather dissatisfied.

Mr. Thomson: You should come to our rescue now.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do not remember those occasions, but I know that you opposed a tax when I was in office and introduced it yourself when you were in office.

The PREMIER: I am surprised to hear that. Treasurers rarely find themselves in the position of having to propose what they previously opposed.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It happened twice.

The PREMIER: Of course one sees things from a different angle when on this side of the House as compared with that side of the House. There is no change in the tax this year. It is proposed to re-enact the land tax and income tax that operated last year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Do you propose to collect both land and income tax from the agriculturists?

The PREMIER: That matter is dealt with in the Assessment Act and I cannot deal with it now.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is the measure you should bring before the House.

The PREMIER: This is purely a taxing measure; it merely gives the Government authority to levy the tax.

Mr. Thomson: And you will levy it all right.

The PREMIER: The question of the payment of both land and income tax by agriculturists is a highly controversial one that can be dealt with only under the Assessment Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then we shall have an Assessment Act Amendment.

The PREMIER: Let us get this Bill through and then we might consider the question of reviewing the Assessment Act. Whenever the Assessment Act has been brought before the House for consideration it has occupied no end of time. In fact, the two measures that have evoked most protracted discussions have been amendments of the Licensing Act and of the Land Tax and Income Tax Assessment Act.

Mr. Ferguson: It is high time we had another go at it.

Mr. Thomson: I think the hon. member should be given an opportunity of dealing with it.

The PREMIER: I am sure that members generally will support this Bill. Although some may be inclined to regard the income tax as excessive, I do think it is fortunate that it shows a very considerable reduction over what it was in former years. Of course, the 33½ per cent. reduction in taxation is due in a large measure to the money that we received on account of the disabilities grant. At the end of the next three years it is possible that the Treasurer of the day may have to increase taxation.

Hon. G. Taylor: That will be hard upon the new Treasurer.

The PREMIER: It certainly will.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He can always sell a few more blocks of land.

The PREMIER: I am rather sorry I initiated that scheme. This may be adopted by subsequent Treasurers as the means of obviating the necessity for increasing taxation. We are, however, fairly secure in the matter of taxation for the next three years. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.48 p.m.