

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 1st December, 1909.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: Returns under the Life Assurance Companies Act, 1889.

QUESTION—MINING SUBSIDY TO MR. HATT.

Mr. BATH asked the Minister for Mines: 1, What amount of money has been advanced from the Mines Department to Mr. Hatt, mineowner of Southern Cross, and for what purpose? 2, What is the amount of subsidy he receives for crushing for prospectors and leaseholders? 3, Has Mr. Hatt furnished the monthly returns of all gold won from the Never Never mine, and also the returns of gold won from public crushing since the date when Government subsidy was first contributed? 4, Is the subsidy granted on condition that Mr. Hatt crushes for the public? 5, Has the condition been fulfilled in its entirety? 6, What steps does the Minister take to see that the conditions under which the subsidy is granted are fulfilled?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1, £1,000. For the purpose of removing certain plant consisting of a battery, etc., from Southern Cross to gold mining lease No. 665 at Never Never. 2, He was required under his agreement to crush for the public, so long as any money was owing by him, at the scale in operation at State batteries at the time, viz., May, 1906. In May, 1909, he was requested to alter his scale to the one then obtaining at State plants. The minimum charge, 8s. 6d., being less than that fixed in his agreement, viz., 10s., he was then given a subsidy up to 1s. 6d. or less per ton to make the minimum up to 10s. 3,

All returns for the current year to September inclusive have been furnished. Difficulty has been experienced in the past, and proceedings have had to be taken to compel him to furnish them. 4, He is required to crush for the public so long as he owes any money under his agreement. 5, Dissatisfaction has been expressed by some of the customers, and recently the inspector of mines was directed to proceed to the locality and hold an inquiry into the whole question of methods pursued in crushing for the public. A set of rules, which he will be required to conform to, are now being drafted, and failure on his part to comply with the departmental requirements will result in foreclosure under the mortgage. His affairs at the present time are being controlled by his creditors, the department withholding any action in the way of foreclosure so long as everything is going on satisfactorily; and since the taking over of his business by the creditors repayments of the advance to the extent of £121 17s. 4d. have been made. 6, Answered by No. 5.

QUESTION—LOCAL COURTS, KANOWNA ELECTORATE.

Mr. WALKER asked the Attorney General: 1, Has he instructed the Public Service Commissioner to report as to the wisdom or otherwise of abolishing certain local courts in the Kanowna electorate? 2, Is it his intention to abolish the local court at Broad Arrow?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, No. The special board appointed to inquire into the service as a whole are applying for information as to the volume of work performed at various courts, but no specific courts have been picked out for their consideration. 2, It is understood that Broad Arrow Local Court is amongst those at present being investigated by the board, but no recommendation has as yet been submitted for the consideration of the Government.

Mr. Walker: Will the Attorney General let me see the recommendation early?

The Attorney General: When I receive it, certainly.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE.*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 23rd November.

Mr. BATH (Brown Hill): Granted that the policy embodied in our Agricultural Lands Purchase Acts which have previously been placed on our statute-book is accepted, then the drafting of the Bill submitted by the Minister for Lands, so far as I can see, leaves little to be desired. But to my mind there are some aspects of this policy of repurchasing estates which certainly do not emphasise the wisdom of a continuance of the policy on the scale contemplated by the demand for extra capital embodied in this Bill. In the first place, in Western Australia we have made a repeated boast of the facility with which we sell out lands, and also of the very large area which is alienated each year; and yet on the other hand we have to carry legislation to enable us to repurchase this land, and in some instances at a very short period after it has been sold, and even before the full conditions on which the land has been alienated have been fulfilled. This aspect of the question struck Mr. Throssell as a result of his knowledge of the working of the Lands Department, because I remember in this House he pointed to instances where the Government had repurchased estates, and a process of building these up again into large areas were going on. One of the estates which was repurchased some years ago after a considerable amount of investigation and report by the Lands Purchase Board, and which has since been regarded as a good bargain, was the Mount Erin estate; but I am given to understand that since that estate was repurchased by the Government and cut up into lots and sold, the building up of a portion of it in considerable areas has gone on, and that only a short time back an offer was made to the Government for the purpose of buying back a portion of

that repurchased estate with a view to selling it for closer settlement. If that is the sort of thing that is going to result from our policy, it will be a bad one for Western Australia.

Mr. Angwin: Was that offer made by the same owners?

Mr. BATH: Not by the same owners but by others who had acquired the land on the Mount Erin estate, and who, having acquired a considerable area—I presume by purchasing from others—have made an offer, which, of course, I am told, was not entertained, but certainly was made, to sell land to the Government to be again cut up and sold as before. Again, on the Throssell estate, which was one of the repurchased estates, that process is going on. There are some fairly large holdings on that area, and if this policy is with a view to closer settlement then that ideal is not being realised, because we have a process of building up estates going on on these repurchased estates. There are several areas which have been purchased in the Geraldton district, and purchased recently, and although the Government have prided themselves on the bargains, and the people in the district regard them as good deals in the interest of the district, still we have to bear in mind that on two of these estates to my knowledge the land was sold, some of it under third-class conditions, at a very low price, and the Government have had to pay as much as eight, if not ten times that price in order to repurchase the land for closer settlement. On the Oakabella estate part of that area was undoubtedly dummied; it was held under conditional purchase by the agents of the owner of the estate, and in some of the areas in the estate the whole conditions with regard to the payment of the purchase money had not been completed. In the purchase of it the vendors had to give consideration to the Government for the unpaid portion of the purchase of the conditional lease. On the Bowes area a considerable portion of that was taken up under conditional purchase, or grazing lease, which is the same thing only that a smaller price is paid, and here again the price paid to the vendor is much in excess

of that under which the land was originally taken up.

The Attorney General: It has never been purchased.

Mr. BATH: I understood the Government had closed with the offer. I know, however, that the Narra Tarra estate has been purchased, and undoubtedly the price is ahead of the price the vendor paid for it.

Mr. S. F. Moore: What about the improvements done?

Mr. BATH: The Premier, when some remarks were made by the member for Mount Margaret, said that although this additional money had been expended in the purchase of estates the Government would get it back. In this respect the Government are taking up the erroneous attitude of dissociating the State from the people who really constitute the State, because in order to realise the price which they have given for it, allowing of course for the expense of cutting it up, and the interest on the money invested, the Government had to get this price out of those who purchased the land, that is, the people who constitute the State had to pay a higher price for the land secured. If the Government were to purchase tomorrow a big estate for 30s. an acre and were to make a profit of, say, 5s. an acre, it could not be said to be a good deal for the State because that profit is made out of the people who have to purchase the land. It is a good thing for the speculator, but the lower the price the genuine settler has to pay the more money he will have with which to develop the area and effect improvements on it, and put it to a productive use, and if the Government have to pay an enhanced price the settler has to pay a high price too, and it means that he has less money with which to carry on operations. Very often the price which the settlers have to pay constitutes a burden which hampers their efforts for many years. Take the purchase of the Cold Harbour estate in the York district. There was a considerable amount of crowding at the time as to the deal which had been made by the Government, or rather with regard to the prices realised by the Government for that land. In some instances the prices

which settlers had to pay were so high that application had to be made for a reduction of the price. I know that during the time I was in the Lands Department I reduced the price of one area on the Cold Harbour estate because I considered that the price which had to be paid was too high, and that the purchaser had no chance of doing any good with it. I do not know the promise under which it was sold, but I know that the price was altogether too high for the area. In my opinion it was altogether wrong for the Government to make a huge profit out of that land which they sold to the man and handicapped him for the whole of his lifetime in his endeavour to make a profitable area out of it.

Mr. George: Do not they sell the land slightly above the price given so as to recoup themselves?

Mr. BATH: It would not be so bad if they were to do that, but in some instances, and in the case of the Mount Erin estate they made a considerable profit out of it, a profit of some £5,000.

Mr. George: Where did that money go?

Mr. BATH: It did not go into the pockets of the settler; it must have gone into the coffers of the State. That profit had to be found by those who went on the land, and they had that much less money to spend on improvements. This policy has proved rather disastrous in the Eastern States of recent years, and the Governments of Victoria and New South Wales have had to consider altogether different means for bringing the areas under closer settlement. They found that the very expenditure of money, loan money too, in purchasing estates for closer settlement had the effect of putting a speculative value on the land, and in Victoria the holders of land, in view of the fact that the Government were purchasers were standing out for a higher price. Those who were attempting to purchase privately found that through being competitors with the Government they were paying exorbitant prices. The same position obtained in New South Wales, only to a lesser degree. In New Zealand the Government had

an Agricultural Lands Re-purchase Act, but there was this stipulation, and it seemed to be one which was made in entire conformity with the idea underlying the repurchase of estates. They said there, "We repurchase these estates for the purpose of getting rid of land monopoly, and therefore when we repurchase land we are not going to sell it again in order that the old process may go merrily on." The lands therefore are leased under a system of lease in perpetuity, and the system has been found to work advantageously. The Opposition there sought to work up an agitation amongst these people in favour of granting freeholds, but they got the greatest rebuffs from the people themselves, and they still stick to the policy of only leasing areas which are repurchased. There may be occasions when the Government may find the opportunity as private people do of repurchasing an estate on advantageous terms, and under those circumstances one would not object to having money at their disposal for availing themselves of an opportunity of that kind. To my mind the policy is altogether erroneous, and if we are going to grant this money we should do as they do in New Zealand, stipulate that the land shall be leased and not resold. Unless there is some attempt to deal with this aspect of the question I shall feel impelled to oppose the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (Pilbara): Without any reservation whatever, I feel impelled to vote against the second reading and every other reading of the Bill. I must say without using harsh terms, I do not think it is possible to reach a greater degree of idiocy than to sell land and buy it back again later on. I cannot imagine greater idiocy outside a lunatic asylum, and I do not think it has occurred anywhere else. We have a proposal here that we are going to pass an Act to repurchase estates; at the same time the Minister has painted the whole of Western Australia green with the object of selling Western Australia. If we are going to sell it, leave it sold; if we are going to retain it for the State, then do not sell it; but the idea of repurchasing and

selling, and repurchasing again should not want any consideration whatever. I am surprised at the leader of the Opposition wanting an explanation from the Minister. As far as I am concerned there is no earthly explanation that can be given why we should be buying and selling land at the same time. If we have land for sale, we do not want to buy. That must be apparent to smaller intellects than mine, and there are many in this Chamber. Let us take one or two estates, the Narra Tarra estate to begin with. We find that questions with regard to this estate were not answered fully by the Minister. It appears that the estate originally cost Messrs. Burges, Waugh, Wittenoom, Bush (who represents Dalgety & Co.), F. Moustaka—I would not like to say whether he is a Japanese, or what he is—and Dalgety & Co. Dalgety & Co. bear in mind have two cuts, their own and that of Bush, who represents them. Those are the people who have dummied Narra Tarra, not to put too fine a point on it. Originally the Government sold 5,597 acres at 11d., 6,724 acres at 3s. 9d., 6,676 acres at 6s. 3d., and 4,759 acres of first class land at 9s. 11d. They bought back 23,000 acres for £26,000, and this is what we are asked to continue to do. Certain improvements have been made there. We are told that a house, out-buildings, stables, shearing and machinery sheds are there; that 1,000 acres have been cleared out of 26,000 acres. That seems to be the usual percentage in Western Australia—one in 26.

The Minister for Lands: We will alter that later on.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Then there appear to have been 3,000 acres ringbarked 150 miles of fencing carried out, and eight good wells and windmills on the property. The water is shallow in that district, so that we can reckon these wells are practically soaks.

Mr. George: How much has been spent on it?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: They paid the Government £7,962 16s. 10d. According to my calculation, to put these improvements in, would cost something like

£7,000. There are a house, outbuildings, stables, and machinery sheds, and for all the possible use they would be to the selector £1,000 is full value for them. No selector could possibly afford to pay £1,000 for his house and sheds. There are 1,000 acres cleared—£1,000. That country could be cleared for £1 per acre. That makes a total of £2,000. Then there are 3,000 acres ringbarked at 2s. per acre—£300. Then there is 150 miles of fencing at £20 a mile, or £3,000. Then we have the eight good wells. We all know that in the Narra Tarra country the wells are shallow, in soft sinking and present no difficulties. If you go through these items it will be found that there are not £8,000 of improvements on the place. These people expended about £6,000 on the improvements and about £7,000 for the land; and they have received from the Government £22,000, showing a net profit of about 100 per cent. on their outlay. Advantageously for the coming selector the Government could put all these improvements on land that we own at the present time, instead of giving Dalgety, and Bush and others these profits. If we want to have land improved, we have millions of acres of it; let us go and put the money into that and we will have improved land to put the people on. Then we could afford to build a railway to it. By having his land improved the selector could take his crop off the first year and so we would have the railway paying from the jump. But these people are allowed to get in and hold the land and then make 100 per cent. by selling it to the Government. The leader of the Opposition spoke of the huge profits the Government make from the next purchaser to whom they sell; but I protest on behalf of Western Australia against the huge profits we allow Dalgety and Moustaka to get out of it. Even if we were to allow them to make a profit once and stop at that I would not mind so much; but when we enact that the land can be sold again on non-residential conditions, we let Dalgety and Co. get in once more and make another £12,000 or £14,000 out of us. The position is absurd in the extreme.

Mr. Monger: Did you say Dalgety & Co. made all this?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Dalgety and Moustaka, Dalgety & Company. And, after all, Dalgety & Company are chiefly Japanese; they run their Japanese boats up and down our coasts. We were told the other night that the Savings Bank had no money with which to provide increased advances to settlers taking up land; but in the Bill we are providing that that institution, which has no money to advance to settlers, is to provide the money to purchase these estates. I do not think we could have a more ridiculous and absurd proposition put before a House of thinking men.

Mr. Angwin: The settlers pay 5 per cent., but this is taken up at 4 per cent.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I am aware of that: 4 per cent. is paid by the Agricultural Bank to the Savings Bank. Here we have the position, that there is no money in the Savings Bank to assist settlers to go on Government land, yet we are going to take from the bank money to repurchase estates which we are going to sell on non-residential conditions. I wish to enter my protest against this, and against the policy of buying land on the one hand and selling it on the other as being the most ridiculous and absurd ever put before any body of men. I am positively sure the Australian aborigines, who are supposed to be the lowest race on earth, would know considerably better than to follow a practice of that sort.

Mr. MONGER (York): I had no intention of speaking on this Bill until the last moment when I came in and heard the member for Pilbara speaking in the way he did of a firm which has done more for the advancement of Western Australia than any other banking institution in the State. It would be unbecoming on my part if I did not tell hon. members a little of what that institution has done. Whether they be, as we so frequently hear, employers of coloured labour I am not going to touch upon, but I would like the member for Pilbara to hear these few words that I

am going to say this afternoon in favour of Dalgety & Co.

Mr. Scaddan: Put them on a gramophone.

Mr. MONGER: I wish that hyaenish laugh, which so often emanates from the member for Ivanhoe, would for a few moments cease. I was going to say, that if it were not for the efforts made by this firm during the trying times of the early nineties, there would be very few of the old settlers occupying the prominent positions they do to-day.

Mr. Swan: They do not seem to bless Dalgety & Co. much.

Mr. MONGER: There is not one man in Western Australia who has had dealing with the firm of Dalgety & Co.—

Mr. W. Price: On a point of order, I would like to know if we are discussing Dalgety & Co. or the Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill. I have no desire to listen to a eulogism of Dalgety & Company.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member for York is somewhat wide of the mark.

Mr. MONGER: I have no desire whatever to eulogise the firm of Dalgety & Company nor have I any axe to grind, but I would be wanting in my place in this House, as an old West Australian, if I were to allow the remarks and innuendoes of the member for Pilbara to pass unnoticed.

Mr. Underwood: You can scarcely call them innuendoes.

Mr. MONGER: I would like to tell the member for Pilbara, and that smiling genius on the cross benches, that Dalgety & Company have at the present moment more money legitimately invested in Western Australia, than all the rest of the banking institutions of Western Australia put together.

Mr. Swan: Why don't you go down on your knees to them?

Mr. MONGER: Personally I have nothing to thank them for, but I like to see praise given where it should be given; and I do not like to see a lot of men who know nothing about what the state of the country was twenty years ago when Dalgety & Company came here—I do not like to hear them make disparaging statements about that firm. I say with all

respect there is no firm in Western Australia that has done more for Western Australia and West Australians than Dalgety & Company.

Mr. Collier: Have they not made money out of Western Australia?

Mr. MONGER: They have not been here from philanthropic motives, but they have been absolutely fair. There are men in this Chamber and in another place who should go down on their knees every night and thank God that Dalgety & Company came to Western Australia. Were it not for that fact those happy homes, those big homes they are now residing in would have been resided in by some other individuals. If the member for Pilbara had made reference to some of those wealthy squatters flourishing in the mother country and who are deriving big dividends through the assistance rendered them by this firm—if he had asked for increased taxation in that direction I would have agreed with him. However, I think the member for Pilbara will agree with me, that in his references to this firm he was somewhat out of place. In connection with this Land Purchase Bill, I think the Government are going in a fairly wise direction, and so long as the selection board consists of gentlemen who—

Mr. Heitmann: They are going to increase the number on the board to twelve; do you agree to that?

Mr. MONGER: So far as the members of the board are concerned, personally I have every confidence in them.

Mr. Collier: Who are they?

Mr. MONGER: They are Mr. Paterson, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Heitmann: Why, they are the Agricultural Bank trustees!

Mr. Troy: You have not been in the State sufficiently long to know these things.

Mr. MONGER: All the gentlemen associated with the Agricultural Bank and the Land Purchase Board are men held in the very highest repute throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia and any recommendations that may emanate from those gentlemen will receive

my support. There may be one or two items in the Bill I will disagree with.

Mr. Scaddan: Do you agree to reduce the salaries of the board?

Mr. MONGER: I once referred to the hyenaish laugh of the member for Ivanhoe. During the present session he has taken up so much of our time laughing not only at himself, but at every expression that falls from this side of the House that it is nearly time he was put to his proper bearings. I support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. CARSON (Geraldton): I am very glad that the Government have introduced this measure, for I believe it will work great good to the State. It is wise to secure large estates close to railways for the purpose of closer settlement. I admit that we have plenty of Crown lands for disposal, but if it is possible to secure these estates, we shall get a ready sale for them. Most, if not all of these estates, have the railways passing through them, or at all events in close proximity, and if wheat is grown there, instead of their being used solely for grazing purposes, it will mean a very great increase to the traffic on the railway system. I feel sure that the same amount of sheep will be carried on the estates with closer settlement as those estates carry now, and there will be the great advantage of the land being settled by very many more families than is now the case. The close settlement of those lands will mean more work for the various industries. If members knew the condition of affairs in the Victoria district they would not oppose the motion. Within a radius of 30 miles of Geraldton we have eight estates comprising over 270,000 acres. Of this quantity 150,000 acres is cultivable land capable of growing cereals estimated to produce, at an exceedingly low average, 10 bushels per acre. This would mean the export of a million bushels of wheat from Geraldton. There have been three estates there repurchased by the Government, Oakabella, Narra Tarra, and Mount Erin. We have heard a good deal from the member for Pilbara with regard to the price of these properties. It is not for members to criti-

cise the prices, more especially as we have a competent board to value the properties. The leader of the Opposition referred to the Mount Erin estate which brought a profit of something like £6,000. With regard to the Oakabella estate, it has yet to be proved whether the price paid for it was too high; also whether the price for the Narra Tarra estate was too high. As to the latter, I can inform members that while I recognise that the full price has been paid, still a short time ago 1,000 acres of the estate purchased at 11d. per acre—probably that was poison land—were repurchased by Mr. Lacey for £1 an acre.

Mr. Underwood: It was 5,900 acres.

Mr. CARSON: There was 60,000 acres in the property, and the wheat yield averaged 15 bushels an acre. Some of the crops this year will give 30 bushels an acre. Land values are going up considerably. The member for Pilbara has said it would be idiotic to buy these lands and then sell them. If he found that he could purchase land and sell it again soon afterwards at a higher price he would realise what a wise proposition it was. This is the position the Government are in at the present time. There are plenty of people to buy that land because it is near the railway. Bowes' estate of 40,000 acres has been offered to the Government, but it is impossible for them to secure it unless this Bill becomes law. There are several other estates available in the same district, and in other parts of the country. The Government cannot get them now, however, as there is no authorisation. The property I have mentioned is one of the best in the district, and it will mean a very great deal to the locality if it is purchased. It will be in the best interests of the State if the Bill becomes law. Of the other large estates which will be available for purchase. I feel sure that if they are secured, they will be the means of bringing a great deal of traffic to the railways, making them in consequence a better paying proposition. It has been pointed out that this money will come from the Savings Bank. That is not at all necessary, for the Government can give de-

beatures for 20 years bearing interest at 4 per cent., and there is no need to go to the bank. Members have complained repeatedly about there being no land available within 15 miles of a railway. Here we have 275,000 acres within a radius of 15 miles of a railway.

Mr. Collier: We can build a railway to where the Crown lands are.

Mr. CARSON: The railway to this district is already built. I support the second reading with great pleasure.

Mr. W. PRICE (Albany): I rise to oppose the second reading and I do so despite the fact that I know there are estates in proximity to my electorate which have been offered to the Government, and which I believe, if purchased, would result in closer settlement springing up. It is the duty of every member however, to consider the best interests of the State as a whole, and not only the interests of a particular section. In travelling along the various lines, particularly through the agricultural areas, members cannot help being struck with the fact that the best areas of land are lying idle and are monopolised by persons holding them purely—

Mr. Underwood: For the Government to repurchase.

Mr. W. PRICE: Either that or for private individuals to purchase. Until the Government have done all they can to compel the holders of the land at present lying idle to place it to profitable use, they should not ask the House to agree to the system of repurchase. I cannot understand why with millions of acres of land lying idle members should be asked to agree to the Bill. If we had a congested population and there was no land belonging to the Government available for the people, we might well be asked to consider such a measure as this, but at the present time the Government—I take the assurance of the Minister for Lands—have millions of acres of land only waiting for settlement to become productive, and for the people to become happy and prosperous upon it. In view of that I cannot imagine what prompts the Government to ask members to agree

to a measure of this character. I call to mind an estate I pass through about once a fortnight. It consists of several thousand acres on the Great Southern railway obtained originally by a Crown grant, so that the Government have never received one penny for it. Not a single hour's work has been put upon that estate, which is held by the wife of a one time prominent politician of this State.

Mr. Heitmann: Where is he now?

Mr. W. PRICE: In the Federal Parliament. The estate is valued at £5 per acre.

The Minister for Lands: I can buy it for one-third of that.

Mr. W. PRICE: If so why is it that the Government go into the back blocks to repurchase estates? The railway line runs right through it. I am assured by a member who knows the country well, and is a large landowner himself in the district, that he is prepared to give £5 an acre for that estate, and still there is nothing done on it, while bona fide settlers are forced 40, 50, and even 60 miles from the railway in order to get land. If the Government were sincere in their desire to see the unoccupied land settled they would introduce such a system of land taxation as would compel the owners of these large estates, either to improve them themselves, or allow others to do it for them. If the Government took steps in that direction, and forced these unoccupied estates to be used they might reasonably bring forward a measure of this kind, but until they do that, until they show they have used every effort to force the people who at present own lands, either to use them or to make them available for others, they should not ask us to pass a Bill of this kind. We are asked to pass this Bill for the repurchase of certain estates. Those estates are not named, but it is understood that certain estates are in view. The Government having once sold the land are now buying it back again and will proceed immediately afterwards to sell it a second time, acting the part of land jobbers. We are assured by the member for Geraldton that the value of the land is going up.

Is it because the value is going up that the Government are to be land jobbers?

Mr. Underwood: If it is going up why sell our millions of acres?

Mr. W. PRICE: I might consider the advisability of supporting the Bill if instead of selling the land once it was repurchased, the Government were prepared to lease it out. We have the experience of New South Wales in this connection. They went in for a system of repurchase, but they were not foolish enough to sell the land again but let it as leasehold, perpetual leasing. They never parted with the fee simple of the estates they repurchased. If the Government were prepared to lease the land which they repurchased there might be some justification for the measure; but in view of the fact that the Government propose to sell the land after repurchase, and will not take steps to compel the owners of large estates to put their estates to the best use, I must oppose the Bill, and I express the sincere hope that it will not pass the second reading.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. J. L. Nanson): The hon. member who has just spoken is apparently under the impression that these estates which are repurchased by the Government are invariably held by their original holders unimproved and unused, and in an idle condition. So far as the estates to which reference has been made, and to which the major portion of the criticism has been levelled, the estates around Geraldton, no description can be more erroneous. Oakabella, Narra Tarra, the Mount Erin estate, and the Bowes estate—the latter has not yet been purchased—all of them are properties which in the hands of the original owners were returning handsome profits. They are not estates that date from yesterday, but they go back to a date prior to the existing land laws of the State. They are properties from which handsome revenues have been derived for many years past. When 30 or 40, or even 50 years ago people went to the Champion Bay district and saw the rich land there they took up these estates,

and they have been devoted to grazing purposes for many years.

Mr. Underwood: The Narra Tarra estate was not taken up 50 years ago.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It has been in existence many years; it was taken up before the present land laws came into existence, and since opportunities have been offered of taking up land under conditional purchase those opportunities have been availed of as far as possible by the owners of Narra Tarra and Oakabella. What the Government have to ask themselves in regard to estates of this character is whether it is better for the State, whether it is better for the districts in which these estates are situated, that they should, although profitable, be limited to carrying a number of sheep with a limited population, or whether they should be subdivided and instead of carrying nothing but sheep and cattle, should carry a considerable population. I remember the case of the Mount Erin estate when I first represented the Greenough constituency in this Parliament. At that time it was a large pastoral property, and there was no population on it with the exception of the owner of the estate and a few boundary riders. At the present time the whole of that estate has been subdivided, and on that estate there is a large number of settlers and their families, and so far as I am aware these settlers are doing well out of their holdings.

Mr. Taylor: How much is unsettled there?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The whole of the Mount Erin estate has been taken up or at least by far the larger portion of it. The Minister for Lands informs me that the whole has been taken up. It has been said as to the Mount Erin estate that the Government made a profit of £6,000. I am not aware if that is the case. I should like certainly that substantiated, to see if it be true or not, because there can be no question when this policy of repurchasing estates was introduced it never was the intention that the Government should make a profit out of the lands, but should merely act as intermediary between the large holder, to buy

from him and to sell to other people, to make sufficient provision against risk, and also perhaps to provide a certain amount of money for making roads and similar conveniences for the settlers, but it was never intended that a large additional profit should be made out of the transactions. The Government sold at a value and it may happen, as fortunately in Western Australia at the present time it does happen, that agricultural lands are increasing in value. It may happen that the land which a few years ago was considered worth only a small sum, may to-day be worth a much larger amount. The member for Pilbara in referring to the case of Narra Tarra and other estates seemed to look on it as a grievance that land which some years ago was fetching only a few shillings an acre, and in some cases only a shilling an acre, to-day is sold for much larger amounts. Instead of regretting that circumstance, I look upon it as one of the most satisfactory and hopeful features in Western Australia to-day. It has never been suggested, and it has never been shown in regard to these repurchased estates, that they have not in the great majority of cases been sold at a fair market value. In regard to these estates in the North, the Narra Tarra and the Oakabella, if it were shown that a fair market value was paid, and I believe no more than a fair market value was paid, it should be a source of satisfaction to all of us to think that the low values placed on lands a few years ago, because people did not realise the high productive capacity of these lands, has been proved by subsequent experience not to be justified. Do members opposite suppose for a moment that the agricultural lands in Western Australia are going to stand at the value they are fetching to-day? I shall not be satisfied, and no member who has studied the question will be satisfied, until the value of land in Western Australia, that is agricultural land, is of a value equal to that of similar lands in the Eastern States. It is a great advantage we have to offer that we are selling in Western Australia to-day land which is very much below the value it will be in

a few years to come. It would be a setback to the agricultural industry if the Government threw overboard the policy of repurchase which has been such a success, and allowed the large estates which are in close proximity in most cases to townsites and railways to rest and prevent them being turned to the best possible account. If members can show that in any case hardship has been caused to any particular section of the community, and that the State is really losing money on the transaction, if it can be shown that the land is not being put to profitable use, there might be some reason for abandoning the system of repurchase; but it is all to the contrary. It is shown by experience in regard to these estates that land which hitherto has been returning a profit in some cases, and possibly in other cases not returning a profit because it was not utilised, that that land is to-day returning a handsome profit. The settlers who have gone on repurchased estates are satisfied with the productive capacity of these estates, and increased freight has been provided for our railways. In the Geraldton district, the Northampton railway which was originally built as a mineral line, and was the first railway built in Western Australia, for many years was run at a great loss, when the lead mining industry declined. And it is only now becoming a profitable proposition. What is the reason of the change? It is because of the policy of repurchasing and the resumption of pastoral lands by the Government, and the devoting of the lands to wheat growing and mixed farming. While it is possible that criticism may be directed against individual repurchases, I do not think it is possible to get away from the broad general conclusion that this policy has been not merely a qualified success but has been a success of a very striking and emphatic description. The argument has been used that because we have large areas, enormous areas of Crown lands suitable for settlement, and which we are ready to sell, that this policy of repurchase should cease for the time being. Do members who advance that argument fully realise what it means?

It means that this land along the railways and in proximity to the coast is not to be utilised to its full productive capacity and that the railways serving these properties are to be deprived of a considerable proportion of their profit-earning capacity. That being the case it is incumbent upon members who oppose the policy of repurchase to submit something practicable in place of it. To merely urge that the holders of these estates, who are in many cases turning them to a good purpose, though possibly not to the best purpose, but which they find personally profitable, to urge that the holders should be taxed to such an extent that they would be compelled to sell seems to be only a euphemistic way of declaring that the tax should be so heavy that the property of these people should be confiscated. It is an easy matter to urge in a general sort of way that properties should be so heavily taxed that the owners should be compelled to sell.

Mr. Taylor: To work.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: They are being worked; they are highly developed pastoral properties carrying large numbers of sheep and bringing in thousands of pounds to their owners. Are you to take individual properties and specially tax them, or are you to take the properties as a whole and put on a general tax? If you take the individual properties and tax them in order to compel the owners to sell you commit an injustice. If you try taxation all round you will find that in order to get at a few large holders you will inflict a hardship on a large number of smaller owners. The problem is not such an easy one as some members imagine. There is no reason why we should exchange a policy which has justified itself for one the result of which must be highly problematical, and would not do the work so speedily or so satisfactorily as it is done by the well-tried repurchase system.

Mr. GORDON (Canning): I support the second reading of this Bill because I believe in the principle of repurchasing estates under certain conditions. There is only one thing I wish to point

out, that is how this proposition of repurchase is likely to be abused, that is in the repurchase of land not likely to be suitable for agriculture. That is what we mean by first-class land. Now the present Land Purchase Board has made a very marked departure from what was originally intended in the Act. The Act intended that only first-class land was to be repurchased, but we find the board—and of course the Government have to accept its decision—buying second and third-class land, and I do not know where this is going to end. At any rate I strongly object to the principle. The prices of the Narra Tarra land show me that the land is not suitable for agriculture, and I think the board was wrong in purchasing that estate with so much inferior land in it. I hold with the policy of repurchasing estates for the reason that the class of land repurchased the Government have not got for sale; and especially is it necessary in the case of Geraldton where there is no Government land available in the neighbourhood of the port; but I do not think the Government should repurchase second or third-class land.

Mr. Carson: Would you throw the estate out because it is only three parts good.

Mr. GORDON: Of course it is hard to get a big block of country without inferior land in it, but when we have a place like Narra Tarra with nearly all second and third-class land, the Government should look into the transaction and find out whether the Lands Purchase Board is to blame or not. Of course it may be that land classified in the past as second and third-class land may to-day be classed as first-class, but it does not appear to me that this land has been taken up as third-class long enough to be classed as second-class to-day. Now, following on the principle of buying second-class land, we find in the Bill that a thousand acres of second-class land is not good enough, and it is to be extended to 2,000 acres. Then of course it will follow that if we buy third-class land we will have to extend the area to 5,000 acres. I hold that the intention of the

original Act was that only first-class land should be repurchased and that this should be the intention of the amending Bill before us.

Mr. WALKER (Kanowna): I intend to vote for the second reading if it be only to fight against those very evils pointed out in the alleged opposition to the Bill. The Government must retain in their hands the power to take back estates for the purpose of subdividing them and allowing our people to occupy them. If the Government do not keep that power in their hands, then the capitalists and large owners will take it in their hands. We have seen something of this on the Midland Railway. If the Midland estate had been in the possession of the State there is no doubt it could have been used to far greater advantage so far as incoming settlers are concerned than is the case now when it is manipulated by those who have it in charge.

Mr. Heitmann: They are settling more on their land than the Government at present.

Mr. WALKER: I know; not altogether on the terms the Government can give. At all events the power should not be out of our hands to do so. Individual cases, particularly the striking case pointed out by the leader of the Opposition, must be dealt with on their merits. We ought to have the capacity of reviewing all options of sale in the House. I am under the impression that when the purchase of a large estate is under consideration it should have more review than it gets. No one can have a greater horror of the land jobs that may be perpetrated in this country, as they have been perpetrated in the East, than I have; but the policy, I take it, should be close settlement; and when any large estate stands in the way, whether it is being utilised or is lying idle, whenever it stands in the way of settling population, we should have it in our power, without doing an injustice to anybody, fairly to take that land, buy it back and utilise it.

Mr. Collier: The better way would be to legislate so that it is not profitable to hold these estates.

Mr. WALKER: I am with the hon. member there, but we are in the position of a young settlement. We have what may be very well described as our millions, not a few thousands, and we may give a man a larger estate to encourage him to go further out away from population—we may do that, I say—where for a time his employment will be chiefly that of a pastoralist: but it will not be many years before population overtakes that pastoralist, and he who is a solitary pioneer, having to travel miles and miles to get to any centre of civilisation, will be right in the thick of population and settlement. Then shall we say to him, "You can hold your big estate still and still hold it as a pastoral run," when we want it for agricultural purposes? No. Neither would it be fair to say to him, "You have helped to develop this country, you have gone back and invited people to come after you, you went where few would follow at the time; you have had trials and difficulties, and now that you have done so much, hand it back, give it up without any reward or compensation." There is no man, I do not care what principles he holds, who would be unfair enough to take up that position. There should be some recognition of those who have taken up land in the early days when at the time these lands were right out of the track. We must recognise that they have as much vested interest, while the law is there, as the man who has taken up a small block within a few miles of the metropolis, and we must give them what is fair—but no more. I object distinctly to anything like rookery, but I say we should recognise fair play and justice and should give fair play if the State can use the land better. In the meantime I am one who is anxious to push along everything that will compel all men holding or owning land to put it not only to his private interest but also to public utility. That is one thing we must not neglect; but the two things can be done, we can give fair play, we can give a fair price—and no more; we should not give a penny more than a fair price in purchasing any big estate that is blocking the possibility of settlement in settled districts.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray): I have listened with a great amount of interest to the remarks of the hon. member and it was quite refreshing to me at any rate to hear the spirit of what I think we must term fair play running through his speech. The general impression I gathered from some remarks made by some of the previous speakers was that any person holding a large estate is necessarily a criminal against the State.

Mr. Collier: Not at all.

Mr. GEORGE: And should be taxed to burst up his estate if possible, or else make him work it and so give more employment on his land. I am not against the principle of a man, if he has land, providing employment. I think it is a duty everyone owes to the State that as far as our means allow we should provide sufficient employment and sufficient pay.

Mr. Collier: To monopolise the land.

Mr. GEORGE: The member for Kanowna talked about fair play: let us have a bit of fair play. What has been the land policy of Australia from the inception? It has been to get people to settle on the land and occupy it and do something with it.

Mr. Collier: With what result?

Mr. GEORGE: If the hon. member will hold himself in patience a little I shall get on with my argument, and give him the result, and perhaps a little more—because I hold startling ideas with regard to private proprietorship of land. I am with the member for Kanowna in believing that if any State puts forward a land policy and invites people to settle on the land, it owes some amount of fairness to those people it gets to come and settle on the land. The idea that because in former times, or perhaps at the present time, people are invited to settle on 2,000 or 5,000 acres of land, as years pass by they must be looked upon as almost criminals because they hold that land, is foreign to any sense of fair play and foreign to the principle of inviting people to come and settle on the land.

Mr. Collier: Then you will oppose the Bill?

Mr. GEORGE: The Attorney General spoke with regard to the selling of land

and putting a tax upon people to make them part with their estates, and realise, and so forth. He might have gone further and put a tax on the people who will not go and buy land. I can assure members that there are many landowners who would only be too glad to sell if they had the opportunity because they find that with the legislation—I am not decrying it—that is looming in the near future in this place to possess land will almost be sufficient crime to consign a man to Karakatta.

Mr. Scaddan: There is an easy way out of it.

Mr. GEORGE: Many persons in the State who by some means or other have suburban lands would be very glad to get rid of their land at almost any price, but there are no buyers. It seems to me that when people talk about the sin of the unearned increment and speculation and so forth they must remember that this speculation and such like has been encouraged by the Government of the day, and the Government of the day have been presumably directed by Parliament. However, in connection with the Bill, one of the reasons that seems to justify the repurchasing of estates is this, that a man who has selected a piece of ground, and who is married, or very soon will be, as he ought to be, in the course of time is blessed with a large family, and what is more natural for him when that family grows up around him than to desire that they should settle around him if they can? There is a good deal of the old patriarchal spirit with people settled on the land. They like to have their sons and daughters and relatives round about them. In many instances that is the reason why a large area of ground is taken up in the first instance.

Mr. Heitmann: No one objects to that.

Mr. GEORGE: Most of the people who take up land, whether it is freehold or under selection, do so with the idea that when their children grow up they would like to have them round about them. As I say, there is a good deal of the patriarchal spirit surviving at the present time.

I can give instances in the Murray electorate where there are large families. I know of one family of 22, and more power to them. This particular family illustrates the case that I am referring to. There is no land for them in that particular district, but there is a large estate belonging to that fortunate firm, Dalgety & Co., which I should like to see repurchased, so that these people might be settled on it. If the sons want a piece of land they have to go into the never-never country, and then run the risk of not being able to get it there. Farmers like to get their children around them, and it is a laudable desire and one that we should assist to bring about. I think the Government are justified in acquiring large estates if they carry out the principles, not of land jobbers, but of a progressive Government, with the desire to do the best they can for the people of the country. I have some figures before me from a return obtained from the Minister, and I find that on 13 estates, which have been purchased there is a loss of £17,000. Perhaps that amount is not much if you take the acreage, but the part I object to is that on another five estates there is a profit of just over £17,000. I contend that if the Government purchase an estate it is not for them to fix the price of the land at such a figure that it will bring them within range of the charge of being land jobbers. The Government purchase land to distribute to the small holder, and consequently, if the Government step in to distribute this land among small people they should do so in such a way as to recoup themselves for the expenditure incurred and not one cent. more. When we take this return and we find that on five estates Cold Harbour, Dudara, Bolgart, Mount Erin, and Wallya a profit of £17,000 was made, I contend that that money has been taken from the pockets of the people. If it had been left there much more good would have resulted to the State. We all know that when we start in life a pound in our pockets is more important to us than £5, or £10, or even £50 when we get older. It is when a man starts that his troubles begin. This

£17,000 profit belongs to the people of the five estates, and should not have been taken from them. The Minister will say, "Oh, well we have to take it in one big lot." I say that is not so, you cannot rob one part of the State to pay the loss of another part and the £17,000 profit belongs to those five estates, while the £17,000 loss should not be hidden, but should be shown so that the House should be able to deal with the question of the management of the Land Purchase Board.

Mr. Troy: Would it not be better to put the surplus aside to provide roads in the estates?

Mr. GEORGE: I have no objection to a proposal of that sort. If the people get conveniences in the shape of roads they have got what they have provided money for. It should be done in that way, or the money should not be taken from their pockets. The amount lost in connection with these estates should be presented to the House in such a form so that it might be reviewed, and so that members might deal with the question as to whether the Land Board has or has not been carrying out its work properly. Another statement made by an hon. member, which gave me a certain amount of concern, and which I should be glad to have the Minister's views upon when he replies, was that certain large estates had been purchased and instead of them being kept for the small people a certain section had been able to pick the eyes out of them and take the bigger portion of the land. The statement is either erroneous or correct. If it is erroneous it should be contradicted. If it is not erroneous then such a condition of affairs is not right, and we should have the opportunity of expressing our opinion on it. The repurchase of these estates can only be justified by the fact that there are people who are desirous of getting land, and will take it up in reasonable blocks and not block further settlement. It is my intention to support the Bill, but there are a few alterations that I shall endeavour to make in Committee. I should however like the Minister to take into consideration the fact that the profit belongs to the people, and I should like him either to repudiate or affirm the as-

section made that the eyes have been picked out of some of these estates. I have heard it said, and I give it for what it is worth that in connection with some of these properties there has been some undue preference shown in connection with the allotment of the blocks. I know at the same time that it is hardly possible to do anything without someone coming along and finding fault, but I would like the Minister to explain to the House whether it is or it is not possible for such a thing to be done.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet): The opposition to this Bill is largely based upon the objection hon members have to the existence of large estates, and I do not think that if the Bill is prevented from passing the House that objection will be overcome. I am prepared to vote for the second reading of the Bill though in Committee I intend to move an amendment with regard to the manner of disposing of an estate when it comes into the hands of the Government. There are two ways of getting rid of these large estates. The first is by means of taxation, taxing the properties so heavily as to compel the owners to put them into use, or giving another person the opportunity to use it, and secondly, repurchase by the Government and disposing of it to the selectors at first hand. I know from experience that there is in this State a very large number of estates, particularly in the districts spoken of by the Attorney General, which are very valuable, and which should be purchased as soon as possible. If these estates are not purchased the State will not get that advantage from the land which it would get if the property were in the hands of a greater number of persons, and in this way put to better use. If the Bill is not passed, and if any opposition is shown and the opposition proves successful, these estates may remain in their present condition for many years to come, and one day they will have to be purchased and forced into use. If, therefore, we delay in this connection we will be asked to pay about ten times the price that we might be able to get them for at the present time. Every year the value of

land is going up in this State, and in the near future our agricultural lands will be equally as valuable as the best lands in the Eastern States, and if that be so, the sooner we get hold of these large estates the better it will be for the people in the country. If we wait to acquire those areas until the land is dearer, not only will the State have to pay a higher price but the people for whom the land will be purchased will also be compelled to pay the Government a much bigger sum. That is not what I desire to see obtain, and it is because I know that will obtain that I intend to give my vote for the second reading of the Bill. Hon. members will say "why not compel the owners to use their estates by the pressure of taxation?" Unfortunately we have a Government in power which will not carry out such a policy as that. The Government will not force these people to use their leases by pressure of taxation, and since that Government is in power we must adopt the best means at our disposal to secure those lands so that they might be distributed to the people of the State and be developed for the good of the State. What I object to in connection with the Government's land policy is the policy of selling areas once they have been repurchased. That merely means perpetuating the old evils which we are seeking to remedy by the passage of this measure. There is no doubt these lands will again become large estates when the very people possessing the ambition spoken of by the member for Murray and who desire to see all their relations settled around them, acquire these properties little by little. These people with large families naturally will get hold of these farms and so form large estates again. While these properties may be secured in comparatively small areas for large families of sons, the possibility exists that these sons, like many others, will not remain around their homes, but will depart for fresh fields. That is where the danger lies.

Mr. George: Let us have the delusion for the time being.

Mr. TROY: There is the danger of the estates drifting back into the hands of

one owner, and that is the end which we shall certainly bring about by purchasing estates and selling them again. Therefore, when the Bill reaches the Committee stage, I intend to move an amendment by which these estates will be disposed of by way of lease such as is done in connection with our pastoral areas. I merely rose to say I recognise that an injury will be done to this State if we permit the existence of these large estates to continue. I will give my vote for the second reading of the Bill.

(Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.)

Mr. HEITMANN (Cue): I have listened to the debate this evening, and I must say that the remarks made by the Minister when moving the second reading were the most striking of all. He made a statement which has been made times out of number in the House, and which has been contradicted by various members of the Ministry. That was the statement of the effect that adjacent to our railways we have thousands and thousands of acres of land held in large estates, and which are not being put to any use at all. I agree with the Minister in that. I agree that along the Great Southern Railway there are thousands of acres which, so far as I can see, have been simply fenced without further improvements whatever. I travelled over the line two or three months ago, and I saw miles of country along the line absolutely unimproved except for the fences. As the Minister has stated, we have lots of land favourably situated as far as railways are concerned, but which is not being used at all. It should be the endeavour of the House to see that it is put to use. So far as this is concerned I agree with the Bill; but I disagree with the method adopted by the Government in bringing this land into use. I believe that those people who, by the improvements made to their own land, have given an added value to this unused land, have the right to ask that those holding this land unimproved should make some use of it. We have heard statements made to-night which would convey the impres-

sion that members on this side of the House believe that the man who holds land without using it is a criminal. I do not think any member on this side of the House would go so far as that. I have no fault to find with the individual who is holding a huge area of land and who refuses to utilise it, but I do find fault with the Government who know that this is being done and yet make no attempt to force the holder to use the land. A plea has been put forward on behalf of those settlers who, in the early days, went far out beyond the railways and took up large areas, as naturally they had to do for pastoral purposes, and who now find themselves surrounded by settlement. It is necessary to force these people to put their land to better use. While I agree that there is something to be said for these men, I think that the man who takes up country and never attempts to use it should be strongly dealt with. There is an estate on the Great Southern, valued at £5 per acre. The holder of that land does not come into the category of the industrious and enterprising class who went out in the early days and who have made good use of their land. This particular land is being held for an opportunity to sell, and for no other purpose. There is no doubt about that. In the repurchase of these estates the greatest fault I have to find is with the valuation. So far as the taxpayers are concerned it is not altogether satisfactory. I would be prepared to buy these estates, and to give a fair value for the land, as arrived at from what the owners originally paid for it and the value of the improvements since made. But I object to a deal such as was outlined by the member for Pilbara when speaking of the Narra Tarra purchase. In that case, it seems, the land was purchased for a mere song in the first place, has been held for some 18 years, and has now been sold back to the Government at a profit of something like 100 per cent. I do not think that is satisfactory. While we have land in this country—and, as the Minister himself said, we have millions of acres simply waiting for the settler—I think we ought to direct our efforts to-

wards settling that land. I believe we have surveyed in advance of settlement something approaching a million acres. This alone should be sufficient for requirements for a little time to come. While I agree that it is not right that these large areas, or even small areas, alongside the railway should be allowed to remain idle. I think there is a method, which has been adopted in other parts of the world, and which could be adopted by this Government, to prevent people holding the land and not using it. Another phase of the question was touched upon by the member for Murray; and I am with him when he states that he is entirely opposed to the Government buying up these estates and selling them to the settler at a profit. It seems to me that the men we want to assist, namely the settlers, are not the men upon whom we should place a burden merely that we might make a few thousand pounds out of them. It is altogether unnecessary. In connection with one estate I feel sure if we could but have the opportunity over again, having regard to the experience of the Government, and particularly of the settlers on the estate, we should refuse to touch it. I refer to the Stirling estate. I do not think this matter can be brought up sufficiently often. That it should be frequently referred to is for the benefit of the agricultural industry, and particularly of the settlers on the estate. When the Minister brings into this country 20 or 30 settlers with their families, we see in the newspapers countless interviews given by the Minister as to the progress being made in the settlement of our land. But we have 20 or 30 settlers on the Stirling estate who were misled in the first place, and to whom the land was sold at an extraordinary price. They have since found that the land was not worth anything like what they paid for it.

Mr. Layman: Try to buy them out, and see how you would get on.

Mr. HEITMANN: I do not think it should be the object of a Government to endeavour to buy out settlers. Rather should it be to keep them on the land. As far as buying out the Stirling estate

is concerned, I know of one settler who sold out at a price which did not pay him for the labour and the money he had expended on the land. I refer to the case of Mr. Holmes. In reference to this land, it was bought from the private owners for £10,000. To that, of course, must be added interest and sinking fund, and also the loading of some £6,000 which has been expended for the purpose of draining the estate. Now, for this amount the settlers are returning to the Government something like £26,000. If any hon. member will tell me that there is land in any part of that estate worth £13 an acre I am prepared to admit that the Government have some justification for their treatment of the settlers.

Mr. Monger: There is plenty of it worth £13.

Mr. HEITMANN: I would like to see the hon. member trying to make a living off the whole of it. It was boomed as potato land, and as a matter of fact, generally speaking, the settlers have not got back their seed. In no case have they got more than three or four tons to the acre. They have been loaded with a little over £6,000 for drainage, and there are parts of that estate which are really worse off now as regards water than they were before the drainage scheme was put in. The effect of the drainage work has been to drown some of the land.

Mr. Gill: They were told that would be the effect of it.

Mr. HEITMANN: The unfortunate settler can get no redress. One party has declared that to get his potatoes out he would require a boat. When we are paying so much attention to the settler on our agricultural lands surely it is time that the Government should give these people a fair deal. I feel perfectly satisfied the work performed for this £6,000—which will have to be returned by the settler—is altogether ineffective and, in fact, is retarding the progress of the estate in some respects. Certainly the settler should not be forced to pay this money back to the Government. The Minister knows the settlers are in a bad way. He knows the country is not what it was supposed to be, and he knows the

estate was cut up very badly, some of the blocks being as small as 6, 8, and 10 acres. One man has 180 acres consisting of no fewer than nine blocks, and not three of them are together in one parcel. That shows that a great blunder was made from the start. It is time the Minister did something for these people. The fact that some have sold out at a fair price should not receive consideration, as the reason for that is that those on the dry lands have to purchase a block in the wet area in order to get feed for their stock. The Government appointed a board five or six months ago, yet it has never met and has not considered the matter. We are telling the world what we are prepared to do for the settlers but let the Minister stay at Stirling for a little while and he will get the opinion of the settlers as to the sort of encouragement farmers receive. I am opposed to the Bill as I think we have any quantity of land in the country, and there is a method of dealing with the large estates other than by buying them with the people's money. I intend to vote against the Bill. I will not use the underhand methods adopted against the Labour Government when they brought in a proposal to buy the Midland lands, and when charges were brought against the Government. The opponents of that scheme are those who are now supporting the Bill, which is something on the same lines. I do not say there is something wrong, as they did then, as I think the Minister has the best intentions; but I see no reason for the measure and will vote against it.

Mr. JOHNSON (Guildford): Before the Minister replies I desire to make a few remarks. I cannot follow those members who are opposing the Bill and say they will vote against the second reading, not because they object to the principle, but because they object to the details, or that portion of the Bill which provides for the purchase of estates with a view to selling them again. I agree with members who look upon that as a ridiculous proposition, and while I will take every means in my power to amend the Bill by providing that when the lands are repurchased they shall be held and let

out on the leasehold system, still I am with the Minister in his desire to get hold of these big estates and utilise them for closer settlement.

Mr. Underwood: The Minister believes in getting hold of them.

Mr. JOHNSON: And I will help him to get hold of them. Some members think that by means of a land tax we would reach the same result; but in New Zealand there is a land tax, and a graduated one as well, but it is essential there for the Government to repurchase estates. They adopt a very wise course there of leasing the land instead of selling it again. It must be borne in mind that some of the estates are very well improved. Some members think that the estates the Government will purchase are only those that are not improved. That is not so. I know of estates in Western Australia, numbers of them, which it would be a distinct advantage to the State for the Government to buy, and cut them up into small areas. If that is done often ten times the population will be settled on the land that is there to-day. These estates are highly and fully improved and return a very large amount of profit to those holding them. They are, however, too large for one man and it is to the distinct detriment of the State for one man to hold such big areas. We want some means by which we can get these estates back, so that the Minister can let them out in smaller areas and to other people for the purposes of closer settlement. In many of these largely improved estates the land tax would have no effect and they should be repurchased. I propose to support the second reading, and when we arrive at the Committee stage, to assist those members who desire to see the Bill amended in the direction of protecting the interests of Western Australia to a greater extent than is proposed by the Bill as introduced.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (in reply): When I introduced the Bill I explained that we desired to have the land adjacent to railways already constructed brought into use. It might be that a heavy land tax would have that effect, but was the idea of having that

tax ever suggested when the opportunity arose? It seems to me that the speech made by the member for Kanowna is a very reasonable and sensible one. The owners of the large estates are almost without exception the men who were the pioneers, who went into the wilderness in the early days and blazed the track. They are entitled to consideration. We desire that those lands abutting on or adjacent to railways should be brought into use. The measure will not cause the taxpayer one penny of expense for some years.

Mr. Collier: It will do no harm.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is saying a good deal, but I go further and say it will do a great deal of good. It will bring lines alongside non-paying railway lines into cultivation. For that reason alone the Bill is justified: but there are other reasons. We wish to see settled on areas now supporting a few people, a great many farmers. Instead of there being eighteen families on estates which the Government have repurchased there are now three hundred and sixty, and in addition many are living on small suburban blocks. The eighteen families would perhaps total one hundred persons, while there are now on the estates probably twelve hundred. Reference has been made, I do not know why, to the Throssell area at Northam and to estates in the Geraldton district. The Attorney General has put up a good defence for the district he represents; now for the Throssell area of which I know something. A few years ago but a few sheep were running on it, while to-day it is practically all cleared and under cultivation. It is true that some of the original purchasers of small blocks have added to their holdings. Surveyors in cutting up land then did not know as much as they do now, for they cut up the blocks into 100 acres or 200 acres at the most. Men who got those small blocks have been compelled to add to their holdings. It was wrong in the first place to ask men to work on the wheat lands on 200 acres. People have bought their neighbours out and some of them now hold a square mile of country. There are

no big estates being built up there but reasonably comfortable farms capable of supporting families. There is no objection to that. Since I have had control of the Department I have instructed that blocks in the wheat areas should be cut up into holdings of not less than 750 acres. The ideal farm in the drier areas is one of 1,000 acres, and if I had had the cutting up of the estate in question it would have been into blocks of not less than a square mile. Now coming to the estates at Geraldton. The member for Murray used some of my figures but did not get them all, therefore he got on the wrong track. He said we had made an enormous profit from Mt. Erin, but he did not read far enough. If he had done so he would have seen that the estate owes the Government for the lands £11,000, which nearly balances the profit. These estates have been the subject of criticism. The Oakabella estate has sold satisfactorily and is much better than most people think. It will support a large number of people and support them well. Narra Tarra too has come in for a good deal of criticism. I would consider myself very fortunate if I had ten thousand acres of the best of the land there at the price we paid for the whole of it. This estate should be cut up and purchased for it is the nearest wheat land to a port in Western Australia, imagine land twelve miles from Geraldton running sheep, when it should be growing wheat! The Geraldton district has not distinguished itself in the past as a cereal growing one, but it will in the future, and largely because we have been able by aid of the Act to cut up estates and bring the land under cultivation. Ten thousand acres of the land there is 20 bushel land, just as is a great deal of the land that has not been considered wheat land in that district. The Narra Tarra estate includes I am bound to admit a considerable area of second-class land, but it is a fine estate and it was quite right to repurchase it for subdivision. The Cold Harbour estate was referred to. I believe it made a profit, and I think it was sold by auction, and the result was that the competition forced the land up until it

got beyond a paying proposition. The leader of the Opposition when Minister for Lands did quite right to reduce the value in order to enable settlers to make a living, particularly as he had a profit in hand. There are estates on the Albany line. The member for Albany objects to cutting them up, but I would like to see some of those fine areas, not far from Albany, properly cut up.

Mr. George: Who owns the big estate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Mr. Hassell. Reference was made to the estate owned by Lady Forrest and it was said that the owner wanted five pounds per acre, also that it was unimproved. That estate has been improved for many years. It is now rented by someone who uses it for a farm and sheep run.

Mr. W. Price: No one mentioned Lady Forrest's name.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That estate could, I am sure, be obtained at an outside price of £3 an acre. The objections that have been raised to the Bill have not been of a very strenuous character. The administration of the past has been criticised, but it could be said with equal truth that the Government had very little to do with the cutting up of these estates. The Stirling estate especially has come in for some criticism. It was bought and sold before the Government came into power. It is quite true the land on the Stirling estate is valuable. The expenditure in connection with the drains on that estate has not so far had the desired effect, but each year the land is sweetening, and in a year or two it will be just the kind of land that we expected. You cannot expect land that has been flooded by the sea for years to become sweetened in a short space of time. The member for Cne admitted that the holders of the land can easily obtain buyers whenever land on the Stirling estate is on the market. I believe the estate was badly subdivided, but everything that can be done ought to be done to enable those on the estate to make a comfortable living, and with that end in view, a few months ago we

determined to send down a board to deal with the matter on the spot, and it is to be hoped when that board visits the estate they will make the conditions under which the people are living much brighter. Hon. members will have an opportunity of dealing with the Bill in Committee. It has been said by several members who have spoken that the idea contained in the Bill is a good one. I believe it is. It is the only way to bring into cultivation large areas which are now lying idle. If we wait until the tax compels the people who own the acres to improve them, we shall wait for a very long time. Surely it is good business for the Government to have these lands brought into use. We are particularly anxious that the land adjacent to our ports should be the first lands to be dealt with, and the Geraldton land has received some attention because the land along the Northampton line is all within 40 miles of a port and anyone who is a wheat grower or grower of cereals must realise that it is advisable to be near a port. It would be a criminal thing if the Government or the House allowed the land to remain lying unused when by the aid of a few hundred thousand pounds we can bring it into use, especially when the State is not asked to pay a penny in connection with the subdivision of it.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	26
Noes	..	..	..	17
				—
Majority for	..	..	..	9
				—

AYES.

Mr. Brown	|	Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Butcher		Mr. Monger
Mr. Carson		Mr. N. J. Moore
Mr. Cowcher		Mr. S. F. Moore
Mr. Daglish		Mr. Nanson
Mr. Davies		Mr. Osborn
Mr. Draper		Mr. Plesse
Mr. George		Mr. J. Price
Mr. Gregory		Mr. Troy
Mr. Hardwick		Mr. Walker
Mr. Jacoby		Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Johnson		Mr. Gordon
Mr. Keenan		
Mr. Layman		

(Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. O'Loughlin
Mr. Bath	Mr. W. Price
Mr. Collier	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Gill	Mr. Swan
Mr. Gourley	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Holman	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Horan	Mr. Ware
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Heitmann
Mr. McDowall	(Teller).

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1909-10.

In Committee of supply.

Resumed from the previous day; Mr. Daglish in the Chair.

Mines Department (Hon. H. Gregory, Minister).

Vote—*Mines Generally*, £41,920:

Item, State Mining Engineer, £800:

Mr. HEITMANN: What were the exact duties of this officer? Reports made by this officer had appeared from time to time, and he (Mr. Heitmann) had come to the conclusion that for technical matters and matters dealing with the higher knowledge of minerals generally, the officer was a capable man, but for giving assistance to the prospector and the small man the State Mining Engineer was not of much use. The Minister had great faith in the officer, but personally, he (Mr. Heitmann) had come to the conclusion that we were not getting full value for our money. What work did this officer perform, and was he doing it well?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was recognised years ago that it was necessary to have a highly trained and technical officer to advise the Minister in matters pertaining to the mining industry. This officer's abilities were unquestionable. Prior to coming here he was chief inspector of mines and Government geologist in Tasmania, and as to having practical knowledge, he was manager of one of the largest gold mines in New Zealand. In this State his duties were, first as chief inspector of mines to control the various inspectors, and formulate the regulations. He had to deal with all applications made under the Mines Development Act, to make reports in connection therewith, and advise. It was to

be regretted that Mr. Montgomery had not gone more out into the field. We required his services for the purpose of visiting the outlying places to advise what should be done so as to assist those engaged in the mining industry. There was no doubt as to the abilities of this gentleman, and no doubt as to the value of the reports published in connection with his work, more especially the report recently published as to the geological formation in the Great Fingal mine, and his reports on Quinn's and Burnakurra. A few years ago Mr. Montgomery met with an accident and to some extent he had been incapacitated from work in the field for some time. In the future he would expect more outside work from this officer than had been the case in the past. At present his services were required in connection with the Commission which it was proposed to appoint in regard to tuberculosis.

Mr. Scaddan: After our experience of previous Commissions I do not care whether there is a Commission or not.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member's opinion was not asked for.

Mr. Scaddan: I give it without the asking.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No one was more capable in a work of this sort than the State Mining Engineer. The Commission would deal almost entirely with tuberculosis as far as it pertained to mining, and it was necessary that a gentleman like Mr. Montgomery should have charge of that Commission.

Mr. Heitmann: Is he to be the Chairman?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The matter had not been decided by Cabinet, but it had been recommended that he should be chairman.

Mr. Holman: Was he not chairman of a Commission before?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The previous Commission dealt with the ventilation and sanitation of mines, and this Commission would, of course, deal somewhat with the same subject. The Commission would deal with the degree of permanence of pulmonary diseases, the nature of the disease, and the extent to which it was caused by mining work.

Secondly the Commission would be asked to say what steps should be taken to improve the working conditions in mines in order to minimise the occurrence of pulmonary diseases. Afterwards we could increase the scope of the Commission by asking them to inquire as to what action should be taken in regard to the men debarred from working in mines through legislation introduced as the result of the Commission; but when dealing with that phase of the question, the social or political phase, some outside representation should be given on the Commission, and we could make the Commission larger. The State Mining Engineer was of value to the department, his reports were appreciated all over the world, and he was one of the most highly scientific men from a mining standpoint in Australia.

Mr. COLLIER: Some time ago statements were made in the House in connection with an advance to a mine in the Davyhurst district. The Minister promised a report by the State Mining Engineer. Had the inquiry been held, and what was the result?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member had the papers. It was pointed out that the shaft had not been worked since operations were suspended some years ago, and that it was impossible to make further inquiry without great expense. He had made no further inquiry other than that shown on the file, where it said there were no appliances to descend the shaft, and that it was believed a certain amount of debris had fallen down the shaft.

Mr. COLLIER was surprised if that was the only information the Minister had. There was a report on the file by Mr. Montgomery, but that showed there had been no investigation by the State Mining Engineer as was promised. Mr. Montgomery simply quoted from Mr. Greenard and others. A report furnished by the State Mining Engineer without visiting the district was not making an inquiry. When a deliberate charge was made that moneys were obtained from the department by fraud and absolutely dishonestly, was the Minister content with a report furnished by an officer in Perth? Surely a charge made by a member of

the House warranted some more consideration? The Minister practically connived at dishonesty in permitting this thing to go on.

The Minister for Mines: Read Mr. Greenard's report.

Mr. COLLIER: Mr. Greenard knew nothing about it. Mr. Greenard visited the shaft and reported that there was no windlass and that it was impossible to ascertain the depth. Mr. Greenard was wrong. There were ladders from top to bottom, and any man who wished to descend the shaft could do so. Was there any desire on the part of Mr. Greenard to ascertain the truth of the charge when he did not go down the shaft? It was on Mr. Greenard's report that Mr. Montgomery based his report and concluded by saying he considered it unnecessary to take further steps. The charge on which Mr. Montgomery was asked to report was not made by Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt, the present holders, but by him (Mr. Collier). Eggeling and Nutt had made their charges previously, and it was upon those charges that Mr. Montgomery reported instead of on the charges he (Mr. Collier) made. He (Mr. Collier) knew nothing about the charges made by Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt, and it was on the charges he made that he had asked for inquiry to be made. Mr. Montgomery reported—

"The facts of the loan are fairly stated in the attached report of Mr. Collier's speech, and have been given in very similar form in my synopsis of Mining Development Act loans in the published annual reports of the department for 1903, 1904, and 1905. There is a slight inaccuracy in Mr. Collier's statement that part of the 25 ton crushing did not come from the mine. It came from the mine, but about 10 tons were got directly from the mine and not from the heap of 100 tons at the Callion battery of which a sample crushing was intended to be taken. The shaft was measured from time to time by Mr. W. Ey, then manager of the State battery at Mulwarrie, whose instructions were to measure the work done below the 100ft. level. He sent in

certificates from time to time of having done so, the last showing a total depth of 193ft., and payments were made in accordance with the agreement for, in all, 93 feet of sinking at £2 10s., equal to £232 10s. On 22nd September, 1908, a letter was received (p. 17 of file 2556/08) by the Secretary for Mines from Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt, who had taken up the ground after Berteaux's lease was forfeited, stating that they had 'measured the shaft and the accurate measurement is 146 feet' (p. 21 of 2556/08). This allegation was referred to the inspector of mines at Menzies, who reported: 'With reference to the depth of the shaft subsidised, I find after carefully going into the matter with Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt on the lease that they have never been down the shaft. Before the depth of the shaft can be accurately measured it will be necessary to clean it out and repair it. There is no rope or windlass on the mine fit to descend a deep shaft. Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt measured the shaft from 15 to 20 feet below where it was originally measured from. This shaft has been standing idle for several years and there are probably several feet of mullock in the bottom. I think the money advanced by the department for this work was legitimately expended.' The loan was granted to Mr. Berteaux not for sinking from 100 feet below the natural surface but for sinking below the level of the bottom existing at the commencement of the subsidised operations. This was certified by Mr. Greenard, before the sinking started, to be 100 feet from surface; and for convenience in subsequent measurement he doubtless took the top of the collar of the shaft as his point to measure from. Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt took a point some 15 to 20 feet lower, which we may presume to have been the top of the natural surface. Mr. Ey measured from the same point as Mr. Greenard and certified to 93 feet of sinking from the time the shaft was started. It is really not very material whether the starting point was 100ft. below the brace or 80 to 85 feet below

the natural surface. The only real question is whether 93 feet were sunk from the starting point. The discrepancy in the depth according to Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt's statement is 47 feet; if this is reduced by 15-20 feet, it becomes 27 to 32 feet, or say about 30 feet. This would be a large amount for the shaft to become filled with loose fallen dirt, as suggested by Mr. Greenard but not at all incredible. Seeing that Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt had not been down the shaft to ascertain the condition of the bottom, it does not seem to be open to them to be positive as to the depth, and there is no good reason to challenge the accuracy of Mr. Ey's certificate. Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt were written to on 21st November, 1908 (p. 34 of 2556/08), and informed that Mr. Greenard said they had not been down the shaft, and on 4th April, 1909 (p. 41 of 2556/08) they say, 'Although we have not been down this shaft and will not swear to a foot to the depth of the shaft, we know that it is not more than 150 feet.' They also question Mr. Berteaux's having spent pound for pound on the work; but as we hold receipted vouchers showing that he expended much more than pound for pound, their mere opinion cannot be given any weight. Whether the money was wisely expended by Mr. Berteaux is another question altogether. The next stage in the transactions concerning this mine that is not worth noticing in connection with Mr. Eggeling's complaint, is an attempt on his part (p. 44 of 2556/08) to transfer his interest in the lease to his son, who turns out to be only thirteen years of age (p. 48). This does not speak very well for Mr. Eggeling's straightforwardness. It does not appear from our file that Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt have ever repaired and cleaned out the shaft. It would no doubt suit them very well to have us do it, but it does not seem to me that any more notice should be taken of their allegations."

All through the report Mr. Montgomery dealt with the allegations of Eggeling and Nutt, and not with the statements

made in the House. It was more than surprising that when a charge of dishonesty was made against an officer of the department the Minister for Mines was satisfied to have a report made from an officer in Perth and took no further steps to ascertain the truth or not. The information on which he (Mr. Collier) based his statements was not obtained from Messrs. Eggeling and Nutt, but was obtained from an entirely different source. He repeated that Mr. Berteaux received payment for 93 feet of sinking at £2 10s. a foot, but only sunk the shaft 45 feet. He also now repeated that this shaft was only 145 feet, and that there was a ladder way from top to bottom down which Mr. Greenard could have gone. Several times men had gone down to the bottom and found it absolutely as clean and hard and solid as on the day work was knocked off.

The Minister for Mines: I have a later report from Mr. Greenard. I thought it was on the file in the Chamber.

Mr. COLLIER: Then, had full investigation been made? When a deliberate statement was made that £120 had been obtained by fraud on a certificate given by an officer of the Mines Department it was up to the Minister to ascertain the truth of the statement, and that could only be done by sending up an officer not afraid to go down a shaft. The only information we had on the file was a report by Mr. Montgomery in Perth.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The instructions were for a report by the local inspector. He thought the file had contained a report from Mr. Greenard in connection with the matter. Speaking from memory he could not tell the contents of the report, but there was a report since Mr. Montgomery made his. The report of Inspector Greenard was not on the file; it was his impression that it was.

Mr. Collier: What does Mr. Greenard's report say?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The report was fairly satisfactory but the inspector said it was impossible to go down the shaft. If, as the member for Boulder had stated, there was a ladderway

down the shaft, Mr. Greenard's report could not be understood. The member for Boulder could rest assured that he would be supplied with the papers on the following day and if further inquiry was necessary after Mr. Greenard's report had been read, the Department would be only too glad to grant it.

Mr. COLLIER: If Mr. Greenard had not gone down the shaft it was up to the Minister to force one of his officers to conduct a proper inquiry. Even if Mr. Greenard's statements were correct that it was impossible to go down the shaft without a windlass, when a charge of such a nature was made involving the honesty of an officer of the department, was it too much to expect the inspector to secure a windlass to go down the shaft. Surely the fact that there was no windlass at the shaft was not sufficient reason for passing the matter over and not holding any inquiry. The information which he (Mr. Collier) had obtained had come from a very reliable source, and the man who supplied the information did not know either of the people concerned. He had been down the shaft several times and had measured it himself; if it were possible for him to go down the ladderway and measure the shaft, it was possible for an officer of the Mines Department to do so. This was neglect which did not reflect too much credit on the responsible people in the department. When a member made a charge that the State had been robbed to the extent of £120 in connection with 45 feet of sinking, and payment for which was made on a certificate of an officer of the Mines Department, and when a charge was made that the work was never performed, it was the duty of the Minister to hold an inquiry, and find out the truth of the accusation. It was not sufficient for the Minister to say two months afterwards that he believed Mr. Greenard's report was satisfactory. Was that the kind of reply that was due to the House when a matter of such importance was concerned?? If the charge was not going to be investigated by the department the House should say that the investigation should be carried out. The shaft was only 145 feet deep, and not

more than that, and £120 was obtained by fraud and dishonesty and it was desired to know whether the matter would rest there or whether the Minister would get an officer who was not too tired to go down this depth and report.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: If the hon. member was not satisfied with Mr. Greenard's report when he read it on the next day, instructions would be issued to Inspector Crabbe of Coolgardie on his next trip to go out to this mine and investigate the whole thing, and if the hon. member then was not satisfied that everything was straight and above-board an inquiry would be held.

MR. SCADDAN: Did the Minister instruct Mr. Montgomery, the State Mining Engineer, to inspect the shaft or did he ask him to prepare a report from the file? If Mr. Montgomery was instructed to proceed to the mine then he had neglected his duty in not complying with that instruction. If he was not so instructed the Minister had not kept the promise made to the House that he would have a thorough investigation into the charges made by the member for Boulder. He (Mr. Scaddan) had seen the report, and it was a most absurd one for a responsible officer receiving a salary of £800 to write, and it was a reflection on an intelligent body to ask them to accept the statements which had been been drawn up from the file. The State Mining Engineer had prepared this report apparently only to please the Minister. If the statement that the State had been robbed of £120 was to go unchallenged it meant that anything might happen any day, in connection with this particular system of loans to companies and individuals in the mining industry.

MR. TAYLOR: The remarks of the member for Boulder after the promise made by the Minister two months ago that the question would be thoroughly investigated were very disappointing. The Minister at that time stated that it was impossible to allow charges of such a grave nature to go unchallenged, and he would immediately despatch the State Mining Engineer to investigate and probe the matter to the bottom. The Minister had pointed out that he was confident that

the member for Boulder had been badly advised, and that such a thing as he had stated could not happen, but on the face of that we found that the inspector of mines, so far as could be gathered, had set forth certain views, and Mr. Montgomery from that report had prepared his own report to the Minister which it was presumed the Minister accepted as final.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: That report was written immediately after the statement was made.

MR. TAYLOR: But the report dealing with the charges made by the member for Boulder against the administration of the department could not be treated so lightly. He (Mr. Taylor) had every confidence in Inspector Greenard doing the proper thing as far as the safe working of mines was concerned and giving a fair deal to the employers, and that consideration which was due to the employees. As far as that officer being too tired to go down a shaft, such a thing was news. There was no doubt whatever as to the vigilance of Mr. Greenard as an inspector irrespective of whether he pleased the department or the employers. That officer did what he believed to be right in the interests of the safe working of the mines and there surely must be some mistake if the shaft was in the position which Mr. Greenard said, namely, that there was no windlass and no ladderway.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: He did not say there was no windlass; he said it was impossible to go down the shaft.

MR. TAYLOR: The member for Boulder had assured the Committee on the soundest authority that the ladderways were there from the top to the bottom and that the shaft was in hard ground, and that the bottom was in the position it was in when the work was abandoned. When a charge of such a nature was made against an officer of the department it was necessary that an investigation should be held. If Mr. Greenard had been instructed by the Minister or by a superior officer to make an investigation there is no doubt about it, he would have made it fearless of the consequences, and reported exactly as to the position.

MR. GEORGE: Who gave the certificate?

Mr. TAYLOR: The certificate for payment was signed by the battery manager at Mulwarrie but that manager was not now in the service of the Government, and perhaps it was just as well he was not. At the same time the matter could not be allowed to drop. The House had been told that the State Mining Engineer would make the fullest investigation; that had failed. Were the Committee now going to accept a lesser light in the person of the inspector of mines at Coolgardie to make this investigation?

Mr. George: Why did he not do it?

Mr. TAYLOR: It was to endeavour to discover why that he was on his feet. The matter should be probed to the bottom. It was known that the Minister had to accept the advice of his officers, and if he had been badly advised it was his duty to see that his advisers were punished. This thing should not be allowed to go on. It was not the first case of the sort although, perhaps, the most glaring. The Minister should give an assurance of some more satisfactory action than that which he had promised. If the Estimates were to be allowed to pass, what opportunity would hon. members have of dealing with the subject again this session? And when it was brought up next session, people would say, "Oh! this is the same old grievance." It should be fixed up at once, and on the spot.

Mr. JOHNSON: The charge made was the most definite and serious he had heard since being a member of the House. The member for Boulder had distinctly charged a person with getting money from the State dishonestly; yet the Minister had not taken the matter seriously enough to undertake to have a thorough investigation made.

Mr. Heitmann: Yes he has. He is putting on a confidential officer.

Mr. JOHNSON: In a case of this description what was the use of a report by a departmental officer on the incapacity of another officer of the same department? Recently he (Mr. Johnson) had gone through an inquiry in connection with a charge he had made in the House,

and he had no hesitation in saying that although he had proved his case to the hilt, he would have failed miserably had it not been for the special capacity of the Public Service Commissioner, who had conducted the inquiry. Certain files had been put in which he (Mr. Johnson) had been quite unable to follow. These files had contained mysterious little pencil notes which, while conveying nothing to him, yet, conveyed sufficient to the Public Service Commissioner. In view of the desire on the part of departmental officers to cover up and assist one another when in fault, the member for Boulder had but little reason to hope for any satisfactory issue from a departmental inquiry. Although the battery manager at Mulwarrie had looked after this particular bit of business, still the inspector of mines for the locality should be made responsible to the State Mining Engineer in the matter. Both these officers had failed to assist the Minister in the protection of the funds of the State, and the Minister had now got a report from a subordinate officer. What was the use of such a report in respect to a direct and serious charge made by an hon. member? Now the Minister said that if this report was not satisfactory he would get another from Mr. Crabb. Mr. Crabb, it was to be remembered, was an officer in the same branch. It was to be hoped the member for Boulder would not accept this proposed further inquiry as suggested by the Minister. On much less serious charges the Minister had been found flying into the newspapers, and had put resident magistrates and Supreme Court Judges on the track of hon. members who had dared to say a word in criticism of some favoured officer. Yet when a definite and distinct charge of dishonesty was made the Minister merely said he would get a report. The charge was sufficiently serious to warrant an investigation by some outside person altogether.

Mr. Hohman: Apparently it would warrant a criminal investigation.

Mr. JOHNSON: It was to be hoped that the Committee would realise the seriousness of the charge, and see that a proper investigation was made. It was

desirable that hon. members should realise the amount of money wasted under the Mining Development Act. With a view of putting a stop to this he had brought down an amending Bill earlier in the session, but no opportunity had been provided for discussing it. However, on the Loan Estimates hon. members would have an opportunity to point out to the people of the State exactly how this money was being expended on mining development. The Minister should be the first to court an inquiry into this particular case, if only for the reason that Mr. Bertaux was his best and most trusted supporter in the district, a man who would stop at nothing to get a postal vote for the Minister. Public justice demanded that the Minister should have a complete inquiry held, not by some departmental officer, but by somebody from the Supreme Court bench.

Mr. WALKER: It had been a revelation to him that such things were possible. Nothing could have been more definite than the charge made, and it seemed incredible that an officer of the standing of Mr. Montgomery, knowing all the circumstances, could lend himself to the acceptance of such a report as that which had been read to-night. The charge was that certain money out of the Mines Development Vote had been advanced in proportion to the depth sunk in a shaft, and that the shaft was not the depth it had been represented to be, and on account of which representations the money had been paid over. It was a simple matter of measurement and the highest officer in the Mines Department, after the under secretary, was apparently satisfied with the report of the officer who said that he had gone to the top of the shaft but did not measure the depth, and consequently did not know. Could the Minister be satisfied with a report of that character? Did the Minister not realise that any report short of an exact measurement was but a subterfuge? Every officer concerned in this was deserving of dismissal without further consideration.

Mr. Heitmann: And all those who tried to protect him.

Mr. WALKER: From the Minister downwards all were betraying their trust. Hon. members would be unworthy of confidence if they were to sit silent and be satisfied with reports such as this. He hoped that some other and more definite steps would be taken in regard to the matter.

Mr. GEORGE: Like other hon. members he was seriously perturbed over this matter. It seemed that a person had secured assistance for sinking a shaft, and that the declared depth was not in the shaft. The hon. member for Boulder had made a statement which was short and decisive. He used words which bore no misconception whatever, and the Minister should realise that the House would not be satisfied until the matter was set right. Assuming the statement was true, and that a certificate had been given upon which money had been fraudulently obtained, then the man who gave the certificate and he who received the money should be proceeded against at law. Even if the man were a rascal and were a friend of the Minister, that was no reason why if he were charged with fraud the Minister would shield him; for certainly he would be proceeded against the same as any other man, if the charge were true. If there had been wrong done the man who had done wrong would have to pay the penalty. Members would never allow themselves to be a party to screen anyone who had been robbing the country in a fraudulent way. If the charges made were proved to be incorrect, then the hon. member would have to take his gruel. His statements were so definite that it was hard to understand how anyone could bring a false statement forward in so definite a manner. He had charged absolute fraud against the man who took the money, and the man who gave the certificate. In addition he had made charges of gross neglect against those who should have investigated the matter.

Mr. BATH: There was no possible doubt as to the charge made by the member for Boulder when he brought forward his motion for the production of the papers. It

was not a request for an inquiry on a matter on which he had some doubt. He made specific charges of fraud in connection with the payment of money from the Mines Development Vote. On that occasion the Minister seemed to have been seized with the gravity of the charge, and expressed anxiety to have the matter inquired into. It was therefore a matter of surprise that after the lapse of so long a period the question had not been cleared up. It was sufficiently serious for all members to concern themselves about. The proper course for the Minister to adopt now was to report progress, let members have the report of the inspector, and make a definite statement the following day as to the action he intended to take to probe the matter, and to protect the State against another such transaction.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: There was no necessity to report progress for he was sure he could promise sufficient to satisfy members. He desired first to refer to the remarks made by the member for Guildford which were characteristic of nearly every utterance that member made about him. Members would assume from those remarks that in connection with this grant it was something he (Mr. Gregory) had done himself, assistance he had given to a friend. The assistance was approved of by Mr. Hastie when Minister for Mines, and it came before the member for Guildford himself, for that gentleman had extended the time. Subsequently it came before him (Mr. Gregory). So far as the charge was concerned the member for Kanowna would know that when the file was asked for it was the Minister's duty to bring it to the House as speedily as possible. There had been a further report received from the inspector. That was probably satisfactory to him, but might not be to members. There had been a definite charge of collusion made and he was prepared to instruct the warden to conduct a special inquiry on the matter on his next visit to Davyhurst. In connection with the advance to Berteaux, that man was not able to find sufficient capital to carry out the work he had promised to do. When he had expended the £220 advanced fur-

ther assistance was refused until he could show he had sufficient capital to carry out the work. Exemption was granted for some time to allow Berteaux to get further capital, and the lease was then forfeited. When taken up again by other parties he had refused to give a title unless there was a lien on it to the extent of the amount advanced, so that if the lease proved payable the owners would have to pay to the Crown the sum advanced on the work. A letter was received from the leaseholders saying the shaft was not of the depth stated. A report from Mr. Greenard satisfied the State Mining Engineer that the work had been correctly measured up, and Mr. Greenard was satisfied that the work upon which the advance was made had been carried out. When the charge was made by the member for Boulder instructions were given to the State Mining Engineer to prepare a report and also to get one from the inspector. He had thought that the report was on the file. He was quite prepared to instruct the warden in the matter, and it would be necessary for that official to take an inspector of mines with him so as to make a full inquiry into the case. It was difficult to fix a date owing to the engagements the warden would in all probability have made. If members preferred he would have an inquiry made by a couple of inspectors of mines, and have that done immediately, or he could send the State Mining Engineer there with an independent inspector so as to prepare an exhaustive report to be submitted prior to the prorogation of Parliament. If there were any evidence of collusion either on the part of the officials or the person who obtained the advance, he would not hesitate a moment about criminally prosecuting anyone who had robbed the department.

Mr. Scaddan: You promised that before.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The promise was that a report would be made.

Mr. Scaddan: You said the State Mining Engineer would go up himself.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: If the leader of the Opposition would be satisfied he would instruct the State Mining Engineer to hold an inquiry, or there

could be one made by the warden, who would submit his report to members. There was no officer of the Department implicated in this affair.

Mr. Scaddan: What about the inspector?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Captain Ey left the employment of the Batteries Department over three years ago, while Mr. Greenard would be the first one to condemn any officer who made an improper representation. Members knew the high reputation Mr. Greenard had. If it were found that improper representations had been made he would issue instructions for a prosecution. A report should be obtained, for unless he was satisfied there had been improper representation he would not initiate a prosecution. There could either be an inquiry by the State Mining Engineer, accompanied by, say, a Coolgardie inspector, or there could be one by the warden.

Mr. BATH: The matter was of sufficient importance to warrant the warden being instructed to inquire into it at once. Someone outside the department could accompany him. The question of the convenience of the warden should not be allowed to stand in the way of an immediate inquiry. If the Minister would agree to the warden making that inquiry immediately and clearing this matter up definitely such a promise would be satisfactory. There was no reason why we should wait the convenience of the warden in going to Davyhurst in a week or two; the Minister should have the inquiry made at once; probably the member for Boulder could nominate someone to accompany the warden to make the investigation.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Mr. Walters or Mr. Warden Finnerty could be appointed to make the inquiry.

Mr. BUTCHER: This was a serious matter, and an inquiry should be held to find out if there had been fraud or not. After the determined manner in which the member for Boulder had brought the matter before the Committee he (Mr. Butcher) was not prepared to wait for a month or two to have the matter settled; instructions should be given to have the shaft measured at once. In-

structions could be issued to-morrow morning and an inquiry held immediately. The shaft could be measured and the officer could go to the bottom of the shaft to see if there was a certain quantity of mullock there.

Mr. W. PRICE: A suggestion had been made that the Minister should report progress, and allow the Estimates to stand over pending the receipt of the report. In the interests of the officer the Minister should accept the suggestion of the leader of the Opposition. On the 15th September the Minister made almost the same statement to the House that he had made to-night. He (Mr. Price) could not understand why there should be more than forty-eight hours' delay in securing this report. That seemed to be ample time if the Minister was sincere in his desire to secure all the information for the Committee. There was no immediate hurry for the passing of the Estimates, because they had been put off many times to suit the convenience of the Government, and they might well be suspended when a member on the Opposition side of the House made such a definite and distinct charge as that made by the member for Boulder. If the item were carried the Minister might do as he had done up to the present, and take practically no notice of the charge. Not only had certain mineowners been charged with fraud but the inspectors of the department were accused, as being parties to the fraud, and the State Mining Engineer was impeached as he had not carried out his duty, that is if the Minister had done what he promised the House on the 15th September. On that occasion the Minister said that if there was the slightest reason for the statement of the member for Boulder the State Mining Engineer would have to go up and make an inquiry. After ten weeks nothing had been done. The wisest course was to report progress and have the report laid before members. Before dealing with the Mines Estimates we should be sure whether a fraud had been perpetrated or not. If the charge were true then the State Mining Engineer and those under him would deserve the severest censure;

if it were not true then the House would know how to deal with a member who made such a charge.

Mr. BROWN: After such a definite charge members opposite had no backbone if they did not strike out the item. It was said the State Mining Engineer had practically connived at a report on certain sinking that had not taken place; members should strike the item out and he would support them. On a former occasion when he had made a certain charge the Government had an inquiry held and paid a solicitor to appear against him.

Mr. HOLMAN: If the member for Perth wished to vote on this matter then he should vote against the Minister for Mines who was responsible for the rottenness and corruption that went on in the department, if this charge were true.

The Chairman: The hon. member must withdraw the remark.

Mr. HOLMAN had said, "if the charge were true."

The Chairman: The hon. member was not in order.

Mr. HOLMAN: If the Minister had done his duty the shaft would have been measured long ago. Other men had measured the shaft and found it was not down to the depth stated. It was not only in this direction that charges had been made, for time after time similar charges had been brought against the officers of the Mines Department. At Yalgoo there was a man named Hunter, or some such name, who got money for machinery to put on a lease when he had no lease. We were told that we should strike the item out and the member for Perth said he would support the item but members on the Government side would troop in and support the Minister, not knowing what they were voting for. If the Minister valued his reputation, if he had a spark of that spirit which a Minister should have, he would report progress and refuse to bring on his Estimates again until this matter had been dealt with one way or the other. But the time had come when a man valued his reputation so little that for the sake of getting his Estimates through the

Chamber he would listen to charges and do nothing, but would tell members in the same childish voice that he did on the 15th September that if the charge were proved the persons would be punished. On many occasions charges had been made against the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: What charges have been made against me?

Mr. HOLMAN: Scores; and many of them were true. The charge about the machinery at Yalgoo was absolutely true. It appeared that some legal gentlemen had been able to get information from the Mines Department in regard to decisions of Cabinet before those decisions were arrived at, while members were kept in the dark. This would go on while supporters of the Government trooped in and voted blindly whichever way the Minister directed. When a charge was made of absolute robbery and fraud surely the Minister had some spirit—he was going to say in his carcase—but surely the Minister had enough spirit left in him to stand up and defend his department. If the Minister found something had been done wrong, whether the person who had done the wrong was a friend of the Minister or not, he should not defend the action. He had sufficient confidence to know that the Minister, if he got his Estimates through would not care a button about what charges had been made.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Minister must realise that there was just cause for stronger remarks than he, Mr. Johnson, had made that night. This matter was brought forward by the member for Boulder ten weeks ago; the statement was then made as definite and distinct as it had been to-night, and the Minister promised then that an inquiry should be held, yet ten weeks had passed and nothing had been done. When we viewed the action of the Minister in regard to other matters, it was curious that nothing had been done. Take the action against the member for Cne when that member passed some remarks about an officer. Did the Minister hesitate about having an inquiry? Did he not rush it as fast

as he could? We could turn to other actions on the part of the Minister. The member for North Fremantle went through an inquiry; the Minister rushed it and had the inquiry held, yet in connection with this matter, although the charge was definite and distinct—

Mr. Heitmann: And more serious.

Mr. JOHNSON: Yet we found the Minister refused to do anything. The Minister took exception to the remarks when he (Mr. Johnson) pointed out that the Minister should have been more anxious on this occasion to hold an inquiry because the man solely responsible, who had committed the fraud, was a Mr. Berteaux, his particular friend in this locality. The circumstances were such that we should have had an inquiry held before we were asked to pass the Estimates.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Even if anything wrong had been done, even if there had been collusion and the department was defrauded, there was no charge against any officer of the department. That should be made clear.

Mr. Collier: That is right.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Murchison when he heard charges were being made naturally thought they were being made against the Minister.

Mr. Holman: The charge to-night is made against yourself in not having made the inquiry. That is a charge you cannot cover up.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: For one thing, he could not cover up the reputation of the hon. member.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. Holman: You cannot cover up your own dirty trail.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Instructions would be issued to one of the wardens to immediately proceed to Davyhurst. It was necessary to send the papers and to advise Mr. Berteaux and Mr. Greenard to be at the inquiry. He maintained there was no fraud though the member for Boulder was no doubt in earnest in the statements made. In Mr. Greenard he (the Minister) had un-

bounded confidence, and members generally knew Mr. Greenard to be of good reputation and to be an upright man. One was satisfied there was no collusion in the case, and there was no charge against any officer of the department. The only person who could have done wrong other than the applicants for the loan would be the man who was a battery manager three or four years ago and had since left the department.

Mr. Heitmann: And that might have been neglect.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was not as if some charge was being made against an officer of the department and another officer was being sent to screen something. Mr. Greenard reported there was nothing wrong in connection with the matter. However, all the delay there would be would be to send the papers to the warden.

Mr. Collier: No papers are necessary; all you want is to find the depth of the shaft.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member wanted to see justice done, and surely he would rather lose his case than see wrong done to any person. One felt sure the inquiry would show that Captain Ey had done his duty faithfully. He was prepared to instruct one of the wardens, either Warden Finnerty, or Warden Gibbons, or Warden Walter to make an investigation and report to Parliament on Tuesday next.

Mr. SCADDAN: It was useless saying no charge was made against anyone at present in the department. One could not separate the charge from the Minister and the State Mining Engineer, who were responsible for lending the money. When the charge was made in September last, and the Minister, backed up by the State Mining Engineer, took no notice of it, it was a serious accusation against the Minister and the State Mining Engineer. The State Mining Engineer should have had the measurement made in his presence. The charge against the Minister and the State Mining Engineer was that they had neglected their duty, and when a charge of this nature was held over the head of a Min-

ister, until he and anyone connected with him was cleared of blame, the Estimates of the department should not be proceeded with. If the Minister were really anxious to have the matter settled once and for all he could have a report made before the House met to-morrow evening, and if he had any regard for his reputation the Minister would refuse to proceed with his Estimates until the matter was settled.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the item were passed it would not relieve the officer in the slightest degree. Supposing it were found necessary to suspend him it would still be necessary to pass the item. Even if an officer were suspended and were awaiting trial on a criminal charge it was necessary to pass the salary for the office. The hon. member must give the Government credit for every desire to see if a wrong had been done. But if the principle was to be adopted of stopping the Estimates because a charge was made against an officer in the departments we might be continually having to report progress.

Mr. TROY had every respect for Mr. Greenard, but when was Mr. Greenard's report to be brought to the House. Would members have an opportunity of seeing it?

Mr. Scaddan: I had an experience once. A report was brought down an hour before the prorogation.

Mr. TROY: Could we expect a report to-morrow—the latest report received?

The Minister for Mines: Yes.

Mr. TROY: If not there would be trouble. He was not prepared to take a promise and allow it to be unfulfilled. The Minister was wrong in saying Mr. Hastie was responsible for the loan, because the loan was made just after Mr. Hastie came into office; but that loan was strongly recommended by Mr. Hastie's predecessor in office who was the present Minister for Mines. No stronger recommendation could be given to a succeeding Minister than the recommendation of the Minister going out of office. So the present Minister was solely responsible for the loan to Mr. Berteaux. The Minister complained of the member for Guildford misrepresenting him, but

there was no member in the Chamber who had been subjected to more villainous misrepresentation by the present Minister for Mines than the member for Guildford.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not accuse the Minister of "villainous misrepresentation."

Mr. TROY withdrew the word "villainous." It was misrepresentation, because over some matter in connection with the battery system the member for Guildford was pursued for twelve months by the present Minister and by no means received a fair deal. The Minister for Mines should be the last to complain about misrepresentation. The Minister should learn to give justice to other members, and when he gave that justice, might expect some himself.

Mr. BATH: In view of the charges made by the member for Boulder, and the definite way in which the matter was brought up on the 15th September, the discussion should not have been necessary. The further consideration of the Estimates should be adjourned until the report was available. If the Estimates were passed there would be no opportunity to discuss the report.

The Minister for Mines: The whole question was one for the Loan Estimates.

Mr. BATH: It was inexplicable how the matter had been passed over.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister for Mines had said he would do his best to get the report by Tuesday. There should be no difficulty in getting it by then. There were three wardens that could be communicated with, and the depth of the shaft could soon be obtained. The position was that there was a shaft 145 feet deep, and application was made for a loan to sink it further. The accusation was that the parties did not sink further but got paid for a shaft 193 feet deep. There was, therefore, the question of 45 feet. No plumb line would sag more than two or three feet, and the determination as to the proper depth could easily be arrived at. There was no necessity to stop the Estimates, for there was no possibility of them being got through by Tuesday.

Mr. Scaddan: How shall we discuss the report?

Mr. GEORGE: There was nothing to prevent an amendment to recommit a portion of the Estimates to discuss the matter.

Mr. Holman: There is a blind majority to prevent it.

Mr. GEORGE: The member had no right to say that. He need not think the members on the Government side would support the Minister if they thought for a moment he would not keep his word.

Mr. Holman: We have had experience of his promises before.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister was on his trial now in a way he had never been before. He had given a pledge that the report would be here on Tuesday. Assuming that the report on Tuesday was not satisfactory the adjournment of the House could be moved.

Mr. Scaddan: There is no chance of getting that.

Mr. ANGWIN: The leader of the Opposition had suggested the best way of getting over the difficulty, and that was by reporting progress. Members should have an opportunity of dealing with the report when it arrived. As to the part taken by the Labour Ministry, Mr. Hastie, the then Minister for Mines, simply carried out the suggestion of the present Minister, and the latter really dealt with the matter throughout. There should be no necessity for any delay, and probably time would be saved if, instead of getting a warden from the fields, a capable man was sent up from here to make the inquiry. The Estimates should be held over for a few days pending the receipt of the report.

The PREMIER: So far as obtaining the information desired by members as to the depth of the shaft was concerned, that would not entail a very great expenditure of time. Before it could be said, however, whether the work had been done by the men who received the advance or not, it must be ascertained where the new work commenced. The question resolved itself into whether the new work was measured from the top of the dump or from the surface of the ground. That would have to be taken into consideration

as well as obtaining the actual depth of the shaft at the present time. The question could not be elucidated unless other information besides the actual depth of the shaft was obtained. The advance made was from an item in the Loan Estimates, and the opportunity would present itself for considering the question when those Estimates were brought down. Many other advances had been made from the same vote, so why should not members take the opportunity of discussing the whole question on the Loan Estimates rather than report progress now. The Government had no desire to burke inquiry in matters of this kind. Members were aware that where cases of abuses had been brought under notice no unnecessary delay had taken place. Recently the member for Cue brought under the notice of the Government a question concerning certain subsidies which it was alleged had been made on false representation in connection with a certain library. As a result of this statement inquiries were made without unnecessary delay and the warden was instructed to hold an investigation. This question might be treated in a similar manner.

Mr. HOLMAN: There would have been no difficulty if this had been the first time for the matter to come before the Chamber. Eleven weeks ago the whole question was thrashed out, and the Minister made exactly the same promises then that he had made to-night. Time had been given to get the information but it had not been brought down, and it went to show the cavalier manner in which the Minister treated members. In the past the Minister had been able to take any course he liked as he had the blind support of members opposite. Anything said by the Minister was backed up by them without question. We had seen the time when the Estimates were going through and the Minister was the only man on that side of the House, yet when a vote took place every Ministerial member flocked in and cast his vote for the Minister. It would not be possible to discuss this item on the Loan Estimates and the only honourable course that could be adopted would be to report progress

so that the matter might be thoroughly sifted.

[Mr. Taylor took the Chair.]

The MINISTER FOR MINES : A promise had already been made by him that an inquiry would be made at once. It would be useless to say that any person would be condemned at the present time. The person who obtained the money, and any others it was possible to get hold of would be examined, but before anybody was condemned they should have the opportunity to be heard. Hon. members could rest assured that no delay would be permitted to take place. At the inquiry the opportunity would be given to all the people interested to be present. They would appear before the warden and whether the warden confirmed or condemned the previous report, as soon as the report reached the department it would be presented to the House and no effort would be spared to bring about its presentation to Parliament by Tuesday. Then if there should be any necessity for a special debate the Premier would be only too pleased to agree to it. Hon. members ought to be content to take that promise. A warden would be appointed, preferably Warden Finnerfy, to conduct the investigation, and a wire would be sent to Inspector Greenard to place himself under the direction of the warden. A wire would also be sent to Mr. Berteaux, and an endeavour would also be made to get Mr. Ey who was in the Battery Department at the time the advance was made. With regard to the shaft itself, hon. members had stated that there were ladders there, but Mr. Greenard's report led one to believe that there were not.

Mr. Collier: Do you mean to say that an officer should not go down if there were no ladders there?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Oh no. It would have to be seen whether there was a large amount of debris at the bottom of the shaft. Members could rest assured that every endeavour would be made to get at the truth, and to have the report presented by Tuesday next.

Mr. WALKER: The explanation of the Minister was not satisfactory. We were dealing with the item of the State

Mining Engineer,* and if the charge made by the member for Boulder was correct this officer could not escape his share of guilt. If the Committee passed that item they would exonerate the officer. Whilst he (Mr. Walker) believed in every man having the opportunity to defend himself and explain all details, he also believed that we should not pre-judge a man to be innocent. The Committee would stultify themselves if they passed the item before an inquiry was made, and that was why the item should not be proceeded with. Its further consideration ought to be postponed, and if the Government desired they could proceed with the remainder of the Estimates.

Mr. COLLIER: All that was wanted was an inquiry, and a fair deal. He could not agree with the views of the Minister. If we were going to have an inquiry as the Minister suggested it would be necessary for the officer holding the inquiry to have the file of papers there.

The Minister for Mines: We can send it up to-morrow.

Mr. COLLIER: With regard to the shaft, it was either a certain depth or it was not, and in his opinion no papers were required, and neither was it necessary for anyone to be present. The shaft was over 190 feet deep, or it was not. Whether they measured it from the top of the collar or the dump, which was 15 feet from the surface, the file would not show. There was nothing to show where the shaft was first measured from. Mr. Greenard was assured that the shaft was measured from the top of the collar, which would account for between 15 and 20 feet, but there was nothing in the reports on the matter. Even allowing for that 15 or 20 feet there would still be a difference of 30 feet to be accounted for. He (Mr. Collier) should have the opportunity of being represented at that inquiry and the Committee should have the opportunity of discussing the report.

The PREMIER: Since the member for Boulder had stated that he would be satisfied if he obtained an assurance that he would be given an opportunity to discuss the question after the report had been obtained, and that he would be given an opportunity of being represented at

the inquiry, he (the Premier) would be prepared to give that assurance. It would be necessary for the member for Boulder to see the Minister for Mines so that the matter might be proceeded with without unnecessary delay. Immediately the report came to hand the opportunity would be given for the matter to be fairly discussed in the House.

Mr. Walker: In the meantime the further consideration of the item could be adjourned.

The PREMIER: Provision had to be made for the State Mining Engineer, and it was necessary for the item to be there, therefore nothing could be gained by postponing the further consideration of it. Members having been given to understand that there would be an opportunity to discuss the matter, they should allow the Estimates to proceed.

Mr. HOLMAN: If the State Mining Engineer agreed to the grant of money, and did not know where the shaft was measured from, he did not know his business and should not be there.

The Attorney General: You have the Premier's assurance that there will be an opportunity to discuss this matter.

Mr. HOLMAN: Members, however, desired to deal with the administration of the Mines Department. Once the item was passed all opportunity of discussion of the subject would be at an end.

The Premier: The member for Boulder asked only for an opportunity of discussing the report.

Mr. HOLMAN: The member for Boulder could only speak for himself and not for other members of the Committee. He (Mr. Holman) wished to deal with the administration of the Mines Department and he was not satisfied that a discussion of that sort would be allowed on the report. The item should be postponed and attention given to some other business. Statements had been made by the Minister for Mines which had proved to be quite incorrect, yet the Minister had not had the courtesy to acknowledge it. All that members of the Opposition were asking for was an opportunity of protecting the interests of the people of the State. It would be more satisfactory, even to the

Premier, to have the matter fully discussed.

Mr. SCADDAN: Earlier in the evening the Minister had stated that he proposed to appoint Mr. Montgomery, the State Mining Engineer, chairman of the Royal Commission to inquire into the subject of miners' complaint.

The Minister for Mines: I said it was my recommendation.

Mr. SCADDAN: Somebody had then asked was Mr. Montgomery not previously a chairman of a similar commission, and the Minister had replied in the negative. As a matter of fact Mr. Montgomery had been chairman of the Royal Commission on the ventilation and sanitation of mines. Without wishing to deprecate Mr. Montgomery's capabilities as mining engineer he (Mr. Scaddan) desired to say that if there was anybody who was unfit for the position of chairman of a commission it was Mr. Montgomery. That gentleman, as chairman of the former commission, had made a recommendation, and signed it, to the effect that the system of box-rising should be provided for in the Bill itself; yet the same officer had prompted the Minister to oppose the recommendation.

The Minister for Mines: How can you be justified in making that statement?

Mr. SCADDAN: The statement was fully justified on the evidence to hand.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: In a number of instances in connection with the Mines Regulation Bill he had acted upon his own initiative and not upon the advice of Mr. Montgomery. Because he had opposed the inclusion of a provision for box-rising in the Bill the hon. member was not justified in saying that Mr. Montgomery had given him (the Minister) specific advice inconsistent with his (Mr. Montgomery's) own report.

Mr. SCADDAN: Notwithstanding what the Minister had said, the statement that Mr. Montgomery had advised the Minister against the recommendation of the commission was fully justified. Evidence of it was to be found on the files. If the Minister would look up the Act he would find that it dealt with the system.

The Minister for Mines: Was that in the first Bill drafted?

Mr. SCADDAN : It was in the existing Act. During the discussion on the Bill in 1906 he (Mr. Scaddan) had declared that Mr. Montgomery wanted the provision to be inserted in the Bill, and the Minister had not been able to deny it. What, then, was the worth of a man like Mr. Montgomery as chairman of a Royal Commission ? Any report made by Mr. Montgomery would not be accepted by those most interested in the question. The miners would not forget the way in which Mr. Montgomery had treated them when the Bill dealing with their lives and their health was before the Chamber. Undoubtedly Mr. Montgomery had prompted the Minister to oppose the recommendations which he (Mr. Montgomery) had himself made as chairman of the commission. Mr. Montgomery was not a fit and proper person to act as chairman of an important commission.

Mr. HOLMAN : If we were going to have a commission sitting and drawing large fees, and if the commission was going to bring in recommendations, then in order to be sure that the chairman would not urge the Minister to oppose those recommendations steps should be taken to see that Mr. Montgomery was not the chairman. Mr. Montgomery was not fit to be chairman of a commission, nor was he fit to be chief officer in the Mines Department. Two matters had been discussed this evening, one affecting the honesty and integrity of the Mines Department, and the other the health and lives of those engaged in the industry. In both of these essential points it had been found that Mr. Montgomery was lacking in his duties. Progress should have been reported some time ago. There was a variety of business on the Notice Paper which could have been gone on with.

[Mr. Dalglish resumed the Chair.]

The MINISTER FOR MINES : The State Mining Engineer would make an admirable chairman of the Commission. Any representations made by members opposite would receive every consideration. Certainly there should be representation from the department, but so long as the best material was got for

the Commission he would be satisfied. The Government wanted the Commission to be effective and wanted to be satisfied it would meet with the approval of members opposite. The Government wanted members opposite to give every assistance, and no doubt they would do so. There was no desire to deceive the Committee in regard to Mr. Montgomery acting as chairman of a similar Commission. That Commission dealt with the ventilation of mines, and certainly also with tuberculosis. However, this matter should be settled now. Why was there need to waste time ?

Mr. Holman : Is the Minister correct in accusing me of wasting time ?

The Minister for Mines : The hon. member was not accused.

The CHAIRMAN : Any accusation made by one member against another member of wasting time was not in order, but the Minister had given assurance he did not accuse the member for Murchison.

Mr. BATH : The inquiry should not be confined to phthisical or tubercular complaints as affecting miners. If the inquiry was to be made we might as well make a good job of it, and deal with the aspect of the whole occurrence of the disease. It was not necessary to have the personnel of the Commission a big one. If we had one good man with previous knowledge of the matter, who could deal with the mining aspect of the question as well as with the general occurrence of tuberculosis and phthisis in other occupations, it would be well. The worth of the report would depend almost entirely upon the evidence given by those interested in the question, and so long as there was a man interested in the question who could elicit that evidence, the object of the inquiry would be served. An officer of the department was more concerned about saving the department as much trouble as possible than to have the fullest possible investigation into any matter under consideration. We could do better by getting a competent man outside the official sphere in order to conduct these inquiries. The State Mining Engineer would naturally be called as a witness in

regard to the prevalence of miners' disease, but that was a different matter from constituting him chairman or a member of the Commission. It was to be hoped that the Commission would not be confined to mining, and that men would be selected from their knowledge of the subject, and from the zeal they would display to get the fullest possible information.

Mr. HEITMANN: No one could write such extensive minutes as the State Mining Engineer. If sent to see the time at the town clock the officer would write a minute a yard long. We were told by the Minister that Mr. Montgomery had occupied high positions in the mining world in various parts of Australia. But we had a director of the School of Mines here and there was no need for Mr. Montgomery's qualifications in that direction. We had also inspectors of mines, so there was no need to pay a man £800 a year to be above those inspectors. We had a Geological Department costing £6,000 a year, and, though Mr. Montgomery had been chief geologist in Tasmania, he had now very little to do with the Geological Department, and any action on his part interfering with the department would be strongly resented by the qualified men in the department. Therefore, one failed to see why we paid this officer £800 a year for a smattering of education in one direction and a smattering in another. Not one of Mr. Montgomery's reports would direct a prospector where to find gold. Mr. Montgomery was like Geologist Jack in Queensland who, when asked by an old prospector where to look to take up a leader which was lost, told the prospector, "You are a practical man and you know a great deal more about it than I do." So far as prospecting was concerned and the location of gold in the country, the opinions of the old prospectors were far more valuable than those of all the geologists in Western Australia. It had been said that Mr. Montgomery would be a member of the Royal Commission about to be appointed. The Minister said he would be pleased to hear suggestions from members as to that proposed appointment. If the

reports of the State Mining Engineer on mining and the ventilation and sanitation of mines were as reliable as his report on the ventilation of the mines at Day Dawn, and the existence of phthisis in that district, they were of no value at all. Some time ago he (Mr. Heitmann) had called attention to the matter and the Premier and the present Minister for Works asked Dr. Blanchard to report. In the report was the following:—"A very considerable increase in the number of cases of miners' phthisis has taken place recently here, and all persons so affected have almost invariably been working underground in the Great Fingal mine for a longer or shorter period." What did the State Mining Engineer say. He visited the district, and in his report said as follows:—

"When at Day Dawn at the end of last July I went through the Great Fingal mine, taking special notice of its condition in respect to dustiness, and made numerous inquiries from the residents of the district likely to be acquainted with the facts as to the alleged prevalence of miners' phthisis. The mine is not an especially dry or dusty one, though at times there are dusty places in it, as in most mines when rising is being done and when there is a great deal of ore being drawn from the stopes on the shrinkage system. As a general rule the walls of most of the workings are damp, and there is, therefore, little dust on them. The mine was in the main in an excellent condition as regards freedom from dust when I inspected it, but it was freely admitted by the management that at times there had been a good deal of dust in parts of it while it was working under high pressure to produce ore. With alteration of the system of stoping it is expected that the dust trouble will be very small. Water is liberally provided for use in drilling, and very few dry holes are bored in the ordinary stoping, and it rests very greatly with the miners themselves to have very little dust in the workings. I heard of only one sufferer from phthisis,

and, in conversation with him, he did not blame this particular mine as responsible for his complaint, though he thought his life as a miner had predisposed him to it. His case, as far as I could ascertain from him, appeared to be one of ordinary phthisis or tuberculosis, rather than miners' complaint or silicosis. There are a good many cases of phthisis amongst all classes of the community, and a certain number must be expected among miners, quite independently of their occupation. This sufferer told me of another case previously in the mine, that of a man who had died of the disease, but this person had been affected with it quite seriously before he came to the State of Western Australia at all. My informer worked in the mine and knew most of the men; but though his complaint would naturally lead him to take special notice of other cases he told me he did not know of any. My inquiries all led to the conclusion that the alleged mortality from phthisis among miners on the Great Fingal mine had been very greatly exaggerated. As directed by the Minister, the inspector of mines has been instructed to pay special attention to making inquiries as to the prevalence of cases of phthisis in the Great Fingal mine, and also to the maintenance of good ventilation and laying of dust."

What reliance could be placed in the report or on the word of the State Mining Engineer. Here was a man employed in the department, the chief function of which was to take care of the miners. On reading that report he had come to the conclusion either that Mr. Montgomery had no conception of the duties of his department or he was instructed by his superior officer to bring in a negative report. The State Mining Engineer made no enquiry at Day Dawn among the residents as to the prevalence of phthisis. He had received a letter from the secretary of the miners' union there, written immediately after the report of the State Mining Engineer was published, to the effect that, with the exception of one or two men in Day Dawn, Mr. Montgomery's

visit was absolutely unknown. Where could he have made his inquiries? A man had only to go into the streets of Day Dawn and converse with any resident to learn of the prevalence of the disease. In that letter from the secretary of the miners' union he had been given a list of some twenty men suffering from miners' complaint, and in that list were the names of ten or a dozen who were then residents of Day Dawn. After that would the Minister say that the officer was worthy to occupy the position of chairman of the commission? Mr. Montgomery was unworthy to fill the position he held as State Mining Engineer, and he certainly was not a fit and proper person to become a member of the commission to inquire into miners' complaint. The position of State Mining Engineer was unnecessary, and the Minister himself could not say what duties the officer should perform. The Minister said Mr. Montgomery was a mining engineer, but we had inspectors, geologists, wardens, an Under Secretary and his staff, and why should there be tacked on to the department the position of State Mining Engineer? It was well that Mr. Montgomery had come under the fire of criticism that night, for he had been too long immune from the criticism he justly deserved.

MR. HOLMAN: If the Minister had no answer to make to the criticism of the hon. member he might be asked why the State Mining Engineer was paid £800 a year, and why the reports and recommendations made by that officer were not carried out. The State Mining Engineer made a report in connection with a proposed State battery at Quinns. He said that a State battery was wanted there, but that owing to an option having been taken place over some property there it would not be wise to erect it. Practically in one breath he said it should be erected, and in the next breath he said that the time was not opportune. It seemed that the recommendations of this officer were only carried out when they agreed with the views of the Chamber of Mines. It was hard however, to condemn the officer when it was known that his hands were to a great extent tied by the Minister. It was known from

statements made by other officers, that they were used in the department practically as tools. If that was the case with the State Mining Engineer, he was not fit to remain in the department because his position was such that he should refuse to be dictated to by the Minister or anyone. It was his (Mr. Holman's) intention to refer at length to the question of the erection of a battery at Quinns, but if the Minister would give an explanation, and that explanation was satisfactory there would be no need to deal with the question at any length.

The Minister for Mines: What explanation do you want?

Mr. HOLMAN: An explanation in connection with the report he made at Quinns, and the erection of a State battery there. The State Mining Engineer reported that a battery should be supplied, and then added that the time was not opportune, but he recommended that they should be given at that place a subsidy of 2s. or 3s. for carting. It should be pointed out however that in that locality carting alone cost 15s. per ton, and it was impossible for the mines there to be opened up unless there was a battery erected.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If the hon. member would state exactly the various questions that he intended to ask and desired information about a reply could be furnished to the whole lot. The duties of the State Mining Engineer had been explained, and on the item the hon. member should not endeavour to obtain a promise from the Minister.

Mr. Holman: Your promises are no good; I have had too many of them.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If that was the attitude of the hon. member it would be of no use to proceed further.

Mr. W. PRICE: That was a most cavalier manner for a Minister to treat a member of the House.

The Minister for Mines: It is all right; I am not losing my temper.

Mr. W. PRICE: Nothing was said about temper. What he said was that the Minister had treated the member for Murchison in a cavalier manner when information was sought.

The Minister for Works: And the member for Murchison insulted the Minister.

Mr. W. PRICE: The member for Murchison was asking for information. He (Mr. Price) also desired to know for what purpose the State Mining Engineer was paid £800 per annum. From the report of the Mining Commission which sat some years ago and made certain recommendations, it appeared that the State Mining Engineer occupied the position of chairman. The Minister for Mines had stated that evening that he had recommended Mr. Montgomery for the position of chairman of the proposed Commission to deal with tuberculosis among miners, and the Minister denied that an inquiry into the health of the miners was part of the duties laid down to be performed by Mr. Montgomery. Yet Mr. Montgomery and his colleagues on that Commission which sat some years ago dealt with the question of the ventilation and sanitation of mines, and investigated also the conditions and the health of the persons engaged in the mines. If the report were read it would be found that recommendations were made by the Commission with regard to miners who were suffering from tuberculosis. The State Mining Engineer was chairman of that Commission and he signed the recommendation. Nothing had been done to give effect to the recommendation made by Mr. Montgomery, yet to-night the Committee had been told that the Minister for Mines recommended that same gentleman for the chairmanship of of another Royal Commission. The Minister seemed to wish the Committee to understand that the State Mining Engineer would do something during the next 12 months to justify his occupancy of the position. In connection with the charges made earlier in the evening, the State Mining Engineer had submitted a report, which clearly had been intended to be final. That report had meant nothing. It had been based on reports sent in to the State Mining Engineer by the very individuals concerned in the charges made by the member for Boulder, and the State Mining Engineer had wound up his own comments by stating that it did not appear from the files that Messrs

Eggeling & Nutt had ever attempted to clean out the shaft, and that it did not seem that any further notice should be taken of their allegations. This was the gentleman for whom the Committee was expected to vote a sum of money. What was the State Mining Engineer for? The Minister for Mines had walked out of the Chamber, not caring to hear read out a recommendation made by the State Mining Engineer in respect to which nothing further had been done.

The Minister for Works: I am not surprised that he should have walked out.

Mr. W. PRICE: Perhaps if he (Mr. Price) were a meek and servile follower of the Minister for Works things would have been all right; but because it was desired to enter a protest against paying money away to an officer whose duties were not known to the Committee, then the Minister for Works, in his lordly style, said no wonder anybody should walk outside. Perhaps the Minister for Works would like him (Mr. Price) to shut up altogether.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was not in order in discussing the Minister for Works.

Mr. W. PRICE: That was so. The Minister for Works was not worth discussing at the present time, for the question before the Chair was the salary of the State Mining Engineer. He hoped the Minister for Mines would not attempt to treat him in the same cavalier fashion as he had treated the member for Murchison when he had sought information. If the expenditure was justified it should be allowed to go, but if it was not justified the item should be reduced or struck out. The information sought should be forthcoming.

Mr. HOLMAN: The Minister for Mines a few minutes earlier had hinted that he (Mr. Holman) was endeavouring to extract a promise to get a battery erected. As a matter of fact the Minister's promises were not wanted. All that was required was the information asked for, and he (Mr. Holman) was going to get it. The members of the Committee should take the matter up

and deal with it in an unmistakable manner.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member was in error in thinking that he (the Minister) was offensive in replying to the question asked. He was endeavouring to fairly place the position before the hon. member, and then the hon. member replied offensively. No promise could be given in connection with the battery system when dealing with this item, but the hon. member knew that the State Mining Engineer recommended assistance should be granted by way of subsidy, and his recommendations were given effect to. Not having the papers, he felt disinclined to refer to the question, but reference was also made in the report to the erection of a State battery. The duties of the State Mining Engineer had already been given twice. Mr. Montgomery was Chief Inspector of Mines and had to see that the inspectors carried out their duties on a uniform basis; he had to look after all matters in connection with the Mines Regulation Act, and to control the mining development vote; he made recommendations in connection with applications for assistance, and was the technical adviser on all matters pertaining to mining; he was asked to spend a good portion of his time in the back country making special reports for publication, but during the past twelve months, owing to a serious accident, could not attend to this part of the work as much as was desired. There was no officer in the public service of the State superior to this gentleman in integrity. He was a man of the highest character and a man of probity and ability, and had risen from the ranks and made a name for himself in matters connected with mining, and possessed practical experience.

Item, Inspectors (9) of Mines, £3,588:

Mr. ANGWIN: The inspectors of mines were classified at £150 but were receiving £350; what was the intention of the Government?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: When the classification was made he (the Minister) thought we would not be able to get inspectors at the salary fixed and

had asked that the classification should not be approved. However, the Government had approved of the classification, giving the officers the right of appeal. The matter was now in the hands of the Public Service Commissioner and would shortly be dealt with.

Item, Registrars (19), £5,501 :

Mr. HOLMAN: Twelve months ago the Minister at Wiluna promised to place a mining registrar there. The nearest mining registrar to this rising and important centre was 130 miles away, and the school teacher who acted as deputy mining registrar knew nothing about mining. Mining business could not be properly carried out. There was an instance in the continued exemptions given to certain leases. These leases were granted protection fortnight after fortnight. This was a protection that was not recorded.

The Minister for Mines: They must be shown.

Mr. HOLMAN: Against the ordinary exemption obtained from the court there was the right to object, but there was no chance of objecting where the Minister gave protection for a fortnight. In a letter of the 22nd January the Minister definitely stated the matter of the appointment would probably be arranged within a few weeks. Surely it was time that the promise was redeemed? It was impossible for the people in the district to get their mining business properly transacted. The officer was a very worthy man, but he was a school teacher and did not understand the mining laws. He had no desire whatever to cast any reflections upon him. Why did not the Minister fulfil the promise he made so long ago?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: At Wiluna there was now a deputy mining registrar who was the school teacher. Why it was impossible for that officer also to carry out the duties of mining registrar he failed to see. In many places where it was desired to give facilities to the people, to give justice to them, we must try and make the public officials do the work of the Mines Department. There was no reason why in some of the smaller places the stationmaster, for

instance, should not do the work for the Treasurer and the Mines Department. As to the appointment of teachers to do this work, surely a man sufficiently qualified to teach children should soon be able to grasp the requirements of the Mines Department. Instructions had been given to the warden to hear cases at Wiluna, and the Government intended to do all they could to try and give justice to the people there instead of compelling them to go 120 miles to Lawlers.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Did you promise that a registrar would be appointed?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: A deputy had been appointed, not a full-fledged official. The school teacher should be able to do the work quite as well as an efficient mining registrar.

Mr. HOLMAN: It was a pity the Minister did not remember his promises and redeem them. So far back as September, 1908, there was a promise made that a registrar should be appointed at Wiluna. If the Minister was not satisfied that an officer was necessary there why did he promise that one should be appointed? It was an absurdity to expect that a miner who came in from 30 or 40 miles outback should be asked to wait outside the school while the children were being taught, before being able to apply for a property. It was an unwarranted action on the part of the Minister. He had promised definitely that a registrar should be appointed and then only appointed a school teacher to act as deputy. The mining people in that district deserved some consideration. Over 12 months ago the Minister approved of the appointment and yet it had never been made. The Minister went to the district, saw the requirements, came to the conclusion it was necessary that a registrar should be appointed, and now made a ridiculous explanation that either a stationmaster or a school teacher was quite qualified to do the work. Such a man was not worthy the confidence of members of the Committee. With regard to the suggestion that stationmasters should be appointed registrars, how did that apply to the case in question, considering that the railway was now 140 miles from Wiluna?

One could not compare a place having a railway with one like Wiluna so far back.
Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.27 p.m.

Legislative Council, Thursday, 2nd December, 1909.

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

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Registration of Deeds, etc., transmitted to the Legislative Assembly.
- 2, North Perth Tramways Act Amendment, passed.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Recommittal.

On motion by the Colonial Secretary, Bill recommitted for amendment.

New Clause:

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved—

That the following be added to stand as Clause 16:—Section 133 of the Principal Act is amended by adding a paragraph as follows:—"Every such writ shall cease to bind charge or effect any bond lease or mortgage or charge specified as aforesaid unless a transfer upon a sale under such writ shall be left

for entry upon the register within three months from the day which the copy shall be served.

The amendment was moved for the reasons explained by Mr. Moss at the previous sitting. The Crown Law authorities had agreed that the amendment was necessary and important.

Hon. M. L. MOSS: It would be well to make the period four months. Three months was the period in Victoria, but Victoria had a very circumscribed area. In the case of a judgment affecting the far North of this State the period of three months would not be long enough.

The Colonial Secretary: There would be no objection to make the period four months instead of three months.

New clause put and passed.

Bill again reported with further amendments.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Recommittal.

On motion by the Colonial Secretary Bill recommitted for amendment.

Clause 25—Amendment of Section 204.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: When the Bill was previously before the Committee Subclause 2 of Clause 25 which provided that only justices and postmasters could witness claims, was struck out. Since then the Chief Electoral Officer had drawn attention to the fact that the subclause was of the utmost importance in order that there should be pure rolls and that there might be some check on witnesses. It was proposed therefore to ask the Committee to reinsert the clause with the exception of the penalty which it was originally provided should be £50. The intention was that this should be reduced to £5. It was desired to bring our laws into line with those of the Commonwealth.

Hon. G. Randell: That penalty is more reasonable.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved an amendment—

That the following stand as Subclause 2:—"Any person who witnesses the signature of a claimant without being personally acquainted with the facts, or