genuine worker should be the adviser. I trust that the optimistic remarks of the Minister on the new discoveries will be fully justified by developments in the near future. To some extent I rejoice when a promising new field is to be opened up, but with that rejoicing is mingled a little regret that with every new development of the industry, with the opening up of every new field there must come to the men actually working in the industry a certain degree of ill health. I cannot forget that about 70 or 80 per cent. of the men engaged in the Western Australian mining industry, young men who should be in the prime of life, are to-day in very bad health, are ageing rapidly, and in many cases are, unhappily, dying from miner's phthisis. When I hear the vast possibilities of a new field proclaimed, I cannot help feeling a measure of regret that all those possibilities or riches should be attended by conditions that are inimical to the health of the men engaged in the industry. I look back now over a period of 23 years that I have spent on the goldfields, during which I have been associated with thousands of young men. I can say that 90 per cent. of the young men who were on the Murchison field when I arrived there, and whose time was contemporary with my own, are to-day either dead, or in declining health, or in sanatoriums. Therefore I naturally hope that if there is going to be a large development in the mining industry, action will be taken in good time to ensure to the men engaged in the actual working of the industry healthy conditions. At present there is in control of the Mines Department a Minister who ought to know the work of the men affected. He comes of a family who for generations, I suppose, have spent their lives in mining. He has been engaged in the mining industry himself. From this side of the House he has frequently urged upon Mr. Gregory, a former Minister for Mines, the need for establishing healthy conditions in the industry. I hope that if the development takes place which he hopes will take place in the Kalgoorlie district, he will take prompt action with a view to ensuring that from the beginning proper methods are adopted for making the ventilation of the new mines what it should be. Then the old excuse will not be open to the mining companies, the excuse that the time is too late and that proper ventilation of the mines will involve them in too heavy expense. Without the assurance of healthy conditions for the miners, members on this side, and indeed members of this Chamber generally who have a regard for the health of the miners, cannot be unduly optimistic. I repeat, I hope the Minister's optimism will be justified by events. I trust that both the State and the men engaged in actual gold production will have a very good time. In my opinion, no one is better entitled to such a good time than the men who produce the wealth of the country. In travelling I have often felt resentful, or else amused, by statements made by superior persons that the worker ought to get a fair deal. As if there could be any question about it! When I read in the speeches of gentlemen like Mr. Lloyd George that the worker ought to get a fair deal too, I cannot help asking myself why there should be any question whatever about it? The worker ought to be the very first consideration. The man who does not work should get a fair deal after the other man has had a fair deal. I trust that in the mining industry, and in every other industry, the worker will be the first consideration, and that other people will receive consideration later on. As regards the mining industry, therefore, my hope is that the prospector will receive a fair deal, that the worker will receive a fair deal, and that the man who puts money into a mining proposition will receive a fair return.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.10 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 11th November, 1919.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

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

(1) Slaughter of Calves Restriction.

(2) Pearling Act Amendment.

BILL—FRUIT CASES.

Select Committee's Report.

Hon. A. SANDERSON brought up the report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Bill.

Report received and read.

On motion by Hon. A. Sanderson ordered: That the report and evidence be printed, and be taken into consideration when the Bill is in Committee.

QUESTION—SOLDIER SETTLEMENT, PASTORAL COUNTRY.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (for Hon. J. W. Hickey) asked the Minister for Education: Supplementary to the answers given by the Minister for Education on the 28th October to a question by me, I now ask: 1, Will he state the exact number of acres held under pastoral lease by Mr. F. Pearce, at Mt. Kenneth? 2, Are the leases stocked as required by the Act?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, 133,000 acres. 2, 43,000 acres are not stocked in accordance with the Act, and the question of forfeiture will be considered. The conditions of the Act have been complied with in respect to the balance of the area.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

Standing Orders suspension.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [4.35]: I move—

> That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended for this sitting as are necessary to enable the Land Tax and Income Tax Bill to be passed through all its remaining stages at this sitting.

Members will recollect that the second reading was moved at the beginning of last week. The Bill was to have been considered in Committee on Thursday last, but on the representations of certain members that the pastoral industry was not being fairly treated and that they required time to consider that aspect of the Bill, I agreed to the postponement of the Committee stage until to-day, and at the same time gave notice that I should move this motion. On the second reading I explained that the Bill was late this session, that the assessment notices, framed on the returns furnished to the end of June last, have been awaiting issue for a little time, and that any further delay in the passing of the Bill would mean a serious inconvenience and loss of time in the collection of revenue. Consequently, although I have no desire to rush the Bill through, I hope the motion will be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

In Committee.

Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Grant of land tax and income tax for the year ending 30th June, 1920.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I have to thank the leader of the House for his consideration in postponing the Committee stage from Thursday in order to allow those members interested to look into the matter. From what I can glean, the clause aims at imposing an additional tax upon pastoral lessees. But instead of its hitting the larger pastoralists, as intended, the tax will rebound upon the smaller pastoralists, allowing the larger to go free. The Premier, myself, and four others who understand the business are engaged in a scheme for the peopling of the great cattle areas in the North-West with pastoralists beginning in a small way. But those men will be faced with this position: They will pay the higher rent imposed under the Land Act of 1917 and will get no return for six years. It will take two years before a station is properly established, and after that it will be four years before there is any marketable product. It follows that during the next six years the smaller men will pay the land tax but, having no income, they will be able to set off their land tax against an income tax. Still they will be paying a higher rate under the Land Act than they would be paying by way of income tax. On the other hand, the bigger men will have their land tax and income tax assessed, and will set one off against the other and pay the difference. In my opinion that is entirely wrong.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The adjournment given by the Minister is very much appreciated by members interested. This is a taxation measure. It has passed the lower House without opposition, and therefore the question might be asked why a member of this Committee should take it upon himself to criticise the measure. If I consider the measure is unfair I shall make what protest I can. Under present conditions, to get at the basis of the value of the leases for taxation purposes, the following rough and ready method is used: First we double the rate, then we capitalise the result, and finally tax on that. To illustrate my meaning, let me suggest that the rate is £100. We double the rate, that is £200; that makes the capital value £4,000, and a tax of a penny in the pound on £4,000 is, roughly, £16. Under this proposal, although the full market value of the land has been arrived at, it is proposed to double that for the purpose of getting cash. If we are going to put further burdens on the taxpayers those burdens should be distributed fairly. As pointed out by Mr. Holmes, the man who will be hit the hardest

is the small man. Why do these people not make a strong protest?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It went through in two minutes in another place, I understand.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It would be unseemly at present to explain why this clause went through another place in the way it did. There is only a comparatively small amount involved in this matter, and, though the principle is unfair and unjust, it is apparently not worth while fighting the matter. I do not prospose any amendment, and will let the matter go at that. It can, however, be used in evidence against the Government and against their method of conducting the financial affairs of this country. I regret that the Government should lend their support to this taxation proposal, which is obviously and manifestly unfair.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: We know that the Government want revenue, and that all parts of the State should contribute towards it. I do not think the pastoralists as a class have shown any objection to reasonable taxation. To impose it on the increased rent is premature. It is a temporary expedient until the land is appraised. Lessees have the right to surrender their leases to the Government with a view to having them appraised and rents apportioned accordingly. These rents may be doubled or trebled or quadrupled, but, on the other hand, they may be altered to such an extent that when the lessee has the right to say whether he will accept the appraisement or not, he may refuse to accept the appraisement. In the meantime, however, he will pay land tax for the total rental. The Government are imposing this double rental on the chance that everyone will accept the appraisement. The only remedy would be to insert a proviso to make the Taxation Department return so much money which had been levied on the amount of rents that were returned to those lessees who did not accept the appraisement.

The Minister for Education: Would you increase it in cases where the appraisement was higher?

Hon Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: I say that in cases where the lessee does not accept the appraisement there should be a certain amount returned to them. I endorse the remarks of Mr. Holmes, in which he says that this will fall on the small man, such as the returned soldier, who may just have started out in this pastoral pursuit.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The clause provides that it is subject to the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act of 1907. Paragraph (c) of Section 2 of the Act of 1907 reads—

> In respect of any land held for any leasehold estate or interest, without the right of purchase, under the Land Act, 1898, or any amendment thereof, or any land regulation thereby repealed, a sum equal to twenty times the excess of the amount of the fair annual rent at which the land would let under such reasonable conditions as a bona fide lessee would require, assuming the actual improvements (if any) had not been made, above the annual rent for the time being reserved by the lease, to be assessed under the Act; and until assessment, a sum equal to twenty times the amount of the annual rent reserved by the lease.

The effect of the amending Land Act of 1908 under which the pastoralists, in order to secure an extended tenure, are called upon to pay the double rent, was to wipe out this latter provision and give freedom from being subject to land tax at all. Without this clause in the Bill any leaseholder who is paying double rent will be entirely free from land taxation. Mr. Holmes has rightly said that the tax will fall upon those who are not making any incomes from their land, but I do not know that it necessarily follows that it will fall upon the small man. It will fall most heavily upon those who are holding back areas of land and are not using them to the extent of producing any considerable income from them. If these persons had a large income this would not affect them at all, but those who are holding land without using it, whether large or small men, would not have an income large enough to free them from payment of land tax. Those who are not earning an income from their land will be those who have newly taken up land. Under the Land Act of 1917 as amended in 1918, giving the pastoralists this right of extended tenure of 20 years after the expiration of the lease, the pastoralists were given a great privilege. I do not think they have much cause for complaint. Those who did not exercise the right of coming under that Act and who have continued with the knowledge that their leases will expire on the date originally fixed, will not have their tax increased under the provisions of the Act of 1907. The Committee have to decide whether these people who have got the advantage of the extended tenure shall pay a land tax or not. Does the privilege, which has been given to them of extending their leases by 20 years, entitle the Committee to impose this measure of taxation upon them?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The extension of the tenure of the lease for another 20 years has enhanced the values of areas held in the far North. There are always two sides to a picture. I intend to give the other side without any embellishment and show what has been the result of some of the increases gained by the people in the North as the result of the additional tenure. Since the extension of leases to 1948 has been granted, one by the name of Bob Sexton sold his property to Rawson for £16,000. Rawson very soon after sold it to W. McNaughton for £32,000. Quilty Bros. purchased from M. J. Durack a property for £86,000, which is considerably more than it

could have been sold for had this extended tenure not been granted. Then Kelly also sold his station for a very big figure. Of Connor, Doherty, & Durack's property 100,000 acres were reclaimed for the Wyndham Freezing Works, but they still retain 800,000 acres in Kimberley, and upwards of one million acres in the Northern Territory. It will be generally understood that these were valuable properties to hold prior to the passing of the Act during the last session of Parliament. I understand that a Kimberley station was purchased for £160,000. To-day they would refuse £250,000 for the same property. These are big figures and they speak for themselves. In view of the figures which I have quoted, the proposal contained in the measure will not impose a hardship, as has been contended by previous speakers. I intend to support the Bill as it stands and at a later stage will have something to say with regard to other transactions in the North in the last 12 months.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Mr. Duffell will excuse me when I say that the points raised by him are entirely foreign to this question. In reply to Mr. Sanderson, I would say that the pastoralists' objection is that the thing is wrong in principle. They are not likely to be affected very much if this Act is passed.

The Minister for Education: Why is it wrong in principle?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Crown is the owner of the leases. They put up the rent to the maximum. An appraiser has been appointed to fix the rent and there is a further appraisement to be made 15 years hence. The Government appointed their appraiser to raise the rent, not to double it as suggested, but to raise it to any figure the appraiser might think fit. The Government having secured the maximum rental for the property come along and impose a land tax on the maximum rental. That is wrong in principle. If I own a block of land in Hay-street with premises on it, and I double the rent paid by my tenants, then the income tax officer is surely entitled to come along and tax me on my income. In this case we have an appraiser engaged at the present time to ascertain the full value of the land and, having done so, and extracted the last penny from a tenant, it is now proposed to impose a land tax. The big man will set off the land tax as against the income tax and pay nothing, but the small man, on whom we depend to open up the North, we propose to baulk him at the first hurdle by the imposition of this tax. I hope I have shown the Minister that the thing is wrong in principle.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Will the Minister tell me what the estimated result of this taxation will be?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I omitted, when speaking before, to refer to the suggestion of Sir Edward Wittenoom, that provision should be made for a refund in cases where the higher rents were not accepted. It is difficult at any time to get a refund from the Commissioner of Taxation, and I do not think an amendment of that kind would be accepted, unless the other side of the case were put up, that is, that the rent should be much higher and that the holder of the leases should pay for a period of years what he should have been paying all along. Unless it were made to cut both ways, I do not see what good would result.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: It is rather significant that the Government do not know how much this is going to produce.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is rather an unfair statement for the hon. member to make. I have no doubt that, if I had had an opportunity of communicating with the Commissioner, he would have told me. I merely said I did not know. I endeavour as far as I can to arm myself with all the information that I consider hon. members are likely to require.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The Minister for Education represents the Government in this Chamber and it is significant to me that the Government here, or in another place, have not indicated what revenue this tax is going to produce.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The statements which I have quoted are sufficient to show that the double rent which has been referred to by the members representing the North will not be burdensome. The value of the property is there. Speaking on this taxation measure a couple of years ago, I made a suggestion that the time had arrived when the Commonwealth Government should permit the States to impose a tax of one penny per lb. on the wool clip. It must be generally admitted that the burden of taxation is very heavy indeed, especially to the general community, and when there is an opportunity to impose a tax on those who will feel it least it should be our duty to suggest to the Government that taxation in that direction should be imposed.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I would like to ask the Minister whether, under this Bill, new selectors will be given a certain term during which their land will not be subject to taxation. I am not well acquainted with the law relating to taxation, but I understand that, at the present time, if a person selects land under the conditional purchase sections of the Act, he has not to pay a tax for the first five years. Will not that apply to pastoral holdings when new selectors are taking up land? If that is so, that will get over one of Mr. Holmes's objections, that the new selector will have to pay tax before he has any chance of making anything out of the land. I question the legal right to collect the land tax on these fictitious or supposed values. The Government themselves do not know the unimproved value of the land. The other day there was a case at Kalgoorlie of a

road board trying to increase rates for a similar reason, but it was not allowed. I do not think this tax will be allowed until the land is appraised. If we appraise land values and fix an annual rental, and then put a land tax on top of that again, we may establish a precedent which will put us in difficulties.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I appreciate the position taken up by Sir Edward Wittenoom. A number of lease holders may find on appraisement that they will not be paying double rent, but my impression of the original assessment Act is that it assumed these leases had about 20 years to run and the unimproved value of the land was taken on the basis of a 20 years' lease. Now an alteration has been made to the Act. The leases, which had only another nine years to run, have been extended by 20 years so that, following the same basis, we should charge on 29 times the rent. When the Government, by arrangement with the pastoralists, doubled the rent the pastoralists were prepared to abandon the old leases and take up new ones, knowing that the double rent would be a charge. I agree with Mr. Holmes that it will be a hardship on new settlers. If a sufficiently strong agitation were worked up, the Government might be impressed with the necessity for giving new lessees the same opportunities as are extended to those who take up conditional purchase land. That exemption, however, is only granted to men who take up a limited area; I believe £1,000 worth of unimproved value is exempted for five years. I support the clause.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Mr. Hamersley has said that pastoralists knew their rent would be doubled and were perfectly satisfied to go on. That is not the position. The trouble is the pastoralist does not know what his rent will be. It may be 10 times what he is paying to-day.

Hon. J. Mills: He knows it will not be that much.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: He knew there was a maximum of £3 per thousand acres which the appraisement could not exceed. The rental under the old surrendered leases was 10s. per thousand.

Hon. J. Mills: Not all.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Parliament in its wisdom struck out the provision for the £3 per thousand and the appraisement could be made at £10 or £20 a thousand. The pastoralist to-day is paying the usual rent plus 100 per cent., which is held in trust until the appraisement is fixed, and then the pastoralist will have the option of going on under his present lease, expiring in 1928, at the rental fixed in the lease or accepting a lease to expire in 1948, the rent to be fixed by an appraiser 10 or 15 years hence. In regard to Mr. Duffell's proposed wool tax, the Imperial Government hold in Australia 1½ million bales of wool, for which they have paid. Until that wool is shipped and sold, the pastoralists do not know what they are going to do with their wool. The Imperial Government intend to ship and sell their wool first. Yet some members would impose a tax of one penny a pound on wool which may probably never be exported.

Hon. J. MILLS: I do not think that pastoralists have any quarrel with the Bill. I support the Government, but they would be well advised to amend the Bill so that leases issued since the amending Act of 1917 might be exempted from this tax. That would protect the small men. The old pastoralists certainly obtained an advantage by getting a renewal of their leases as they did in 1917, and the new leaseholders coming in should receive some advantage. It would be in the interests of the country if the Government decided that all land selected since 1917, up to a maximum of 100,000 acres, should be exempt from this taxation.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I move an amendment—

> That the following words be added to the clause—"Provided that no new selector shall be liable to pay any land tax for the first five years of his lease."

We have millions of acres of good pastoral land lying idle. We are supposed to be trying to induce men to go on the land. If we pass a land tax of this description, we shall be taxing these people before they have a chance to make anything out of their leases. I shall never agree to put a land tax on any selector until he has had a chance to make an income from the land.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This Bill is not the proper place to make an amendment of the nature proposed by Mr. Greig. It should be made in the Land Tax Assessment Bill and not in a Bill for imposing taxation. If this were the proper place for such a provision, we should have to consider whether it is a fact that taxation on pastoral leases is discouraging the people from taking up leases. This is not the case. People are eager to take up leases and are doing so. The amendment suggested by Mr. Mills would not be worth bothering about as he will realise if he reckons up the tax payable on 100,000 acres.

Hon. J. E. DODD: If the amendment were applied to new land, there would not be so much objection to it, but the hon. member is moving to exempt new settlers. The probable result would be that big estates would be cut up or dummied so that new selectors would take them over. There would be the old land for which no tax would be paid for five years. No objection was raised to the tax in 1917 and why should exception be taken to it now? I believe the whole method of taxation is absolutely wrong. Where land is let on lease, the money paid for the leasehold should include the tax. But if we had been going on that basis when the Act was altered in 1917, in-

stead of making the rental double we should probably have made it treble or fourfold. Parliament proceeded on the assumption that land tax would be paid on the double rental. It seems an anomaly that the State should lease land and then tax it; but, still, we have gone on that principle all along. If the amendment applies only to new settlers going on new land, I do not see much objection to it.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: Mr. Greig's amendment introduces a very dangerous principle —that a man is to be exempt from taxation if he is not making a profit. Where is that principle to stop? If it is to apply to the pastoralist, why should it not apply to an orchardist beginning operations on freehold property?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I cannot support Mr. Greig's amendment, which is too vague to yield any definite results. The words "new selector" are open to many constructions. To my knowledge, foreign applicants have gone into the North-West under assumed names, and I certainly would not exempt them. Perhaps the matter could be dealt with in some other way than that suggested by the amendment.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: My object is to encourage land selection.

The Minister for Education: There is no occasion to offer any encouragement. The pastoral leases are being rushed.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: Looking at the map of the North-West, one sees a great many blanks. It seems to me a wrong principle to tax a man as soon as he gets on the land. My contention is that a man should not be taxed before he has had a chance to make a profit.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: With regard to the interjection of the leader of the House, I have had occasion to inquire into northern leases during the last few months, and so far as I can judge the rush is from oversea corporations. In order to protect our own people and our returned soldiers, an embargo has been placed on those leases pending the solution of the problem.

Hon. J. MILLS: According to published statistics, on the last day of last year there were 221,000,000 acres held under pastoral lease. On the 30th June last the area held under pastoral lease was 241,000,000 acres.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3, 4, 5—agreed to.

Preamble, title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and passed.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Inebriates Act Amendment.

2, Licensing Act Amendment Continuance.

Received from the Legislative Assembly.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [5.41] in moving the second reading said: I trust that hon. members will not be appalled by the dimensions of this measure. It is a small Bill of 356 clauses and two schedules, but for many reasons it is not so formidable a measure as its mere bulk would suggest. Of the 356 clauses 163 are lifted from the existing Act without any alteration whatever. Of the remainder, 171 are taken from existing legislation, but have been redrafted. In the case of a large proportion of them, they have been merely redrafted to better express the intention of the original enactments. Others have been redrafted to express alterations in principle. The clauses that are actually new number only 22. When the Roads Act was passed in April, 1911, it was recognised that the measure embodied several important principles that were new not only to this State of Western Australia but new throughout Australasia. To a considerable extent it was experimental legislation. Consequently a definite understanding was carried at that during the following session the measure should be reviewed, and in order to enforce that understanding upon the Government of the day a provision was inserted in the Bill that it should continue in operation for 12 months and no longer. Hon. members are well aware that although a period of nearly eight years has elapsed since the passage of the principal Act, the promise to review the Act by Parliament had not been carried into effect until the present Bill was presented. When the original measure of 1911 was submitted, it was recognised that in many respects the Bill represented a new departure from road board government as previously understood, and therefore the Bill was referred to a select committee. The select committee took a great deal of evidence, spent a lot of time in considering the measure, and suggested some very important amendments. Amongst the amendments made by Parliament upon the suggestion of the select committee were two to which special reference may be made, as illustrating a large number of alterations from previous principles. One is the provision for making the unimproved value of land the basis for levying the general rate in road board districts. That was a provision inserted on the suggestion of the select committee, and it was a provision entirely new to this State. The other is the provision that the owner of land should be the only person to be rated. Previously the practice had been to have recourse first to the occupier, and, he failing,

to go to the owner. The 1911 Act provides that the board shall go straight to the owner. Both these provisions, I say, were new to Western Australia, and indeed to Australasia; and it was largely because of these provisions, and kindred new departures, that Parliament decided to limit the operation of the Act to 12 months—the idea being that during the 12 months the Government of the day would be able to determine, by experience, whether it was desirable that the new provisions should be indefinitely continued, and what other sections of the Act might require alteration. Another matter which received a good deal of attention during the debate on the 1911 measure was the mode of allowing absentee voters to record their votes. Of the present method of absentee voting we have had eight years' experience, and it is very unsatisfactory indeed. A promise was made at that time, in 1911, that special consideration should be given to this question. In accordance with that promise a committee was appointed by the then Minister, consisting of the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Lambert appointed by the road board executive, and the local government officer. This committee, after exhaustive inquiries, put up a report devising a scheme which the road board executive have endorsed as likely to give what is required, namely, opportunity for absentees to vote, and at the same time removing the abuses which take place under the existing Act. The scheme put up by this committee is embodied in the Bill. It has been referred by the executive of the road boards to the whole of the boards in the State, and has been unanimously approved. I believe one board did send in a suggestion of a minor character. So it may be said that the provisions suggested by the committee in regard to absentee voting and embodied in the Bill have the unanimous support of road boards throughout the State. The Act of 1911 has proved to have many defects, but it can safely be said for it that it was a very distinct advance on previous legislation. Generally speaking it has served its purpose well. However, the eight years that have elapsed have shown up all its weaknesses, and the time has arrived when those weaknesses should be removed. One thing that has happened under the Act has been the amalgamation of a number of road boards with small municipalities. This has happened in a great many cases, and I think I am right in saying that in every instance the amalgamation has proved to be a step in the right direction, reducing administrative costs and making for greater efficiency. At the same time it has been found that the provisions of the existing Act, whilst they admit of the amalgamations, do not provide all the machinery necessary in order that the amalgamations may be satisfactorily carried out. These defects are remedied in the Bill. For instance, those amalgamations had the effect of bringing a number of towns under the control of road boards, and the purposes for which road boards might raise money did not cover some of the objects for which it is necessary to raise money for the requirements of a town, such as the supply of electric lighting power, gas, water, and other conveniences. These were not contemplated under the Roads Board Act, and consequently when a small municipality, too small to be economically worked as a separate institution, merged itself in a road board, there was no longer authority to give to the town those conveniences which the town required. Provision is made for this in the Bill. The boards will be enabled to undertake works in that connection, but only with the approval of their ratepayers, and in certain cases with the approval of the Governor in Council, in exactly the same way as municipalities are empowered to do under their Act. Another defect in the Act was that whilst these amalgamations could be made there was not a ready provision for the ratepayers to vote in a new district. Various amendments are provided in the Bill which will overcome this defect. Another aspect of the amalgamation of districts and the growth of existing districts is that the necessity is indicated for increasing the number of members in some boards which cover large areas. The number was limited to eleven. Under the Bill that number is to be increased to 13. This increase is considered necessary, especially in respect of boards covering large areas embracing both country districts and towns, where there are health and other local matters to be administered. Whilst it is to be regretted that so long a period has elapsed before the introduction of the Bill, I think it can fairly be claimed that that long interval of time will prove to be not without advantage. During those eight years all the defects of the existing Act have been brought to light. Quite a number of road board conferences have made recommendations. All those recommendations have been carefully considered, and the result is there has been every opportunity for framing a thoroughly good Bill. It will be for hon. members to judge whether that opportunity has been fully seized. I confess at once I do not pose as an authority on these matters, but having spent a good deal of time going through the Bill and comparing it with the existing Act and with suggestions from several road board conferences, I think that if we could manage to pass the Bill during the present session, in conjunction with the Traffic Bill, it would mean a very creditable session's performance in the direction of improving local governing bodies' legislation. It will be agreed that we cannot do any greater service to the people throughout the country than to make perfect the machinery by which they can govern themselves. The number of alterations suggested by different road board conferences, and approved by the department, has been so large that it has been necessary to completely redraft the Bill. As I have already stated, 163 clauses have been taken out of the Act without alteration, but they have had to be put in different positions to place them in their proper sequence

with other new and altered clauses, and therefore it is a newly drafted Bill. The executive of the Road Boards Association have had an opportunity of considering the principles of the Bill. The measure itself was not submitted to them, of course, but notes were submitted to them showing the principles advocated by the different conferences which had been agreed to, and explaining the reasons why other proposals had not been agreed to. Practically 90 per cent. of the requests by road board conferences have been embodied in the Bill, and reasons were given why it was thought not desirable to embody the remainder. Those notes outlining the provisions of the Bill and submitted to the road board executive have met with the strong approval of that body, and I am sure that local governing bodies generally will greatly appreciate the Bill. The machinery of the various clauses has been amplified to meet the experience gained by the boards during the past eight years. Provision is contained in the existing Act to regulate subdivisions of lands, which actual experience has shown to have many weaknesses. These it is sought to remedy in the Bill. That is one of a great many points in the present legislation which have been proved to be defective. Another provision is that the chairman of a road board shall be a justice of the peace in the magisterial district in which the office of the board is situated. This has been long requested by road boards, and I think it is a proper provision, seeing that the mayor of a municipality is the chief magistrate in the magisterial district in which the municipality is situated. The amendment becomes all the more necessary in view of the considerable number of municipalities which have been amalgamated with road boards. Another provision is that women shall sit on boards, that is to say, subject to the approval of the ratepayers. We have already approved of women being eligible for appointment as justices of the peace, and if their fellow townsmen agree to elect them to a seat on the board, I think provision ought to be made accordingly. The old measure places no limit as to the number of votes for a person having property in several wards. Consquently a person may have as many as four votes in as many wards as his property allows. When the Bill was in another place an amendment was inserted providing that no person shall exercise more than four votes in any road board district. I think it is desirable to compare that provision with the provision in the Municipalities Act. In the Municipalities Act the scale of votes is set out, providing for one, two, three, or four votes for mayor, according to the property qualification. For voting in the different wards no ratepayer can have more than two votes for councillor, but he can exercise two votes for councillor in each ward in which he has a sufficient property qualification. The Road Board Act does not make any special provision for the election of a mayor or chairman. The chairman is elected by the members of the board themselves, so that there is only the one provision for providing the number of votes an elector shall have. That principle is based on the unimproved capital value or on the annual value, whichever may have been adopted as the basis of rating, and the maximum number of votes is four. Under the Act as it stands, a ratepayer having property of sufficient value in each of six or seven wards of the road board area could exercise four votes in each of those wards. The amendment made in the Assembly provides that no person shall exercise more than four votes in any road board district.

Hon. J. A. Greig: Per year, or per election?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The amendment carried in another place seems to be open to the objection that it does not say how a person shall exercise those four votes, or whether, having used his four votes in one ward at a general election, in the event of an extraordinary election in another ward, he might use them there. But whatever the defect, it will be remedied by an amendment which I intend to place on the Notice Paper. It is for the House to say whether they will agree to the principle of four votes. If so, it will be necessary to make a small amendment in order that the principle might be worked out clearly. It is obvious that the Bill is purely a measure for consideration in Committee. All that I intend to do is to direct attention to the new clauses and to those clauses that have been altered in principle. Because of that I do not propose to make any reference to the clauses that have been lifted in their present form from the existing Act, nor to any clause the amendment in which is purely an alteration in drafting and merely carries out the existing principle. The first of the new clauses is Clause 15. This provides machinery for extending the vote to owners or occupiers of transferred territory. Under the Act these ratepayers would not be on the roll of the district to which they have been transfererd until the next revision court. This might deprive them of a vote. The clause provides for placing their names on the roll without delay. That is one of the defects to which I have referred in the case of two districts or road boards amalgamating. Clause 16 is quite new but is purely a machinery clause. Clause 17 is the interpretation relating merely to this part of the Bill. It is essential for the purpose of dealing with the term "district" in the constitution of districts. I think the clause is clear and a very proper one. Clause 19 is an improvement of Section 12 of the existing Act and prevents the same action from being taken under separate Acts. The provisions of Section 12 of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1906, and the provisions of Section 8 of the Roads Act, 1911, with regard to the alteration of

boundaries and similar actions, are very much alike, and hitherto such action might have been taken under either Act when a municipal district or a road district was being dealt with. This divided responsibility is always undesirable, and is got rid of by the present Bill. In future the amalgamation will proceed definitely under the Roads Act alone whenever a road district is involved. Clause 22 refers to outlying land. There is very little outlying land in the State, and it is not expected that the clause will be brought into operation to any extent at all. It may be found necessary to apply the provisions for outlying land and it is desirable that the machinery should be in the Bill if it is wanted. Clause 69 does not appear amongst the new clauses, but provision is made in it with regard to the putting up of deposits by candidates. Clause 71 is a new clause providing for the fate of the deposit. It is merely the usual provision in the case of forfeited deposits. Clause 144 gives the board power to define and set out new roads in addition to those in existence. Hitherto road boards have taken it for granted that they had this power and they have done this. No power was given in the Roads Act to define and set out roads within their district. It is obviously a proper power that will now be given under this clause.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What about control?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: They have the control of their roads under the Act. That was given to them before.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Can they set out a road without the Minister's approval as under the old Act?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The Bill says—

> No road shall, without the consent in writing of the Minister, be set out or constructed unless the width of such road, from front to front of the boundary line on either side thereof be 66ft. at least.

They have the right to set out a road, but cannot set out anything which is not a proper road without the consent in writing of the Minister. Clause 55 is a new clause following on the provisions of Clause 154. It is inserted with a view to preventing the resubdivision of allotments already approved of until reviewed and consented to by the board. This is a necessary provision. Clause 154 relates to the making of subdivisions and the obtaining of the authority of the road board to make them. Clause 155 is required to prevent the subdivision without further submission to the board. Undoubtedly this provision is very much needed. Clause 156 deals with the control of roads, reserves, and the subdivision of land. The reason for having this part of the Bill administered by the Lands Department is that the survey and declaration of roads is provided for in the Lands Act and rests entirely with the Lands Department. When a board wishes to move for the opening or closing of a road, they deal direct with the Lands Department, even under the present Roads Act. As regards subdivision, it is thought that better, more convenient and more economical administration will result, as the Lands Department and the Lands Titles Office are kindred offices and jointly interested in the matter of the subdivision of land. It is the business of the Lands Department, and will be an improvement to place this part of the Act under the Minister for Lands. Clause 203 is a machinery clause. It is inserted so that no block may occur by reason of the board's neglect in the direction mentioned. If a road board fails to serve an offer on any claimant against the board for compensation under the Public Works Act, 1902, within the time limited for that purpose by that Act, then the Minister may at any time thereafter serve an offer on behalf of the board, and such offer shall be deemed to be an offer duly made by the board for the purposes of the said Act. Clause 161 limits the board's power to contract for water supply in the same way as councils are limited under the Municipal Corporations Act of 1906. Clause 162, relating to electric light, follows that provision and keeps in line with the electric light Acts. Clause 163 is a machinery clause and incorporates the provisions of the electric light Acts and makes them applicable to the supply of gas. All these matters relate to questions to which I have previously referred. Where road boards include towns, as they do now, they will have the right to provide these facilities for the people in the towns. Clause 215 is another new clause. It establishes the improved value of certain classes of land, that is lands in relation to which a special method of ascertaining the improved value is prescribed by the Bill. Clause 248 makes clear what claims can take precedence to road rates and also makes the purchaser of land liable for the payment of rates due thereon. At the present time the board can sue only the person who owned the land at the time it was rated, and this, it is considered, hampers them in a very unfair way. Clause 253 is a new one, but very simple. It provides for an allowance of discount on rates for prompt payment. The board may, if authorised by its by-laws, allow any person who pays the rates for which he is liable within 30 days of such rates becoming due a percecntage by way of discount to be fixed by the by-laws, but not exceeding £5 per cent. of the amount of such rates. That is a proper course to encourage the prompt payment of rates. With regard to Clause 255, it is considered that this will protect the interests of both parties. It protects the board by providing that their action shall not fail by reason of the rate notice not having been served, and it protects the ratepayer by giving him the right to make the same objections as he would have had on an appeal if the rate notice had been properly served. It provides against vexatious technical objections and also provides a ready method of settlement

which appears fair and equitable both to the ratepayer and the board. The next new clause is 267. This means that the order must be put in force within a reasonable time; such order must be put in force within 12 months, or it lapses. A similar provision is contained in the case of the Transfer of Land Act, where writs of fi. fa. lapse after a certain time unless they are either enforced or renewed. Clause 268 follows on 267. It merely provides—

> That an order for sale under which the land has not been sold shall not discharge the land from any rates or take away any right of the board against the land, including the right to apply for a fresh order for sale.

This is a necessary complement to the previous clause. Clause 341 is as follows:—

> Any charge imposed or arising by or under this Act in respect of any property shall be valid and effectual for all purposes and against all persons without registration, notwithstanding the provisions of the Transfer of Land Act, 1893, or any other Act.

One of the principal provisions of the Transfer of Land Act, 1893, is that in order to become fully effective an instrument (or a caveat in respect of a claim that cannot be registered) must be registered so that all the world may have notice thereof. It is to guard against the effect of this provision, so far as it would affect charges under this Bill, that Clause 341 has been provided. Clause 351 provides that the board may destroy old and useless accumulations of records. It says—

> The board may destroy disused rate receipt books, bank books, cheque books, ledgers, cash books, and documents which have not been in use for upwards of seven years.

This is to prevent an unnecessary accumulation of such books and papers. Clause 256 is the usual arbitration clause and is inserted in the Bill, because under this Bill many disputes under the existing Act are referred to a magistrate and assessor. These are all the new clauses of the Bill, but there are many clauses taken from the existing Acts in which alterations of principle are being made, and to these I intend to direct attention. The first is Clause 23. This allows for women to be elected by the omission of the word "male." I have already referred to this. Clause 24 removes the restrictions of persons to sit as members who have served a term of imprisonment. That has been struck out. It will involve an amendment in the proviso. The proviso of Clause 24 reads —"Provided that paragraph (5) shall not apply to any person." Paragraph (1) was struck out at the top of the clause and the other paragraphs were renumbered, with the result that there are only four paragraphs now in the clause.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: We had better put the other one back.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: We must either put that back or alter the number "five" to "four" in the proviso. In Clause 27 the date of election is altered from Wednesday to Saturday. It is generally accepted that Saturday is the most desirable day for an election. This means a consequential alteration of dates for the preparation of roles, revision courts, etc. Clause 34 is altered in the way I have already referred to by providing that no person shall exercise more than four votes in any road board district. Apart from that, the method of calculating the number of votes to which each ratepayer shall be entitled is the same as under the existing Act. Clauses 42 to 50 are amended for the purpose of obviating the writing up of section lists. The alteration is a very simple but a necessary one. Clause 65 is amended by making provision to appoint fresh returning officers when those previously appointed cannot act.

Sitting adjourned from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Clause 69 provides that a candidate for election shall accompany his nomination with a deposit of £1. The intention is to do away with frivolous nominations. The amount is very small and I think I am speaking from recollection when I mention that in connection with municipal elections the amount is £5. Clause 90 merely provides for the disposal and custody of ballot papers by the Minister after an election has taken place. Clause 110 provides a penalty for the fraudulent obtaining of ballot papers and also the making of false statements in connection with elections. Clause 128 provides that there shall be a veto by the Minister against the appointment of any officer, also against their unfair dismissals. It further provides that the board may from time to time appoint and remove a secretary and such other officers and servants as may be deemed necessary and may define their duties and may assign reasonable remuneration for their services, provided that no secretary shall be appointed or removed without the approval of the Minister. That is an alteration in principle in regard to which members may have a difference of opinion. My present duty is to point out the alteration that is contemplated. Clause 145 provides that roads on duly approved subdivisional plans prior to this Act shall become public roads. Clause 148 will prevent people forcing a board to fence lands, by owners fencing during the period of gazettal, and will also restrict the liability of the board in case of deviation of road to fence the deviation only. That is a very necessary provision for the protection of the road boards. Clause 150 provides for an exchange of land for other land taken for roads. Clause 154 provides against lands being re-subdivided when once approved by a board, without further approval of the board. Clause 159 extends the boards' powers in regard to the supply of water instead of the formation of a water board, the supply of electric power, the establishing of gas works, and the supply of gas, the

management of cemeteries, the arrangement of railway sidings over roads and the acquisition and working of quarries or gravel pits. These provisions entail consequential alterations in other parts of the measure. Clause 184 provides for an improved method for gates on public roads and provides that persons who take advantake of a neighbour's fence when gates are placed on the road to pay half the interest on the cost of the fence. Clause 190 provides for obtaining reports from the fire brigade board in connection with the scheme for fire prevention to be undertaken by road boards. Clause 195 extends the board's powers to make by-laws in the direction of granting discount for prompt payment of rates, the regulating of business concerns, the restricting of specially constructed tracks for motor cars, stands for vehicles, hand carts, prevention of dumping of hot ashes, etc. Clause 209 restricts the boards to expenditure beyond the amount authorised as an over-draft or loan. Clause 213 adopts the unimproved value on town lots leased from the Crown. The last line of the first paragraph reads—"Assuming that the improvements, if any, thereon or appertaining thereto had not been made." The clause in its present form follows a similar provision in the Federal Act but it departs from the provision in the State Act. There seems to be some fear that the inclusion of the words "or appertaining thereto" might lead to a misunderstanding. I will, however, ask for an exact explanation as to what those words really mean. Clause 229 extends the period for which land may be assessed and which has been omitted from the rate book. Clause 232 increases the maximum for rating on the unimproved system from 3d. to 6d. subject to the Minister's approval. Clause 233 exempts the board from raising unnecessary loan rates on reproductive works. That is following the present practise of municipalities. Whenever a municipality or a road board raise a loan they must provide a rate to meet the interest and sinking fund charges. The Municipalities Act provides that where money borrowed has been spent on reproductive works, and if the money in itself returns sufficient profit to meet interest and sinking fund there is no legal obligation on the municipality to strike a special rate for that purpose. Clause 234 extends the boards' powers for a minimum charge to the loan rate. Clause 245 provides that appeals to the local court must be decided on the same evidence as was placed before the appeal to the board. Clause 253 abolishes interest on rates. Clause 260 provides that the board must make application to the court for an order to lease or sell, and Clause 276 will prevent the legitimate borrowing powers of boards being curtailed. I have not made any reference to the numerous clauses which have been lifted from the existing Act without alteration, nor have I made reference to those clauses in the Bill which are merely alterations in form of the existing Act and which have not involved any alteration in principle. I have endeavoured to make clear the meaning of all the new clauses of the Bill and also all those clauses which have been altered so as to embody new principles. I would again ask hon. members not to look at this Bill merely from the point of view of its size. Already the Roads Act has been in successful operation for eight years, but during that period defects have manifested themselves. A number of road board conferences have dealt exhaustively with the matter and recommendations which have been made by those conferences have received the careful consideration of the department. Ninety per cent. of those recommendations have been embodied in the Bill before the House. The principles dealt with in the measure have been submitted to the executive of the road boards and have been approved. On those grounds I think that the House may accept the measure, simply devoting its attention to the consideration of the clauses which are new. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. W. Kirwan, debate adjourned.

BILL—TRAFFIC.

In Committee.

Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Postponed Clause 34—Maximum weight of vehicles:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: On the Notice Paper there appears an amendment in the name of Mr. Cornell and on the supplementary Notice Paper there is a proposal in my name. I discussed this matter with Mr. Cornell after the House rose on Thursday night last, and that hon. member made it clear that he was not by any means wedded to the particular schedule he put forward, and although I have not had an opportunity of discussing the revised schedule with him, I gathered from the discussion which I had with him that it will meet with his approval. At the moment we can only deal with the proposed amendment to Clause 34, and it will be necessary to recommit the Bill in order to add the schedule. I move an amendment—

That the first six lines be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—"No person shall carry or cause or permit to be carried on any road by any vehicle a greater weight, including the weight of the vehicle, than that prescribed by the Fourth Schedule, for each inch or portion of an inch of the width of the bearing surface of the tire of each wheel of the vehicle."

The intention is to give effect to the wishes of members by putting this matter on a sound and scientific basis. We recognise

that the wider the tire, the greater proportionate weight it might carry.

Amendment put and passed.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

Recommittal.

On motion by the MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, Bill recommitted to further consider Clause 20 and a proposed new schedule.

Clause 20—Licensing of drivers.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Mr. Cornell, who is not present, has asked me to take charge of an amendment standing in his name. I move an amendment—

That at the end of Subclause 2 the following be added—"one half of all the fees collected for such licenses shall be paid by the Commissioner of Police to the local authorities in whose district the licenses are granted."

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: While I am sympathetic towards local authorities, I cannot see any reason for giving them a portion of the fees which they do nothing whatever to produce. The whole matter will be in the hands of the police.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I can hardly appreciate the argument of the leader of the House. In view of the fact that the Government have ceased to give local authorities that financial support in the shape of subsidies which in former years was recognised almost as a right, they should be entitled to participate in this revenue. The local authorities endeavour to improve their areas and, the greater the support accorded to them, the greater will be their success in carrying out their work.

Hon. H. STEWART: Unless better reasons are given by the leader of the House, I shall support the amendment. The licenses will be largely pro forma renewals and, considering the reduction in the subsidies and the outside traffic for which local authorities have to cater, the amendment is deserving of support in the interests of the development of country districts.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not question that, in the interests of the development of the road boards and municipalities, the amendment would be desirable. It would amount to a gift. So far no licenses have been issued to drivers. Now we propose to issue such licenses and to impose the work on the police. We have fixed a registration fee to reimburse for the work, and the fee will go to the police who will do the work.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It is created by the existence of these local bodies.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: If the money is to go to the local authorities, those bodies will gain to that extent and the work will be carried out probably at a loss which the general taxpayer will have to make good.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	.. .. ..	6
Noes	.. .. ..	7
Majority against	..	1

AYES.

Hon. J. A. Greig	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. W. Kirwan	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. C. McKenzie	Hon. J. Mills
	(*Teller.*)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. V. Hamersley	(*Teller.*)

Amendment thus negatived.

Clause put and passed.

New Schedule:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The proposed new schedule which is before hon. members is based on the principle laid down in the Bill as introduced, of a weight of six hundredweight per inch for a vehicle with a three-inch tire. The schedule has been framed so that as the tire becomes narrower the load per inch decreases, and as the tire becomes wider the load per inch increases. Since this schedule was framed, I have discussed the matter with several interested parties; and, so far as I can see, no exception is taken to the tire weights, but it has been pointed out to me that in one or two instances some of the lower weights might lead to hardship. For instance, it is said that a four-wheeled lorry has sometimes not more than two inches or two and a half inches width of tires. Take a four-wheeled lorry with a 2½-inch width of tire. The weight per inch of tire is 5¾ hundredweight. Thus the total weight allowed would be 2 tons 17 cwt. 2 quarters. A lorry of this type, I understand, weighs 1 ton 5 cwt. Thus the load would be reduced to 1 ton 12 cwt., while the practice is to put two tons on lorries of that description.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Are you certain of the weight of that lorry?

Hon. J. Nicholson: I believe the weight of the lorry is 1 ton to 1 ton 5 cwt.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Assuming that the weight is one ton, the load would be 1 ton 12 cwt., and the practice, I believe, is to carry two tons. Under the Bill as originally introduced such a lorry would have been entitled to carry a weight of 6 cwt. per inch, instead of the 5¾ cwt. now proposed. The Government would be prepared to accept an amendment increasing the weight from 6 cwt. to 7 cwt. without any gradation at all. On that principle, if

the Committee desires it, I should be quite willing to make 6 cwt. the starting point.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I do not like the schedule submitted by the department. It contains 22 different gradations, more than any ordinary man can keep in his memory. The amendment proposed by Mr. Cornell seems to me far more practical. The additional weight on narrow tires is well enough on the macadamised roads in towns from the point of view of drivers; but the municipalities are strongly opposed to it, because it injures the road. However, I do not think we should specify how much a six-inch tire should carry.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Mr. Cornell's amendment would accentuate the position pointed out by Mr. Greig. Under the proposal I have submitted, a four-wheeled vehicle with a 2½-inch tire will be entitled to carry a total load of 2 tons 17 cwt. 2 qrs., which, it has been pointed out, would inflict a hardship as compared with existing conditions. Under Mr. Cornell's amendment, however, such a vehicle would only be allowed to carry a total of 2 tons, or, deducting the weight of the lorry, a load that the driver himself could carry.

Hon. J. A. Greig: But that schedule refers to loads without the weight of the vehicle.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No: that is not so. Mr. Cornell's schedule includes the weight of the vehicle.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: It seems to me that the first six or eight items of the schedule should be struck out. To carry loads on such extremely narrow tires is absurd: one might as well carry a load on the edge of a knife. Such extremely narrow tires simply tear up the roads. This question came up three or four years ago, and the time for the discontinuance of such narrow tires was then extended on the plea that the expense of substituting broad tires for narrow ones was very great. The schedule should commence with the 3-inch tire.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I regard the proposed schedule as a very good one, and I should be sorry to see the earlier items of it struck out. The narrow tires under three inches are used for light carts and sulkies. There is no reason why lorries with narrow tires should not continue to be used subject to the load restrictions proposed by this schedule.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: In order to test the feeling of the Committee, I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the Bill:

"FOURTH SCHEDULE.

The following is the scale of weights referred to in Section 34 of the Act, regulating load (including the weight of vehicle) to be carried according to the width of tire:—

Vehicle.	Width of Tire.	Weight per inch in hundredweights.	Load.
Wheels.	For tires of—		tons. cwt. qr.
2	1½ inches...	4	0 12 0
4	1¾ „ ...	4¼	1 5 2
2	1¾ „ ...	4¼	0 15 3
4	1¾ „ ...	4¾	1 13 1
2	2 „ ...	5	1 0 0
4	2 „ ...	5¼	2 2 0
2	2½ „ ...	5¾	1 7 2
4	2½ „ ...	5¾	2 17 2
2	3 „ ...	6	1 16 0
4	3 „ ...	6¼	3 15 0
2	3½ „ ...	6½	2 5 2
4	3½ „ ...	6¾	4 14 2
2	4 „ ...	7	2 16 0
4	4 „ ...	7¼	5 16 0
2	4½ „ ...	7½	3 7 2
4	4½ „ ...	7¾	6 19 2
2	5 „ ...	8	4 0 0
4	5 „ ...	8¼	8 5 0
2	5½ „ ...	8½	4 13 2
4	5½ „ ...	8¾	9 12 2

The width of bearing surface as defined by Section 4 of the Act is for the tires as originally made, and does not permit of any extra weight by increased width owing to any spread of tire occasioned by wear or otherwise."

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Lorries have been in the habit of carrying much heavier weights than those contemplated by the amendment and it would serve to reduce their usefulness if they had to comply with the schedule. It has been suggested that they could have their wheels widened; but I am told on reliable authority that it would be almost an impossibility to have the necessary alterations made within the prescribed time limit. I hope the Minister will see his way to increasing the weights to be carried by the lorries. At a later stage I will move an amendment providing for an increased weight of load.

Schedule put and passed.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill reported with amendments.

Further Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. J. A. Greig, Bill recommitted for the purpose of considering a new clause to stand as Clause 33:

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I move—

That the following be added to stand as Clause 33:—"No drays with over 2in. tires, except dobbins, shall be manufactured or imported into this State unless the axle be of sufficient length to allow

at least 6ft. width of tread between the wheels, measured from middle to middle of the tires."

Practical men will realise that the narrow tread wagons are much more severe on roads than are vehicles of wider tread. The width of wagons in the Williams district is 4ft. 9in., which is ½in. greater than that of the Ford motor car. Many motor cars are only 4ft. in the tread, and it is necessary for them to straddle the track. No motor cars will follow a narrow tread wagon. On the farm narrow tread wagons are a nuisance. They are useful only on bush tracks, but bush tracks are becoming a thing of the past in this State. There are three different treads among the wagons in this State. In the Great Southern it is about 4ft. 9in., on the Ashburton 6ft., while farther north it is 6ft. between the wheels or, with 6in. tires, 7ft. from outside to outside. If all wagons were of uniformly wide tread, it would save hundreds of thousands of pounds per annum in the upkeep of our roads. The amendment provides only for drays with tires of over 2in. I am not providing for the lighter traffic.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not question the hon. member's experience. No doubt what he aims at will be a good thing for the roads, but whether we as a Committee are prepared to make the drastic amendment proposed I cannot say. I have had no opportunity of considering the matter or ascertaining the other side of the case. I do not know that it would be competent for us to prohibit the importation of vehicles. The existing Width of Tires Act did undertake to prohibit the manufacture of vehicles, and no doubt we might prevent that but not their importation.

Hon. H. Stewart: Could we prevent their use?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is a different matter, but the point is whether the Committee will be satisfied to make the drastic amendment proposed.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I understood that there was some definition as to the width between the wheels. There has, however, never been any stipulated gauge, and it has been the custom to have different widths in different localities. In the north the wagons make a much wider track than wagons do in the southern portion of the State. I think it would be unwise to stipulate a certain width here. Those engaged in the trade of manufacturing these vehicles usually turn out those most suitable to a particular locality. It is better to leave matters as they are.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The hon. member would be wise if he withdrew his amendment. The Bill will only apply to a certain portion of the State, and then only at the request of the local authority on a proclamation being issued by the Governor-in-Council. The amendment, however, will make it compulsory both as to the construction and importation of vehicles, or vehicles for use throughout the State. In the north, where only bush tracks exist, surely people are entitled to use a vehicle of any size required. Another point is that the hardware merchants' stocks at present held could not be used for the construction of these vehicles if the amendment is passed, although it might be the only material available in the State for their construction.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Mr. Holmes has used a strong argument against this amendment, and I agree that it would be wrong to prohibit the importation of vehicles to all parts of the State. I would draw the attention of Mr. Greig to paragraph (h) of Clause 40, Subclause (7) which says that subject to this Act the Government may by regulation prescribe by what distance or length of axle tree any wheel of a vehicle shall be separated from the opposite wheel. It will be competent for the Governor-in-Council to do just what the hon. member desires in a way that will not inflict hardship upon any particular portion of the State.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: In view of what the Minister for Education has said I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill again reported without further amendment.

BILL—PURE SEEDS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 30th October.

Hon. H. STEWART (South - East) [8.40]: I intend to support the second reading of this Bill, and congratulate the Honorary Minister upon having brought it forward. Mr. Sanderson raised a number of objections to it and asked the House to throw the Bill out on the second reading. I do not think, however, he need be taken seriously in this instance. He said he had two objections—one that it would increase the expenditure of the Agricultural Department and the other that it gave the department too much power. With regard to the former point, I have received some interesting figures from the Government Statistician showing the large amount of money received into revenue by the State from land. These give an indication that the objection that some hon. members have to expenditure in connection with agriculture and agricultural development is hardly warranted. I put these figures forward to combat Mr. Sanderson's objection. The ab initio receipts from land in the State which have gone into consolidated revenue have been seven million pounds sterling, and

the expenditure on the lands and surveys department has been £2,185,000. If we add to that the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank expenditure, namely, £150,967, and the general expenditure on agriculture which takes in quite a number of items, we get a total ab initio expenditure of £3,296,000 from revenue as against the seven million pounds I have mentioned as having been received from the lands in the State. Mr. Sanderson also said that the fruit and vegetable growing industries would be on a much better footing, both for the growers and the consumers, if the Agricultural Department had never existed. I agree that the department is not all that it ought to be, but nevertheless it is progressive and improving and gives a considerable amount of assistance in agricultural development. His indictment is against the department as a whole. He would wipe out the department altogether and wipe out anything for the regulation and combating of diseases and pests. It seems as though he would let each individual (and many of the people who come to the State, go on the land knowing very little about it and needing much assistance and guidance) be without anyone to give that necessary assistance and guidance. I think the result would be far from satisfactory if there were no Agricultural Department. I am opposed to the hon. member in the attitude he takes up as to the uselessness of the department. That the department does not achieve better results is due to the fact that we are suffering from a lack of men trained in agriculture. All technical men engaged in the department should be trained for the profession and should have gained a detailed knowledge of both the science and practice on which the future of agriculture depends. That can only come about when we have in our State an institution for training men. The Government can afterwards employ those men in the service of the State.

The PRESIDENT: I think the hon. member has sufficiently dealt with the subject of the Agricultural Department, which is not entirely connected with the Bill.

Hon. H. STEWART: I wanted to answer the hon. member definitely in regard to that aspect, but I have finished with it now. The hon. member also stated that the best nurserymen refused to give a guarantee. He seemed to think that the object of the Bill was to provide that the purchaser should get a certain result. My reading of the Bill is that it is nothing of the kind. A nurseryman gives a warranty that certain seeds planted under recognised conditions will give certain results. The hon. member indicated in his speech that someone might come along, plant those seeds in an inefficient way, then get an unsatisfactory result and put the blame on the seedsman on account of the warranty he was supposed to have given. It seems a most peculiar attitude for the hon. member to take up. The hon. member queried the method of sampling and testing seeds. All I can say is that he showed a woeful lack of knowledge of this and comparable matters, a knowledge which is recognised by all those who are supposed to be well informed on such a subject. The hon. member also asked what would be the result of the passing of the Bill, and stated that it would increase the cost of government. I have already dealt with that aspect of the matter and also the point with regard to the harrasssing of the nurserymen. We all realise that the practice in vogue in other countries in which agriculture plays an important part, is that measures of this description tend to increase production by safeguarding the purchaser, who knows then that he is getting what he is paying for, and there is more involved in that than in the protection of the seller of the seeds. Discussing the question of harrassing the nurserymen, the hon. member overlooked the fact that the purchaser of seeds may spend a considerable amount of time and money in cultivation and seeding and then have practically no result. Mr. Sanderson instanced the case of the man who might buy the seeds from a nurseryman to-day, seeds which may be perfectly good and true to name, and he asked what guarantee the purchaser would be given. All that the Bill seeks to provide is that seed of a certain quality shall be sold. As a matter of fact the purchaser and the seedsman are safeguarded. The seedsman is safeguarded to the extent that if a querulous purchaser wants a particular line of seeds tested, he must give due notice, and before he purchases it that particular seed has to be sampled from bulk. In order, however, to ensure that reliable seeds may be distributed throughout the country the department have the right to enter seedsmen's premises, take samples after paying for them, and have them tested. Clauses 6 and 9, particularly the former, fully protect seedsmen from attack by a purchaser and also provide that all the necessary requirements shall be carried out. In introducing legislation of this description we are only following on the lines adopted by other important agricultural countries. The Department of Agriculture at Washington works under a measure similar to the one before us now. In fact in that country they limit importation, as our Bill proposes to do. Experiments are carried out there with the object of seeing that there is no deleterious matter or noxious weeds in the seeds before they are allowed to go out into general distribution. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East—in reply) [8.53]: I have very little to reply to, as Mr. Stewart has dealt to a very great extent with the arguments used by Mr. Sanderson. One important point made by Mr. Sanderson was with regard to the importation of seed potatoes, particularly from the Old Country. For his information I may state that during my recent visit to Melbourne the Premier wired to me to take up this matter with the Federal authorities with the view of getting the existing regulations altered.

I went into the matter with Mr. Massey Green, the Minister for Customs, and after discussing it with him, I wrote to him. I think it would be as well for me to read the letter and the reply which I have received. I wrote on the 29th August, 1919, as follows:—

> The Hon. W. Massey Green, Minister for Customs, Melbourne. Dear Sir,—A matter that is giving the Western Australian State Department of Agriculture a considerable amount of concern and causing no little inconvenience in that State, is the Commonwealth Customs Quarantine regulation restricting to fourteen (14) pounds weight each parcel of seed potatoes imported from overseas. It is very important to our growers in the West who are progressive enough to accept nothing less than the best to try new varieties of potatoes, varieties at present unobtainable in the Commonwealth. The limitation to fourteen (14) lbs. practically precludes any adequate test of imported seed. The officials of the State Department of Agriculture are fully aware of the danger of importing potatoes in any way diseased and thereby of endangering potato production in Western Australia. Inspection is, therefore, very strict, and the testing of imported seed is carefully carried out, and growing tests made in the prescribed quarantined areas. I suggest on behalf of the Government of Western Australia, that the actual quantity of parcels of seed potato to be imported from overseas might be well left to the individual States. I therefore respectfully urge that the Customs Quarantine regulation as far as it affects quantity only might be relaxed in the direction indicated. If there is a difficulty in making this proposal apply to all the States, I invite you to be good enough to consider giving effect to my proposal at any rate to Western Australia.

Although the Commonwealth agreed to relax the regulations, they placed the onus on the State Department, and not being satisfied with that I replied again and am still waiting for an answer to that letter. I wrote on the 2nd October in the following terms:—

> The Hon. the Minister for Trade and Customs, Melbourne. Dear Sir,—I have to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 23rd ulto., forwarding copy of the "Commonwealth Gazette" containing the amended proclamation allowing consignments of potatoes exceeding 14lbs. to be imported on behalf of the State Government. While thanking you for your prompt attention to my reprsentations in regard to this matter, I should like to point out that it was not contemplated that you would restrict the benefit under the new proclamation to potatoes imported by or on behalf of the State Government. It is not clear to me as to why producers should be allowed to import privately parcels up to 14lbs. in weight only and not be allowed to import larger parcels, and I contemplated when laying this matter before you that the amendment would take the form of removing the 14lb. restriction and allowing larger parcels to be imported direct by individuals. You will recognise that the arrangement as now re-established will make it necessary for the Government to handle any importations on behalf of any importers who wish to obtain larger parcels than 14lbs. There seems to be no good reason for this extent of Government interference in this matter, and I should be very much obliged if you would kindly give consideration to making the new proclamation applicable to the individual grower as well as to the State Government. Yours faithfully, Hon. Minister for Agriculture.

To that communication I have received no reply. The growers in this State have been inconvenienced in the past, and we are trying to remedy the position by endeavouring to provide that a greater quantity may be imported. What the Government desire is that the imports should be in reasonable quantities, of course under Government supervision, that is to say, that the imported potatoes shall be grown in quarantine as is the case to-day. I am of the opinion that the other references the hon. member made to the Agricultural Department need no reply from me. Most hon. members are aware of the fact that inspections are carried out and that no charge is made to the grower. The only charge that is imposed is one of 2s. 6d. per ton for inspection of imported potatoes and that means very little indeed. His reference to the need for an army of inspectors is not right because the inspectors we have will be given very little additional employment as regards this measure

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 4th November.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [9.1]: I realise that the measure has been found necessary by the department, and I have no desire to delay it being placed on the statute-book. I am concerned about some remarks made by the Honorary Minister when he introduced the Bill. He laid great stress upon the ignorance displayed by land owners regarding the Act. This is not remarkable seeing that the Act is of such recent origin. It was only passed last year, and therefore has been in operation for only a very short period. Further, the Government have already found it necessary to amend the Act, and it is hardly fair to blame the land holders for not knowing all about it and for not working in greater harmony with the officers of the department. Settlers generally require a long time to become acquainted with any new legisla-

tion or with amendments of existing laws, which they are often inclined to view with suspicion. Seeing that most measures entail great strain on their financial resources, and that they have a great amount of work to do and are generally short-handed, it is not to be wondered that they do not rush in to report every little trouble to the department, because it would bring down upon them all sorts of reprimands and threats of litigation if they did not immediately carry out the various instructions of the department. When the original measure was before the House, it was mentioned how the opposition of land holders had been aroused by the department taking such action when the presence of rabbits was reported to them. Land holders have reported the fact in good faith and in an endeavour to meet the wishes of the department, but, when they have met with such a hostile reception from the officers of the department, strained feelings have resulted. Therefore the Minister should not complain of their attitude. I have met many settlers to whom I have quoted the remarks of the Minister and the officers of the department regarding the efficacy of poisoning, and I have been surprised at the number who, while admitting that poison might have achieved an immense amount of good, have been sceptical of the claim that poison was responsible for the comparative absence of rabbits.

The Honorary Minister: We never laid claim to that.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: These land holders have told me that, as soon as the end of the season came, the rabbits returned freely, notwithstanding the great amount of poison which had been used. One or two land holders informed me that they declined to use poison, because they had lost so many sheep in consequence. They had found it very much better to trap the rabbits by using a few coils of netting erected temporarily along the edge of the crop which the rabbits were attacking. At each end of the line of netting they placed a trap and, in a couple of nights, one settler trapped no fewer than 3,000 rabbits. In this way he was able to keep them in check and save his crop, and he did not run the risk of poisoning his stock. The system is a splendid one, to which the department should give attention. Another successful method of dealing with rabbits, and not advertised by the department, has been mentioned by Mr. Walter Hawker, a South Australian, who found that the exhaust from a motor car turned on to rabbit burrows is one of the most effective means of exterminating the rabbits. The Honorary Minister should make a trial of it. Mr. Hawker claims that this method of dealing with rabbits resulted in a wonderful saving as compared with the digging out system, because it was so comfortable and satisfactory to run around in a motor car from one set of burrows to another and let the car do the work of pumping down the poisonous gas. It seems to be a very cheap method.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: It sounds nice and easy.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I intend to adopt it when the rabbits come my way.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I read the article.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I can vouch for the integrity of the man who wrote it. It should considerably cheapen the work of dealing with rabbits, and would probably save the Government the expense of purchasing large stores of poison to which they have been pinning their faith. Any such information which will help land holders to deal with the pest should be made known, so that they can try them, and ascertain the most effective and cheapest means of coping with the pest. Many land holders do not care about using poison because of the quantity of stock which is destroyed. It would be well for the department to adopt other measures if they can be shown to be effective. I support the Bill.

The HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East—in reply) [9.12]: I dispute the hon. member's remarks regarding my speech on the second reading. I did not refer to the ignorance displayed by the land owners of this measure. I may have referred to the fact that the land owner has been neglectful in poisoning and destroying rabbits, and I still maintain this has been so. The hon. member said I put up an argument that the department had pinned its faith to poison, and that poison had been responsible for the rabbits being practically exterminated in some parts. What I said was that the good work of the vermin boards, the poisoning by the Government employees, together with the dry seasons, had reduced the pest down to small numbers, but they would soon increase during the winter and spring, and such has been the case. The fact that a farmer, by running a few lengths of netting along a crop with a trap at each end, trapped 3,000 rabbits in two nights, shows the seriousness of the position. If the farmer caught that number, I should like to know what stock he carried on the land. I know that stock has been poisoned, and this can only be expected unless the poison is laid in a proper manner, namely, by burying it. It is quite possible for the carts as they go along to make the cuts deep enough to enable the poison to be buried. If it is laid on the surface where stock is running, there is a danger of the stock being poisoned. The poison is just as effective when it is buried, and sheep will not trouble it, though if pigs are allowed to run there they of course will root it up just the same as the rabbits. As for the method of trapping with netting, my best advice would be that the hon. member should try it himself, but I would certainly not advise anyone else to wait until the rabbits are thick enough to be trapped with netting. A landholder who delayed destroying rabbits until

that point had been reached would not be abl eto run any stock on his property. In regard to poisoning by gas with motor car exhausts, if the gas ejected from car exhausts is so poisonous, one would expect it to have some effect on the people in the streets of the city. Speaking for the department, I say they feel that the majority of the vermin boards did good work last season, but that, with few exceptions, the boards show a tendency to relax their efforts as soon as they get the rabbits thinned down. If they would take active measures in the slack period, they would destroy early in the season small numbers of rabbits which will increase a hundredfold later on.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 9.19 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 11th November, 1919.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4·30 p.m., and read prayers.

HOSPITAL FOR INSANE, SELECT COMMITTEE.

Report presented.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN brought up the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the conditions existing in, and the management of the Hospital for the Insane.

Report read.

Ordered, that the report and evidence be printed.

QUESTION—MINING CONDITIONS AT WESTONIA.

Mr. HARRISON (without notice) asked the *Minister for Mines*: Does he intend to take immediate action to alleviate the serious position of the mines at Westonia.

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: The amendment of the Mining Act, of which I have given notice to pass through all its stages tomorrow, subject to the approval of the House of the suspension of the Standing Orders, is evidence that I have taken definite action to meet the difficulties at Westonia in the hope that if the position cannot be entirely saved, it will at least be improved. The situation is extremely serious.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1. Licensing Act Amendment Continuance.
2. Inebriates Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Resumed from 6th November.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5·4]: The Bill provides for compulsory enrolment. While practically all hon. members are in accord with compulsory enrolment, at the same time I think there should be in the Bill a provision to enable the Government by regulation to make use of the Commonwealth rolls. If the Bill becomes law without any such provision the cost of the State Electoral Department will be considerably increased. The Commonwealth machinery of administration would not be available to the State department. In the Commonwealth department the divisional officer who looks after enrolments has a staff of assistants, in addition to which a large number of men connected with the post office render valuable service. As far as I can gather the system is this: They have a list showing the whole of the electors, together with their places of residence. Periodically the postman notifies the Electoral Department of all changes of address on his postal round. From that information the divisional officer makes a list, and when a certain time has elapsed without claims being made for alteration in addresses, he sends a notice to the elector concerned, pointing out that he has not notified the change made. With this notification is sent also a form to be filled in by the elector. That form is returned, and the elector has then to appear before the divisional officer, who fines him some small amount of about 2s. 6d. to cover the cost to which the department has been put. If the elector fails to appear before the departmental officer he is taken to court and fined. The whole machinery is perfect for the administration of the Act. But the State department has no such machinery. To provide such machinery the staff will have to be increased. Only to-day a friend pointed out to me that there is no difficulty whatever in seeing to the registration and licensing of various animals such as dogs. Nor is there. In my own electorate we have no fewer than four officers with a staff to see that these licenses are applied for and the requirements of the Act complied with. But in the Electoral Department there is not one officer to see to the registration of changes of address. Therefore, to pass the Bill as printed, without making any provision for taking advantage of the machinery of the Commonwealth department, will be to in-