

in the area for a limited period, there was a storm of disapproval. Members who comprise the present Government expressed themselves as being strongly opposed to what they termed a monopoly. It would be interesting to know the exact terms under which these concessions—if they are concessions—have been granted in the Kimberley district. I hope the Minister will give us some information. It is stated in the annual report that Dr. Stillwell, a highly skilled Federal officer who was loaned to this State, has completed a geological survey and submitted a valuable report on the Golden Mile. In the ordinary course of events his report would be embodied in the annual report of the department and would not be published for another 12 months. If it is available, I ask the Chief Secretary to have it laid on the Table of the House in order that members interested in the mining industry might have an opportunity to peruse it now, and not have to wait for another year until it is included in the department's annual report. I support the motion.

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

House adjourned at 5.33 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 15th August, 1929.

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

QUESTION—WYNDHAM MEAT WORKS.

Live-stock manager.

Mr. COVERLEY asked the Minister representing the Chief Secretary: 1, Do the Government intend to call applications for the position of live-stock manager at the Wyndham Meat Works? 2, If so, how will the vacancy be advertised, and what qualifications are needed by prospective candidates?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, It has not been considered necessary. 2, The General Manager has already made a recommendation and among the qualifications considered necessary are knowledge of stock and of the business side of pastoral pursuits.

BILL—MINES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: There is no need for me to say a great deal in justification of the Bill. It comprises two clauses and the principles dealt with are vital. The first amendment seeks to include in the Mines Regulation Act provision for what has been the practice of the mining industry for many years. I refer to the 44-hour week for work underground. The Mines Regulation Act contains a section which prescribes that the working week shall be one of 48 hours. I have been in Western Australia for 32½ years and during the whole of that time the 48-hour week has not been worked in our mines. For practically the whole of the time I worked in the mines 47 hours were recognised as a week's work. We had five shifts of eight hours and on Saturday one shift of seven hours. On the 1st March, 1918, the Arbitration Court issued an award covering the whole mining industry and it included a provision for a 44-hour week.

Hon. G. Taylor: Did that apply to surface hands.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. I admit that at the time it was stated the altered period to constitute a week's work would cause great inconvenience in the mining industry. It is possible that at the

outset the new arrangements did cause some difficulty, particularly in arranging the shorter shift on Saturdays. During the last eight or nine years, however, I cannot recollect one complaint regarding the 44-hour week, not even from the mine managers themselves. The object of the first amendment, therefore, is to substitute 44 for 48 in relation to the hours of work per week. The second principle, which is involved in the other amendment, has reference to the limitation to be placed upon the number of foreigners in, on, or about mines. It is proposed that there shall be no more than one foreigner for every 10 Britishers employed underground, and not more than one foreigner for every 20 Britishers employed on the surface.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why have the one foreigner?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am making provision for 10 per cent. of foreigners underground, and I contend that even with that limitation the treatment meted out to aliens of this State will be much better than that accorded Australians or Britishers in any European country.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You bet it will be!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It will be considerably better. The time has arrived when somebody must take action regarding the number of foreigners employed in our mines.

Mr. Sampson: Will the question of naturalisation affect those foreigners?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Of course it will. Immediately a man becomes naturalised, he is no longer a foreigner; he is a Britisher! Before I conclude my remarks, I will give hon. members particulars regarding the number of foreigners employed in our mines. As a matter of fact, some of the mines are to-day employing a lower percentage of foreigners than is being fixed by the amending legislation. The managers have found no difficulty in getting a sufficient number of employees to man their mines. I have heard it said many times that it is very difficult for mine managers to secure the services of practical miners. If it is, it is their own fault.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course it is.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: For years past the majority of the mine managers have given the whole of the unskilled work underground to foreigners. I do not believe that Australians or Britishers cannot learn what is necessary about work in the mines as quickly, or more quickly, than foreigners. I will not accept any statement that Australians or Britishers cannot do, and do not do, as much work as any foreigner.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about the dust difficulty?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am not dealing with the dust question at present; I will refer to that on the Mines Estimates. In view of the abnormally large number of Southern Europeans who have entered Western Australia during the last three years, it is only a matter of a couple of years when they will be qualified to take jobs underground. Under the provisions of the Mines Regulation Act the test of a foreigner's ability to work underground is that he must speak the English language readily and intelligently. These foreigners are apt pupils, particularly in regard to the ordinary language that applies to mining operations. I am convinced that they are schooled as soon as they come to Western Australia by their compatriots, and I do not blame them for seeking to qualify themselves for work in the mines. After being schooled in mining language, the foreigners apply for work and get it. The district and workmen's inspectors repeatedly apply the language test to the aliens, but it is only upon rare occasions that they come across an individual whom they consider they can conscientiously disqualify.

Mr. Thomson: Will the provisions of the Bill conflict with international considerations?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: So far as I know, there is nothing in the limitation placed upon foreigners that will affect international law. In order to satisfy myself on that score I secured the advice of the Crown Law authorities. Unless the provisions of the Mines Regulation Act are altered, a Britisher in our mines will be a *rara avis*, when we consider the number of aliens who have been entering the State recently. In the interests of the State as a whole, and of the business people in particular, that is not a desirable state of affairs. I have not been able to ascertain the amount of money transferred from the mining in-

dustry to foreign countries because of the employment of aliens, but everyone will admit that it must be a substantial sum. I am positive that there are over 200 of these foreigners who have been in Western Australia for considerably more than five years, during which period they have been employed in the mines. In my opinion, if a Southern European comes here to make Australia his home, and to seek employment here, he should become naturalised as a Britisher.

Mr. Latham: But he cannot do that for five years.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have already mentioned that point, and have stated that there are over 200 foreigners who have been here for longer than that period but have not become naturalised.

Hon. G. Taylor: I know many who are anxiously waiting for the 5-year period to elapse, so that they can become naturalised.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I admit that may be so. There are still a considerable number who are not naturalised. I know one man who has been working in the mines at Kalgoorlie for 14 years and is not naturalised.

Mr. Kenneally: Anyhow, this will not affect a man who is naturalised.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so. If we are going to retain Britishers in the mining industry, we want more power than we have at present. In view of the prospect of 400 to 500 men being employed at Wiluna, it is only fair to the State that action should be taken along these lines. I do not say this in disparagement of the management at Wiluna, because I have it in writing from the general manager that he will give Britishers preference of employment.

Hon. G. Taylor: They tell me they have always done that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: When I was working in the mines, it was quite a common thing for managers to say they always gave preference to Britishers, but when going on shift, I have seen Britishers standing outside while foreigners were called in for employment.

Hon. G. Taylor: Yes, at every change of shift.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: A limit of 10 per cent. is a pretty fair proportion. If the Bill be passed, as I hope it will be, it is not the intention of the Government to

put the measure into force straight away. We must allow the mines reasonable time to get British labour. I am safe in saying there are 500 men in Perth to-day who have probably never seen or worked in a gold mine, but who would be quite capable of doing much of the unskilled work on or in a mine. I was never in a gold mine in my life until I came to Western Australia, but I did not hesitate to take a job with the shovel.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: How did you get on with the shovel?

Hon. G. Taylor: He knocked the banjo about.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I made it my business to learn as much as I could, so that I could get off the shovel and on to the machine as soon as possible. So would every Britisher if given a chance, but at present he is not given a chance. Yet companies complain of not being able to get practical miners. The reason is that Britishers are not given a chance.

Mr. Thomson: Do you mean to say that managers prefer foreigners?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The percentages prove that someone is giving preference to foreigners. There are many things I could say but do not wish to say on this debate.

Mr. Sampson: Has this been going on ever since you arrived in the State?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was not so much in evidence when I first came here, but it has been going on in some parts for many years.

Mr. Angelo: Is similar legislation in force in any of the other States?

Mr. Panton: There is no mining in the other States.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know and do not care. Even if other States have no measure of the kind, it is time we took the lead and gave the Britisher protection against the foreigner. I am prepared to do that. Without giving the names of individual mines, let me quote the following details of employees:—

British.	Alien.	Total.	Percentage of Aliens.
129	16	145	11.25
219	16	235	6.79
419	66	485	13.60
344	80	424	18.87
208	40	248	16.10
131	156	287	54.00
8	8	16	50.00
82	30	112	26.79
190	73	263	27.76

It will not hurt No. 1 to come back to 10 per cent. and No. 2 will not be affected. I have omitted small prospecting shows.

Hon. G. Taylor: Do those figures cover a large area?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, they cover the Murchison and the whole of Kalgoorlie. From those figures it will be seen that the total number of employees is 2,115 of whom 485 are aliens and the percentage is 21.89.

Mr. Thomson: And they are not naturalised.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so. I suppose there are up to 200 naturalised Southern Europeans working in the mines. The employees I have quoted are classified in the returns as aliens and they are not naturalised.

Mr. Ferguson: Those men are employed on the surface and underground?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Most of them underground; very few on the surface. I could not get figures for the whole of the mines showing the number employed underground and on the surface, but I have some figures and they bear out what I have stated. One mine employs on the surface 86 Britishers and five aliens, a total of 91 or 5.5 per cent. of aliens, while underground there are employed 45 Britishers and 151 aliens, a total of 196, or 77 per cent. of aliens.

Hon. G. Taylor: I think I know where that mine is.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The figures for another mine are—surface, 132 Britishers, 12 aliens, total 144, percentage of aliens 8.33; underground 58 Britishers, 61 aliens, total 119, per cent. of aliens 51.26.

Mr. Thomson: Have they failed in the language test?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They have submitted to the language test during the last few months. It is not a very severe test.

Hon. G. Taylor: No naturalised aliens are included in those figures?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. Some of the companies will say that they cannot get Britishers. I am positive that if it becomes known there is ordinary labouring work on the mines for Britishers—I am not referring to machine men—the companies will have no difficulty in getting British labour. I am firmly of opinion that if we prescribed a lower proportion

than 10 per cent., the managers would have a chance to keep their costs below what they are at present. I hope the Bill will be received in a right spirit. I am introducing it not for any personal reason but because I believe that in the interests of the State and particularly of the goldfields towns something should be done to limit the number of foreigners employed in the industry. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. G. Taylor, debate adjourned.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [4.55]: in moving the second reading said: This is a very small Bill and should not occupy much of the time of members. It is to enable the Government to make free grants to group settlers of land in re-purchased estates. The agreement signed by group settlers provided that, where the land is in a re-purchased estate, the settler shall obtain a lease and pay for the land in the usual way over a period of 30 years. It has long been recognised that all group settlers should be placed on the same footing whether they are located on Crown lands or re-purchased estates. This is emphasised by the report of the Group Settlement Valuation Board, who fixed the valuation of group locations on a freehold basis. In some cases of course, the valuation may be more than the group settlement expenditure, in that the valuation may include some of the improvements purchased with the land, but it is intended that insofar as the value of the land only is concerned, group settlers will not be charged for that value. The estates concerned are—

Estate.	Acres.	Cost.		
		£	s.	d.
Pries, Busselton ..	751	750	0	0
Doolette ..	787	4,722	0	0
Moon's (Group 123) ..	363	900	0	0
Anniebrook ..	2,219	4,992	0	0
Karoolup ..	3,002	4,294	11	7
Upper Cape! ..	3,483	16,468	s	4
Richardson's (Group 125, Peel Estate)	1,990	7,710	11	1
Total ..	12,595	£39,837	11	0

The total is exclusive of the Peel and Bate-man Estates. The total amount to be written off in giving the freehold is therefore £39,837 11s.

Mr. Thomson: Is that included in the other figures of what is being written off, or is that in addition.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This amount is in addition.

Mr. Stubbs: Someone ought to get the sack over that job.

Mr. Latham: How many settlers would there be?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: All the settlers on those estates are not included in the 327 locations that have been valued by the board, but some have still to come. This measure will provide for those settlers whose locations have been valued and for settlers whose locations will be valued later on. The expenditure which has been written down does not comprise the expenditure created by the purchase of those estates.

Mr. Stubbs: Can you tell us how much that is?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: All those estates have been subdivided and the settlers will be charged the survey fee in the same way as settlers on Crown land. The Peel Estate is not included as there are many difficulties in the way of apportionment of the amount to be written off and so much of the estate is held by ordinary settlers and soldier settlers. There has been considerable expenditure on roads and drainage which is irrecoverable and must be looked upon as a national expenditure. The cost of purchasing the Peel Estate was £54,987, the area 86,326 acres, the cost of drainage £557,459 and the cost of roads £263,946, a total of £876,392. This expenditure does not include annual interest at the rate of £56,089. The number of group settlers on the Peel Estate is 177 and in addition there are 123 soldier and other settlers. I do not think any additional facts are necessary. It is essential that this amending Bill should be passed as soon as possible. The revaluation board has already dealt with 327 holdings, particulars of which have been laid on the Table of the House. Included in the 327 are 109 holdings in re-purchased estates, the bulk of which are in the Peel Estate. The board

has valued all the holdings on a freehold basis, but freeholds cannot be given in re-purchased estates until approval has been accorded by the House. There is nothing particularly intricate about the Bill.

Mr. Thomson: It will put all the settlers on the same basis.

The Premier: It enables us to grant freeholds.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is all.

Mr. Latham: What about the settlers outside?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The settlers cannot go to the bank for assistance unless this legislation is passed. Meanwhile they remain under the administration of the Group Settlement Board. Any delay will mean holding up the change over to the bank. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [5.3] in moving the second reading said: This is one of the hardy annuals that come up for consideration each session. The object of the Bill is to continue for another year the higher rate of stamp duty that has been levied since 1916. The purport of the Bill is well known to every member. In 1916 the stamp duty in certain directions was doubled, and continued from year to year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was a war measure.

The PREMIER: Yes, when it was first introduced.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Do not make a war of it now.

The PREMIER: We have not yet escaped from the aftermath of the war.

Hon. G. Taylor: We never will.

The PREMIER: Many of the difficulties that rendered necessary legislation of this kind during the war years are still with us.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We can get rid of a bit.

The PREMIER: No doubt we shall do so in time.

Hon. G. Taylor: Let us start upon this.

The PREMIER: I submit that the rate is not excessive. It is not above the average obtaining in the other States where they have been carrying it on for many years. Most of the States, in fact, have passed Acts not from year to year, but imposing a higher rate of duty for a period of years. It was, I think, in 1926 that a Bill was passed in Victoria to continue an increased rate until 1931. At least we give the House an opportunity to review the stamp duty every year. A considerable amount of money is involved, as will be gathered from the revenue returns from stamp duty.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There has been such a tremendous increase that we can afford to reduce it.

The PREMIER: It is contended in some circles that a reduction in the duty would not necessarily mean any diminution of the total amount received. It is also contended that this high stamp duty has a detrimental effect upon local investments, and that shareholders in companies transfer their registrations to the Eastern States, such as New South Wales, because of the duty imposed upon transfer when the sale of shares takes place. It is very difficult to ascertain the exact financial position in that respect, and whether an increase in Western Australian business as against Eastern States business would balance any loss of revenue that might result. Generally speaking I think it can be taken for granted there would be a considerable loss. Having regard to all the circumstances, I do not think the State is in a position to-day to give away any of this revenue. I also think the House will agree to the re-instatement of this measure for another year. I know the increased rate was introduced when I sat in opposition. It is argued that it was forced on the Government of the day because of the war conditions. I need not dwell upon the fact that to-day the financial position is just as difficult as it was during the war.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: When was the duty introduced?

The PREMIER: I think it was in 1916 or 1917, and it has been continued throughout the years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I think you said I introduced it.

The PREMIER: I am generally careful as to facts, and this is one of the charges I have not brought against the hon. member.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You said I was in favour of gambling.

The PREMIER: I could not have said that except in a facetious way. It may not be a good argument to say that the hon. member did it.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is none.

The PREMIER: It may be urged that the time has arrived when the bad example set by my predecessors ought to be abandoned. In some respects we are trying to do that. This is not one of the directions in which I am able to abandon a policy that was adopted by my predecessors and carried on by the Leader of the Opposition for five years, and by ourselves for five years. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES.

Message.

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

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [5.11] in moving the second reading said: This is something in the nature of a further attempt to achieve what we set out to do two years ago. Under the provisions of the Commonwealth Housing Act, the Workers' Homes Board was constituted a State authority through which advances might be made by the Commonwealth. A difference of opinion has arisen between the legal advisers of the State and of the Commonwealth with regard to the matter. Although it has been contended by our Crown Law officers that all that is necessary in the way of guarantees to the Commonwealth Government is contained in the Act of 1927, the legal advisers of the Commonwealth—I suppose wanting to make doubly sure—feel that it is not quite clear. This Bill of one clause gives a statutory guarantee to the Commonwealth for moneys advanced under the housing scheme to the Workers' Homes Board. All that the Commonwealth does is to make the money available.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And get the credit.

The PREMIER: The State takes whatever risks may be involved in the scheme, and the only part the Commonwealth plays is to advance the money. This may be advanced in lump sums of £20,000 or £30,000. Under the Act the authority may be the Government, a local governing body, or any other authority. That authority takes the whole of the responsibility, and must guarantee the money advanced by the Commonwealth. Under the Act that exists the Commonwealth are not satisfied—although they may obtain a guarantee from the Workers' Homes Board to administer the measure in this State—that that of itself carries the guarantee of the State Government. Our Crown Law Department say that inasmuch as the Workers' Homes Board is a State instrumentality, really a State body, it naturally and necessarily carries the guarantee of the State.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Surely the Treasurer would have to give the guarantee!

The PREMIER: The board gives the guarantee, because the board is operating. Our Crown Law Department hold that inasmuch as the Workers' Homes Board is a State instrumentality, an agency of the Government, that carries with it the guarantee of the Government; but the Commonwealth say that they are not quite satisfied and that they want a statutory guarantee. That is the object of this Bill—a statutory guarantee to the Commonwealth Government regarding any moneys advanced under the scheme.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Does it mean that the board can get money from the Commonwealth without consulting the State Treasurer?

The PREMIER: No. The Commonwealth advances the money to whosoever is operating on behalf of the State. The Commonwealth Government say the money is really advanced to the State Government through the Workers' Homes Board; or a better way of putting it would be, to the Workers' Homes Board through the State Government. The Commonwealth Government require a statutory guarantee as regards that money. When I was in Melbourne during the early part of this year, I discussed the matter with Commonwealth Ministers. They said that before putting the Act into operation in this State, they would require to have an undertaking that the Government of Western Australia would give this necessary security by legislation. I gave a written

undertaking to that effect. The Act is in operation under the written guarantee given by me, subject, naturally, to the Parliament of this State endorsing the whole scheme. The Bill merely ratifies an undertaking I gave. For the information of the House I may say that although there has been considerable delay in bringing the Act into operation, already 222 applications under it have been received, involving an expenditure of £161,000.

Hon. G. Taylor: Have the applications been approved?

The PREMIER: Up to date there have been 14 approvals, covering an expenditure of £11,235. Therefore I think it will be agreed that the Act will prove of considerable benefit to the State, because if we should be able to secure even the figure already mentioned, £161,000, it means—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: At what rate per cent.?

The PREMIER: We fix the percentage. The Commonwealth Government advance us the money at a certain rate of interest.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What rate will they charge?

The PREMIER: The ruling rate, whatever it may be for the time being, just as a borrower going to a bank is charged the current rate.

Mr. Angelo: Why not get the money from the Commonwealth Savings Bank?

The PREMIER: That is where it comes from. It is the Commonwealth Savings Bank that is advancing the money in all the States. The money is advanced at the ruling rate of interest for the time being.

Mr. Angelo: I thought you would have to get it in a lump sum, so much at a time.

The PREMIER: Whatever we require. If we have applications for that total, we may say that we want £10,000.

Mr. Angelo: But if the Commonwealth Savings Bank gives the money by way of an overdraft, you will only be charged interest on the daily balance.

The PREMIER: No. They make a loan to us of what we require from week to week or month to month to cover the programme, and the loan is at the ruling rate of interest for the time being. The whole scheme really amounts to this, that the State is a borrower from the Commonwealth.

Mr. Latham: The Commonwealth Government are not charging you more interest than you would pay in the ordinary course of events?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. Latham: They charge the current rate?

The PREMIER: The State carries on the housing scheme except to this extent, that the Commonwealth provides the money. The State is a borrower from the Commonwealth to the extent of the amount required from month to month, and the interest charged is the ruling rate. I do not know when the 222 applications already received will be finalised, but we may assume that they will be finalised within the next 12 months. It means that £161,000 of Commonwealth money is made available to the State for the purpose of erecting workers' homes, the erection of which naturally would not be feasible unless this scheme became operative. Our own Workers' Homes Act operates side by side with the Federal Act. This is not in substitution for our own.

Mr. Latham: No; it is supplementary to ours.

The PREMIER: Yes. The State Government made £25,000 available last year, and £25,000 in the previous year, to the Workers' Homes Board. During the past two years we have made £50,000 available for the purpose of our own Workers' Homes Board. That is the first amount of capital made available for the purpose since 1912. After our Act came into operation, in 1912, the amount of capital made available to the board within a year or two was half a million, or just over.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That money has been coming back and has been used again.

The PREMIER: Yes. Since that time the only money made available for the Workers' Homes Board has been the money coming in. That money has been going out into new homes. In addition to the money coming in, however, the Government have made £50,000 of new capital available during the past two years. This Bill, in my opinion, represents a good thing. The enactment will mean that more homes will be erected for our people, and that the money for them will come from resources which perhaps would be beyond the State Government for the time being. The arrangement will relieve us to a considerable extent. The measure is intended to give the Commonwealth Government a statutory guarantee as to all moneys advanced under the Act.

Mr. Latham: Do the Federal Government limit you to an amount that you may borrow in one year?

The PREMIER: No. There is no limit at all except, I suppose, that the Commonwealth Treasurer, being burdened like most State Treasurers are—

Mr. Latham: No Eastern States money will be sent here?

The PREMIER: Just as I have to urge departments to cut down expenditure and reduce it to the smallest possible amount, so the Commonwealth Treasurer urges me to keep the expenditure under the Act as low as possible. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [5.25]: I support the second reading of the Bill. I hope that the Federal money will be made available, because the 220 odd applicants will then be able to get loans at a lower rate of interest. Presumably this State will obtain the money from the Federal Government at about 5½ per cent. I presume, also, that this money is not included within the limitation placed on our borrowing by the Federal Loan Council?

The Premier: No; it is not included in that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Just now it would be useful to have the Federal money expended here, as the erection of soldiers' homes must be decreasing. The competition between our Workers' Homes Board and the Federal body erecting soldiers' homes put up the price against the unfortunate worker desirous of owning a house. It is an excellent thing for the people to have homes of their own. There are persons who have borrowed money on mortgage, and they will be relieved under this measure. Having borrowed on rather short terms, repayment takes away from their weekly earnings more than they can really afford.

The Premier: The rate of interest is higher, as well as the term being shorter.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. I do not think a working man ought to pay too much. After paying his rent, or his contribution to the board, he should have enough left to live decently and comfortably. The Bill represents the best way of achieving that end. Let us give the worker money at a low rate, and let us help him

to pay off a mortgage that carries a higher rate of interest.

The Premier: The system helps in an economic direction, as, if rents go up, the Arbitration Court puts up rates.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is not possible to have cheap homes and also high cost of material.

The Premier: Nor is it possible to have high rents and low costs of production.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is also the cost of bricks and material to be considered. I am perfectly willing to give the Premier the power he needs in order to secure the Federal money. I believe this is the third time of asking. I trust the Premier will speedily obtain Federal money to assist the 220 odd people who have submitted applications.

MR. LATHAM (York) [5.29]: I support the Bill, which I understand to be purely a machinery measure giving the Premier authority to guarantee on behalf of this State money advanced by the Federal Treasurer. May I express my sincere hope that consideration will also be given to the erection of workers' homes in the country.

Mr. Angelo: We have a promise to that effect.

Mr. LATHAM: I would even ask that preference be given to country applicants. There are cases of men employed in the primary industries who are faced with the task of keeping up two homes—one in the metropolitan area, and one in the country. I hope that will have the earnest consideration of the Government. Again, I trust there will be no differentiation between the class of cottages built in the city and in the country towns. The people in the country towns are entitled to just as good a class of cottage as are the people in the city. I do appeal to the Treasurer that there shall be no differentiation between the class of homes in the country and in the city respectively. If a man goes out into the country he is at least entitled to as good a home as he would have in the city. Again, if there is to be any preference at all, I hope it will be given to the country people, so as to stop that drift into the city which is killing every State.

The Premier: But there is a great scarcity of workers' homes in the city.

Mr. LATHAM: And there will be a greater scarcity still if we encourage in any

way the drift to the city. One thing that is lacking in the country as against the city is that private enterprise is not prepared to invest money in the country towns, because the unearned increment in the city is so much greater than in smaller centres. I have talked to people in a place like Bruce Rock, an up-to-date town, the centre of a rich agricultural district, and vainly have I endeavoured to induce them to invest their money in providing homes for other people.

The Premier: When we had only our own Workers' Homes Act in operation in years past, a great number of workers' homes were built in the country.

The Minister for Works: And we are building as many to-day.

Mr. LATHAM: I have watched carefully the tenders invited every week, and I must say the numbers appear to be immensely in favour of the city. However, I am willing to accept the assurance of the Government that the country towns will not be overlooked. Certainly I have seen workers' homes at Narrogin, and some at Wagin, and some at Merredin. I am glad to know we are not to be limited in the amount of money we are to have.

The Premier: Limited only, of course, by the capacity of the Treasury.

Mr. LATHAM: Certainly. I hope we shall keep up as closely as we can to the limit available to us.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [5.34]: I hope that every opportunity will be taken to make the provisions of this measure known to the people throughout the country. Only recently I told the people of Carnarvon what the housing scheme meant, and I think the Workers' Homes Board have received six or eight applications from that centre already.

Member: Will this apply to the North?

Mr. ANGELO: I think so. I remind the Premier of an interjection I made on a previous occasion when he brought down a similar measure. I asked him would it apply to the North-West, and he said, "Yes, even to the aristocratic town of Carnarvon." So I have used that reply of his for all it is worth.

Hon. G. Taylor: It should secure you a few votes at the next election.

Mr. ANGELO: We have not come to that subject yet. The Premier has told us that

there are something like 220 applications, involving £161,000. I feel certain that when the provisions of this measure are made known there will be more like 2,000 applications, involving perhaps a million and a half of money. And I hope the Premier will go to the Commonwealth Savings Bank with a strong uplift and say, "We want that money, and we are going to have it." Last session I asked the Premier to get information as to how much the Commonwealth Savings Bank had received from the people of Western Australia. The Premier replied that it was $5\frac{1}{4}$ millions. I also asked how much of that money had been lent back to the people of the State. The Premier could not get the information, but I have since found out that it is about three-quarters of a million. We want every penny we can secure to invest in homes and for development purposes. This bank which was established for the purpose of helping in the development of every State, and has that huge sum of money of ours, and probably is using it to help people in other States, must realise that it is about time that we got back as much of that money as possible. So I hope the Premier will not stick at £161,000, but will try to get the full amount of $5\frac{1}{4}$ millions. When in Sydney a few months ago, I had the pleasure of meeting one of the directors and the Governor of the Commonwealth Savings Bank, Mr. Riddle, who was previously stationed in Perth. In the course of conversation I mentioned to those two officials how unfair the Commonwealth Savings Bank was to the people of this State. They asked if I could suggest any method whereby they could do more in the way of lending money in Western Australia. I mentioned our Agricultural Bank, and they told me that if our Agricultural Bank were to put forward an application for a million or two, they would consider it and probably grant it without any difficulty. Mr. Riddle, who is very sympathetic towards Western Australia, gave me to understand that if the Agricultural Bank wanted money he would be content to accommodate it on an overdraft basis. So I suggest that the Workers' Homes Board, instead of obtaining large sums of money at a time should try to arrange for their advances on an overdraft basis, so that the interest would be charged only on the daily balance. I welcome the Bill and I hope that this will be the last time any amendment is

found necessary. I know the present necessity is not the fault of our Government, but has arisen through some misunderstanding on the Federal side. Hence the amendment now before us. But I hope that this will be the last amendment, and I again ask the Premier to let the people of the country know that they can get homes through this scheme. I think the applications he will get will gratify him and will help us to recover some of the money the Commonwealth Savings Bank has had from us, and probably is using elsewhere.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [5.40]: The time appears opportune for a few remarks as to the limitations of areas in metropolitan districts where wooden buildings may be erected.

The Premier: That is not a Government affair. That is for the local authorities.

MR. SAMPSON: Just so, and since there is a growing tendency to restrict the erection of wooden houses, the time I think has come when Parliament might give consideration to the delimiting of powers in that way.

Mr. Panton: Hear, hear!

MR. SAMPSON: The position to-day is that those whose need for housing accommodation is the most urgent are those who cannot afford to pay very high prices. In many instances they are prevented from erecting the homes they could afford, namely, weatherboard houses of a good class.

Mr. Clyde-dale: But a weatherboard house is nearly as costly as a brick house.

MR. SAMPSON: I do not admit that. But there is another difficulty, the difficulty in obtaining bricks. One might say something about that, but perhaps the time is scarcely opportune. The intrusion of the State Government into the brick-making industry has been very disadvantageous. However, since bricks are unobtainable, and since there is an ample supply of timber, and since the timber industry is in a comparatively stagnant condition, there is every reason for a word in favour of extending the areas wherein weatherboard houses can be erected. I hope greater consideration will be given to applications for weatherboard houses. An application to erect a weatherboard house should be received more favourably than an application to erect a brick house, because a greater number will benefit from the money available and, again,

the construction of a wooden building will give work to a greater number.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member to discuss this on a proper occasion. I hope he will not continue in this strain, because it is irrelevant to the Bill under consideration.

Mr. SAMPSON: I understood we were dealing with the giving of statutory power in order to meet—

Mr. SPEAKER: We are dealing with a specific thing.

Mr. SAMPSON: Very well, I will not continue. At any other time, when you, Sir, will permit it, a discussion on these lines will be found to be fully justified.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle) [5.45] in moving the second reading said: This is not a very comprehensive amendment of the Main Roads Act. It deals mainly with the question of finance. I am anxious that it should be put through at the earliest opportunity so that the local authorities may know where they are. I am taking the opportunity to amend one or two sections of the Act that have been found to give difficulty in administration, and to repeal one or two others that are not necessary. Under the Act there is no definition of a developmental road. I do not know how we missed that, but we did not include any definition to show what that class of road was. Local authorities are asked to name the roads they would prefer to be brought under the heading of developmental roads, and to mark them in the order of their preference. We have endeavoured to allocate to our local authorities £2,000 a year for that class of work. They are asked to contribute nothing towards the work done on the roads, but after it is done the road board are asked to maintain it. The local authorities are charged nothing for the work. As there is no definition in the Act to show

what a developmental road is, I am including such a definition in this Bill. The Act talks of handing over developmental roads made by the Main Roads Board to the local authority. There is no such thing as handing over, because the roads belong to the local authorities. The Main Roads Board have no control over them. They agree with the local authority upon the work to be done, and it is done either by the local authority or under contract. All the while the road is within the jurisdiction of a local authority, and at no time is it under the authority of the Main Roads Board. We are therefore repealing the section which talks of handing over developmental roads to local authorities.

Mr. Sampson: The feeling is that the local authority does not take charge of the road until it is completed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Main Roads Board never had charge of it.

Mr. Withers: Do they not take charge of developmental roads in new areas?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: When a new railway is put in, developmental roads leading to the sidings are laid down. At no stage have the Main Roads Board any authority over these developmental roads.

Hon. G. Taylor: After the construction is decided upon the local governing authorities are in control.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They are in control all the time. The road is their's before any work is done. At no time does it become the property of the Main Roads Board.

Mr. Sampson: There is a reluctance on the part of the local authority to interfere until the work is completed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There are many developmental roads upon which local authorities have themselves done work. The Main Roads Board may then carry on work which has already been started by the local authorities. They may extend the road for miles and finally complete it, but all the while it is within the jurisdiction of the local board. It is only over main roads that the Main Roads Board have control; they have none over developmental roads. The reference to handing over is wrong. The Main Roads Board cannot hand over something they do not possess. We are asking that this should be struck out. Power is contained in the Public Works Act to allow the Minister temporarily to occupy certain lands prior to resumption. Under the Act, when the Main Roads Board desire to engage in temporary occupation they must have the

written authority of the Minister. That means, for every temporary occupation on the part of the Main Roads Board prior to an actual resumption, they must come to me for written authority. We are asking that the Minister shall have power to delegate his authority to the Main Roads Board so that he will be able to give them general authority, as is done under the Public Works Act, without having to sign for everything. This is merely to provide for giving to the Main Roads Board the power that is already enjoyed by the Public Works Department.

Mr. Thomson: That is in regard to the resumption of land.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: To its temporary occupation pending resumption. Resumptions take some time to bring about. Notices have to be served, the price has to be fixed, and all that sort of thing occupies a considerable time. The Public Works Act states that the department may enter upon land, occupy it, and do the work, and, subject to certain compensation which is set out, can temporarily take over occupation pending resumption. We are not asking that anything should be done that is not done by the Public Works Department. This power has been used by the Works Department in connection with railways, drainage, etc. It does not apply as yet to the Main Roads Board, and a certificate from the Minister is required in every case.

Hon. G. Taylor: That sometimes causes delay.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, and unnecessary work. It holds up the board until such time as they get written authority from me. That is not the case with any other department. If a railway, a drainage, a harbour or a railway construction engineer wants to go over land in order to do certain work, he can do so under the Public Works Act.

Mr. Latham: The work must not be done without the resumption first being made.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This refers only to temporary occupation. We do not suggest that the Main Roads Board should have any power that the Public Works Department does not possess. This merely gives power to the Minister to delegate authority to the board under this particular clause. No extended powers are asked for. It is only a question of expe-

ditating administration. When this Bill is passed, I shall be able to delegate authority to the board without being obliged to give it every time the occasion arises. Under the Act, it was intended by Parliament that all works involving a sum of money exceeding £1,000 must have the approval of the Minister. No committal for a sum exceeding that can be entered into by the Main Roads Board without his approval. That was actually the intention of Parliament. It appears now that a doubt exists as to whether this applies to everything the board does, or only to that section where this provision occurs. There is a legal difference of opinion as to whether the £1,000 was limited to the section where it was mentioned, or applied to other activities of the board. I think it was undoubtedly the intention of Parliament that all expenditure of and above £1,000 must receive Ministerial approval. A clause has been inserted in the Bill to clarify the position.

Hon. G. Taylor: The board cannot spend over £1,000 on anything without Ministerial approval?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is so. This has been the actual practice up to now. The board have always submitted to me every expenditure exceeding £1,000. The legal advice is that there is room for doubt as to the position, and we want the matter cleared up by this Bill. It has been found that when surveyors locate a road and put in permanent pegs, vandals come along and destroy or remove them, which means a great deal of additional expenditure and work. The Main Roads Board have no redress for acts of this kind, but surveyors of the Lands Department are able to take action. We are asking that the powers given to surveyors of land in cases of this sort be also given to the Main Roads Board, so that, if it can be proved that persons have deliberately destroyed these permanent pegs, action can be taken against them. The loss to the Main Roads Board has been considerable.

Hon. G. Taylor: Is there any chance of catching the culprits?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In some cases it is known how these pegs have been taken and by whom, but the board have no redress.

Mr. Ferguson: They have the same opportunity as the surveyors of the Lands Department to detect culprits.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, to find out who was responsible. Roads are usually built in districts more settled than those that are being surveyed by officers of the Lands Department. The Bill repeals certain references in the Act to the Main Roads Development Act, 1923. That was a Commonwealth Act, and deals with the early moneys that were given by the Commonwealth and the State Governments. The Commonwealth Act has now lapsed, because the money is being made available under the Federal and State agreement. It is no longer in existence, and reference to it can serve no useful purpose in our legislation. We ask that wherever reference is made to it the words be struck out. The reference there to certain moneys being paid into the trust account deals with the 2 per cent. which the Commonwealth have agreed to pay towards the cost of survey and supervision. When our Act was passed, it contained no such provision; and the Commonwealth did not pay anything towards survey or anything towards supervision. When the agreement was fixed, about 12 months later, the Commonwealth agreed to pay 2 per cent. on the cost of work towards survey and supervision charges. The Bill provides that that money shall be paid into a trust account, which is to be operated by the Main Roads Board themselves. The main question treated in the clause is finance. The existing section has been found absolutely unworkable. It was not the child of this Chamber at all. It did not represent the Government's proposal in the Bill as introduced. It was inserted by another place as the result of a select committee appointed there. It was claimed to be the principle operating in Victoria. Our experience has proved it to be absolutely unworkable. It has pleased nobody. All the local authorities are against it. Nobody has been able to devise a formula whereby the section can be worked satisfactorily. It has given general dissatisfaction right through, so much so that the local authorities unanimously have made a strong protest against it. The argument in another place was that what was feasible in Victoria should be feasible here. But Vic-

toria found that provision unworkable, and has altogether given up the idea of allocating charges for construction or maintenance among the various local authorities. Victoria has given up the idea that the board would be able to ascertain just how much an individual local authority benefited by a given work, or able to assess amongst the great body of local authorities from one end of the State to the other how much each of them should contribute towards a certain work on the basis of the benefit derived from it by the ratepayers. Such an idea has been found absolutely unworkable. For years past Victoria has been charging the full cost of a work to the local authority in whose district that work was done. That is how Victoria views the matter. Our existing section sets the Main Roads Board an absolutely impossible task. Under the existing provision no one could give satisfaction to the local authorities. We have canvassed the various alternatives, and considerable investigation has been made, but no satisfactory alternative has been evolved other than that suggested in the clause. The Government were inclined to favour the imposition of a petrol tax for the purpose of meeting Main Roads Board charges on main roads. It will be remembered that this Parliament enacted a petrol tax, and that the tax, after operating for 12 months, was declared ultra vires by the High Court on the application of the Commonwealth Government. Therefore, while the principle of a petrol tax is accepted by this Government as being the soundest and most equitable on which to base taxation for the use of main arteries, yet the fact remains that the High Court have declared that our Act on the subject is ultra vires, and that it is beyond the functions of a State Parliament to impose taxation as was done. True, South Australia now claims to have found a way out of the constitutional difficulty. South Australia believes it has made such an amendment imposing a petrol tax as will be within the confines of the Constitution. We on our part hope that South Australia's view is right, because, as I have said, we regard a petrol tax as the most equitable method of taxation for Main Roads Board purposes. It is the one means so far devised of obtaining from users of roads taxation in proportion to the use made of

the roads. I have received a copy of the South Australian Bill, and this Government will watch with much interest what will happen to that measure. If South Australia is successful in placing its Bill on the Statute Book, and afterwards in surviving an inevitable challenge to the High Court—which I am informed will take place—not much time will elapse before the Western Australian Government will ask this Parliament to follow the South Australian example.

Mr. Davy: You would rather see some-one else figure in a leading case.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have had our experience. If South Australia wins through, that State will have done a good deal for the benefit of Australia as a whole.

Mr. Davy: Will we share the cost?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Our Crown Law Department still strenuously contend that the Bill passed by this Parliament was within the Constitution. It is strange that while the Federal provision relating to the matter has been taken from the Constitution of the United States, throughout the American Union every State imposes a petrol tax, with which the Federal Government have not sought to interfere. The matter is one of interpretation. Wherever I went in the United States, I found an agitation for the use of the petrol tax, which impost was considered quite reasonable and equitable. There was a general desire in the United States to obtain by that means more money for roads. The people saw that they saved a good deal of wear and tear by having good roads, and that they were able to get about and attend to their business much more quickly. When the Commonwealth Government made the two millions a year available to the States, they challenged the efforts of South Australia and Western Australia to impose a petrol tax. They asked the High Court for a declaration that the efforts were unconstitutional. After saying that they were making a free gift of the money to the States, they turned round and imposed a petrol tax of their own. That Federal petrol tax brought in more money than the Commonwealth Government were granting to the States. The Federal Government are making a profit out of the matter. Instead of the States receiving any return, the Commonwealth is obtaining more money from the tax than is being distributed among

the States. In the circumstances we are unable to ask this Parliament to repeat its previous action. Under a petrol tax, I reiterate, we should obtain revenue from road users according to the use they make of the roads.

Mr. Lindsay: Some people not using the roads would pay the petrol tax.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No; exemptions could be arranged. I do not say that in the petrol tax there are no inequalities; I can point out some myself. However, I do say that for every anomaly connected with the petrol tax I will undertake to find a dozen anomalies attaching to the existing arrangement. The present method is most inequitable in many respects. The petrol tax, although not perfect, is a long way ahead of the method now in use.

Mr. Ferguson: If you get that, you will not want this 25 per cent?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. Latham: There would be no 25 per cent. to draw if you got the tax.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. The whole basis of taxation would then be altered. The Government have explored many avenues with a view to discovering a formula to take the place of that in the existing law. I have had a number of conferences on the subject with the executive of the local governing authorities. We have exchanged ideas, and then we have separated in order to think the matter over and explore it further. Eventually we arrived at an agreement that the best method of meeting the charges incurred by the local authorities in the form of obligations to the Main Roads Board is the method set out in the Bill. The executive of the country road boards are unanimously in agreement with this provision, and so are the executive of the metropolitan bodies, by whom it has been confirmed in full meeting. The suggestion is that 25 per cent. of the traffic fees be paid into a trust account, and that that money be used to meet the whole of the obligations of the local authorities in respect of main roads. It means that the Main Roads Board themselves will have to shoulder the financial obligation for main roads throughout the State. That system has many advantages over the existing law, which has never been put into operation. Under the existing law the local authorities would never know from one year to another just what their obligations would be.

Mr. Sampson: It was an impossible proposition.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Last year there was not a large expenditure. As hon. members are aware, over half a million sterling of the money available was held over, owing to the change from day labour to contract, which necessitated surveys and the preparation of specifications. In that way practically 12 months was lost. This year, however, we shall expend approximately £1,250,000. Thus what the local authorities had to meet last year is no guide whatever as to their financial obligations for 12 months. In the circumstances, budgeting to meet their obligations would be, in my opinion, an impossible proposition. Under the clause in the Bill the local authorities will know exactly where they are from week to week. In fact, from day to day they will know just how they stand. A quarter of the money that they receive will be laid aside in a trust fund, and then they will have no more nightmares of accounts from the Main Roads Board. On the contrary, they will know that the whole of their obligations in that direction will be met.

Mr. Sampson: Any shortage would be supplied by the Main Roads Board?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. That is an obligation. Any shortage would fall on the shoulders of the board. We are now in the fourth year of the arrangement, and last year it was estimated that the obligations of our local authorities under the Main Roads Act would amount to £54,720. in the fifth year.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was estimated that the allocation by the Main Roads Board against the local authorities in the fifth year would amount to £54,720. We are in the fourth year now, and it is hoped that the arrears of work will be cleared up this year. The change over from day labour to contract conditions delayed operations practically to the extent of a year's working. The staff are now better organised and we have established district officers. By that means a lot of the work is now done in the districts, whereas formerly it was done at headquarters. It is anticipated that at the end of the fourth year we shall be practically level with our

programme and start the fifth year with a clean sheet. While we may not achieve fully that objective, I do not think the operations of the board will fall far short of it.

Mr. Withers: Has the contract system increased the cost of administration?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It has considerably increased the cost of surveys and the work in the drafting room in the preparation of plans and specifications.

Mr. Ferguson: But there will be an equivalent saving on the work done subsequently.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know that there will be; it is difficult to calculate.

Mr. Latham: I think there will be.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course, the hon. member can speak on this subject without prejudice! I would like to have facts to substantiate such a statement.

Mr. Latham: I will give you some facts later on.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I shall always be glad to have facts. I have had statements investigated, and they have not proved correct. At the same time hon. members must realise that the day labour versus contract controversy is not involved in the Bill.

Mr. J. H. Smith: You admit that last year you had over £500,000 unexpended from Commonwealth funds.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, that was the aggregate amount on hand from the inception of the scheme to the close of the last financial year.

The Premier: That was not for last year alone.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. J. H. Smith: But that was in hand at the end of June last.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. It must be remembered that a considerable portion of the first year had elapsed before the agreement with the Commonwealth was finalised and before we secured authority to go ahead with the work. Then again as regards the £500,000 that was in hand at the end of the last financial year, hon. members will remember that during the discussion on the Estimates last year, I told the House that it was anticipated there would

be an unexpended balance of that amount at the end of June. Anyone could see the inevitable; there was no doubt as to what the position would be. With the organisation we had at that time it was impossible to cope with all the work regarding surveys, locations, plans and specifications and so on. We could not keep pace with the preliminary work involved. I therefore explained from the commencement what was anticipated, and I gave a figure that approximated the amount that was actually in hand at the end of June last.

Mr. J. H. Smith: And you set the pace!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What is the hon. member inferring?

Mr. J. H. Smith: You set the pace on one occasion to the extent of £30,000, and the Commonwealth would not agree to it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is entirely wrong.

Mr. J. H. Smith: They did not agree to it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I know that. What has that to do with setting the pace? It simply meant that the Commonwealth Government would not extend to me the same consideration that they did to our predecessors.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Simply because you set the pace.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Our predecessors in office did not ask permission; they did all their work by day labour, and the Commonwealth Government paid for it, although it was done without permission. Our predecessors did not call for a single contract and they spent the whole of the money available on day work. The Commonwealth paid every penny involved, but they would not do it for me, because of the outcry that was raised for political purposes.

Mr. Sampson: There was a suspicion in their minds.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no question about what happened at the time. But that phase of the question has nothing to do with the Bill; it has been cleaned up. I have already indicated that it was estimated the allocation to the local authorities in the fifth year would amount to £54,720. It is anticipated that 25 per cent. of the traffic fees will bring £55,000 to the Main Roads Board, or within £300

of the liability that it was estimated the local authorities would have to shoulder next year. When I first put up the proposition to the local authorities, I asked them to agree to 33 1-3rd per cent. of the traffic fees going to the Main Roads Board. I believe that percentage would go nearer to meeting the obligations of the board because as the years go on the expenses of the Main Roads Board will be greater. With increased mileage, maintenance costs will be augmented, and more money will be required to meet the outgoings. The local authorities would not agree to that but indicated that they would be agreeable to a reduction of 25 per cent. As a compromise the Government accepted that proposal in order to place the financial arrangements between the Main Roads Board and the local authorities on a better footing. It is obvious that it will mean the Government will have to find money in addition to that derived from the traffic fees so as to fulfil the financial obligations of the board. The adoption of this scheme will free the local authorities from any further charge. We agreed that the first year's allocation should be waived and there is a clause in the Bill in which provision is made accordingly. It is also provided that the North-West and the Kimberleys shall be exempted from the operations of the Bill. In other words the same territory will be exempted as was excluded in connection with the petrol tax.

Hon. G. Taylor: The North-West seems to be exempted in so many instances.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It means that the Bill will operate over the southern portions of the State only. There is a clause at the end of the Bill that provides that the Main Roads Board shall be placed on the same footing as the Commissioner of Railways with regard to deputations that desire to be accompanied by members of Parliament. It will readily be admitted that it is an invidious position to place any public servant in if he has to refuse a request when pressed by members of Parliament to agree to a certain proposal. It may mean that feeling will be engendered and political considerations will be involved in the attitude the board may adopt. It is considered only right that with reference to matters in which the Parliamentary member of a district is involved, deputations should go to the Minister. It is the Minister who

is responsible to this House for explanations and an account of the doings of the board, and therefore it is with him that members of Parliament should deal. If the board were disposed to disagree with what a member of Parliament sought and came to cross purposes with him, it might result in the board being unfairly attacked in Parliament, and the board might be adversely affected by the coloured attitude a member might adopt in this House or another place.

Hon. G. Taylor: The board have not suffered in that respect so far.

The Premier: Have they not?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not want to be forced to disclose them, but I could give many instances to indicate that it is most desirable for such a provision to be included in the Bill. As a matter of fact, I do not know that there is not authority for the Minister to make this provision on his own responsibility, but I consider it better to have the point set at rest by a declaration through legislation.

Mr. Sampson: But are the board not outside the control of a Minister?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member should examine the law and not be emphatic when he says just what is the final word.

The Premier: The hon. member would not quite decide that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: When it is a question of funds, there is one man only who is regarded as responsible, and that is the man who speaks in this House as the ministerial representative of the department concerned. He is the man who has to carry out his obligations. When there has been any criticism or fault-finding, hon. members opposite have not failed to declare that the Minister must be held responsible. At times they have known more about it than I have done. I could give many instances that would fully warrant the House passing the clause under discussion. I do not desire to give them, but if necessary I shall do so. I have briefly outlined the provisions of the Bill. There is nothing very contentious in it. It will place the financial provisions of the Act on a workable basis. No one can contend for a moment that the existing arrangements are workable. On the contrary, they have been found most unworkable. With the continuance of the existing provisions, the Main Roads Board at the end of each year would be faced with the necessity for making allocations against local authori-

ties, and they would have to be prepared to face disagreements, dissatisfaction and fault-finding from one end of the State to the other. The Act has set the board a most impossible task. The local authorities have agreed to the percentage to be deducted from traffic fees and the Government have accepted that percentage as a compromise. It will give us a basis for smooth working; it will allow the local authorities to know where they are, and will place the Main Roads Board in its relationship to those local authorities, on a satisfactory basis as against the impossible position existing to-day.

Hon. G. Taylor: You brought in the Bill!

The Premier: The Act is not the Bill that we brought in.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

BILL—TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [7.45]: It will be agreed that the amendment contained in the Bill is necessary, for the Act has been known to be defective for many years past, indeed from its very inception. The amendment will provide a convenience which will be very much appreciated, for hitherto, after obtaining judgment in certain cases, a transfer of the land concerned could not be secured. The Bill is unusual inasmuch as one of its provisions relates to the past as well as to the future. But in this respect also it will be appreciated, because there are many difficulties which, when the Bill has passed, will be capable of being cleared up. In the Bill by implication the important protection afforded by the use of the caveat is set out. While perhaps this is not strictly in accordance with the principles contained in the measure, I think that phase of it should be more generally stressed. The use of the caveat is not sufficiently widespread. It provides a very great protection to those buying land or dealing in land, and since on various occasions we have noted it in the House and discussion has taken place throughout the State regarding difficulties which have arisen because of a sale of land where a title could not be given, the usefulness of the caveat should be more widely

known. The amendment is a very useful one, and I will support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—WATER BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL WATER SUPPLIES (Hon. J. Cunningham—Kalgoorlie) [7.48] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to empower water boards to strike a supplementary rate or rates, but not to exceed the amount prescribed in the principal Act, during any one year as may be found necessary. The reason for the introduction of this measure has arisen only recently out of the activities of the water boards within the State. Some years ago a water supply was provided in the town of Wagin. Later on the supply was found to be inadequate. On the representations of the local people, and on their giving the necessary assurance that they would be prepared to pay the rates as prescribed in the principal Act, the Government consented to construct additional works. Those works were completed in February of this year and handed over to and placed under the control of the local water board. During the latter portion of last year, at the beginning of November, the Wagin Water Board struck a rate of 6d. in the pound for the purpose of getting the revenue to pay the annual cost of the original scheme. When taking over these new works, the board accepted an additional financial responsibility. After accepting that responsibility the board found it necessary to strike a supplementary rate in order to get the required amount of revenue to meet the annual cost on the combined works, that is to say, a portion of the original scheme together with the capital expenditure on the new scheme. The question whether the local water board had power under the Water Boards Act to strike a supplementary rate was referred to the Crown Solicitor. He was of opinion that it might be done under the provisions of that Act. But later on he expressed a doubt concerning that authority, and so it was considered advis-

able that amending legislation be introduced giving the necessary power to the water board.

Hon. G. Taylor: And to validate what had been done.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL WATER SUPPLIES: And if necessary to validate what had been done. The Bill, if agreed to as presented, will have retrospective application as from the 1st November of last year. In the Wagin district the water board's financial year closes on the 31st October, and therefore it will be necessary to give the power sought so as to enable the board to collect a supplementary rate for a portion of the year. A similar power is granted under Section 236 of the Road Districts Act, and also under Section 91 of the Land Drainage Act. The reason why that power has been granted under those Acts will be apparent to members. In land drainage and also in work under the Road Districts Act, it is for the purpose of meeting any extraordinary expenditure that may be necessary as the result of flooding, or of any damage to culverts, bridges or other works. It is essential that the water boards should have similar powers. I have already pointed out what has taken place in the Wagin district, that the new scheme was completed and handed over to the board in February of this year. Therefore it will be recognised that it would be altogether unreasonable to allow at least eight months of the year to go by without the board having the power to collect a rate sufficient to enable them to meet their financial obligations. It is also necessary that a water board should have this power as it may be found advisable to make certain improvements during any one year to any of our established water supplies that is under the authority of a water board. It may be necessary for the purpose of getting an adequate catchment to make certain improvements in the catchment, even after a rate has been struck. Such occurrences do come along, and it would not be wise to cramp the activities and functions of a water board by not permitting them to strike a supplementary rate for the reasons I have stated. I have explained the principle of the Bill, and I say it is essential for the purpose of enabling the

Wagin Water Board to meet their added expenses incurred by their willingness to manage their own water supply. The board, when they took over the control in February last, expressed their willingness as a board—and incidentally as a municipal council representative of the ratepayers of the district—to accept that additional financial responsibility. So I have every confidence that the Bill will meet with sympathetic treatment in the House and will be given an early passage through the Chamber with a view to enabling the Wagin Water Board to strike a supplementary rate. The Bill is not restricted to Wagin. It will have general application to all water boards that may be in existence, as well as to those to be created in the future for the purpose of controlling local water supplies in the various centres of the State.

On motion by Mr. Davy, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 7.55 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 20th August, 1929.

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

QUESTION—LAND, VICTORIA DISTRICT.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON (for Hon. E. H. Hall) asked the Chief Secretary: 1. Will the Government state whether any of the areas situated in the Victoria district are to be included in the 3,500 farms scheme. 2. When will the lands north and east of Victoria Location 8687, Plan 161 80, be made available for selection?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1. Whenever any suitable area of land is found for settlement in the Victoria District, applications can be made for its development under the Migration Agreement. 2. The Minister for Lands and the Agricultural Bank trustees will be visiting this area in the course of a few weeks, after which a decision will be arrived at.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eleventh Day.

Debate resumed from the 15th August.

HON A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [4.33]: The few words I have to offer on this occasion I may perhaps preface by congratulating you, Mr. President, on the excellent work you did on behalf of the State when in London. I may also pay a well-earned tribute to Mr. Cornell, who took your place while you were away and who presided over the deliberations of this Chamber with credit to himself and, I am sure, with satisfaction to the members of the House. I wish also to congratulate Mr. Mann on having been elected as one of the representatives of this State to the Empire Press Conference. Let me also congratulate Mr. Franklin who has attained the dignity of Right Honourable. I am sorry he is not in his place, because if he were, I might get on a little better on account of being in a position in the Chamber to bask in the hon. member's higher dignity of Right Hon. the Lord Mayor. I appreciate the well thought out speech and lucid utterances of Mr. Seddon when he addressed the House the other evening. I propose to touch upon two points only. The first is to endeavour to remove the impression created by Mr. Fraser, in speaking on the Address-in-reply, when he suggested, what has been more than a suggestion throughout the country during the recess, that this House was responsible for the present condition of the hospitals, inasmuch as it had thrown out the Hospital Fund Bill. Those statements are quite contrary to fact, as most members know. This House passed the tax Bill without dissent and almost without discussion. We gave the Government the full tax for which they asked. Where we differed was on the machinery Bill, and at the finish, we differed on one point only. This House said and said emphatically that it