

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 21st October, 1930.

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by the Minister for Country Water Supplies, leave of absence granted to the President, Sir John Kirwan, for October 22nd and 23rd, to enable him to visit his constituents at Salmon Gums.

BILL—BEES.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.40]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [4.41]: As I indicated previously, it is my intention to ask the House to vote against the third reading of the Bill. I am the more confirmed in my intention after reading the last report dealing with the Industries Assistance Board, laid on the Table of the House by the Minister, and studying certain figures which he gave to the House. In view of all the circumstances I am of opinion that the time is long overdue when the Board should cease their operations. I

take it that members have definitely made up their minds to deal with the finances of the State from the standpoint of efficiency. Already action has been taken by the Government in that direction, because owing to the loss of £400,000 on the railway services, about 600 men have been dismissed, as the result of an endeavour to reduce the expenditure and place that department upon a more efficient footing. Here is an institution operated by the Government which, in 1929, was paid no less than £131,000 from general loan funds, and in 1930 no less than £151,000. Practically since 1920 it has consistently made losses in its operations. These losses have increased from year to year. At the present time when every penny has to be sought for, we are asked to continue the operations of this board, although it is almost inevitable in view of the immediate outlook for the State that we shall incur further heavy losses by reason of the continuance of the board. In the circumstances we are justified in asking the Government to abandon the board, and to amend the Agricultural Bank Act in order to safeguard the securities. Another factor is that the amount and nature of the assistance given through the agency of the board has been of such a kind as to involve a considerable amount of imposition upon that institution. Whilst it is inevitable that the Government will be asked to find assistance for farmers in the future, it is also necessary that such assistance should be rendered in a much more restricted manner than has been the case in the past. It should, I take it, be given according to the system it is proposed to provide in certain amending legislation already forecast by the Minister for Lands. In dealing with that phase, I would refer hon. members to Section 8 of the Industries Assistance Act Amendment Act, 1917, which provides the safeguard for the securities of the board, and particularly to the following portion of that section:—

Notwithstanding any provisions of the Land Act, 1898, the Transfer of Land Act, 1893, or any Act or law to the contrary, the principal and interest of all advances made, or deemed to have been made, under this part of the Act shall be, and until fully paid shall remain, a first charge in favour of the board in priority to all other encumbrances—

(a) upon the estate or interest of the applicant in all lands held or occupied

by him for agricultural, farming or grazing purposes, including all such lands held by him under lease or contract for the purchase thereof, or as a homestead farm, or otherwise; and

- (b) upon all crops to be sown in or grown upon such lands and the produce thereof, and the share or interest of the applicant in any other crops wheresoever grown; and
- (c) upon all implements, livestock, and the progeny thereof, and other chattels supplied to the applicant under this Act.

Provided that when the holding of any applicant is already mortgaged by a registered instrument, or is subject to the knowledge of the board to a vendor's lien for unpaid purchase money, notice in the prescribed form of the proposed advances shall be given to the mortgagee or vendor, and if within 14 days after such notice the mortgagee or the vendor, by notice to the board in writing, objects to the proposed advances, or if such notice as aforesaid shall not have been given, the board shall only be entitled to make such advances subject to such mortgage or vendor's lien as regards the applicant's land, and on the security of a first charge upon all the crop of the next ensuing harvest and the two succeeding crops to be grown upon such land.

That section provides adequate safeguards for advances which have been made. My contention is that if that section were embodied in the Agricultural Bank Act, advances made by that institution would be protected and the Government safeguarded against any loss. It is inevitable that there will be losses incurred in winding up the accounts by the Industries Assistance Board. I contend that that will involve the necessity for further legislation to enable the winding up process to be carried out effectively. It is better to face such losses as are inevitable now than to permit the functions of the board to continue, in which event the country will have to face considerably greater losses than those contemplated at present. I wish to refer hon. members to the report of the Industries Assistance Board for 1929-30, for I regard some of the statements in the report as significant. The report was presented to Parliament after we had discussed the Bill, and consequently due consideration could not be given to the question in the light of information made available since. On the first page of the report there appears the following paragraph:—

As the board still has a number of fully and partly assisted settlers on its list, whose affairs have not been sufficiently finalised

precedent to placing their accounts under instalment mortgage, it becomes necessary to seek the approval of Parliament to a continuance of authority for a further twelve months. No new applicants for assistance were accepted during the year.

Hon. members will see that that is the reason advanced by the board for the continuance of their operations, and that is the only reason advanced. In those circumstances, it appears to be that if we allow the board to continue operating until the 31st March next, that will give six months within which to deal with the 208 accounts that still remain fully or partly on the books, and which will require to be wound up. That should be sufficient to comply with the reason advanced for the continuance of the operations of the board. On the next page we have references to increased balances. The board point out that the aggregate advances to settlers have increased by £20,453. Reference is made to the fact that the aggregate balances of settlers' accounts show an increase of £20,453, and that during the year £49,988 was lost on the realisation of securities, while £8,396 was written off in extending relief to settlers whose holdings were overcapitalised. Amounts of principal due under instalment mortgages were: Arrears, £95,149; current, £97,649. The report continues—

Advances made during the year totalled £311,641 13s. 10d. against £532,497 5s. 8d. for the preceding period. Harvest proceeds collected to the 30th September amounted to £151,375 14s. 7d., and it is expected that a further amount of approximately £5,000 will be received before the 30th November on account of the last financial year.

So hon. members will see from those figures that there has been no improvement regarding these accounts; on the contrary, they have retrogressed. There is the following significant paragraph on page 3 of the report:—

The board's policy in the matter of over-advances against wheat in storage is to allow settlers to arrange with wheat buyers to recoup themselves preferentially out of any crop proceeds passing through their hands during the coming season.

It is well known that over-payments to farmers on account of last season's wheat were made, and in that respect it is apparent that the policy of the board is to secure repayments from next season's crop. If that is so, I would like the Minister to ex-

plain how the Government, or the Industries Assistance Board, will be able to secure repayments to the board, by having those amounts deducted from the proceeds of the coming season.

Hon. J. Cornell: The same principle applies to thousands of men who are not clients of the I.A.B.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is the point. There are thousands of farmers outside the scope of the Industries Assistance Board who cannot be brought within the protective influence of that institution. Legislation is being prepared in order that those men, at any rate, and their creditors, shall be able to come to some sort of a working agreement. It appears to me that if we are to continue this system of preference to clients of the Industries Assistance Board, such as is proposed in the Bill, there will be considerable dissatisfaction expressed by the men who are not clients of the I.A.B., seeing that they will be dealt with by one authority, and the A.I.B. clients will be brought under a separate authority altogether. Another question relates to the securities in possession and a paragraph of the report reads as follows:—

During the year the board entered into possession of 84 defaulted securities, the aggregate debt thereon being £129,617 9s. 1d. Sixty-two securities were sold, resulting in the recovery of advances amounting to £44,591 19s. 7d. and involving a deficiency of £42,646 9s. 1d., which it is expected will ultimately be written off as lost.

Hon. J. Cornell: That happens under the operations of the Agricultural Bank Act just the same.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Two wrongs do not make a right.

Hon. J. Cornell: But the same thing applies.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I do not think there is under the operations of the Agricultural Bank anything like that which occurs under the Industries Assistance Board, not to the same extent by any means.

Hon. J. Cornell: There have been repossession just the same.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The dangers to be feared under the operations of the Agricultural Bank Act are not so great as those under the Industries Assistance Act which carries the matter further and provides for security over and above that which is required for the Agricultural Bank.

Member: A great deal more dangerous.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Then there is the following reference in the report:—

The number of properties in possession on the 30th June was 97, carrying a total board debt of £141,658 12s. 8d.

The Minister provided us with some figures the other day regarding the administrative part of the board's operations, and, in reply to Mr. Holmes, he pointed out that, whereas half of the cost of administration was charged to the board, the other half was charged to the Agricultural Bank. He gave us certain figures regarding accounts. It appears to me that there is a point here that is well worth noting. We have been told there are 10,923 Agricultural Bank accounts, and 1,478 Industries Assistance Board accounts; at the same time we are told that the Agricultural Bank, with 88 per cent. of the accounts in existence, are charged 50 per cent. of the administrative costs, while the Industries Assistance Board, with 12 per cent. of the total accounts, are also charged 50 per cent. of the costs of administration. There can be one of two explanations only of that position. One is that the Agricultural Bank has escaped its fair proportion of the administrative expenses, or that the Industries Assistance Board's clients require so much more supervision and control that it is necessary to provide that allocation in apportioning the administration charges. If the latter is the explanation, then it is another argument for the discontinuance of the operations of the board. That is indicated on page 7 of the report, where hon. members will find the following statement:—

It is clear that, apart from losses on securities and interest payable on lost capital, the board's margin of 1.41 per cent. in interest plus other sundry earnings are insufficient to meet its working costs. This may be accounted for by the amount of costly supervision entailed in controlling the detailed operations of so many farms.

Inasmuch as these remarks are embodied in a report of the board the existence of which the Bill seeks to prolong, the House is provided with matter for serious consideration. Then there is the following paragraph:—

The depressed market price of primary products—more particularly wheat and wool, is causing the board much concern. Unless prices firm considerably, it cannot be expected that the accounts will derive much, if any benefit from the coming harvest, as sufficient

funds must necessarily be released from proceeds to enable clients to pay for such preferential charges as superphosphate, cornsacks, insurance and wages, as well as to continue operations until the following harvest. As forecasted in the last Annual Report, assisted settlers were notified that assistance would be discontinued and balances outstanding funded and brought under mortgage terms as at the 31st March, 1930. It is not proposed to make any further advances or accept new clients. The board consider the purpose for which it was created has been served, and that its activities should not be renewed if such can possibly be avoided. It is obvious that a serious loss would ensue in carrying on operations under present conditions.

In view of these significant remarks, which are couched in somewhat similar terms to those that appeared in the report for 1928-29, it appears to me necessary for us to request the Government to finalise the operations of the board, to wind up the accounts of the clients now on the board's books, and, generally, to terminate the operations of the I.A.B. We should ask the Government to do that rather than permit them to continue the operations of the board from year to year. In view of the serious position in which the State stands at present, larger losses are bound to be incurred by the Government arising out of the operations of the board, and it merely serves to indicate that the whole question of assistance to industries should be handed over to one authority instead of having special assistance rendered to one section of the community, whereas it is withheld from the other section.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Should not the board be the best authority to wind up its own blunders?

Hon. H. SEDDON: While the board members would have the necessary knowledge, legislative action is necessary before that can be done. I have indicated to the Minister what is necessary to protect the securities, and that legislation should be introduced with that object in view. I have quoted the pertinent section of the Industries Assistance Act Amendment Act that will provide all that is necessary to protect the securities. The present is one opportunity of which we can take advantage to say definitely whether we are prepared to tread in the path we have been following for some years past, or whether we will take the course that is necessary for the salvation of the country, and depend upon efficiency in industry as the only method by which our position can be improved. Hon. members

have stressed the necessity for efficiency, and if, in view of conditions that have operated in the past year or two, the accounts cannot be placed in a better position than that of to-day, what chance have they of improving in the years ahead of us? In these circumstances we should view the matter from the standpoint of the action we should take not only in this but in other directions, so as to indicate to the Government that we are determined to place the finances of the State and our industries on a more efficient basis. I ask the House to support me in voting against the third reading of the Bill.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [4.58]: No one will deny the truth of much that Mr. Seddon has said regarding the necessity for efficiency, but it seems extraordinary that the first attack he should make in securing his objective should be on the Bill to continue the operations of the Industries Assistance Board. It is peculiar because there is not one farmer in the province that Mr. Seddon represents. Unless there be some assistance rendered to the pastoral industry there, I do not think any assistance whatever, or protection, has been accorded that province under the provisions of the Industries Assistance Act. Mr. Seddon has said that the position is altered by the presentation of the latest report. The latest report may have thrown fresh light into his mind, but I do not think it has thrown any fresh light on the views of the board itself. When the board framed that report, they were in a position to recommend to the Government the desirability of the continuity or otherwise of the board. I take it the Government have acted on the advice given by the board, that is, to continue this piece of legislation for another year. Mr. Seddon said there is sufficient warranty in the existing law to continue the operations of the board and to wind up its affairs by March next. Suppose we reject the Bill, what will be the position? The board will find themselves in the position of an official receiver. It does not matter how good a case may be for the client, no consideration can be given to him, if we do not agree to the continuity of the board for another year. Mr. Seddon argued that because certain legislation has been forecast to deal with the unfortunate

set of circumstances that have arisen, that that is a reason why we should not renew this law for another year. I claim that there is no analogy there. We have been asked by the Government to renew the law for another year. There are 208 clients under the board, and whether we pass, later on, legislation to deal with the unfortunate existing set of circumstances, I venture to say it will have no effect whatever on the clients of the board. Mr. Seddon made much of the question of administrative costs. I think it is safe to say that except on concerns that have been assisted in the North-East Province, and business ventures, nearly every farmer that is to-day on the Industries Assistance Board is also on the Agricultural Bank. Inspections will have to be carried out whether we pass this legislation or not; the cost will be there just the same. It will be divided because of the dual position the man occupies, being on the bank and on the board. Take him off the board, and he will have to be supported just the same. The strongest point is that the board administering the affairs—I know the members of it, having had dealings with them on almost every day of the week—are themselves anxious to wind up the whole business, and the sooner they can possibly do so, the winding up will be done, but to take the extraordinary course of refusing the re-enactment of this law for another 12 months is to fly in the face of the board. The House will not be justified in accepting the hon. member's motion.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.5]: I should like to correct a wrong impression that has been created by the previous speaker. I gathered from his remarks that the board have to carry on. Sir Edward Wittenoom said why do they not clean up the mistakes they have made. In reply to that I say that so long as we continue to legislate, so long will the board carry on. It is idle to tell me that the members of the board do not want the Industries Assistance Board wound up. They do. But so long as Parliament continues to extend the legislation, so long will this or some other board have to carry on. The last paragraph in their latest report speaks for itself. It says—

The board considers the purpose for which it has been created has been served, and that

its activities should not be renewed if such can possibly be avoided. It is obvious that a serious loss would ensue in carrying on operations under present conditions.

That is what the members of the board say; they are anxious that the board should be wound up, but so long as Parliament extends the legislation, so long will the board carry on. We find that since 1925 there has been an annual loss of £100,000; so we have a total loss in that period of £600,000. The report also shows that in 1920, when things were busy and a number of clients were on the board, the administration costs were £20,000 a year. In 1930, when the numbers on the board had rapidly dwindled, the costs were not £20,000, but £40,000 for the year. I gather from Mr. Cornell that the men under the board also come under the provisions of the Agricultural Bank. Where is the necessity for the two bodies to deal with the one individual? It does not appear to me to be the correct thing. One is under the board and one is controlled by the same men but under the Agricultural Bank. Why cannot the Agricultural Bank carry out the whole of the administration? I learn, further, that where the board have 10 clients, the Agricultural Bank has 90; that is the proportion. Yet we are told that the administration is equally divided between the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank. What object can there be in penalising the people with these administrative expenses, except it be to relieve the bank and pile everything on to someone else with the object of making it appear that the administration expenses of the bank are so much less. If these people are saddled with 50 per cent. of the administrative expenses, they are saddled with something they ought not to carry. It may be, as we find elsewhere, that when it was a question of the people being most hopelessly involved, they were told to take State implements, but when in the position to get through, they were told they could take any implement that suited their purpose. It seems to me that the solution of the difficulty is to allow the legislation to expire as it will if the Bill goes out. The board will then have six months in which to wind up, and the Agricultural Bank can take over those people who are worth taking over, and refuse to carry the others

any longer. If those people were not able to succeed during the years when the prices of wool and wheat were high, I ask what hope have they of making good when prices are at the existing level, and with the present outlook? Everybody knows that during the fat years these people could have squared their accounts with the board. But they did not do so. If they had been efficient, they could have done so. The worst feature of the whole thing is that they have no financial interest in the farms, and now that we are up against it we are informed that if somebody does something they will walk off their farms. It is very ungrateful position to take up, after having been assisted through good times, to say, "If you do not carry us on, we will walk off." It is a dangerous position to allow this board to go on, because I find that the net loss last year was £113,000, and they were debited with interest to the extent of £132,000 which we will never get. It is very convenient for a kite-flying Treasurer to debit these people with interest and in that way reduce his own interest bill. We will never get it, but it is all right when it will enable that kite-flying Treasurer to cover up the mistakes of the past. So long as the board are allowed to go on, so long will the matter drift from bad to worse. The board do not propose to make any further advances or to take new clients. Then what do they propose to do? Wind up or transfer to the Agricultural Bank. There is nothing else for them to do unless we extend the period for another year as suggested. The board are only the servants of the Government of the day. If they are told that they must make further advances and take on new clients, they will have to do it. We know they do not want to do it; they say they do not propose to. However, if we pass this legislation they may be compelled to, and so the State will get out of the frying-pan into the fire. I shall vote against the third reading of the Bill.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [5.17]: I am with Mr. Seddon in his desire to cease assisting people who do not deserve to be assisted. At such a time as this, however, it would be inopportune to stop assistance which has been rendered for a number of years under the Industries As-

sistance Act. I call to mind a speech made here the other evening by Mr. Holmes, which was rather hard on politicians. During my brief tenure of a seat in this Chamber I have said some hard things about politicians; but the hon. member, after his long experience, said some very hard things indeed. While Mr. Holmes was speaking this afternoon, I recalled that the other evening he blamed politicians for interfering too much. In this case we have a responsible body of men—

Hon. E. H. Harris: Who have asked us to interfere.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I maintain they have not.

Hon. E. H. Harris: They have done so in their report.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: If the men in charge of the board consider that its operation should be terminated, it is their bounden duty to advise Parliament accordingly.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I read something to that effect from their report two minutes ago.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: If it is unnecessary to get Parliamentary authority for winding up the board, then, as Mr. Cornell pointed out, there is another string to the bow, and that is to wind up by funding the accounts. The members of the board are the men whose duty it is to say whether the accounts of I.A.B. clients should be funded and thus removed from the sphere of the board. I do not wish to say anything about Mr. Seddon having brought up this matter, though none of the people whom he represents are clients of the board. I applaud him for having drawn attention to the subject. Still, not having the close knowledge of the working of the measure possessed by other hon. members, such as Mr. Cornell and Mr. Glasheen for example, Mr. Seddon may possibly have arrived at conclusions which are astray. The board can, if they think fit, fund the account of every Industries Assistance Board client and so terminate the operation of the board. I shall vote for the third reading of the Bill.

HON. SIR EDWARD WITTENOOM (North) [5.20]: I shall vote for the third reading, not because I consider that the Industries Assistance Board should have power to take on new clients or make new

advances, but because the members of the board are the best people to wind up the board. I shall vote for continuance by way of letting the members of the board know that the continuance is for the purpose of winding up. If they are fit to be trusted in their positions, they are fit to be trusted to wind up the board in a fair and proper manner. The men who have got us into this bit of trouble should be the best men to wind it up and get us out of it, putting the whole conduct of the business under one administration.

HON. W. T. GLASHEEN (South-East) [5.21]: This matter puzzles me somewhat. We are told that the members of the Industries Assistance Board have recommended the winding-up of the board. I presume that before the Government and another place took any action whatever, they obtained the advice of the board. It is to be assumed that the Bill was introduced on that advice.

Hon. E. H. Harris: How do you reconcile that statement with the board's report?

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: I am not reconciling anything with the report. I am only dealing with the facts. I presume that the Government would not have brought down the Bill if the members of the board had not recommended continuance for another 12 months. I am quite in agreement with Mr. Seddon as to the administration of the board and as to the results which have accrued over a number of years. It is regrettable in the extreme that affairs have proved so unsatisfactory. Mr. Seddon asks why we should go on with an impossible proposition when, after years of good prices and good conditions, a number of settlers find themselves getting worse and worse off. On that supposition we should close up not only the Industries Assistance Board, but the entire farming industry. All over the State it is said that 90 per cent. of the farmers are bankrupt.

Hon. J. Cornell: So they are.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: From that aspect of immediate results, the farming industry has no business to survive. However, we are not highly consistent. We do not pay so much attention to group settlement. Is anyone recommending to-day that group settlement should be closed up? Has any hon. member read in this morning's

newspaper the losses incurred in connection with group settlement? On the basis of pounds, shillings and pence, on the basis of efficiency or inefficiency, if we close up the Industries Assistance Board we had better close up group settlement as well. Looking round the country one may well wonder what to maintain and what to close down. What does Mr. Seddon think of the gold bonus from the aspect of whether the gold industry should survive?

Hon. H. Seddon: If a gold mine does not pay, it closes down.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: I presume Mr. Seddon would agree to a gold bonus of £1 per ounce although disagreeing with it on economic grounds. We are quite content to have millions written off group settlement, and to have a burden of millions borne by the community in the form of sugar and gold bonuses. Then why should we not give consideration to those engaged in the farming industry and the clients of the Industries Assistance Board? In the circumstances there is no consistency in asking for the closing down of that board. The members of the board have said to the Government, "In view of complications, and in view of the clients we still have, let us carry on the board for another 12 months so that we can make a good job of it at the end of that term."

HON. SIR CHARLES NATHAN (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.26]: I had not intended to speak on this subject, and would not have done so but for a certain confusion that seems to have arisen in the minds of hon. members as to exactly what the views of the members of the Industries Assistance Board are. Entirely apart from the desires of the board, it seems to me that at this particular juncture it would be most unwise to close down arbitrarily machinery which has existed for so many years. The Industries Assistance Act has been in existence for 16 years. The operations of the board undoubtedly have resulted in the loss of a considerable amount of money by the State. On the other hand, although losses have been made hon. members will, I think, agree that the advantages and benefits derived have been very substantial indeed. The number of the board's clients now is approximately 208, and from the board's operations during the past year we see that as many as possible of the accounts have been

closed or funded. The passage of the report to which a considerable amount of significance attaches is as follows:—

The board considers that the purpose for which it was created has been served, and that its activities should not be renewed if such can possibly be avoided. It is obvious that a serious loss would ensue in carrying on operations under present conditions.

But there is another passage which is of even greater significance—

As the board still has a number of fully and partly assisted settlers on its list, whose affairs have not been sufficiently finalised precedent to placing their accounts under instalment mortgage, it becomes necessary to seek the approval of Parliament to a continuance of authority for a further 12 months.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is what the board ask for.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: It does seem to me that Mr. Seddon might well have considered that aspect. After all, if the hon. member's advice is followed, the board would arbitrarily cease operations in March next. A continuance of their authority would give the board the opportunity of winding up accounts to the best advantage and funding them and providing the necessary security for the State.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: That is right.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: As Mr. Holmes pointed out, during the past year the board made a loss of £113,000 on their operations; but hon. members must not assume that that loss is due entirely to the operations of last year. I speak subject to correction, but I believe the £113,000 to represent largely bad debts made during preceding years and written off last year. My argument is that the members of the board should be allowed their own time to wind up the board's affairs in accordance with the desires specifically expressed by them. To vote against the third reading means, so far as my experience here goes, taking the business out of the hands of the Government, and is against the express desire of men who during their years of administration have shown their capacity for handling the affairs entrusted to them. I shall vote for the third reading of the Bill.

HON. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [5.30]: The Bill appeals to me as being somewhat on the humorous side. Mr. Glasheen has just told us that the board

reported that their services were no longer required; and the Government having brought in the Bill, he deduces from that fact that the Government must have seen the board and the board are now desirous to have the Bill. Certainly that is not a logical deduction from the final statement of the board's report, which is that their services are not needed any further. But I can see the the Leader of the Government, without consulting the board at all, introducing this Bill, because it is one of those Bills which go to make up what may be termed the frenzied finance of this country.

Hon. J. Cornell: Is the hon. member losing sight of paragraph 2 of the board's report?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The Bill is another peg on which the Treasurer may finance and, on paper, square his Budget. He debits up an institution which has nothing—such as this board—with the interest, and he credits revenue with it, and he thus lessens the interest which he legitimately has to meet. Then it becomes a dead concern which eventually will have to be, what we are pleased to term, written-off. But of course there is no writing-off in this country. All the group settlement money supposed to have been written-off has never been written-off, because we have nothing to write-off against, no reserves. We have been carrying on this system of frenzied finance for years and years, and here we are perpetuating it to-day. The Wyndham Meat Works originally cost £700,000, and we now say they are worth a million and a half. Those works have increased in value by reason of their losses, which ought to have been paid out of current revenue. The Bill before us is not wanted at all, except for the purpose of paper finance, debiting up the interest to a dead concern and crediting it to revenue, apparently to strike a balance so that at the end of the year we can say we have squared the ledger. In this way practically we are committing fraud upon the people who are lending money to the State, and the sooner that is checked the better. The Industries Assistance Board in the last paragraph of their report—and we must take the last paragraph as being the board's final conclusions—tell us that there is no further need for the board. Yet the Government

propose to keep the board in existence. This can only be for one object, namely the debiting of interest to the board, in order to make it appear on paper that we have squared up our transactions. Mr. Seddon and Mr. Holmes are quite right when they say we should get rid of this board, even if only on the ground of honesty of purpose.

THE MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES (Hon. C. F. Baxter—

East) [5.35]: To say that I am astonished at the attitude of those opposing the third reading puts my feeling into very mild words indeed. The objection to the third reading is only from the financial standpoint. Mr. Seddon was snug and smug on the gold-fields when this Act was brought into operation 16 years ago to assist those who had hoped to find their salvation in wheat growing, but who were then struggling against impossible conditions imposed by drought. A few years later, the hon. member came into Parliament. Not in any way is he associated with land settlement or wheat-growing, but he raises a plea against the third reading on the score of finance. I ask members do they imagine that the Government are out to maintain something involving great expense and a wasteful expenditure of money? Certainly not. Mr. Seddon goes further and says that during the past year there has been no improvement in the board's accounts. I remind Mr. Seddon and others speaking in that strain that during the past year there has been no improvement in the board's clients accounts. Those associated with the industry know that the losses on each wheat farm in the State during the past season have been terrific; yet it is now put up as an argument against the third reading that there has been no improvement in the board's accounts. The board were established to assist those wheatgrowers who could not be taken as clients of the Agricultural Bank, farmers that were bankrupt and even worse. What has been the result? The State has made a loss on the actual operations of the board, it is true; but consider the benefit those operations have been to the State—something just under £12,000,000. Moreover, those operations have gone far to establish the wheat industry, on which the State has to rely.

Hon. J. Cornell: The State will get more out of the operations of the Industries Assistance Board than it will ever get out of group settlement.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Quite so. Several members have pointed to paragraphs in the board's report and interpreted them as meaning that the board wanted to have their affairs wound up. Mr. Lovekin was the last to take that view. I noted that in two of his statements he deliberately charged the Government with ulterior motives. He was careful to read only the concluding part of the board's report. At the beginning of that report the board said definitely that their operations must be continued. And the board say that emphatically to the Government to-day; else the Government would not have brought down the Bill.

Hon. A. Lovekin: But it is the last word that counts.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: And the board qualified their last word by the additional words "if possible." The hon. member did not read that.

Hon. H. Seddon: Tell us why the board should be continued.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Does the hon. member wish to see the Government placed in the position of having to sacrifice the clients still remaining with the board? The hon. member has spoken of alternatives, but I can assure him there is no other way than this of protecting the securities on the properties. If the House were to take the stand that there should be no continuance of the Act, it would be taking a tremendous responsibility on its shoulders, for its action would inevitably crush a lot of deserving settlers that must eventually make good.

Hon. J. Cornell: And there would be no protection either for the Government or for the board's clients.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: That is so. The Government want to wind up the board, but that can only be done as the accounts are funded. If the Act be not continued, the settlers under the Board will be sacrificed and so, too, will the Government's securities. I plead with the House to extend the Act as provided in the Bill, particularly at a time like this, when the financial difficulties are extreme. To abruptly

discontinue the Act would mean injustice to the settlers and a great loss of money in the shape of securities. The board desire to fund the accounts and close up, and we ask that the members of the board be given their own time in which to wind up the board's affairs. Those board members know their business and know what is required, and this House should not take the business out of their hands.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Received from the Assembly and, on motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, read a first time.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th October.

HON. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [5.43]: The principles of the Traffic Act have been discussed in this House on many occasions; therefore I need not refer to the Bill from that standpoint at the present time. Indeed I think every member will see that this is really a Committee Bill, and so I shall have very little to say on the second reading. I have already noted in the Bill many points that appear to me to require investigation, and I have directed the attention of the Minister to the effect of the words in Clause 3, "Subject to 10a next following." They practically take away the privileges of those who have certain privileges under the Traffic Act. In Committee I will ask the Minister to give us an explanation of that. There is just one other point to which I might refer, and which I know will be to some extent controversial. I can see that there are two sides to the question whether a farmer who has his own motor truck and comes to town occasionally, bringing in a load of wheat or of wool, is not to be allowed on his return to take with him a load of foodstuffs or other necessities. We should help the men on the land as much as we can and not block them if they wish to come to town occasionally. They should not be

placed in the same category as the common carrier travelling the road from day to day for hire and reward.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Bill blocks them except with the consent of the Minister.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Yes, I wish to open the door a little wider in order to help the man on the land. If he wants to come to town only once or twice a year, it would be very hard if he had to pay the additional fees provided by the Bill. I can see there are objections to my proposal, but if we can help the man on the land in the present time of stringency, we should do it. I shall endeavour to suggest some reasonable amendment that will meet the position. As I have mentioned the point, other members might consider whether something cannot be done on the lines I suggest. Wherever possible the policy should be to help the man who is producing practically the whole of the wealth upon which we are depending. There is another matter affecting Clause 3a of the Bill and Section 13 of the Act, with which I understand Mr. Nicholson intends to deal.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I am not aware of it.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I thought the hon. member intended to deal with it, and I was going to say that he would be able to do it better than I could. If he does not deal with it, I shall raise the point in Committee. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

HON. W. T. GLASHEEN (South-East) [5.47]: Mr. Lovekin suggested that the farmer with a motor truck should receive some consideration above that given to a man who is making a living by carrying on the roads. I quite agree with the hon. member, and I hope that something will be done in Committee. The argument in favour of the general application of the higher license fee is that we cannot expect the railways to carry superphosphate and wheat at the present low rates if the farmers are permitted to carry by road wool, petrol and other high-class freightage. As a general principle, I agree with that, but I think we should open the measure a little in order to give consideration to the man who transports by motor truck only his own produce. It is true that the Minister is empowered to give special consideration when an application is made to him. I have a letter from a farmer who is situated 20 miles from

the nearest railway station. He says that he often has a motor truck load of oats or barley to cart to the railway. There he unloads it into a van, because the quantity would not be sufficient to fill a truck and thus entitle him to the cheaper freightage allowed for a full truckload. His contention was that his having to travel 20 miles to the railway would affect that road just as much as any other road, and he should be permitted to motor to Perth with his barley or wheat and take back a load of necessities. I think that emphasises the special set of circumstances that should be considered in favour of a farmer not being regarded in the same light as a carrier who makes his living by transporting goods over the roads.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Would you propose that he should take only one load?

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: In many instances he carts only one load. He might come to Perth and have a little holiday, and then cart back some goods and chattels. We have a huge amount of capital invested in our railway system and must safeguard it as much as possible, but we should not forget that if anyone is entitled to safeguarding at this juncture, it is the man who is going to provide the revenue and where-withal to perpetuate the railways. We should discriminate between him and the man who is carting for a living. Not many people would cart wool to the city.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: I saw two loads to-day.

Hon. W. T. GLASHEEN: Quite so, but not many people would cart down their own wool by road. If we can confine the operations of such people to carting their own produce, and not allow them to cart the produce of a neighbour, no great amount of revenue would be lost by the railways, and the settler would be assisted in a time of great need.

HON. C. H. WITTENOOM (South-East) [5.52]: I support the second reading of the Bill although, with Mr. Lovekin and Mr. Glasheen, I am not altogether satisfied with it. I recognise that the time has come when we must stop the huge drift in railway finances. We lost something like £400,000 on the railways last year. Our railways have cost the country about

£23,000,000, and the annual loss has simply got to stop. The Bill is quite a good one. If it does not achieve its object and enable the loss on the railways to be obviated, the Premier will be a long way from balancing the Budget. I would have been better pleased had provision been made in the Bill under which a farmer could cart his produce in his own truck to the city or port and return laden with stores for his own use. When at Pingelly a few days ago, I was approached by a number of farmers whose holdings are situated from five to 20 miles on the western side of the railway. If they could cart their produce direct to Perth or Fremantle, it would save them considerable expense. Under the Bill they would have to cart their produce in the opposite direction from Perth in order to reach the nearest railway, and that would add greatly to their costs. A farmer purchases a truck in order to economise in the working of his farm, and if ever there was a time when farmers should study economy, it is the present. They should be encouraged to have trucks of their own, and should not be debarred from using them to cart their produce to Perth or Fremantle. The trucks are used not only for commercial purposes, but in order to improve the conditions of life on the farm. A farmer owning a motor truck can use it to convey his family to Perth, or to the nearest town, and he should be able to cart his produce and cart back stores for his own use. The Bill has a dual purpose. It is designed to increase business on the railways, and to check heavy traffic by motors on the main roads. The farmer's truck is rather a light vehicle as a rule, and if provision were made in the Bill to permit farmers to use their own trucks, it would be beneficial. Not many farmers would be affected, because generally it would be more economical for them to use the railways. There are instances where it would be cheaper to use their own motor trucks, and I hope that in Committee consideration will be given to such farmers.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.56]: I have perused the Bill carefully and, while regretting the necessity for increased taxation in any direction, I have in the main to agree with the provisions of the measure. It is necessary to provide funds

for the maintenance of our roads, and it is necessary that those forms of transport which utilise and wear the roads most should contribute their fair proportion of taxation for the upkeep of the roads. I wish to refer to some of the persistent and glaring offences which the Traffic Act was designed to prevent but which are being committed. I may not get another opportunity to voice what I believe is a very general desire on the part of the public with regard to motor cycles.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Travelling without a tail light?

Hon. W. J. MANN: This form of transport is both useful and convenient. Many motor cyclists are very careful, considerate and law-abiding, but a great number merit the term "road hog" in the truest sense. They are bad enough in the city, but they are worse in some parts of the country. This section of motorists seem to think they can flout the law habitually and conduct themselves as they please. They exhibit no thought for hospitals, and no reverence for places of worship, and they show little regard for the lives of other people.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Or their own.

Hon. W. J. MANN: No. If it were not for the trouble they create for other people, one might not worry so much about what happens to them. Seeing, however, that they endanger the safety of others, it is time the Government effected some control over them. I take a serious view of these offences, and were I not satisfied that provision has already been made to deal with these people, I would be prepared to move in the direction of having the legislation amended. I have made some investigation and find that the law, if properly carried out, gives the authorities all the powers necessary to control these breaches. Section 26 of the Traffic Act, 1919, says—

If any person drives a motor vehicle on a road recklessly or negligently, or at a speed or in a manner dangerous to the public, having regard to all the circumstances of the case, including the nature, condition, and use of the road, and to the amount of traffic which actually is at the time, or which might reasonably be expected to be, on the road, that person shall be guilty of an offence under this Act.

In Section 28 provision is made whereby on conviction a person may be disqualified from holding a license. The regulations

under the Traffic Act are a little more explicit. Paragraph 6 of Regulation No. 29 says—

Every motor vehicle shall have an efficient silencer attached to such vehicle, and connected with the proper portion of the engine of such motor vehicle, so as to reduce the noise that would otherwise result from the working of the engine and shall not in any way have attached to such silencer, or to the exhaust pipe leading thereto or otherwise connected therewith, any device or machinery whereby such silencer may be rendered inefficient.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: That is rarely enforced.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Very rarely. Regulation 84 says—

If any smoke, offensive vapour, or offensive noise or smell is allowed to be emitted from any vehicle, so as to be a danger or annoyance to the public, the owner or driver of any such vehicle shall, except when such emission shall arise from a temporary or accidental cause, be guilty of an offence under these regulations.

The authorities are fully aware of this complaint, and provision is made not only in the Act but by regulation to deal with it. For the information of members who may not have read the last annual report of the Commissioner of Police, recently laid on the Table of the House, I will quote some extracts to show the seriousness of the position. I do not intend to deal exhaustively with the question of drunken drivers. I am satisfied that the law courts are doing a fair thing in respect of that particular menace. My complaint is that sufficient action is not taken to prevent those discordant and ear-splitting noises one hears in the street every day and every night, and the disagreeable smells that are emitted from motor cycles. There seems to be no complaint regarding this as it affects motor cars. The Commissioner of Police says—

The person, male or female, who drives a motor vehicle whilst under the influence of alcoholic liquor is still a constant menace to other users of the highways, and when he is convicted of such offence, the punishment should not only be heavy, but it should be mandatory for the court to order the forfeiture of the driving license. There were no less than 97 charges (75 for the previous year) of driving vehicles whilst under the influence of liquor, and 553 charges of driving to the danger of the public; certainly a large number considering the population of the metropolitan area.

I was astonished to read that there had been no fewer than 553 charges of negligent driving, and 97 of driving whilst under the influence of liquor within the metropolitan area. The Commissioner continues—

Little hope can be held of their diminution unless there is (a) increased road supervision by police on motor cycles, and (b) courts dealing with traffic offences of a serious nature realising their responsibilities to the community,—

That is the point I wish to press home—

—and taking notice of the great loss of life, serious injury to persons, and damage to property that are occurring almost every week in the year. An astute lawyer is frequently successful in having a charge dismissed on some technical point where it is as clear as daylight that the accused person committed the offence.

I should say it was necessary that the gentlemen who preside over our courts should have some knowledge of motoring and of the troubles that beset motorists. I would be inclined to think, from the reading of the last paragraph, that there are some discrepancies due to the fact that some of these gentlemen may not be intimately acquainted with motoring. The Commissioner continues—

Apart altogether from the sorrow and suffering caused in many homes, the economic loss to the community of young men and women (the State's greatest asset) and the crippling for life of many others, is alarming and calls for immediate attention. In my last report I said, *inter alia*,—the number of persons concerned was small, but constitutes a very great menace to the safety of the community, and I appeal to the Government, to Parliament, and the general public to support me in my endeavour to protect the lives of pedestrians and others throughout the State from the road hog, the drunken driver and the reckless irresponsible youth, who are bringing sorrow and suffering into many homes. In several cases, after careful inquiries and a consultation with my officers, I deemed it my duty to refuse to renew drivers' licenses, either altogether or for a period, to persons convicted of drunkenness and other serious offences against the Act—I reiterate this and would add that one frequently hears of the rights and liberties of the subject, but I would ask whether the innocent law-abiding members of the community have no rights, and whether their rights and liberties are not also entitled to consideration as compared with transgressors against the law. The lives and safety of the community must not be treated as unimportant. My view is that the way of the transgressors should certainly not be made easier, and when a serious charge is proved adequate punishment should follow.

The Commissioner goes on to quote Lord Buckmaster, who advocated a fine of £50 and imprisonment for similar offences. I do not propose to go to that extent, but I do think this menace should be put down. One evening last week, after the House had risen, another member and I walked along Hay-street. Between King-street and William-street we were obliged to discontinue our conversation because of the succession of motor cycles which were travelling along about 15 yards behind each other with open exhaust, and making the most offensive and earsplitting noises.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You must give way to youth.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Yes, but there should be a limit to the exuberance of youth. The limits have long since been passed by youth in this respect and by men who are old enough to know better. I would not advocate depriving these people of their licenses for a first offence, but I would advocate a substantial fine. I have looked through the tables showing the penalties that were inflicted last year. On a rough computation, I should say the fines averaged about 30s. in each case. That is a mere nothing. These young fellows probably thought they had had a good run for their money. My contention is that the penalties provided for in the Act should more nearly approximate the needs of the situation. For a second offence the license might be suspended for a time, with a view to endeavouring in some way to minimise the trouble. I hope the Minister will pass on to the Government the suggestion that the provisions of the existing law should be carried into effect and some improvement made in the present position. Nowhere else in the world have I noticed anything approaching the noise that I have heard here from motor cycles.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [6.12]: I support the second reading of the Bill, the chief object of which is to rectify the unfair struggle that exists between the railway and motor transport in this State. Both have served a good purpose, and it is essential we should have both for the development of the country, in order to assist in reducing the cost of production. Seeing that the Treasurer has to find the money for the building of railways it is the duty of those who arrange the scale of

charges to see that the users of the railways pay sufficient to meet interest and capital costs, as well as subsequent maintenance. That principle, however, seems not to have been followed in the imposition of the fees at present charged to persons who conduct motor transport over the roads. It is, therefore, only fair and reasonable that such persons should be asked to carry a greater share of the expense involved in constructing and maintaining our roads. Seeing that this is the chief object of the Bill, I can give it my support. There are several provisos dealing with the exemption of persons from paying the higher tax. Let me take the case of the motor truck that is used for certain purposes. It is provided that the additional charges shall not apply to motor trucks used for carrying the produce of primary producers, of orchards, dairy farms, mines, etc. Three of the clauses in the Bill are so framed that the Act will not apply to vehicles used solely for certain purposes. We shall probably find there are very few people who use a motor vehicle solely for the purpose of taking their products to market, or solely for the carriage of goods from one mine to another, or to a battery. With a view to clarifying the position and improving it, I have drafted and placed upon the Notice Paper two or three amendments. The Bill also says "Transport to a railway station or the town nearest." It also makes use of the expression "the nearest railway station." A man may be so situated that to reach the nearest railway station, by the shortest route may involve travelling five or six miles over a bad road, whereas he may have a good road if he goes another way 10 or 15 miles.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I was about to conclude my remarks by drawing attention to the proviso in the Bill setting out that the users of vehicles for the carriage of primary products shall have the right to convey their products to the nearest railway station and not be called upon to pay the extra fee. If a primary producer were fortunate enough to possess two vehicles, one of which he used for carting his produce to the railway station and the other for use in ordinary traffic, the position might be clear. The Bill provides that the producer shall pay the lower rate if the vehicle is used solely for the purpose of

carting his produce. What grower would use a vehicle solely for that purpose?

Hon. V. Hamersley: That is where the producers will be tricked.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I do not know whether there is a trick in it, but I do not think that provision will operate as some members expect.

Hon. J. Nicholson: The Leader of the House has an amendment to deal with that provision.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Then we will deal with that when we come to it. The other clause to which I desire to draw attention is that which sets out—

Provided also, that in exceptional cases the Minister may exempt the owner of a particular vehicle from liability to pay the prescribed additional fee, either wholly or partially, to such an extent as the Minister in the circumstances shall think reasonable

That gives extraordinary powers to a Minister, because the measure will apply to a large proportion of the State. Ministers and members of Parliament are governed, in many instances, more or less consciously by the question of votes. I suggest that if the police were satisfied on this point, rather than the Minister, that authority could be wielded by them. I understand the police control the administration of the Act and the collection of fees.

Hon. J. Nicholson: No. Look at Sub-clause 3 of the clause you are dealing with and you will see that the additional license fee is to be a debt due to the Minister.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Does the Minister control the department and issue licenses to individuals? I understood the police did that.

Hon. V. Hamersley: The local authorities issue licenses in the country districts.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Of course they do.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It was said in another place that the Minister would do it. Apparently he does everything.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am convinced there is some truth in the assertion. We could save the Minister some trouble by conferring this power on the police in the special circumstances contemplated in the clause. We may consider that matter when dealing with the Bill in Committee. I shall support the second reading and will endeavour

our to clarify some of the clauses that require attention in Committee.

On motion by Hon. H. J. Yelland debate adjourned.

BILL—MAIN ROADS.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair: the Minister for Country Water Supplies in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Salaries of Commissioner and deputy:

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I again raise the question of important officers being subject to the whim of the Minister of the day. When we appoint a man to a responsible position, he should be removable only as judges, and as we propose magistrates may be removed, namely, by a majority of both Houses of Parliament deciding accordingly.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 9 to 30—agreed to.

Clause 31—Appropriation of Main Roads Trust Account:

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: I move an amendment—

That at the end of paragraph (b) of Sub-clause 1, after "Act," the words "provided that the moneys received under Section 33 of this Act shall be applied to the maintenance of main roads" be inserted.

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

Clauses 32 to 34—agreed to.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—EDUCATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 16th October.

HON. J. M. DREW (Central) [7.48]: I moved the adjournment to enable me to examine the Bill, and having done so I see no reason to say more than a few words.

It is almost unnecessary to state that were it not for the unprecedented financial crisis which is affecting us at the present time, a Bill of this character would certainly not have been submitted by any Administration. The Bill overrides the Education Act and regulations and gives the Minister a free hand in carrying out his policy of retrenchment. In its administration, we are told, it will be used only for the purpose of finding vacancies for men and women who are withdrawn from the Training College, and some proof of this is afforded by reason of the fact that it will be in operation, unless re-enacted, only until 31st December, 1931. There is no doubt if it were in operation for any lengthy period it would have a very damaging effect on the efficiency of the Training College. The Training College, in my opinion, is the tap root of our educational system. On it depends the quality of the teachers who will be engaged in the instruction of our youth. If it is injured the whole system is injured, and if it succeeds the whole system should succeed accordingly. For that reason it was my aim during the time I was Minister for Education to raise the standard of the Teachers' College to as high a pitch of efficiency as possible, and that college was staffed by men and women eminently qualified to discharge their responsible duties. It is a pity there should be an interruption of the good work which the Teachers' College has been performing for some years, but I can realise it because I had some experience of it myself, during the latter days of my administration. I can realise that the Minister and the Government are hard-pressed for funds and find it extremely difficult to make ends meet. Fortunately in this instance there is a combination of circumstances which enables the Minister to cut down expenditure without much ill result. For some time to come there will not be necessity for the usual output of teachers from the college. Long service leave to teachers is to be suspended. There is a lesser number of women teachers getting married this year than has formerly been the case, and in addition to that, although it has not been mentioned, there will be less money to spend in connection with the erection and opening of new schools, and hence, for a year or so, there will not be the need for the normal flow of students

from the Training College. By that time, that is, after the expiration of 12 months, I hope, with wise administration both by the Commonwealth and the States, and the settling down of the markets of the world, followed by the functioning of our industries on sound lines, that the former efficiency of the Teachers' college will be restored by the Government. It is not necessary to say more. The Bill gives the Minister wide powers, and I feel confident those powers will be exercised with prudence and caution, and after the expiration of the period during which the measure will be in existence, with the efforts of the Minister and the attention given by the Director, we shall be able to justify any action they have taken in the meantime. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. T. FRANKLIN (Metropolitan) [7.53]: In saying a few words on the second reading I should like to suggest that before we pass the second reading it would be advisable to appoint a select committee to obtain the fullest information with regard not only to the Bill but also other matters relevant to it. I understand that ten years ago the cost of running the Teachers' College was about £11,000, whilst at the present time it is £16,000. The work that has been and is still being done at the college I believe is up to date; in fact, it is ahead of the times, and there are more teachers waiting to be placed in positions than there are vacancies for them to fill. I consider that if a committee were appointed to carry out an investigation, a report could be presented in three or four days or within a week, and some concrete suggestions might be the outcome of the investigation, suggestions which might enable the Government to save perhaps a considerable amount of money. That was my only reason for rising to speak.

On motion by Hon. H. J. Yelland, debate adjourned.

BILL—EVIDENCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [7.57] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to effect certain amendments to the Evidence Act, to facili-

tate the swearing of affidavits, etc. As members are aware, when an affidavit has to be sworn, it is the practice to appear before a Commissioner for the taking of affidavits, and to be sworn on the New Testament. All affidavits for use in Supreme Court actions must be sworn before a commissioner who is appointed for the taking of affidavits for use in the Supreme Court, and in the course of experience it has been found that occasionally affidavits are required from persons who may be resident in places that are somewhat remote, and where no commissioner is resident. The commissioners are usually practising solicitors, and it is not in every centre that one can be found. Accordingly, the deponent of the affidavit is forced necessarily to travel sometimes a considerable distance in order to attend before a commissioner, to swear an affidavit. That involves a great amount of inconvenience and on occasions, expense.

HON. A. LOVEKIN: If a commissioner is not available within three miles, a justice can do it.

HON. J. NICHOLSON: That is the object of the Bill; it is to overcome the difficulty as the hon. member will see. If a commissioner is not available within a distance of three miles it will be possible for a justice of the peace to swear the affidavit. I seek to meet the inconvenience which has made itself evident over a period of years now, and to eliminate the difficulties sometimes experienced by deponents. Assuming that the deponent is unable to travel to the nearest place where a commissioner can be found, it becomes necessary to appoint a special commissioner. That has to be done by an application to the court, involving further expense.

HON. A. LOVEKIN: Why in any case should anyone be compelled to go three miles?

HON. J. NICHOLSON: I do not think anyone who is within three miles of a commissioner can complain. A justice of the peace is not always likely to be nearer than three miles in a country district. The object of the Bill is to remove the disabilities and disadvantages that do exist, but at the same time I think it proper that we should recognise the rights of the Supreme Court in the matter.

HON. A. LOVEKIN: It would be a great improvement if a justice could take the affidavit at all times.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think it better to preserve the matter in the form suggested here.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: A commissioner commands a fee, does he not, while a justice of the peace receives no fee?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There is a small fee of 1s. 6d. for swearing an affidavit, or 2s. 6d. with an exhibit. The fee is not a consideration which influences anyone in such a matter.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Every shilling counts nowadays.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Needless expense is incurred in the case of persons in remote places where it becomes necessary to appoint a special commissioner. In most parts of the State we find a justice of the peace conveniently situated. Western Australia is a country of vast distances. In Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia there are more densely populated centres with commissioners at convenient distances. The difficulties which have rendered necessary the amendments here proposed, can easily be illustrated. Take, for example, a person resident at Esperance. I think I am right in saying that there is no practising solicitor at Esperance.

Hon. J. Cornell: Yes, there is. He cannot get any work.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: At Salmon Gums there is none, and the same remark applies to many centres. Sometimes the consequent inconvenience is great. A witness residing at Salmon Gums might have to travel to Esperance or Kalgoorlie to swear an affidavit.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Worse conditions prevail in the far North.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes. Take a place like Wyndham or Port Hedland. There is a commissioner at Broome, but in numerous centres of the North the inconvenience is most pronounced. Instances can also be found in the South-West. At Manjilup there is no practising commissioner of affidavits, though there is one at Bridgetown, some 20 miles away. If I thought the 3-mile limit involved any hardship, I would be prepared to depart from it.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What would be the position if a justice of the peace $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles away from a commissioner took an affidavit? Would it be admissible in court?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I shall explain that matter when I come to the relevant clause. The inconveniences to which I have alluded are marked in many districts, and particularly in the North. They can all be removed by the passing of this Bill. The ideas incorporated in the measure are not by any means novel. An amendment to the Administration Act passed in 1921 fixed a limit of 10 miles within which a justice of the peace might act in matters under the Administration Act. In my opinion, that limit of 10 miles is a little too great. This Bill, therefore, will effect the purpose better than the Administration Act Amendment Act. The Administration Act Amendment Act provides that any affidavit required by the principal Act or the amendment Act to be sworn before a commissioner of affidavits may be sworn before a justice of the peace where the deponent resides more than 10 miles from the residence of the nearest commissioner of affidavits.

Hon. J. T. Franklin: What would happen if the commissioner was absent?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The point raised by Mr. Franklin deserves attention. I think the Bill provides that the commissioner must be resident and present.

Hon. A. Lovekin: What would be the effect of Section 105 of the principal Act in view of your Bill?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not think that section would be affected. It refers to merely voluntary oaths. It says—

It is unlawful for any justice of the peace or other person to administer or cause or allow to be administered or to receive or cause or allow to be received any oath, affirmation in lieu of oath, or affidavit touching any matter or thing whereof such justice or other officer has not jurisdiction or cognizance by some law in force for the time being.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Take the next paragraph. The justices have power to do it now.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Under the sections we are considering it will be provided that they shall have power to administer oaths.

Hon. A. Lovekin: They have that power now.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No, I do not think so. When we give them that power the difficulties will be overcome. At present they would not have the power without the authority given them by the Bill. I may

mention that an amendment to the Bills of Sale Act some time ago also provided for affidavits, which used to be required but are not now required so frequently, to be sworn before a justice of the peace. Even in our Local Courts Act there is provision made for a justice to swear affidavits. We have certain anomalies, it is true, in various statutes. One of those anomalies will be found in the Act relating to the adoption of children. There the application which is made by the applicant to the court requires to be signed before a justice of the peace, but the affidavit in support of that application requires to be sworn before a commissioner for taking affidavits. Frequently that results in inconvenience to people in country districts who are seeking to adopt children under that Act. This Bill, if passed, will remedy that.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Under the Adoption of Children Act the matter has to go before a judge.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Hence the affidavit is sworn before a commissioner. It is one of those anomalies that confronts us in the procedure.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Will the Bill rectify it?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes, it will. Under the first amendment it will be noted that it is proposed to introduce a new section between Sections 98 and 99. It provides for an oath being administered; instead of the person being sworn on the New Testament, the oath may be administered by the deponent holding up his hand and just repeating certain words, without the Book.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That is already provided for.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No; what is provided for in the Evidence Act applies only to one swearing in a court. The present section in the Act does not apply to the swearing of an affidavit. The purpose of this amendment is to bring the swearing of an affidavit as nearly as possible into line with similar procedure with which we are conversant in the courts, when a man holds up his hand and repeats certain words, dispensing with the Book. But in the swearing of an affidavit the oath is distinctly different. It runs, "I

swear this is my name and handwriting, and that the contents of this affidavit are true." That is not provided for at present in the Evidence Act, and it is essential, in order to bring the two methods of swearing as nearly as possible into line, that this new section should be introduced.

Hon. A. Lovekin: I think it is provided somewhere else.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There is no provision in any other place for such an oath being administered in such circumstances. This will be the only Act to provide the necessary authority.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Have we been all these years swearing affidavits without this provision?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes we have. The hon. member will find that what I say is quite correct. The other amendment is proposed to be inserted between Sections 106 and 107. It provides for the swearing of affidavits, etc., in places where there is not a commissioner for the taking of 'affidavits for use in the Supreme Court of Western Australia resident and present within a distance of three miles from the place where such affidavit, etc., is sworn or executed. In such cases all that is necessary is to go before a justice of the peace, and the justice will obtain a certificate at the foot of, or endorsed on the affidavit, that no such commissioner is resident and present within the distance aforesaid. That was the point referred to by Mr. Holmes. So the difficulty is overcome in that way. And it is provided in this new clause 106a that every such affidavit or bond or recognisance shall be admissible in evidence in any action, suit, proceeding, cause, or matter as aforesaid, and may be read and made use of to all intents and purposes as any affidavit, bond, or recognisance sworn or executed before any other person or authority. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

THE MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East [8.23]: I have no objection to the Bill.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin, debate adjourned.

BILL—ANATOMY.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 14th October.

THE MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East—in reply [8.25]: After listening to the prejudiced speech by Mr. Lovekin in opposition to the Bill, I am satisfied that he realised he could not justify straight-out opposition to the practice of anatomy, and that he felt the best course to pursue to achieve his wishes would be to rake over forgotten abuses preliminary to this class of legislation in order to create a hostile atmosphere in the consideration of the objects of the Bill. I followed Mr. Lovekin's remarks with close attention and, in my opinion, his utterances intentionally were carefully phrased. In his denunciation he did not utter one favourable word on the advantage to medical science of the opportunity for dissection, and it seemed to me his method of attack was very thoughtfully planned.

Hon. A. Lovekin: On a point of order. I cannot allow the Minister to declare that I carefully avoided saying anything in favour of anatomy. It was the very reason I gave for not opposing the Bill.

The PRESIDENT: I am sure the Minister will accept the hon. member's explanation.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Yes, I will accept it, and ask him to read his own speech in "Hansard." I can now understand the hon. member's reason for claiming that the Bill was almost a replica of the 1831 English Act. In contradiction of what Mr. Lovekin has told the House in that regard, I desire to state most emphatically that the Bill is the same as the Victorian Act of 1915, which was re-enacted without alteration in 1928. It is therefore the latest Victorian legislation on the subject. On that point I have the definite assurance of the Crown Law Department, which chose the Victorian Act as its model as being the best Act of its kind in the Commonwealth. If after 13 years' experience of this legislation in Victoria no alteration was deemed necessary or desirable in 1928, it is reasonable to conclude that it has given complete satisfaction. In any case, the object of such

an Act was originally to prevent "body snatching" and to control the provision of bodies for dissection. Such an Act if fulfilling these requirements might indeed need no alteration in 100 years. The title is immaterial, and either title, "An Act to Regulate Schools of Anatomy," or "An Act to Authorise the Practice of Anatomy" has in view the same object. As under the Bill no person can practise anatomy without a license, and as all places where anatomy is to be carried on must be approved and under supervision, it is not correct to say there is no supervision or check upon the dissection of human bodies.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That is true, too.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Only authorised persons will be able to handle bodies, which must be obtained in a definitely regulated manner. The practice of anatomy can only take place at places licensed for the purpose, and the names of the authorised persons must be entered on a special register which must be submitted to the proper authorities. A body prepared for dissection is no danger to anyone, and as a certificate showing the cause of death must be given in each case, it is not likely that the bodies of persons dying of infectious disease would be desired for dissection. Even so, however, after preparation for dissection, they would not be dangerous. The treatment necessary to render a body suitable for dissection would also render it safe for handling. Modern methods of preservation, of which Mr. Lovekin has no knowledge, render anatomical specimens absolutely innocuous, the specimens being practically minimised during the process of preservation. It is also ridiculous to suggest that bodies could be used within 12 hours of demise for the purpose of study at a school of anatomy, because the process of preservation occupies several days.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Did I suggest that? What is the good of putting up those bogeys to knock them down again?

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: The Bill does not give any student the right to take a body or part of a body "whither he will" for dissection. He must be a student of a recognised school of anatomy and can practise anatomy only in an approved place.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Does the Bill say that?

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: The Bill does not create any new Government department. It only legalises the practice of anatomy and provides safeguards against improper practice of anatomy.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Does it provide for an inspector?

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: It does not propose that the Government shall establish schools of anatomy. It is proposed that the Principal Medical Officer shall, for the purposes of the Act, be the inspector and extra staff will not be required beyond that at his disposal now.

Hon. J. Cornell: There is nothing about that in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Another important safeguard is that the conduct of such schools of anatomy as may be established can be controlled by regulation under Clause 20. Mr. Lovekin appears to have the idea that under the Bill bodies will be "snatched" unless the relatives object. On the contrary, the intention is that they shall be used for dissection only where the relatives, if any, agree. The hon. member claims that the Bill is so weak as to admit of all kinds of dangers, abuses and difficulties, if introduced into Western Australia. He did not indicate the defects and I must assume that he was not anxious to particularise. The Victorian Act has worked satisfactorily for 13 years. In that State there is a medical school, and much more anatomy is practised than is likely to be necessary here for many years. The hon. member's long dissertation upon the evil days of "body snatching" was quite unnecessary, as since the introduction of legislation such as that proposed, abuse has been quite impossible. Surely the hon. member lays himself open to the charge that he is 100 years behind the times in bringing up at this stage what used to happen before such legislation put a stop to it.

Hon. J. Cornell: He is usually ahead of the times.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Too far ahead. It may assist him to know that the word "anatomy" has two meanings—(1) The science of the structure of the body, (2) Dissection of the body.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Where did you get that?

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Mr. Drew was also vehement in his opposition, and he revealed his lack of knowledge of this class of legislation by his ready acceptance of Mr. Lovekin's designedly damaging statement that the Bill was on the lines of a George III. measure.

Hon. J. Cornell: I think the Minister is going the right way to lose the measure.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: I am afraid I must charge him with carelessness as a private member after his experience as Leader of the House. As Leader of the House he always found it necessary to examine closely the criticisms of Mr. Lovekin, and I cannot understand why he has been so remiss in this instance. As is well-known, the ex-Minister for Health (Mr. Munsie) is very favourably disposed to this Bill. In another place he whole-heartedly supported it and perhaps, if it had been submitted in the days of the previous regime, it would have been introduced here in glowing terms by Mr. Drew.

Hon. J. Cornell: With all due respect to Mr. Munsie, he is not an authority on the matter.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: In their legislative aims, Mr. Munsie and Mr. Drew were always very brotherly, and I have the conviction that the latter would not have strayed to opposition if the Bill, in its present form, had been before us last session. Dealing particularly with Mr. Drew's remarks, I assure him that it is not the Odontological Society, but the Perth Dental Hospital, which, by virtue of its being a recognised training centre, is anxious to obtain affiliation with the University of Western Australia. High though the existing standard of dental training and examination is, the inability to give dental students a proper course of practical anatomy prevents an application to the University for affiliation, which is the first step towards obtaining dental reciprocity with other States and parts of the British Empire. Furthermore, it is incorrect to state that the Odontological Society has undertaken to finance a building for an Anatomy School. It is understood that the University has offered the use of a room for the purpose, free of charge, and at the present time the University Guild of Un-

dergraduates has approached the Dental Students' Society with a view to affiliation and has offered cordial co-operation and assistance in an effort to bring that object to fruition. The Perth Dental Hospital is functioning, as in the past, in all departments. The economic depression has caused an enormous influx of applicants for free treatment who ordinarily would visit outside dentists, and the financial stringency has made it necessary to curtail somewhat the amount of free treatment rendered each month. Mr. Drew wrongly implied that the Perth Dental Hospital has degenerated into a mere "tooth-pulling" institution. The attendance of any patient suffering pain does not necessarily mean an immediate extraction, as many aching teeth can be saved. The filling department is always the busiest one. At the hospital there are nine operating chairs in daily use by the honorary visiting dentists and students. Deeper-seated troubles of the mouth, such as cysts, bone abscesses and impactions, infectious diseases such as Vincent's angina, as well as fractures and alveolectomies, are all treated as they occur. When the establishment of the Perth Dental Hospital was mooted in 1926, it received the whole-hearted support of the dental profession in the State, and the various professional societies, though by no means financially strong themselves, have been most liberal in donations. The contribution list is as follows:—Dental Board: £500 to establishment fund, £100 to supplies fund, and it is about to make a further gift of £75. Odontological Society: £30. Dentists' Association: £30, and another £25 has been voted this week. Dental Students' Society: £40, and the gift of an X-ray unit costing £150. In addition to these gifts many individual practitioners have given monetary donations as well as portions of equipment. In conclusion, I believe a majority of members will desire that the profession be assisted with a workable Bill, and therefore I do not offer any objection to the appointment of a select committee to look through the Bill, even under the chairmanship of Mr. Lovekin.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Referred to Select Committee.

HON. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [8.40]: I move—

That the Bill be referred to a select committee, and that the committee consist of the Hon. J. M. Drew, Hon. G. A. Kempton, Hon. E. H. Gray, Hon. H. Seddon and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers and report this day fortnight.

After the attack that has been directed against me by the Minister I would prefer that some other member had moved the motion.

The Minister for Country Water Supplies: How did you treat the Bill in your speech?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I began by stating that, after the interest I had taken in subjects of this kind, I regretted having to offer any opposition to the Bill. I said I was not going to oppose the measure, but would ask that it be referred to a select committee so that it could be examined in the light of information in my possession. I have before me a copy of the English Act of 1831. I will leave it there and ask any member to compare it with the Bill and say whether they are not identical measures, except as to the title and the provision for the salary of an inspector. The English Act is to "regulate schools of anatomy" and it has been altered to permit of the practice of anatomy. That is the distinction between the two measures. The Minister says this Bill is the Victorian Act of 1928. Things equal to the same thing are equal to one another. If the Bill before us is identical with the Act of 1831, I do not care what else it contains, it is the Act of 1831. The Minister said anatomy had two meanings, one the science of the structure of the body, and the other dissection of it. I do not know where he got his information, but I should like to inform him that anatomy has nothing whatever to do with the structure of the body. The word "anatomy" comes from two Greek words, *ana* etimon, second aorist tense of the verb *temno*, which means the cutting up or dissection of a body. It has nothing to do with the structure of the body, which is quite a different thing. I have some knowledge of the subject, having studied it a little.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.45 p.m.