

new reason for the reduction of the deficit. He said the haulage of extra wheat had added £80,000 to the railway revenue. But what about the corresponding expenditure? I am informed by the Minister for Railways that wheat is not carried by the department at a profit, or else at very little profit indeed. If the revenue from the extra five million bushels of wheat was £80,000, there must have been something like a corresponding expenditure. How then can it be said that the £80,000 revenue from extra wheat reduced the deficit?

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Is it asserted that the carriage of wheat does not result in any profit?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Very little, if any. That is the complaint of the Railway Department.

Hon. H. Stewart: That statement is frequently made, but it has never been proved.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Many other subjects have engaged the attention of hon. members. There have been requests for new railway construction and Government expenditure in various directions, but it is not possible for me to deal in a definite manner with those requests at present. They are questions which have not come before Cabinet for decision, and in the circumstances it will be realised that I am not in a position to give any indication as to how they may be viewed by the Government. There has been criticism, but in the majority of cases it has been fair comment on the actions of the Ministry. It is what every Government has been subjected to, and so long as base motives are not imputed—and such have not been imputed during the course of the debate—the criticisms of hon. members will be accepted by the Ministry with fitting respect.

On motion by Hon. T. Moore, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.44 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 26th August, 1925.

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

QUESTION—NORTH-WEST, EXPENDITURE.

Mr. COVERLEY asked the Premier: What amounts of public money have been spent during the past 12 months in the Pilbara, Roebourne, and Kimberley electorates, separately?

The PREMIER replied: I present two statements containing the information desired by the hon. member, one of which includes the expenditure on the Wyndham Meat Works.

QUESTION—STATE FARMS.

Crops and Rainfall.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, How many bushels of wheat and oats per inch of winter rainfall are obtained at the Merredin State farm? 2, How many bushels of wheat and oats per inch of winter rainfall are obtained at the Chapman State farm?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, Assuming that by "winter rainfall" is meant that falling from May to September, the number of bushels of wheat obtained per inch of rainfall at the Merredin experiment farm ranged from 2.24 to 3.03, an average of 2.39, and the number of bushels of oats obtained per inch of rainfall ranged from 1.41 to 4.92, an average of 2.38. Assuming that the "winter rainfall" is meant

that falling from May to October, the number of bushels of wheat obtained per inch of rainfall at the Merredin Experiment Farm ranged from 1.81 to 2.44, an average of 2.00, and the number of bushels of oats obtained per inch of rainfall ranged from 1.14 to 3.97, an average of 2.00. 2, At the Chapman experiment farm the figures for the season 1924 are not reliable, owing to a large proportion of the crop being destroyed by fire. The details for 1923 season show: Wheat (May to September rainfall), unfallowed, .44 to .58 bushels, an average of .46; fallowed, .68 to 1.06 bushels, an average of 1.01. Oats (May to September rainfall), 1.86 bushels. Wheat (May to October rainfall), unfallowed, .42 to .57 bushels, an average of .45; fallowed, .66 to 1.02 bushels, an average of .97. Oats (May to October rainfall), 1.80 bushels. Note.—For comparative purposes the figures for the Merredin experiment farm for the year 1923 are as follow: Wheat (May to September rainfall), unfallowed, 2.05 bushels; fallowed, 1.55 to 3.57 bushels, an average of 2.96. Oats (May to September rainfall), 2.21 to 4.10, an average of 3.95 bushels. Wheat (May to October rainfall), unfallowed, 1.98 bushels; fallowed, 1.49 to 3.45, an average of 2.85 bushels. Oats (May to October rainfall), 2.14 to 3.95 bushels, an average of 3.81.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Latham, leave of absence for a fortnight granted to Mr. Angelo (Gascoyne) on the ground of urgent private business.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Land Tax and Income Tax Act Amendment.

2, Group Settlers' Advances.

Transmitted to the Council.

MOTION—PRISONERS, TRANS- PORT.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [4.38]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the present system of transporting prisoners between Perth and Fremantle gaol should be abolished. With the exertion of a few country members who have not lived in the metropolitan area, I believe that members generally are aware

of the position. It is a disgrace that prisoners should be carted around as they are at present. To see prisoners carted from the lockup to the station, put into the train, taken to Fremantle, and again carted from the station to the gaol, one would almost think we were still living in the dark ages. Long before I had any idea of trying to enter Parliament, I criticised this practice, and I have not yet met anyone who would attempt to justify it. On the eve of my election I saw four prisoners chained together, and I determined that if I were elected, I would raise my voice against the continuance of this system. I cannot think that any member would be sufficiently callous to oppose the motion. For over 12 months I have been endeavouring to get some better system adopted. I have been to various departments and I am not yet sure which department has control of the matter. I have been to the Gaols Department and to the Police Department, and from them have received quotations between which there is a difference of only £1,000. One department estimated the cost of the reform at £1,500 and the other at £500. No matter what the cost may be, an alteration should be made. The present system is not only a disgrace but is a monument to the inefficiency of the department concerned.

Hon. G. Taylor: What do you suggest?

Mr. SLEEMAN: That a motor conveyance similar to those used in the Eastern States be procured. It could be used for conveying prisoners between Perth and Fremantle, and it could also be utilised to replace the vehicle known as Black Maria. Prisoners are more sensitive than are free men. Many young fellows who have made a little slip for which they have been sentenced to a few months' imprisonment in the Fremantle gaol are conveyed from Perth to Fremantle in full view of the public. I have seen such men chained to the most hardened criminal, not because they were dangerous but in order to prevent the escape of the hardened criminal.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is there no classification?

Mr. SLEEMAN: No. Prisoners are taken from the Perth lockup to the West Perth railway station. Unfortunately they are generally taken at an hour when trains from Fremantle are passing, and everyone strains to get a view of them. I admit that it is difficult to refrain from taking a slight glance. I have seen young fellows so chained hanging their heads in shame as the

people gaze at them. They are taken to Fremantle in view of the travelling public. On one occasion, when a train was on the point of starting from Cottesloe, a man half entered the compartment containing a policeman and prisoners. When he noticed who the occupants were, he drew back. One of the prisoners remarked, "You need not look; you may be in the same position yourself some day." Even in the dark days when people were called upon to answer whether they were bond or free, prisoners were not treated worse than they are to-day. Some people argue that special means for the conveyance of prisoners are also required in the country districts. While prisoners in the country districts are entitled to as much consideration as those in the metropolitan area receive, the fewness of their numbers would probably make it impossible to adopt special means in the country. There may be one prisoner a month from a place like Cue, one from Albany in two months, and one from Leonora in three or four months, and it would not be possible to have special means of transport from those centres. I have discussed the matter with prisoners and have been informed that they feel the trip from Fremantle to Perth, and vice versa, a hundred times more than the trip from the country. There is not much publicity in the country, because there are very few people at the stations to see the prisoners. On the journey down, the blinds of the compartment on the station side are generally drawn to prevent people from gazing at the occupants. But between Perth and Fremantle there are hundreds, or even thousands, of people to view these prisoners. Being held up to the public gaze is more likely to harden than to reform a young fellow who has slipped. To keep prisoners from the view of the public is just as feasible in Perth as in Adelaide or Brisbane. The motor could also be used, if necessary, to bring in a fractious prisoner.

Member: It could be used to take members of Parliament home.

Hon. G. Taylor: I was about to suggest that.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Some members are trying to ridicule this idea. How would the member for Mt. Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) like to be carted around as these prisoners are?

Hon. G. Taylor: I know all about it. It is nothing strange to me. I have been through the mill.

Mr. SLEEMAN: No doubt the hon. member felt the ordeal.

Hon. G. Taylor: I did nothing to be ashamed of.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The hon. member should be the first to rise and support this motion. I believe the House will be sufficiently humane to carry it.

MR. PANTON (Menzies) [4.47]: I have much pleasure in seconding this motion for a reform that is long overdue. I have had to travel from Perth to Fremantle on the 9 o'clock train frequently, and I know of no more humiliating sight than that of two or three young men, and perhaps some old men, and sometimes women, waiting in charge of the police on the West Perth railway station for the train to pull in. I have never seen a woman handcuffed, but it is a common occurrence to see two men or four men coupled in pairs. These people are subject to what I consider the morbid curiosity of the passengers who gaze out of the train, and at Fremantle the passengers generally congregate to see the prisoners taken off. It is a most remarkable thing that while young fellows have their first offence exhibited in this humiliating fashion a murderer, who may be guilty of a gruesome crime, is taken to and from Fremantle in a motor car. If a motor is good enough for a murderer, surely it is good enough for a young man who has committed his first offence. Prison reformers might well take this matter up. The humiliation of a first offender tends to make him callous. The reform should not cost a great deal, and even if it cost £1,000 it would be worth the money. The motor van could be used for the purpose of conveying trial prisoners from Roe-street to the Supreme Court and back again. The sight of a horse-drawn vehicle with two constables on the front seat and two at the back causes every man in Barrack-street to wonder what is going on. I hope the Government will bring about this much-needed reform. Anyone who travels by the train I have mentioned soon becomes disgusted by the sight of prisoners exposed to view on the railway stations.

On motion by Hon. S. W. Munsie (Honorary Minister) debate adjourned.

TRAFFIC REGULATIONS.*Notice of Motion withdrawn.*

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [4.50]: The following notice of motion appears on the Notice Paper in my name:—

That paragraphs (c) and (d) of Regulation 70 of the Traffic Regulations under the Traffic Act, 1919, as amended by the amendment Act, 1922, and published in the "Government Gazette" of the 26th June, 1925, and laid on the Table of the House on Tuesday, the 4th August, 1925, be disallowed.

I find myself in the happy position of being able to refrain from moving the motion, which subsequent developments have rendered unnecessary, the paragraphs in question having been amended. Consequently I ask leave to withdraw the notice of motion.

Notice of motion by leave withdrawn.

RABBIT-PROOF WIRE-NETTING.*Provision on Loan Estimates.*

MR. LATHAM (York) [4.52]. I move—

That in the opinion of this House provision should be made on the Loan Estimates for rabbit-proof wire-netting, to be supplied to farmers on 40 half-yearly payments, so as to enable them to fence against rabbits and dingoes.

Since placing this motion on the Notice Paper I have learnt from the Press that the Federal Government propose to render assistance in this respect to the various States. No doubt Western Australia will receive a considerable benefit. However, I consider that in addition to anything we may get from the Commonwealth, the State should render further assistance to farmers and settlers by cash and by securing a large quantity of wire-netting for the purpose of fencing against the rabbit and the dingo. The netting would serve two purposes. It would help to keep out rabbits, dingoes, foxes and so forth, and would tend to bring into better use the land already under wheat and cereals. I do not wish to be pessimistic, but I believe that this year the losses through the rabbit pest will be very great. Further, Western Australia is losing a huge sum yearly through fences not being completed, through people holding large areas unfenced. If the Government see fit to adopt this motion, I believe it will be the means of bringing a large number of stock into the agricultural areas. I am

not moving this motion in any spirit of opposition to the Government, because I do not think any man has ever tried to do more for the farmers than the present Minister for Agriculture, who is a farmer himself and is alive to the importance of bringing into use lands that to-day are rendering only half service to the State. The large quantity of wire-netting obtained by means of the grant from the Federal Treasury last year placed some people at a great advantage, but others at a great disadvantage; and I suggest that if this year our quota is £500,000—

The Minister for Lands: It is only £500,000 altogether for the Commonwealth.

MR. LATHAM: But I understand there are £3,000,000 to be distributed in six years. Say we get £100,000 this year. I would suggest that that amount be paid into the capital account of the Agricultural Bank, and that all moneys advanced for wire-netting purposes should carry a rebate of interest. Thus men less fortunately circumstanced would have an opportunity of sharing in the benefit. Last year only a very small percentage of settlers were able to take advantage of the grant, and through the Agricultural Bank the money will be spread over a much larger number of agriculturists. Perhaps the rate of interest might be reduced to as little as 3 per cent. There may, of course, be some objection on the part of the Federal Government—but if it is pointed out to them that the effect would be to spread the benefit over a larger number of settlers, they would doubtless agree. The functions of the Agricultural Bank do not extend in the direction in which the £100,000 would be made available, because the bank do not advance on farms situated more than 12½ miles from an existing railway, save in exceptional circumstances. So the settler who is able to carry on without Government assistance finds himself hard up against it for fencing. The means suggested by my motion would enable the Government to assist such a man. Moreover, many settlers are to-day operating under the associated banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions: and the advances granted by such institutions do not extend sufficiently to enable the settler to net. It is not a question of the Agricultural Bank or of the individual landholder, but a question of getting the greatest benefit from our lands. I need not again refer to the wonderful

work that is being done in this respect, but I am anxious to see an extension of that good work. I want the people who are doing so much in the way of production to be given an opportunity to make further use of their lands. I hope the Government will agree to provide on the Loan Estimates a fairly large sum for the purpose of assisting settlers in between the two rabbit-proof fences. We are informed that the rabbits are increasing very rapidly there. That report is brought back by everybody who goes into the area in question.

The Minister for Lands: The skins have been bringing too high a price. That is the trouble.

Mr. LATHAM: Nothing of the sort. I am sure the Minister does not mean that.

The Minister for Lands: I think a lot were put over the fence.

Mr. LATHAM: The Minister for Agriculture would not make such an interjection and I am sorry that the Minister for Lands has done so. There are fewer rabbits outside the No. 1 fence than there are inside. Particularly this year, the early rains have caused the rabbits to breed up more rapidly.

The Minister for Lands: Because they are inside the fence.

Mr. LATHAM: That will always happen with development, because with the provision of water supplies and feed, the pests are enabled to breed more. I regret that at the present time we cannot get poison supplies. A little while ago one firm in particular was active in placing with the farmers a tremendous number of fumigators. Later, however, the farmers found they could not procure supplies of flake cyanide for the fumigators, while they are also short of bisulphate of carbon. A little while ago two men came to me on the farm and I suggested that they should engage in rabbiting. I thought it would be remunerative because a good price was being obtained for the skins. Those men found they could not procure a rabbit trap in Western Australia. I know that the Agricultural Department is against trapping, but we should use every means to reduce the pest. This year the rabbits have been able to breed practically all through the year. We ought to prevent Western Australia getting into the position experienced by New South Wales some years ago when it cost millions of money to get rid of the pest. The most effective way to deal with the rabbits is to fence against them.

There are some people who talk about pulling up the No. 1 rabbit-proof fence and distributing the netting amongst the farmers. No greater calamity could be experienced than that which would follow the pulling up of the fence.

The Minister for Agriculture: It would cost more to pull it up than it would be worth.

Mr. LATHAM: The fence is of wonderful value as it is. I do not say that it actually keeps the rabbits from going back, but it prevents a considerable number from going through. As soon as one passes through the fence, one can see great areas where the rabbits have eaten the crops down. I hope the day will never arrive when the fence is pulled down. No. 1 fence is in splendid condition, and more dingoes will stop on the other side than will get through. Frequently I have been along the fence, and I hope the Minister will not agree to the proposal to do away with it.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have always opposed that.

Mr. LATHAM: That is so. It amounts to this, that the people who advocate such a step do not know the value of the fence. On the other hand, I hope the time may arrive when we will be able to erect cross-sectional fences. With more restricted areas the pest can be dealt with more effectively. I commend my motion from that standpoint, because if the people have the opportunity of procuring wire netting, the pest can be dealt with and it can be reduced very considerably. I know of holdings that have been netted for two years and I do not think anyone could find half a dozen rabbits on those areas.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [5.6]: I support the motion and will give my reasons for doing so. It must be recognised that there has been a great increase in the number of rabbits this year, because, owing to the summer rains, the rabbits not only refused to take the poison while the feed was green, but have also been able to breed throughout the whole period. It has been the worst year from that standpoint in that portion of the wheat belt between the fences since 1917. In the past we have succeeded in controlling the rabbits during the summer months because the various vermin boards have seen to it that the land holders laid down poison baits which the rabbits will take when there is no green feed avail-

able. While rabbits do not require much water or green feed to keep them alive, they do require green feed if they are to continue breeding. Because of the exceptional circumstances this year, the rabbits have been able to breed uninterruptedly. When we remember the rate at which rabbits multiply, we can understand what it means to the wheat belt. It is not generally known that when people were suffering considerably from the ravages of the pest some time ago there was a rush to get wire netting and poison. Unfortunately the shipping strike occurred at the time, and the whole of the netting in Perth had been disposed of, with the result that supplies could not be replenished. I travelled through my electorate with Mr. Gregory, M.H.R., and we received complaints from the settlers that they could not procure the necessary materials to deal with the rabbits. When we returned to Perth we visited various merchants. At the Westralian Farmers we were told that the firm had 95 miles of netting on order but there was not a roll in the city. The position was the same with Malloch's, while Sandover's, who provide the calcium cyanide supplies, had not been able to replenish their stocks. Mr. Sandover showed us some of the correspondence from farmers and it was enough to make one cry. One man asked if the firm could supply two rabbit traps if they could not forward anything else. There were no rabbit traps available, and therefore the farmers could not do justice to the job. To-day there is a lot of poisoning going on. When we visited the vermin branch of the Agricultural Department we were informed that there was no poison in the State and that supplies were on board a ship in Melbourne; consequently, until the strike was over those supplies could not be forwarded. Although the Agricultural Bank has liberalised the conditions recently, I have always thought that the institution could have been more liberal regarding advances for netting. There is only one way of dealing with the rabbit pest and that is by way of netting-in the holdings. Therefore, in order to protect the bank's security and to give the people a chance to pay back their advances, the Agricultural Bank should provide the settlers with the necessary funds to carry out that work. I am pleased to know that something is to be done in that direction in the future. Drift in connection with this work has resulted in many men having to abandon their

holdings in the wheat belt. I have had my property netted for some years and I know the trouble that has been experienced by others. I have seen what has gone on in connection with my neighbours' properties, and I know that the position is serious because we have not got the necessary netting. Another feature is that those who have their properties netted are driving the rabbits on to other holdings which, therefore, get the benefit of the lot. The other day one of my neighbours told me that a trapper had trapped and poisoned 700 rabbits in five days. That will evidence the seriousness of this question. It is disheartening to settlers to find they cannot get poison or traps and to see their crops eaten off each year. I hope the Government will realise the position and assist the farmers and also assist themselves in the protection of the security of the Agricultural Bank.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [5.10]: The motion is unnecessary because the Government have already given consideration to this matter. I was rather amused to hear the member for York (Mr. Latham) refer to Western Australia getting £100,000 out of the total Commonwealth grant of £500,000 for the year. The next thing we shall hear is that the State Government have received £100,000 which is to be made available to settlers for wire netting at a low rate of interest.

Mr. Latham: You flatter me if you think I get that much publicity.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No one knows what we shall get from that grant. The Secretary to the Treasury in Melbourne told me he would endeavour to get some netting for us as early as possible. That was before any Federal member of Parliament had seen him.

Mr. Latham: Is the netting to be sent over here?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know how it will be done.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Will they charge interest?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, there will be a small charge. Then the member for York referred to the advance of £43,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That covered more than one year.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: May be so. That matter was held up for some time

on account of the conditions laid down by the Federal Government.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We could not reach finality.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. When the present Government took office they dealt with the position and reached finality as soon as possible and wire netting was supplied to those persons who were not in a position to buy.

Mr. Latham: You got an additional grant, of course.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member suggested that the whole of the money for wire netting should be placed with the Agricultural Bank and then he complained that the bank would not advance outside a limit of 12½ miles. If the fund is to be administered by the Agricultural Bank, it is natural that the bank would look after its own clients.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is no hard and fast rule.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know that, but there will be a natural tendency for the bank to protect its own clients. It is always easy for an hon. member to ask the Government to supply something at a little cost.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You used to do that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I never did so.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Yes, hundreds of times.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not at all. To-day we have 400 applications for wire netting in accordance with the Federal grant. In all we had £11,000 including £8,000 and £3,000 returned and that would be sufficient to supply 50 of those 400 men with netting. Hon. members will therefore see the difficulty.

Mr. Latham: But I want to supplement that amount.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What will be the position? The motion will mean that the repayments will be spread over 40 half-yearly payments.

Mr. Latham: That is 20 years.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In the wheat belt after five years nearly every man runs his own motor car.

Mr. Latham: Not the new men.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is all very well for the hon. member to speak about the new men. If there is anything

cheap going it is the old settler who wants to benefit.

Mr. Thomson: You don't blame them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member knows what one old settler said when he was asked to pay £1 extra on account of wire netting that he had free for 20 years. He said he had been robbed by the Shylock actions of the Government. Not only had we to supply the netting, but we had to get out a mortgage, make a search of the department to determine his position, send it over to Melbourne, get it back again, and deal with his account accordingly for 20 years until the cost of the netting was defrayed. Yet the Government were referred to as a lot of Shylocks! Before this session closes, probably we shall ask consideration for a wire netting Bill similar to the Act in South Australia, under which the responsibility in respect of grants falls on the local authority, provision being made for appeal to the Minister when an application is refused. It would cost an enormous amount of money to supply wire netting for the enclosing of every individual holding, and the Government are to-day considering whether it would not be better to introduce legislation providing for the fencing in of farms in groups.

Mr. Latham: A very sensible idea.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: However, if any wire netting be purchased by the Government and supplied to the farmer, the farmer will have to pay the rate of interest the Government pay for the money.

Mr. Thomson: Quite right.

Mr. Latham: We are not asking for anything more than that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, the hon. member asks that the netting be supplied at a low rate of interest.

Mr. Latham: No, I did not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) said it was necessary that poisoning and trapping should be done before the green feed came up.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: That is what we have always aimed at.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then he complained that the farmers could not get either poison or traps because of the shipping strike—which occurred since the green feed sprang up! Fancy the earnestness with which the farmers must have impressed upon the city merchants the necessity for stocking

poison and traps, when the whole of the stock is exhausted as the result of a strike that lasted only a fortnight!

Mr. Thomson: Some of the cargo has not been got out of the ships yet.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It clearly shows that the farmers have not been taking active steps in protecting their own interests.

Mr. Lindsay: I agree with you.

Mr. Latham: But poison cannot be stocked for any length of time, because it evaporates.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Still, some stocks must be kept. I have been informed by those accustomed to farming that it is useless to lay poison at present, on account of the green feed, that it is now too late to do any poisoning.

Mr. Lindsay: The rabbits will not take it so well now, but still they can be coaxed into taking it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No doubt something will have to be done to cope with the rabbits. That is fully realised by the department. It is expected that the losses caused this year as the result of the rabbits will be approximately £500,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Who said that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: You know that I got it from a good source. Mr. McLarty told me. As soon as the matter was reported to the Government they immediately took steps to see what could be done to prevent further losses. However, it is impossible to do anything at present to save the crops already sown. I hope that before the session closes we shall consider legislation to deal with the supply of wire netting as in the other States. In the meantime I move an amendment—

That in line 4 the word "forty" be struck out.

The motion will then read, "On half-yearly payments." So long as funds are available, the farmers will never have occasion to fear that the Labour Government will not grant them every assistance.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [5.23]: We should be cautious about accepting the amendment. After some agitation the Federal Government have been induced to do something, working on a protective basis, to assist those farmers who in the national interest should fence against rabbits and dingoes. The Federal Government having accepted the responsibility,

even though only in a limited degree, it would be dangerous for the House to accept any responsibility whatever in respect of the matter. Without invitation, the Federal Government are prone to transfer to the State any and every liability. So, if we agree to do something in addition to what the Federal Government are doing, it will be regarded as an invitation to the Federal Government to say, "The State having accepted this as part of its responsibility, we will get out of it." I know the rabbits are doing an enormous amount of harm, but I should not like to say the Minister's estimate of probable losses is correct. Nevertheless the loss is going to be enormous. I had intended to suggest an amendment that the House urge the Federal Government in view of the ravages taking place in this State to do more than they are doing to combat the rabbits. This State deserves more consideration than do the other States; there are special reasons why we should get more, and I think those reasons could be advanced by the State Government to the Federal authorities, who should be asked to speed up that which they are proposing to do, and even to add to it. But if we agree to the Minister's amendment, the Federal Government will feel that they are already carrying more responsibility than we as a State expect them to bear. It would be altogether better to maintain this as a Federal responsibility, and urge the Federal Government to do more than they are doing. We should not accept any responsibility whatever, for that will lead them to believe that we are prepared to share the liability with them and even to relieve them of all responsibility.

Mr. Latham: You are opposing the motion?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I had proposed to amend the motion in the direction of urging the Federal authorities to do more than they are already doing. I am opposed to the Minister's amendment on the ground that it accepts on behalf of the State some of the responsibility, and proposes to supplement what the Federal Government are doing. I do not want that. We have to concentrate our attention on inducing the Federal authorities to do more than they are doing, in other words to accept the maximum responsibility, instead of a limited responsibility supplemented by the State.

Amendment put and passed

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [5.28]: It is gratifying to have the assurance of the Minister for Lands that the Government are alive to the rabbit menace and that they are considering the putting of an amount on the Loan Estimates. My people are not asking for free netting. All that we want is that the Agricultural Bank should be more liberal in the future than it has been in the past. Unfortunately the bank did not seem to realise the danger to which many of our people in the wheat belt, particularly those outside the rabbit proof fence, were exposed. Recently the Minister for Works was in portion of my electorate, when he had ocular demonstration of the ravages of the rabbits in the Pingrup district, where large areas are being eaten out. The Minister's estimate that we shall lose this year £500,000 through the rabbits, shows the seriousness of the position and suggests how essential it is that provision should be made for wire netting, so that the Agricultural Bank shall be able to advance it to its clients and thus protect the assets of the State. I am pleased that the Minister is agreeable to this. I do not agree with the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) that the responsibility is a Commonwealth one. I would strongly object to the Commonwealth Government interfering in our local affairs. I support the motion because I hope the Government will make the money available. Whether they import the wire netting or not will be a matter for their policy, but I trust they will make the money available whereby the farmers can purchase their wire netting through the Agricultural Bank when they want it. The need is pressing. If the rabbit-proof netting had been available last year no doubt a good proportion of the £500,000 loss would have been saved. It is an economic loss to the State, and will be felt generally throughout Western Australia.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.32]: I support the motion. The member for York (Mr. Latham) suggests that if the Federal Government are going to give us this money at a low rate of interest, the advantage should go to as large a number of farmers as possible. The netting is very expensive. It costs from £60 to £80 a mile to erect a rabbit-proof fence, and the netting itself costs £37 a mile. Until recently it was dearer.

The Minister for Lands: It has been £55 a mile through the Commonwealth.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. It has been utterly impossible to face the cost on those figures. The hon. member suggests that if the Federal Government are giving money at a low rate of interest, this might be used to reduce the rate of interest on sums that are advanced by the Agricultural Bank. That is reasonable and fair. We cannot say to a few people that they can have their wire-netting interest-free for 20 years, and to others they must pay 6 per cent. on the money for 20 years. That never has been the system. We have charged all exactly the same rate. As the Minister for Lands knows, it is customary for the Agricultural Bank to give everyone the money at the same rate and at the same time.

The Minister for Lands: The Government were not going to refuse £43,000 free of interest for the farmers if they could get it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It was accepted before the Minister became Minister.

The Minister for Lands: It was not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We said we would take it.

The Minister for Lands: But you would not agree to their conditions.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We could not get the conditions fixed. The matter had been going on for months. It always will be so in matters into which the Federal Government enter. It is desirable that they should keep out of these things. If they have this money to spare, why do they collect from the people of the State? Why do not they let the State Government collect the money instead of themselves? If they have the money to advance, why do they not make the advance to the Government unconditionally, but stipulate that it shall be applied to a definite purpose?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is another question.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It seems to be ridiculous to pass motions in this House demanding of the Federal Government that this, that, and the other shall be done. We are represented in the Federal Parliament and our representatives do their duty. They voice our opinions and accept the responsibility for our share, although it is a small one, at the hands of the Government of Australia. We can make this

Government do things, but we cannot even influence the Federal Government. The Federal Government are apparently being very liberal with us just now in giving us grants for one thing and another, which total a great deal of money. Everyone knows that that money is collected from the people. The State Government should be given a chance of collecting the money which the Federal Government are collecting. The cost of collecting the money would be £1 to the State Government as against 30s. to the Federal Government. The Federal collections in Western Australia amount to enormous sums per annum. The Premier cannot get by taxation enough to pay for the free services given to the people in hospitals, charities, etc. The Federal Government, however, are getting enough to pay for these services three times over. It would be better if the Federal Government stuck to their job and we stuck to ours. Since they will not do so, we must get all we can out of them. We are now to have cheap money for six years. I understand the Minister for Lands will get his share of it at a low rate of interest. What the member for York suggests is that the money shall be loaned to the Agricultural Bank, so that they may reduce the interest on all advances for wire-netting by the amount of the interest saved.

The Minister for Lands: You cannot do that; they will impose conditions.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know what the trouble will be. I wish the Minister was not in a bad temper. We are only making suggestions in order to help him. The hon. member did not attack him.

The Minister for Lands: That does not help in any way.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not know that the Minister is the best judge of that in his present mood. The desire is to help and it is a laudable desire. The member for Guildford suggests that the fencing is a Federal responsibility because the wire netting will protect the national asset. That is true, but under the Federal Constitution the Federal Government can do a great deal for the industries of the city but mighty little for the industries of the country. It is our responsibility entirely. If we had our proper share of the total revenue collected by the Federal Government, we should have no trouble in carrying on and providing the farmers with all they want. Wire netting is getting a little cheaper and the

Minister may be able to do a great deal during the next year. The truth about the rabbit is that this year we have had summer rains and the rabbits have bred all through the summer. Next year we may have a hot summer and the rabbits will disappear. The farmer will then say he cannot afford to pay for the wire netting and the fences will not be erected.

Mr. Lindsay: They have learnt their lesson this year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This season has now been lost. We have been fortunate in this State. I do not know why the rabbits have not overrun the whole country. They have been down as far as Albany for years. Twenty years ago they were at Jarrahdale and at Yatheroo 18 years ago, but they have not increased very much.

The Minister for Mines: Forty years ago they were at Geraldton.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They were Western Australian rabbits and were well behaved. The others are bred in Queensland and they are badly behaved.

The Minister for Mines: There was no enterprise about the Western Australian rabbit.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There was very little energy on the part of some people who came to this country. Some displayed a lot and some got into Parliament. I hope the Minister for Lands will let us know how much money he will get for this purpose. We should not depend upon what the Federal Government will do. If we wait for them to do something it will be bad for us. The member for York has suggested that those outside the 12½-mile limit, who are keeping stock as they have to do, will want help in the matter of fencing to protect them against rabbits and dingoes. It is a national question that of protecting our livestock and making it possible for farmers to produce more wealth, but wire netting costs a lot of money. I always think that if the Agricultural Department had administered the Vermin Act more liberally a good deal more might have been done. The dingoes are particularly destructive and their extermination should be made a national question. The owners of the land are doing their part. The Government own about two-thirds of all the land in the South-West. The dingoes seem to increase along the coast miles away from where they destroy flocks and herds. I know the Minister for Lands will do all he can. I do

not know whether he will adopt the South Australian system. I understand that there the farmer has his fence erected and pays so much per mile per annum, just as he pays his rates. It may be possible under that system to fence considerable areas and to make it easier for the farmer's pocket. They may be able to pay a per annum rate upon a fence which will be maintained for all time and be saved the great cost of erecting their own fence. The matter is worth looking into if the fences are to be erected. The Minister must get it into his mind that we are not out to embarrass the Government. He must know that. We are out to help. The motion is moved for no other object than to assist the Minister who is just now responsible for this work. I am afraid he displayed some irritation at the audacity of the hon. member in attempting to dictate to the House in regard to the matter.

The Minister for Lands: There would be no dictation. It is only a pious resolution.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If that is so, we shall have to make it a little more definite.

The Premier: It will not have the slightest effect. No more and no less will be done than if it had never been moved.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is no reason to object to the motion.

The Minister for Lands: I do not object to it; if I did I would have said so and moved an amendment.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We on this side of the House must say what is good for the country. Members opposite did that when they were here.

The Minister for Lands: I have no objection to the motion.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We shall not be here very long so we shall not have many more opportunities to do this.

The Premier: We are safe for at least 18 months.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I seem to see a little gleam of sanity in the faces of some of the Premier's supporters. I do not know that he is as safe as he imagines. Probably he had better be careful. At any rate 18 months will pass quickly. It does not do to boast too much and we shall take our chance when the time comes.

The Premier: Now you will withdraw the motion.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We cannot withdraw a motion that has been approved by responsible Ministers.

The Minister for Lands: I merely said I had no objection to it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then you do approve of it.

The Minister for Lands: No; I have no objection to it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister for Lands might have said that he would do his best to give effect to the wishes of members on this side of the House, just for once.

The Minister for Lands: They should be possessed of broad vision.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Unfortunately I am not permitted to discuss the question of vision. I know that the Minister for Lands is whole-hearted in his desire to protect the farmers in every way, and to see that their produce reaches the market. It is very unfortunate that people should be losing their crops, and all that the mover of the motion has asked is that if anything can be done to cheapen the cost of wire netting, the Minister will take the matter into consideration. The Minister suggested the South Australian system; I hope he will go into the subject and that some good will result.

MR. STUBBS (Wagin) [5.50]: The seriousness of the position in some parts of the State warrants my saying a few words in support of the motion. I am convinced that the Government are alive to the importance of the matter, because only a few days ago at my invitation one of the Ministers spent the week-end in the Great Southern, and there saw for himself rabbiters that were going on the wheat areas. It would be impossible for any Government or the Agricultural Bank to wire-net every acre of farm land in Western Australia where wheat is being grown. The wiser course would be for the Government to form groups and not fence every acre. Nearly all the holdings are square blocks and vary in size from 1,000 to 1,500 acres. In my judgment the cost of putting wire netting around every holding that is mortgaged to the Agricultural Bank would be a costly undertaking. Unless something is done shortly in the direction of supplying wire-netting in some form or other to the settlers in the Eastern parts of the wheat belt, large areas of land, now cultivated, will soon be idle. I understand that there were turned down at least 100 applications for netting in connection with the last Federal grant. In addition there are

scores of applications for the grant that is now being advertised.

The Minister for Lands: £8,000.

Mr. STUBBS: But there is no netting in the State; no firm in Western Australia has a yard of netting for sale. To make matters worse, the Federal Government have imposed a dumping duty on wire-netting, merely for the protection of two or three manufacturers in the Eastern States. Those manufacturers already have their books full of orders which they cannot fulfil. It is on the cards that the Government are in the position to call tenders for netting, but they will not be able to get any tenderers in Australia to supply it in reasonable time.

The Minister for Lands: Under the Commonwealth grant you must use Australian netting.

Mr. STUBBS: That makes the position worse from the settler's point of view. Without any desire to enter into the arena of Federal politics, if I were a member of the Government of this State I should not hesitate to import a large quantity of netting, if it could not be got within the Commonwealth in a reasonable time. They should do this and refuse to pay the dumping duty, and every man in the State would support them in their action.

Mr. Pantou: What would they call you, a rebel?

Mr. STUBBS: The position is so serious that it warrants the Government taking extreme action.

The Minister for Lands: We are to pay duty amounting to £4 a ton.

Mr. STUBBS: The public should be made aware of the fact, and it is about time that we cut the painter if they treat Western Australia in that manner.

The Minister for Lands: They did remove the duty on the last lot, and then told us that in future we would have to pay £4 a ton.

Mr. STUBBS: The position is serious, and if members had been with us last week end they would have seen how impossible it was for settlers individually to combat the rabbits that were invading the holdings. I do trust that the Government will take the necessary steps to see that wire netting comes into the State irrespective of any attitude the Federal Government may take. If this is not done there will soon be many thousands of acres of crop destroyed.

MR. BROWN (Pingelly) [5.55]: I also support the motion, and desire to em-

phasise the seriousness of the position. In my electorate there is a rabbit-proof fence about 40 miles east of the Great Southern railway, and for many years very few rabbits were noticed on the western side. At the present time, however, almost against the railway line, thousands of rabbits may be seen in the evening approaching the watercourses. How are the Government going to cope with the pest? If there is only a certain amount of netting available, the man who gets it will be regarded as lucky. But what about the selector who has the adjoining block, and who may not be so fortunate? The rabbits will then be forced on to the neighbour's block and the result will be that the neighbour will be driven off his holding. If rabbits are to be permitted to increase in the manner that they have increased during the last year, every holding, particularly in the wheat belt, will have to be wire-netted. That will be an impossibility. We may have a dry summer and then we may be able to enforce the provisions of the Vermin Act, and by compelling every farmer to use poison we may in that way keep the rabbits in check. Along the Great Southern, poison plants are having the effect of keeping the pest in check.

Mr. Latham: You have no poison down there.

Mr. BROWN: There are many thousands of acres covered with poison, and it is in those areas also that rabbits are to be found. I believe, however, that nature will do more in the direction of exterminating rabbits than all the talk in this Chamber about wire-netting. Personally I consider the matter is so serious that we should use all the means at our disposal to combat the pest. If we are to wire-net we should do what was done in New South Wales and fence blocks, and impose heavy penalties for leaving gates open. That might save the fencing of individual holdings. I realise that it is impossible for the Government to raise money for fencing on top of what is required for development work, but if we can come to some arrangement with the Federal Government we should not miss the opportunity to do so, and then spend whatever money may be placed at our disposal to the best advantage.

The Minister for Lands: We can raise money as cheaply as the Commonwealth.

Mr. BROWN: If we can do that we should purchase wire-netting and try to get

it in free of duty. It behoves the Government to be alive to the position and to do what they can to deal with the pest.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [6.0]: Even if I thought the motion would not accomplish any good, I would willingly support it as I believe the more noise we make about rabbit-proof fencing, the better chance we shall have of getting some assistance from the Federal Government. The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) said this was entirely a Federal matter. I do not agree with that. It might be well for us if it could be made a Federal matter. I support his remarks as to the seriousness of the pest. Owing to the early rains the pest has increased enormously. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown) remarked that nature would probably stop the pest. All I can say is that nature is a long time doing it, because the pest is as bad as ever it was, and it requires only a favourable season or two to make it uncontrollable. Wire-netting is the only solution.

Mr. Stubbs: It would cost a million pounds to wire-net every holding.

MR. GRIFFITHS: At Walgoolan in my electorate there is a small body of men who wish to form a vermin board in order that they may rate themselves to the extent of about £9 per holding per year in order to raise the necessary funds. I hope the Minister will introduce an amending measure to permit of these men helping themselves as they have indicated. I have received a letter from Mr. H. Gregory informing me of what has taken place following the Premier's communication to the Prime Minister regarding wire-netting supplies. I think it likely that the carrying and transmission of this motion will have a good effect.

Question, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST.

To disallow Regulations.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [6.4]: I move—

That Regulations Nos. 140 and 238 of the Fremantle Harbour Trust, published in the "Government Gazette" of the 8th May, 1925, and laid on the Table of the House on Wednesday, the 12th August, 1925, be disallowed.

It is very necessary that these regulations should be disallowed. Boats are coming to Fremantle with large cargoes of inflammable material, and until recently an efficient watch was kept upon them. A few months ago I had occasion to complain to the Minister controlling the Harbour Trust that the regulations were not being adhered to, the chief offenders being the State Shipping Service and the company in which the president of the Harbour Trust is interested. Shortly afterwards the Minister visited Fremantle, and then I found that the Harbour Trust, presumably to overcome the difficulty, had amended the regulations. Originally regulation No. 140 read—

Masters of all ships carrying oils or spirits as cargo must declare their cargo to the pilot before entering the inner harbour. The Trust Commissioners place watchmen on board all ships where oils or spirits are on board, at the expense of the owners of the vessels, and the cost of same must be paid before the vessels are granted clearance.

To ensure the enforcement of that regulation, it is repeated as regulation No. 238. Now we find that the Trust do not wish it to be mandatory; they want to use their discretion. The amended regulation reads—

Watchmen will be appointed by the Trust to supervise the handling of inflammable oils or spirits on the wharves, such watchmen to be maintained throughout the whole time such oils or spirits are being handled or remain upon the premises of the Trust, and the cost of such watching shall be a charge against the consignee or shipper of such goods Where the Trust Commissioners are not satisfied that any ship having on board inflammable oils or spirits is being efficiently watched to safeguard the interests of the port, by watchmen appointed by the master or owner of such ship in accordance with statutory rules and regulations made under the Australian Navigation Act, 1912-1920, or any amendment thereof, the Commissioners will place watchmen on board such ship at the expense of the owners of same, and the cost of such watchmen must be paid before the ship is handed clearance.

Before I complained that certain boats were not observing the regulations it was considered necessary for the safety of the port to have watchmen throughout the 24 hours. Now, however, the Harbour Trust Commissioners declare that it is only necessary to have a watchman on duty until 5 p.m., the hour at which the waterside workers finish handling cargo for the day. Recently complaints were made that naked lights were being carried on such boats, and there were no watchmen on board to see to the safety of the vessels. At night there are no watch-

men on the wharves to watch over oil ships, and some person has only to pass that way and throw down a match, and the whole place will go up in smoke.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is smoking allowed on the wharf?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Yes. Where an oil ship was moored, the public formerly were not allowed to pass a given point. Now that the watchman has been withdrawn, there is nothing to prevent people from going where they like. Members of the crew are to be seen moving about ships carrying naked lights. Previously such action would have been prevented by the watchman. I have known a big buck nigger to be placed as watchman on a boat, and he was regarded as an efficient watch. If anyone went up the gangway, all the nigger could say was, "The chief officer," and off he went to find him. Yet the Trust consider that such a watch over an oil ship is sufficient to protect the port of Fremantle. If an explosion occurred and considerable damage were done to the harbour works, I should lose a lot of electors. Seriously though, I should not like to think what would happen if one of those boats took fire. For the sake of saving a few paltry shillings, the new regulations are not justified.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [6.12]: The complaint of the member for Fremantle is very serious and shows that the administration of the Harbour Trust has not improved since the recent change in its personnel.

Mr. Sleeman: This happened before the recent change.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: A few months ago the Harbour Trust sustained a severe loss in the death of one of its most prominent members, Mr. Basil Murray, who had represented the primary producers on the Trust for many years. When entering into the merits of the complaint by the member for Fremantle, I suggest that the Government should at once review the constitution of the Trust and restore to the primary producers of the State the representation they had for so many years. During Mr. Basil Murray's time we had no complaints of this kind. I hope the Government will attach serious weight to the hon. member's remarks and give back to the primary producers their representation on the port authority.

On motion by Mr. Thomson, debate adjourned.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Supply Bill (No. 1), £1,913,500.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—DIVORCE AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

MR. MANN (Perth) [7.32] in moving the second reading said: I realise that sometimes when a measure of this kind is moved, there is a suspicion that amendment of the law is being sought in order to favour some particular person or for some special reason. That is not so in this case. I am simply moving for a very short amendment of our divorce law which is necessary in order to make a previous amendment apply equitably. The Divorce Ordinance of 1863, by Section 23, laid down the conditions under which divorce might be granted, as follows:—

It shall be lawful for any husband to present a petition to the said court, praying that his marriage may be dissolved on the grounds that his wife had since the celebration thereof been guilty of adultery; and it shall be lawful for any wife to present a petition to the court, praying that her marriage may be dissolved, on the ground that since the celebration thereof her husband has been guilty of incestuous adultery, or of bigamy with adultery, or of rape, or of sodomy, or of bestiality, or of adultery coupled with such cruelty as without adultery would have entitled her to a divorce a mensa et thoro in the Ecclesiastical Courts in England previously to the operation of the Statute 20 and 21 of Victoria, Chapter 85, or of adultery coupled with desertion without reasonable excuse for two years or upwards.

That provision apparently gave the man an advantage over the woman, inasmuch as a husband was enabled to get a divorce from his wife for adultery, whereas a wife was not able to get a divorce from her husband unless the adultery was coupled with cruelty. The Ordinance did not provide for a divorce on the ground of desertion, but Section 2 of the Amendment Act of 1911 provides—

Section 23 of the principal Act is hereby repealed, and the following is substituted:—"It shall be lawful for any husband to present a petition to the said court, praying that his marriage may be dissolved on the ground that his wife has since the celebration thereof been guilty of adultery; and it shall be lawful for any wife to present a petition to the court, praying that her marriage may be dissolved on the ground that since the celebration there-

of her husband has been guilty of adultery, sodomy, or bestiality; and it shall be lawful for any married person to present a petition to the court praying that his or her marriage may be dissolved on the ground that since the celebration thereof his wife or her husband, as the case may be, has without just cause or excuse wilfully deserted him or her, and without any such cause or excuse left him or her continuously deserted for five years and upwards.

That, again, was amended by the Amendment Act of 1920, Section 2 of which reads—

Section 5 of the Divorce Amendment Act, 1919, is hereby amended by inserting the words "subject as hereinafter provided" after the word "entitled" in line eight of subsection (1), and by omitting the words, "although the period of five years or two years (as the case may be)," and inserting in place thereof "may be pronounced although the period of two years," and by adding to subsection (1) a proviso, as follows:—"Provided that no such decree nisi for the dissolution of a marriage shall be made unless the desertion shall have continued for three years, but wilful desertion without just or reasonable cause or excuse prior to the decree for the restitution of conjugal rights, if continuous with subsequent desertion, shall be included in computing such period of three years."

That, on the face of it, made the conditions of divorce for desertion equal in the case of wife and husband. However, in fact it is not so. The object of this amending Bill is to give women an equal and equitable right. As the law stands, if a woman has reasonable cause to sue her husband for maintenance and separation, and if she gets maintenance and separation granted, then, although the husband may never pay a shilling of the maintenance awarded to his wife, though he absconds and disappears, the wife can never sue for a divorce on the ground of desertion. If a husband and wife find that they cannot reasonably and happily live together, and if they enter into an agreement by which the husband shall pay so much per week towards the support of his wife, and if he fails to carry out that agreement and deserts his wife, she can never at any time sue for a divorce on the ground of desertion. All that this amending Bill will do, if carried, is to give the wife an opportunity to sue for a divorce on the ground of desertion after a husband has failed to make the payments awarded by the court. Suppose a woman sued her husband for maintenance and separation, and got judgment for £1 per week, and suppose the husband made payments for three weeks and then disappeared; even if he were away for 10 or 20 years, the wife

could not sue for a divorce. The Bill proposes that the period of desertion shall begin from the time of the last payment. I think the House will agree that that is a reasonable proposition. I do not think it was intended when the amendment was drafted, that a woman who had occasion to sue her husband for maintenance and separation should for all time be prevented from suing for a divorce on the ground of desertion. If legislators thought it wise to provide for divorce on the ground of desertion, surely they would agree that the fact of a woman suing for maintenance and getting it should not prevent her from suing for divorce if the husband failed to pay the maintenance ordered by the court. The Bill is really a one-clause Bill, making the provision I have indicated; and I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Davy debate adjourned.

LAPSED BILL—RESTORATION.

Bills of Sale Act Amendment Bill.

A message having been received from the Council requesting the Assembly in accordance with the Standing Orders relating to lapsed Bills to resume consideration of the Bills of Sale Act Amendment Bill, the message was now considered.

On motion by Mr. Davy, ordered: That the Bills of Sale Act Amendment Bill transmitted by the Legislative Council on Thursday, the 27th November, 1924, be restored to the Notice Paper at the stage at which it was interrupted by the prorogation.

BILL—JURY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [7.44] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is similar to the measure introduced last session, except that some of the amendments then proposed are omitted on the present occasion. The Bill now deals only with special juries and the payment of jurors' fees. The original Act was passed so far back as 1898, when money values were entirely different from what they are now. Wages then averaged about 7s. or 8s. per day, and the Act provided for the payment of jurors' fees at the rate of 10s. per day.

Money values have altered to a tremendous extent during the past 27 years and what may have been considered a fair or even munificent payment in those early days is entirely inadequate at present. It is felt that conditions may alter again in the future, and therefore, instead of arbitrarily fixing payment for jurors under the Act, provision is made for the payment to be at rates prescribed by the Governor-in-Council. That will bring these payments on to the same basis as witness fees, and that system has proved satisfactory in the past. Under existing conditions payments set out in the Act have been increased on many occasions. It is considered eminently fair, therefore, that, in order to apply different rates of remuneration, should it be found necessary to do so, the Government should have power to alter such payments by way of regulations rather than to amend the Act from time to time. The other provision deals with special juries. Nearly all members who were in the House last year will remember that the principle was discussed extensively, and probably they are aware of the arguments for and against provision being made for special juries. Some say that the jury system itself has outlived its usefulness.

Mr. Sampson: Hear, hear! There is no doubt about it.

The Premier: Now be careful how you alter old-established institutions!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: At any rate, I believe that the special jury system has long outlived its usefulness.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think you are wrong.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is what you said last year. That does not prevent us, however, from introducing the Bill again and passing it this time.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I do not think you should say that; this matter should be left to everyone to vote as he likes.

The Premier: That is so, but we are relying upon the good sense of the House.

Mr. Davy: Will this provision prevent anyone moving regarding juries on civil cases?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You do not believe in having special knowledge.

The Premier: You mean special wealth.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is not a question of special knowledge. There is no such provision as in the Coroners Act, where, in the event of an inquiry into a min-

ing accident, for instance, provision is made for jurymen having a knowledge of the industry.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is provision regarding special juries.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, property qualifications and monetary qualifications. Some say that under the jury system the jury has to decide which side has the best lawyer.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: In one case a man had set out in writing that he was guilty, but he was let off.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: A special jury is just as likely to make foolish mistakes as any other type of jury.

Mr. Sampson: Let us strike them all out.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is a different principle. The reason for special jurors having special qualifications, is said by some people—and it is correct, too—to be because they belong to a different social status to people in the ordinary walk of life. On that account it is thought by people liable to come before a special jury that those jurors should have particular qualifications regarding wealth—

Mr. E. B. Johnston: How much is it?

Mr. Davy: The special juror requires to have £500 all told, real and personal.

The Premier: Then of course the member for Williams-Narrogin would not come under that provision!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Then, again, certain provisions are made regarding other occupations of special jurors. A merchant, even though he may not have any money at all, is eligible to serve on a special jury, despite the fact that he may be insolvent or may "go broke" the next day. On the other hand, a retailer, who may be possessed of a hundred times as much wealth as the merchant or wholesale dealer, is not allowed to sit on a special jury because he is a retailer.

Mr. Davy: That is not correct.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I am referring merely to his occupation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Then you should say so.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: So I did.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Many retailers call themselves merchants.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: But the Act states specifically "a merchant who is not a retailer." It will be seen that the endeavour was to keep off the special juries

anyone who had dealings with the common people.

Mr. Davy: How many retailers do you know who would not have an excess of £500, representing assets over liabilities?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I suppose I could name a thousand.

Mr. Davy: I challenge you to name fifty.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There are any number of small shops in the suburbs that can be bought for £100 or £250. There are small ham and beef shops and there are quite 100 of them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The owners of those shops do not desire to be dragged away to sit on special juries.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No one wishes to do that, but it is a civic duty that people are called upon to perform when required to do so. However, the whole principle regarding special jurors involves the social status of people who are entitled to be selected. People in the particular grades or social strata I refer to will be biassed—I will be charitable and say, unconsciously—by reason of their surroundings, and the walk of life in which they move. Therefore, when an issue is placed before them, they deal with it on biassed lines. It is an entirely undemocratic principle and should not be tolerated any longer. The right to have a special jury is evidently regarded as of some intrinsic value or people would not be prepared to pay for the concession.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: When you appoint justices of the peace you are careful, are you not?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, but we do not say that the man to be appointed as a justice of the peace shall be a merchant and not a retail trader, that he shall be possessed of £500, and so on. If we select a man for appointment as a justice of the peace, we have regard to his character, probity and general intelligence.

Mr. Davy: Are you providing that jurymen shall be appointed in future on those lines?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, I am saying that the provision regarding jurymen shall be irrespective of the social status or wealth of the jurymen.

Mr. Davy: Irrespective of character or anything else?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, the jury list to be compiled—

Mr. Davy: But when you have finished with this measure there will be no discretion left at all.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If the hon. member can point out anything to support his contention, we will deal with it in Committee. The Bill merely does away with the provision for special juries, leaving the provisions for common juries in the Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Who pays for the special jury?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The wealthy man interested and that is undemocratic. Merely because an individual possesses certain wealth and certain property, he should not have privileges greater than those extended to others.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is only in civil actions that they are required.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. Why should one man, because he is possessed of wealth, have the privilege of a special jury?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He does not select the jurymen.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: He selects people of a certain class.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No, he does not.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: He selects people of wealth and certain occupations.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But he does not call anyone he pleases.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: But the people placed on the special jury are only those who have the special qualifications. In years gone by there may have been some necessity for special juries, because those possessing wealth had opportunity for education and training that enabled them to give an intelligent judgment, whereas the ordinary people were without those advantages. With compulsory education nowadays everyone is taught the rudiments of civic responsibility and culture generally. In those circumstances, there is no necessity for this provision in our laws. Then, again, manhood suffrage gives people some knowledge of civic responsibility and they take an interest in what is going on. Therefore, they are able to give an intelligent judgment on matters brought before them.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I doubt that. They did not give indication of it last time.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The Leader of the Opposition has a personal

grievance. The possession of a certain amount of wealth makes no difference regarding character and probity of individuals at this stage.

Mr. Sampson: That is something.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: With compulsory education the ordinary citizen can form as good a judgment as anyone else. Special juries have been known to give verdicts unsatisfactory to litigants.

Mr. Davy: Every jury's decision is unsatisfactory to one of the litigants.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: But why should one party have a special jury as against the other party? The other man finds arrayed in the jury box against him men not belonging to his class.

Mr. Davy: Nonsense! Have a look at the special jury list, and see the occupations of the special jurymen.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I have had experience of special juries.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: If they are of no special value, why have them at all?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why have judges? The hon. member would make a very good special jurymen.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Last session the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) gave an example of how the special jury provision works out. Feeling that his character had been traduced in certain newspapers, he was disposed to go to law, but in view of the provision for special juries he knew that if he brought an action for libel, a special jury would sit in judgment against him, and so he did not think he would get a fair deal.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I was advised by a K.C. not to proceed.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Of course the £500 qualification is the minimum for a special jurymen. The average amongst them would be considerably above that amount. People of high social status have not an understanding of the ideals of people in subordinate stations, because they do not come into contact with those people.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But the jury have to decide on the evidence.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Such men by their social environment are unable to decide on the evidence, and so they decide on bias.

Mr. Davy: According to that reasoning, your common jurymen will decide on bias, but their decision will go the other way.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There is no reason why a particular set of people should have a special privilege in respect of juries.

Mr. Davy: The inference is that we had better wipe them all out.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: A principle in British justice is that all men are equal in the eyes of the law. Yet under the law, if a man has sufficient money to pay for the privilege he can have a special jury. Last session the Minister for Works detailed his experience of special juries. However, I do not want to go over the whole of that again. Let me put this case: If, in a charge of conspiracy under the industrial law, a jury composed exclusively of unionists were empanelled, it would be said that the jury had been packed.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Certainly they would get a brick if they did not bring in the proper verdict.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yet the people concerned in an industrial conspiracy case have just as much right to have that case heard by a jury of industrialists as have men of high special standing to have their cases referred to special juries. If one man wants a special jury, why should not another desire a jury of unionists? The jury qualifications should be the same for all, and everybody should have the same opportunity to get a verdict. We have heard a lot of the alleged growing disrespect for law and order, but if anomalies of this kind are to be tolerated we cannot blame those whose respect for a law granting special privileges is decreasing. It has been said that special juries are more likely to bring in an intelligent verdict. Well, during the past four or five months we have seen a special jury bring in a verdict so contradictory that part of it had to be quashed by a higher tribunal.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about the jury that acquitted a man who had pleaded guilty?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: On occasion people have been known to plead guilty although they were not guilty. If there should be reason for a special jury, surely it ought to be for the hearing of charges carrying the penalty of a long term of imprisonment, or even of the death sentence? However, we find that life and liberty do not count, that it is only when a few pounds are involved that special juries can be asked for. It is an invidious distinc-

tion that should no longer be tolerated. If special juries are required they should be available to all litigants, irrespective of monetary status. The Bill got through this House last year and reached another place. On this occasion I hope that even if defeated in another place, the reasons for that defeat will be stated. Such a Bill should not be thrown out on a sudden death motion. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—REAL PROPERTY (COMMONWEALTH TITLES).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [S.11] in moving the second reading said: The memorandum of the Bill sets out exactly what the provisions of the measure are. It is a comparatively simple Bill, asked for by the Commonwealth Government as the result of some difficulty they have reached in respect of certain land titles. It will enable the Commonwealth to obtain titles of land acquired by the Commonwealth. Some land has been obtained by compulsory processes; some by the war service homes board; some by the Commonwealth Commissioner of Railways for railway purposes; some by the trustee for the Commonwealth under the Treaty of Peace Regulations, and some acquired for the Commonwealth for other particular purposes. It has been held by the High Court, sitting in Sydney, that although the title of the Commonwealth to land so vested as acquired is valid, and indefeasible, Section 20 of the Lands Acquisition Act, 1906, which was enacted to enable the Commonwealth to be registered in the Department of Lands Titles as proprietor was ultra vires the Commonwealth Parliament, and therefore State legislation to enable such registration is necessary. The Bill will enable the Registrar of Land Titles to bring the land acquired by the Commonwealth under the Transfer of Land Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They have not got any of their titles in this State, have they?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: They had a few titles before this action was brought before the High Court in Sydney.

Some of the Registrars of Titles had brought land under the Transfer of Land Act, but since the High Court decided that this provision of the Commonwealth Land Acquisition Act of 1906 was ultra vires, the registrars in all the States have not proceeded to bring the land under the Land Titles Act, The Land Acquisition Act, 1906, Section 20, states that the registration of gazetted notification is to have the effect of the conveyance of transfer. This has been deemed to be ultra vires by the High Court, and it is necessary to have legislation to put that in order. The position is uncertain in regard to land that has been brought under the Transfer of Land Act. This legislation will be necessary to validate it or bring the land under the Act. Similar legislation has been passed in South Australia—this Bill is almost an exact copy of it—and I understand that most of the States have signified their willingness to pass such an Act. Probably it will become law in all the States. It is of no benefit to Western Australia, but it does give a validating title to the Commonwealth in regard to land they desire to dispose of. The provision is that if the registrar is satisfied that the Commonwealth is the owner of land, that land can be brought under the Transfer of Land Act, and a memorial will be noted on the deeds and the early titles extinguished. Land that has been acquired by the Commonwealth in the manner I have indicated cannot be claimed by anyone, but the original title may be in the possession of someone else, and there is the possibility of fraud.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You might get some land tax out of the other chaps.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not think many people pay tax on land they do not own. It is hard enough to get it from some who do own the land. The Bill will be a considerable convenience to the Commonwealth, because at present they can do nothing in connection with disposing of land except by the old method of conveyancing. If the land is brought under the Transfer of Land Act, the dealings will be made simple. The Commonwealth occupy a position similar to an individual. They will make application to the Registrar of Titles to be registered as the proprietor of the land. If the registrar is satisfied from any source that the Commonwealth title is valid, he will bring the land under the Act and issue the title in the ordinary way.

Hon. G. Taylor: According to the High Court the title is all right until they try to dispose of the land.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No one can take the land away from them.

Hon. G. Taylor: But they cannot give a title.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No. If they wanted to dispose of land to the War Service Homes, the title would not come under the Transfer of Land Act, and the title would have to be transferred to someone else by means of the cumbersome process of conveyancing. There is nothing controversial about the Bill. The Commonwealth have requested all the States to pass that legislation, and the Crown officers agree that it is necessary. There is nothing in it to which exception can be taken. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.20]: I do not think there can be any objection to the Bill. It merely gives the Commonwealth the right to be registered as the owners of land. I think under the Transfer of Properties Act they are wanting their titles as well.

The Minister for Justice: Yes.

Hon. Sir James MITCHELL: Our law makes it impossible for the Commonwealth to be registered as the owners to deal in land. The Minister says that where the Commonwealth acquire property to subdivide for the purpose of war service homes it is not possible for them to give a title, and they cannot register the transfer. I do not think the House would take any exception to the passing of the measure. I suppose it does not mean that the Commonwealth can become the registered owners of land they do not own.

The Minister for Justice: The registrar has to be satisfied that they have the title.

Hon. Sir James MITCHELL: Of course. It only places them in the position of a private individual.

The Minister for Justice: That is all. They acquire the land under certain Acts.

Hon. Sir James MITCHELL: They cannot have dealings in land to-day as ordinary people can under the Transfer of Land Act.

Hon. G. Taylor: They can, after this Bill is passed.

Hon. Sir James MITCHELL: Yes. We do not want the Commonwealth to acquire

land in this State except for special purposes.

Hon. G. Taylor: They might buy us out.

Hon. Sir James MITCHELL: We cannot prevent the ownership of land if they acquire it in the ordinary way. Frequently they come to the State for land on which to erect some public building, such as a light-house. That is all right, and we find the land. They can pay for it when we get the opportunity of making them. In connection with the air service, they have acquired their own landing places. Under the War Service Homes Scheme they do need to acquire land in order that they may eventually build homes and transfer the land.

The Minister for Justice: They may acquire a block of land that is unsuitable and want to dispose of it, and get another for the same purpose.

Hon. Sir James MITCHELL: They did acquire land opposite the Post Office, and are leasing it, and that lease would require to be registered.

The Minister for Justice: I think that is provided for.

Hon. Sir James MITCHELL: I have no objection to the passing of the Bill. It would be well for the House if all the Bills introduced by Ministers did so little damage. This cannot damage anyone.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Pantou in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Provision for bringing land acquired by the Commonwealth under the Transfer of Land Act.

Mr. DAVY: A private person has to go through a certain complicated process, such as advertising, lodging applications, etc., when disposing of land. I am doubtful whether the same safeguards will be imposed under this clause. It is conceivable that under the Bill a man may be deprived of a right which is not apparent on the title unless some precautions are taken. Is the Minister satisfied that no injustice can be done to anyone?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The Bill provides that both the Attorney General and the registrar shall take all due precau-

tious, and the law officers assure me that the provisions of the Bill are satisfactory.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Government are treating the Commonwealth with great liberality in not asking them to make a contribution to the assurance fund. Private people contribute one farthing in the pound to the fund, and if a mistake is made in regard to the issue of a title, the person who suffers has recourse to the fund. The Commonwealth charges us fully for services rendered, and I can see no reason why they should not be compelled to contribute something to the assurance fund. True, the element of risk is very small.

The Minister for Justice: Hardly any risk at all.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: That is so, but the proportion of risk will be just as great on titles issued to the Commonwealth as it will be on titles issued to private people.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If a mistake is made in connection with an individual you cannot recover from him. In connection with the Commonwealth, if an error is made the matter can be adjusted without the necessity of having recourse to the assurance fund at all.

Hon. G. Taylor: If there was a claim it would lie against the fund.

Mr. Davy: It would have to be satisfied from the assurance fund. We guarantee the title.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5 to 7. Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. J. C. Willecock—Geraldton) [8.35] in moving the second reading said: It will be remembered that this particular Bill was before us last year and was passed without amendment. Then it went to the Legislative Council and was delayed until about 3 o'clock on the morning of the closing of the session. It was the desire of some members of that Chamber to move amendments to the Bill, but rather than have those amendments debated at that hour, the Bill was allowed to lapse. The delay that has followed has meant something, inasmuch as it is the intention of the department to amalgamate

the position of Registrar of Titles and Commissioner of Titles, so that a reorganisation of the Crown Law offices may be made. The member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) dealt with the matter on the Address-in-reply. It is felt that considerably more time would be given to the Parliamentary draftsman by this arrangement. At present that officer is also Commissioner of Titles and Solicitor General. If the business of the Commissioner of Titles were taken from him, members of Parliament would be in a more satisfactory position regarding the drafting of Bills and amendments to Bills. The position as it stands now is that the Commissioner of Titles is also Solicitor General, and naturally his more important duties are associated with the latter office. He is located in the Crown Law Department and persons having business to do with him as Commissioner of Titles are obliged to leave the Titles Office and go to the Crown Law Department and have matters adjusted there. There have been slight complaints about this arrangement, and there would have been more but for the personality of the Commissioner of Titles. The Registrar deals with everything under the Transfer of Land Act, but when it comes to conveyances, they are taken to the Commissioner of Titles to deal with. By making the one person fill the two positions the whole of the business in connection with the transfer of land, whether by conveyance or by certificate of title can be carried out in the Titles Office, and the work will be more expeditiously and, from the viewpoint of public convenience, more satisfactorily done. The original Act states that there shall be a Commissioner of Titles, a Registrar of Titles, and an Examiner of Titles. We have had a Commissioner who has practically held the two offices, but we have never had an Examiner of Titles. With the passing of time more and more land will come under the operation of the Act and it is thought that the time has arrived, or in fact that it has passed, when one officer should be appointed to hold the dual positions of Commissioner and Registrar of Titles. It will be necessary to appoint a man with legal training to the position of Commissioner because the old conveyances deal with all sorts of titles, wills, transfers, easements and other things. It may have been possible to effect by an administrative act the amalgamation we propose to bring about, but inasmuch as the Act says that

the Commissioner shall instruct the Registrar to do certain things, and as the transfer of land is of such importance, and the slightest irregularity may make a good deal of difference to people, it was felt that to safeguard the position it would be better to have legislation and so avoid trouble. Last year the member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) introduced to me a deputation representing the legal profession. Their desire was to be clear on the matter and having gone into the whole thing they considered that it would be satisfactory if the procedure proposed by the Government were adopted. There is no opposition to the Bill. The officers at present in the Titles Office will have their interests conserved, and the Bill will make for efficiency. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. DAVY (West Perth) [8.40]: I do not know that I feel inclined to support the Bill with great enthusiasm. Last year feeling that there might be something about it that I did not understand, the Minister for Justice was good enough to allow the matter to be adjourned and to receive a deputation from the conveyancing side of the profession, so that they might lay before him any objections they had to the proposal. Although the deputation did not like the idea of the combination of the two jobs—the Commissioner and the Registrar—they really felt that they were not able to advance any valid objection to it.

The Minister for Justice: Others have been enthusiastically in favour of it.

Mr. DAVY: I think it was with reluctance that the deputation admitted there was no serious objection to the proposal and that there was something to be said for it. So long as the person who combines the two positions is competent to deal with the somewhat highly technical matters, it will make little difference, and no valid objection can be raised to it.

The Minister for Justice: He will be competent.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 8.48 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 27th August, 1925.

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

QUESTION—MAIN ROADS.

State and Federal Expenditure.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, What amount of money has been—(a) allocated, and (b) expended by the State upon the construction or maintenance of main roads to which the Commonwealth Government subscribe? 2, What mileage of main roads has been recommended by the Minister for Works? 3, Since the passing of the Commonwealth Main Roads Development Act, 1923—(a) what mileage of main roads has been constructed, maintained, or repaired, and (b) what amount of money has been expended, in each electoral district?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, (a) Total amount allocated to 30th June, 1925—£384,000, for construction and maintenance of main developmental roads, half of which has been contributed by the Commonwealth Government. (b) Amount expended from State funds to 30th June, 1925, on construction and maintenance—£178,450 1s. 2d. Salaries and other administration charges, £13,593. 2, Approximately 1,980 miles. 3, (a) Clearing, 570½ miles; forming, 346½ miles, including 133,172 cubic yards of side cutting; gravelling and metalting 242½ miles; drains, 144 miles; bridges and culverts, 872. (b) No record is kept of expenditure in electoral districts. Time would be occupied and expenditure incurred in furnishing the required information and then it would necessarily be only approximate. A schedule showing all authorised works within each road district was recently laid on the Table of the House.