

progress, so that we may have further time to consider the measure, I move an amendment—

That in paragraph (iii.) the words "repeatedly and habitually" be struck out.

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

Ayes	6
Noes	11

Majority against	..	5
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AYES.

Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. J. W. Hickey
Hon. T. Moore

Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. A. Burvill

(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. J. Duffell
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. W. T. Glasheen
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. A. Lovekin

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane
Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. G. Potter
Hon. H. J. Yelland
Hon. J. R. Brown

(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. T. MOORE: I appeal to the Committee to report progress, this being an important Bill and the hour being late. A Bill of a similar character was put through a year or two ago, and in a short time I heard enough to convince me that the measure had not been thoroughly looked into. This is a thin House, and I suggest that anything indefinite in the Bill ought certainly to be made definite. I see no necessity for rushing the measure through Committee in one night.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I am inclined to support Mr. Moore.

Hon. A. Lovekin: We can recommit the Bill to-morrow.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: In matters of this kind we cannot be too careful. Personally I regard it as a mistake to say to two people that after they have been separated for three years they can get a divorce.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I do not wish to take advantage of anybody, but it is only a one-clause Bill, we have been some time over it already and I suggest that we should finish it and report to the House. To-morrow, on the third reading stage, I shall be quite agreeable to recommitting the Bill if hon. members wish it.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted

House adjourned at 11.2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 25th November, 1925.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—SEWERAGE.

Claremont-Cottesloe.

Mr. NORTH asked Hon. S. W. Munsie (Honorary Minister): 1, Is he aware (a) that private sewerage is being undertaken extensively in the Claremont-Cottesloe area by means of septic tanks? (b) That the Commissioner of Health has expressed himself adversely to a general policy of sewerage in these districts by such means? 2, What limit would the department set to the number of persons per acre of settlement who could be safely served by such tanks?

Hon. S. W. MUNSIE replied: 1 (a) It is known that householders are being actively canvassed to instal septic tanks and that a number have done so. (b) Yes. 2, The department is not prepared to set a limit to the number of persons per acre of settlement who could be safely served by such tanks, for the reason that each individual case should be determined on its merits according as—(a) There are wells in the vicinity

likely to be used for drinking purposes and likely to become contaminated thereby; (b) The soil is suitable for the disposal of effluent; (c) The property is suitably situated and large enough to dispose of sewage in this way, without nuisance.

Sewage Disposal.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has he received any information as a result of the late Engineer in Chief's inquiries in London regarding modern systems of the disposal of sewage? 2, If so, will he make such information available to the local authorities in the Claremont-Cottesloe district at the earliest opportunity?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, No. 2, I invite the hon. member to take this matter up with the recently appointed Engineer in Chief in, say, a month's time, by which date he will be more settled in office. Mr. Stileman has expressed his willingness to meet representatives of the Local Authorities and discuss the subject with them.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY.

Claremont, Swanbourne, Cottesloe.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Does he expect to be in a position during the present summer to close down the low level reservoir at Claremont? 2, If not, when do the department propose to supply residents in Claremont, Swanbourne, and Cottesloe districts from the high-pressure main which has now been completed between King's Park and Buckland Hill?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes; as soon as transformer is available for booster pump at Claremont reservoir. The transformer is being supplied by the Electricity Department, and is expected in a few weeks. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—COOKING, ELECTRICITY AND GAS.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is he aware that the Cottesloe Council have been negotiating for a supply of coal gas to meet the domestic needs of the district? 2, What steps have the Government Electricity Department taken to popularise cooking by electricity in that area?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Yes: 2, By supplying current for

this purpose at 1½d. per unit for the first 50 units per month and 1d. per unit for all in excess of that quantity.

QUESTION—WATER FOR STOCK, MIDLAND JUNCTION.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is he aware that stock which arrived at Midland Junction by special train from Meekatharra at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, the 24th inst., were insufficiently watered before being sold? 2, Is the source of supply at the smaller yards at Midland Junction approximately, a half-inch ball tap? 3, If so, will he take the necessary steps to obviate this inhuman treatment of stock, and the consequent unfairness to out-back growers, by increasing the supply sufficiently to cope with urgent demands?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, These cattle were landed at approximately 10 o'clock yesterday, when all water troughs were full, but on account of the sale starting at 10.30 a.m., the agents began to draft them immediately. There was an ample supply of water available had the stock been given time. 2, The source of supply in the cattle yards is a one-inch branch with a one-inch ball cock running off a three-inch main. The supply in the sheep yards is a half-inch branch with a half-inch ball cock running off the same main. 3, The water supply provided is quite adequate, and the department has never received any complaints in this connection. All the troughs in the sale yards are filled prior to each sale, but it is of course impossible to make provisions to water a whole train load of cattle in 20 minutes. If some of the cattle referred to had not time to get a drink there was plenty of time and water available after the sale, approximately two hours later.

QUESTION—GAMBLING DEVICES.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL (without notice) asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been called to the following paragraphs and resolutions appearing in this morning's "West Australian":—

Northam Labour Carnival.

Objection to Gambling Devices.

Northam, Nov. 24.

The Eastern Districts Council of the Australian Labour Party opened on the site next to the office of the "Northam Advertiser"

on Saturday evening last a White City Fair, the stated object of which was to raise funds for a Northam Trades Hall. The attractions included various gambling devices such as dart games, "help your neighbour," and housey. There has been considerable protest locally, and on Monday evening the Northam Traders' Progress Association called a special meeting to discuss the matter. As a result the following resolution was carried and forwarded this morning by telegram to the Premier:—"The Northam Traders' Progress Association, in the interest of the public welfare, strongly protests against the excessive gambling now being carried on at the White City in this town, and respectfully requests that the law be enforced."

Municipal Council's Protest.
Northam, Nov. 24.

A special meeting of the Northam Municipal Council was held at 5 o'clock this evening, and after discussion the following motion was carried and subsequently telegraphed to the Premier:—"This council desires to enter an emphatic protest against the promoters of White City in Northam being allowed to break the law of the land by conducting games that are illegal, and earnestly requests that the Premier immediately instruct the police to take action to prevent same."

2, If so, what action does he propose to take in the matter?

The PREMIER replied: I have read the paragraphs referred to, and have also received the telegrams conveying the resolutions mentioned in the paragraphs. I have no knowledge of what has been done there, but I am causing inquiries to be made. The question of gambling at fairs of this kind has been discussed for many years, and I am not sure how far the gambling has extended, but I will make inquiries into the matters protested against by the people of Northam.

**QUESTION—PEEL ESTATE
INSPECTION.**

Mr. ANGELO (without notice) asked the Minister for Lands: In view of the expected early introduction of the Loan Estimates, will the Minister afford members opportunity to visit the Peel Estate and have the general scheme explained to them by officers of the department, so as to enable members to give an intelligent vote on the items in the Loan Estimates?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: I have no objection to any member visiting the Peel Estate; in fact, I think it would

be of assistance. If they can make arrangements with the engineer in charge, no doubt he will be only too pleased to conduct members over the estate.

Mr. ANGELO: We can get Mr. Anketell to pilot us?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1925-26.

Report of Committee of Ways and Means adopted.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Gun License Act Amendment.
 - 2, Workers' Homes Act Amendment.
- Introduced by the Premier.
- 3, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.
- Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

**BILL—BROOKTON RECREATION
RESERVE.**

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

**MOTION—NORTH-WEST DEVELOP-
MENT.**

To inquire by Royal Commission.

Debate resumed from the 18th November on the following motion by Mr. Lamond:—

That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the development and best methods of administration of the North and North-West portions of the State.

MR. STUBBS (Wagin) [4.45]: I have followed with much interest the debate on this motion. I am not going to traverse any of the ground covered by the previous speakers, but desire to inform the House that some years ago, in company with Mr. Colebatch, then Minister for the North-West, I travelled a distance of over 4,000 miles through the North-West. A considerable portion of this journey was made in a motor car. Our first prolonged trip on that occasion was in following the Fitzroy River from Derby almost to its source. We passed along one of the most fertile valleys I have ever seen in Australia, not even excepting some of the most beautiful country in the north of Queensland. Un-

fortunately for closer settlement, the frontages of this magnificent river are all alienated from the Crown in long leases. I do not envy the holders of these frontages, because they have been held by men who took them up 30 or 40 years ago, but if the North-West is to be developed and settled with a denser population, reasonable compensation must be given to these holders if they are deprived of their river frontages. One has only to make the journey that I did to see the trials and difficulties that beset the pioneers of that huge belt of rich country. We frequently saw the graves of men who had been speared by blacks in the eighties and nineties of last century, or the early portion of this century. Those men who had been so plucky as to go up there must have endured many hardships. It is equally true that they have been well rewarded for their pluck and enterprise. The appearance of that country reminds one, who sees it for the first time, of a huge wheatfield. For hundreds of miles across the plateau in the Kimberleys, a population fifty times as great as the present one could be profitably employed, and each man could make a competency. One can travel for 40 or 50 miles without seeing a fence. The stock naturally keep as close as possible to the water frontages. Very little provision has been made for water away from the natural sources of output that lie in the ranges that pass through the Kimberleys. To a certain extent I support the remarks of previous speakers concerning the disabilities under which the North-West has laboured. Members have accused not only this but previous Governments of neglecting the North-West, and I sometimes think there is a good deal of truth in their argument. At all the ports and leading towns where Mr. Colebatch was entertained, he expressed astonishment at the wonderful potentialities of the North-West. He assured his hearers that if the Government could do anything to assist them in developing the country, by giving them facilities for transporting their produce, it would be the plain duty devolving upon him and his Government to do it. Whether these promises have been fulfilled or not, I do not know for certain, but from the complaints that have been voiced in this House it does not appear that very much has resulted in the intervening period. My experience of Royal Commissions is that they

are not much good. If a Royal Commission were appointed, whom would the Premier call upon to act? Would the matter be placed in the hands of a judge of the Supreme Court, or some representative of the trade and commerce in the State? I think not. The Premier would look for better men than these, not on account of their integrity, but because a Royal Commissioner dealing with this matter would require to possess practical experience of the work that lay before him. If I were a member representing the North-West I would not ask for the appointment of a Commission, the members of which I might know nothing about, but I would suggest banding together with my colleagues from the North-West, in the hope of arriving at the best means of overcoming the disabilities and furthering the interests of that part of the State. Perhaps this suggestion will be considered by the members concerned. I am forced to the conclusion, after listening to the debate, that the appointment of a Royal Commission would lead us no further. I am of opinion that the North-West has not had a fair deal during the last 20 or 25 years. That may be due to a certain extent to the distance between the various ports, and to the fact that there is only a fortnightly service along the coast. The climatic conditions may also have something to do with it. All the country I passed through had its river frontages alienated from the Crown. It would be idle to ask any new settlers to carve out a home for themselves there, unless the Government were in a position to advance them sufficient money to enable them to find water. No person can carry stock successfully without an adequate water supply. Unless some new portion of the North-West is discovered and thrown open for selection, the only thing for the Government to do is to assist settlers in much the same way that they are assisted in the South-West, namely, through the Agricultural Bank. In view of the unbounded possibilities of that region, it would pay the country to send members up there to travel through it, so that they might give an intelligent vote upon this question. The matter is one of importance not only to Western Australia but the Empire in general, if Australia is to be part and parcel of the British Empire. Two days' run from Wyndham is Java, with a population of 35 to 40 millions. Thousands of those people have

not sufficient land to enable them to live in houses. They dwell on rafts along the fore-shore of the coast or rivers. If they all lived on the land there would not be much room for the growth of the food necessary to keep them all alive. For years that island has been controlled by the Dutch. The Dutch, as a rule, have not much time for Australia. They think we have treated them badly because of our prohibitive duty on sugar, and because of late years we have taxed their bananas and other fruits that grow so abundantly on their rich belts of land. In the North-West there is a vast area of country carrying not more than half-a-dozen whites to every million acres. It could carry 30 or 40 times as great a population. How it is to be successfully developed without the expenditure by the Government of a large sum of money puzzles me. It will not be possible to induce people to take up land there 50 or 60 miles from a river frontage unless they are assured of financial assistance. They will require to fence their holdings against kangaroos, which abound there in thousands, and which eat a tremendous lot of grass. I admit it would be possible to carry 100 times as many cattle on that area as are now being carried, notwithstanding the pest that is represented by the marsupials. I fear that the mover will get the North no further forward by the means he proposes. I sympathise fully with him and members who have supported the motion, and agree that the North must receive attention from some Government in the near future. The question of defence is vitally important. For the best part of a thousand miles the coastline of the Kimberleys is held by a handful of white people who are in close proximity to teeming millions of the coloured races. Those races increase by a million yearly in Java alone, I am given to understand. If the North-West is to remain an integral part of the Commonwealth and of the British Empire, some Government must take steps to safeguard it against possible invasion. If we do not populate the North-West, we have no right to hold it. I do not like opposing the motion. I travelled the Kimberleys from one end to the other on a trip lasting eight weeks, and I can speak of the disabilities under which the people there labour. Where to start in assisting that huge territory is a difficult question, especially having regard to the

enormous amount of money which will be eventually required. I hope that members representing the North, rather than a Royal Commission, will devise a scheme of development and place it before the Government, from whose sympathetic consideration practical results should ensue. There is justification for the motion. No member who has not seen the North-West can realise its value. It is one of the brightest gems in the British Crown.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [5.3]: I support the motion, in the first place from a sense of duty. I am satisfied that the people of the South know very little of the North-West, and understand neither its possibilities nor its troubles. I have a great ambition to see the North-West for myself, and hope to make a leisurely trip through it. A recent issue of the "Daily News" published an article which may have had its origin in the editor having his ear to the ground and hearing rumblings from the North-West. The article reads:—

Sir George Buchanan, who recently visited Australia at the invitation of the Federal Government, and reported on North-West development as well as on various harbour works in the various States, was interviewed on his return to England by a representative of the "Financial Times." In that interview he expressed views similar to those expressed whilst in Australia concerning the administration of the North of Australia, but one statement is of particular interest to Western Australia. He says that railway extension should, in the interests of the country, take eastern routes and link up with the Queensland lines. Sir George apparently regards these developmental lines as essential to the development of the North. It is certain that a line running across the north of this State, serving the great areas of pastoral country, would prove of immense benefit to that industry, which he says must be the first policy of any administration. He is opposed to more intensive forms of agriculture until the foundations have been laid by extending the pastoral industry. One or more railway systems linking the northern areas with the ports of Wyndham and Darwin, and Queensland with Western Australia, also, in the opinion of Sir George, would probably assist in developing the mineral resources. Although the mining industry has great possibilities, he says that without cheap transport—and economic labour—there can be no progress. Figures are quoted by the "Times" to show the richness of some of the ore deposits, and although it is not likely that such richness would continue for any great period of years, even in the best mine which might be opened up, there is evidence of a vast mineral field which only awaits transport facilities—and economic labour—in order to

allow it being profitably exploited. What is meant by economic labour is not made clear, but if transport facilities are first provided so as to remove the tremendous cost now involved in carting all the necessities of life over long distances, the difficulties of the labour problem should be greatly reduced. It may be hoped that now the turmoil of the political fight is over the question of northern development will not longer be neglected, and that a real attempt will be made to open up a territory which is at once a great storehouse of wealth as well as a great menace.

A widely-read paper, one certainly read by Government supporters, thereupon published an article headed, "The North Must Be Kept White," commenting on Sir George Buchanan's report. The article contains the following:—

He (Sir George Buchanan) states that "white labour in the North is not as efficient as black labour in other countries," and that under present conditions "it is impossible to grow cotton and sugar to compete with the outside world." While he does not say straight out that the North should be turned into a black man's territory, it is difficult to see how any other inference can be drawn from this observation.

The article proceeds to analyse the report. I do not know whether the comments are fully justified.

The Premier: It was not a report, but merely an expression of opinion.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I have here a report by Mr. George A. Hobler, Engineer of Way and Works, Commonwealth Railways, on a tour of inspection of the North-West, being the tour referred to by the member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs). The party included, besides Mr. Hobler, our present Agent-General, and Mr V. Hamersley, M.L.C., Mr. Stubbs, Mr. Frost of the "West Australian," Mr. Nicholson representing the Melbourne "Age," Mr. Diamond, the manager of the Commercial Bank, and Mr. Durack, then member for Kimberley. Some of the party left at different stations. Mr. Durack did not complete the trip, nor, I believe, did Mr. Diamond. The report affords most interesting reading, and I have marked certain passages of it for quotation. It describes long stretches of good chocolate soil, or chocolate and black soil, and good grasses. Elsewhere, it states, there is good top feed in addition to the grasses. We are accustomed to regard distances here in the South as great, but it is astonishing to note that the round trip made by this party covered over 5,000 miles. Mr. Hobler's report says—

The country, as far as about 377 miles from Derby (Carrington Creek), is undulating, with granite outcrops in places, good rich soil, well grassed, and good growth of top feed, and well-watered for portion of the year. This country is suitable for both sheep and cattle. . . . From 377 miles to Panton River the country consists of granite ridges intersected with deep creeks and broad, open creek flats, carrying good grass and some top feed, well watered for portion of the year. . . . From 426 miles (Ord River) to about 436 miles, the country consists of fine grassy plains and well grassed ridges, with good top feed, such as white wood and camel bush. This country is well watered, and is good cattle country, and should also carry sheep. In addition to these rivers there are numerous large creeks and many springs. Generally along all the rivers and creeks there are large, open, rich-soil flats carrying good grass and some top feed, making good pasturage for cattle.

From the report one realises that there is in our North an enormous area of country awaiting development. Mr. Hobler also speaks of mining possibilities. Whilst he was there, it was reported that a good manganese deposit had been found 20 miles from Meekatharra. Mr. Hobler comments upon the quantity of gold produced by the Pilbara and other fields of the North, and says that while it is not likely that the gold output of that part of the country would be brought up to pre-war level again, yet with railway facilities many propositions which now, owing to the high cost of transport, are impracticable to work would become payable. Ever since I have been in the House I have endeavoured to assist the North-West members. We of the South, knowing so little of the North, should be only too willing to assist that great province to come into its own. Certain things have been said about neglect of the North in the past, but I do not think it altogether fair to say that the North has been neglected. It is a fact that various Governments have tried to do something for the North. I think as much assistance as was reasonably possible at the time was given regarding cotton growing. I remember a tropical adviser was appointed, and on various occasions when these matters have come up for consideration various Governments have shown sympathetic interest in connection with the North. Owing to the war and the disabilities under which we have been labouring, we have been prevented from doing very much for that part of the State. To-day more attention is being devoted to it and it has been suggested that the members representing the North could be as effective

as a Royal Commission. After all, attempts have been made to do something. Mr. George Miles, a member of the Legislative Council, has been active in connection with his North-West Railway and Development League.

Mr. Marshall: Nearly all of them have been starved out, and only a few are left in it.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I do not know anything about that, but I know that Mr. Miles has been prominent in endeavouring to advance the interests of the North.

Mr. Marshall: What is he going to get out of it?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He is a good friend of the North.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: He acted in a public-spirited way.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: He is a good man, too.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I do not think the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) should refrain from giving credit to men of this type for being actuated by a public spirit. It is regrettable to hear it suggested that he was to get something out of it.

Mr. Chesson: You want to live up there to know what is to be got out of it.

Mr. Marshall interjected.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: To hint about anyone being kicked out of it is on a par with the usual type of statement made by the member for Murchison in this Chamber. If anything can be achieved by the appointment of a Royal Commission, I will vote in that direction.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [5.18]: The speeches that have been delivered so far indicate that there is need for someone to evolve a policy that will lead to the comprehensive development of the North-West and at the same time secure sympathetic administration. Past Governments have attempted to do this. I was associated with one Government that made an inspection of the North-West and endeavoured to improve on the then administration. Later another Government made a further inspection, and again tried to improve upon the existing conditions. Notwithstanding this, we do not seem to be able to make any progress. The North-West is more thinly populated to-day than it was a few years ago, and that is a reflection upon the development of that part of the State. Then again, we find that the stock

up North is not increasing in proportions such as were noted in the earlier stages of development. That being so, surely the time has arrived for something to be done with the object of securing better results from the huge stretch of country north of Geraldton. It is difficult for a Government to define a policy for such a huge territory. A Government's policy is merely formed for the three years during which they will be in control of the affairs of State. A policy limited to three years is useless for the North. It requires a policy extending over a long period of years, and when Governments attempt to do something along those lines without the advantage of a definite comprehensive scheme, little can be achieved. The results are so small that a succeeding Government can hardly be expected to take up the matter seriously. They adopt the policy laid down by the previous Government, but regard the position as having been toyed with. Then they proceed to do a little more, with the result that there is no continuity of policy but the mere carrying out of routine work. The Minister for Lands stated that he attended a conference in Melbourne at which it was proposed that a Commission should be appointed to investigate the position regarding the northern area of Australia.

The Minister for Lands: And to carry out improvements.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: But we have heard nothing more of that proposal. We have to ask ourselves whether the composition of any such proposed commission of inquiry, apart even from the personnel of it, would be such as would be satisfactory to Western Australia. It is difficult for us to get that consideration from the Federal Government that our isolation really demands, and if we have a Commission controlled by the Federal Government on which we will have one representative and Queensland another, there is a grave possibility that the Northern Territory will receive a good deal of attention, that Queensland will receive a little, and that Western Australia will get less. I do not think that is the type of Commission likely to provide any Government or Parliament with an indication as to how we could best develop the northern part of our State. I recognise that the scheme propounded by Mr. Theodore in Queensland, which was supported to a certain extent by Senator Pearce—

The Minister for Lands: Senator Pearce did not support it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: He did not oppose it. There was not sufficient between them to warrant it.

Mr. Latham: But he did support it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: To an extent, he did, but he did not accept the scheme. However, I do not desire to go into these finer details. Mr. Theodore's proposal was to hand over the northern part of our continent to a special Administration, vested with powers to develop, borrow funds and administer the affairs of the northern areas. If the whole of that territory were taken over by an Administration having the powers indicated, we could rest content because our responsibilities would cease and another authority would be constituted to accept that responsibility. I do not think, however, that that was the proposal considered by the conference at which the Minister for Lands was present. That proposal was more for an investigation to ascertain what could be done. Having obtained information by that means, a policy of development was to be evolved. On the other hand, the motion before us suggests the appointment of a Royal Commission of inquiry, and such proposals are always difficult to pilot through the House. If the hon. member proposing the motion says too much regarding the matters to be investigated, he is told that he knows all about it and that there is no need for such an investigation. We heard a lot along those lines from the Opposition benches.

Mr. Latham: All Oppositions do that.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The member for Mt. Margaret (Hon. G. Taylor) interjected now and again, "We know that now," indicating that we already had the information that was sought. Then again, if the hon. member proposing such a motion does not outline sufficient to convince the House that there is something worth while inquiring into, again he fails. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Lamond) introduced sufficient matter into his speech to demonstrate that there is need for improved methods of administration in the North-West. There are a few additional figures that could have been given by the hon. member. The real settlement of the northern areas has been from a pastoral point of view.

Mr. Latham: So it is in all new countries.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The first efforts in that direction were made in 1870. The fact that settlers left thinly populated districts in the south and were content to go into the more remote parts of the North in that year, is surely sufficient to indicate that they thought the land to which they were going was better and more suitable for their purposes than the holdings in the South. Ample land was available in the South-West in those days and we have only to consider the enormous belt of country now under wheat and carrying stock, to lend point to my remarks. That land, too, was easy of acquisition, yet these pioneers were content to go out into the more remote areas. I take it that the explanation was that they knew they were going to wonderfully good land.

Mr. Latham: Was it not also because they realised that the country up North was of a more natural type for stock than the land in the South-West?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Not necessarily, because the York gum and jam country is very suitable for stock. From 1870 to 1890, taking the Upper Gascoyne and the Murchison districts, for instance, we find that the flocks increased as follows: sheep, 2,500,000; cattle, 130,000 head. Statistics show that we have not maintained that rate of increase since 1890. In 1918 we find that the sheep totalled 2,524,000, and in 1923 only 2,571,000. There were fluctuations and I have taken 1923 as the peak year with the largest number of stock. Although the 1923 figures did not include the Murchison, taking the 1890 figures as including the Murchison, there were 2,500,000 sheep. One cannot analyse the figures to ascertain how many were in the North in those respective years, but the fact that there was so small an increase makes it necessary to have an investigation to find out whether we cannot do better than we have done in the past. The main cause for alarm is the decrease of population in the North. It is deplorable that in this country, so rich in many respects, the actual number of people have decreased in recent years. According to the records, this country has produced gold and minerals to the value of £2,449,000; pearls to a value of £2,100,000 and pearlshell to the value of £6,403,000 have been exported, and in 1924 the wool clip was worth £1,412,000. When the figures demonstrate

the production of such an enormous amount of wealth by a limited number of people, surely further investigation is justified to determine whether we have reached the maximum that can be produced from those industries alone. Every authority has stated that we have not reached anything like the maximum of production. All who have made an inspection of the country declare that it is not populated to the extent it might be, that none of the industries is exploited to the extent it might be, and that nothing like the wealth has been raised that could be produced if we had a better system of development and administration. There is a general desire on the part of people in other portions of Australia to acquire pastoral areas. Consider the enormous expansion on the goldfields north of Kalgoorlie. Land that a few years ago was running a few head of cattle, and other land that was running nothing but wild dogs is being fenced in huge areas, and stock is being sent there in trainloads day by day. Though enormous expansion has taken place there, we cannot find any development of the kind occurring in the North. All the records go to show that the white race can flourish in the North-West. A Medical Conference sat in Melbourne in 1920 and appointed a sub-committee to investigate the question of establishing and maintaining a vigorous white population in the northern parts of Australia. The committee of experts declared definitely that it was possible. They said—

There is no insuperable difficulty in the way of the permanent occupation of tropical Australia by a healthy indigenous white race. A great national question is involved, but we are unable to discern any obstacle which cannot be overcome by earnest and skilful application of the principles of State-craft.

Thus there is no difficulty about peopling the North with the white race. When we know it is possible for our people to populate the North and when we bear in mind the mineral, pastoral, and other wealth capable of great expansion, surely we should appoint someone to make a thorough investigation and tell us, as administrators of the affairs of Western Australia, the best and most economical way to tackle the problem. I had the pleasure on one occasion of travelling over a fair portion of the North. I did not limit myself to the ports, but had a run inland. One spot I visited was Wodgina.

Members might have seen a reference to Wodgina the other day when the Press reported that a man had flown there to investigate the mineral deposits. I understand he went to inquire into a discovery of tantalite. When I visited Wodgina I found quite a number of old prospectors even in that remote part. I cannot say how far it is inland from Port Hedland or Marble Bar, but it took us a few days to reach the place. The old prospectors had been on the field for six or seven years, and they appeared to be of the same type as the prospectors on our Eastern goldfields—just as vigorous and healthy-looking. They were battling against grave disabilities, but they were making a "do" of it. At the time they were working mostly on tin. I was shown a deposit of tantalite for the working of which a Sydney syndicate had erected a plant, and those people seemed to be making a success of it. Although that was some years ago, it appears that the product from Wodgina has not increased but that the field has become somewhat stagnant. When we find all white men working in such remote parts, we can be satisfied that there is no difficulty in developing this country with the white race. During my trip it was very interesting to hear representations made at the various seaports that only with black labour could the North be populated and worked. At the ports there were boats calling regularly; ice was distributed from the boats; fresh vegetables were available at regular intervals, and all the comforts of civilisation were provided for the people, and yet they were the ones who talked about black labour, while at Wodgina and Marble Bar and on the mining fields all the work was being done by white men, and the visitor heard no suggestion that coloured labour should be employed. Some years before that my work as a carpenter led me to take a contract at Onslow, and while there I had an opportunity to see a fair belt of the pastoral country. That occurred in one of the years of heavy rainfall when feed was abundant, and I saw the country under the most favourable conditions. It is well worth seeing under such conditions. When we started the contract I obtained the metal for concrete out of the bed of the Ashburton River—the river was quite dry—but before I had finished the contract, the water was 40ft. deep, rushing downstream in a raging torrent. When we arrived at Onslow there was little

or no grass available, though there was any quantity of top feed, but before we left we had to cut a track through the grass that had grown in order to get to the river for an evening dip. To walk through that grass was just like walking through a crop of wheat in the eastern wheat belt. It reached up to the shoulders and extended as far as the eye could see—an enormous growth of luxuriant feed. Having seen the country under such favourable conditions, I was able to appreciate its wonderful possibilities. I realise that rainfall is necessary to give such results, but the country has a wonderful carrying capacity between rains. It is extraordinary how it will maintain stock during dry spells, due to the abundant supply of top feed. I do not agree with the member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) in his statement that the utilisation of the land of the North-West is governed by its proximity to the rivers. In the greater part of the North it is possible to get water without relying upon the pools in the rivers. True, some people rely upon the pools, but that is only because they can maintain sufficient stock for their own requirements and make it a profitable proposition by keeping the stock close to the pools. Such people have too much land. I was working on the Minderoo estate, which comprised a considerable area, the greater portion of which was never used at all. There was no need to use it because sufficient stock could be carried on the land adjacent to the river frontages. As the river ran practically through the holding, it was possible to carry a fair number of stock on the land contiguous to the river. But it does not follow that the remaining portion of the holding could not be stocked. It would be possible to get water by sinking, but there is no inducement for the holders of the land to do it. They have more land than they can possibly develop. Therefore they simply develop what is convenient and easy, and they get a big return from the use of a limited area. I am convinced that on quite a number of stations an increased number of stock could be carried if the areas were so divided that only the land which could be used were controlled by the companies or individuals holding the lease. The main need for a Royal Commission is to investigate the question of tenure and the use to which the land is being put. Doubtless much harm was done to the country by the amending Act of 1917 which extended the tenure of pastoral leases from 1928 to 1948.

The Bill was opposed at the time, but it would have been more vigorously opposed had we all realised the effect it was going to have. We thought the Bill would limit the holdings to 1,000,000 acres, but we find that that is not so, that actually larger areas are now held and that those in possession of them have been able to get round the Act. Had Parliament at the time thought that this possibility could arise, the Bill would have been more vigorously opposed. The Government of the day, with the support of the Legislative Council, were able to get through the measure which has since done such a lot of harm. When we find the Act operating in the way experience has shown, and that since then the population of the North-West has decreased, we must admit that the time has arrived when we should have the matter reviewed. We do not want to attempt to do anything in the shape of repudiation, but whilst we have a responsibility to the lessees, surely we also have a bigger responsibility to Western Australia, and in fact to Australia, on finding that an Act of Parliament has had a result that Parliament never anticipated would follow. Consequently there is nothing wrong in asking that the matter should be reviewed, in the hope of learning whether we can get a better result than is being experienced to-day. Authorities state that the holdings are too large, and therefore it would be better if we could get smaller holdings and so increase development and the number of stock being carried per acre.

Mr. Latham: Do you think a Royal Commission will help us to overcome that difficulty?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: A Royal Commission could go into the question and see whether there were means by which the matter could be adjusted.

Mr. Latham: We could do more by an Act of Parliament.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It is a responsibility that no Government should be called upon to undertake, without first having it closely investigated. If the Commission found that the large holdings were responsible for the retrogression, they might be able to indicate to Parliament means by which the difficulty could be overcome. It is quite worth while appointing a Royal Commission to go into that question because Parliament was misled and did not for a moment anticipate what has since happened. The main basis upon which that Act was justified to

Parliament was that, by extending the leases to 1948, there would follow increased development and increased population. If hon. members were to read the speeches that were made at the time, they would find that the whole matter was based on the contention that we were not progressing on account of the fact that the pastoral lessees were fearful that in 1928 they would lose the whole of their improvements. It was also stated that if the pastoralists got an assurance that their leases would be extended, they would carry out further improvements and would indeed be encouraged to spend money in many other directions such as augmenting water supplies, fencing, etc., and that, as a natural corollary, there would be an increase in the population. All this has not taken place. The Act has been long enough in operation now to enable us to form a definite opinion. A Commission could obtain reliable data and could report to Parliament as to how the matter might be remedied, and then legislation could be introduced.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The mining population has also gone down.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: We have lost population all round. It may also be that the decrease is due to mining. That only goes to show that an investigation is needed. There should not have been a decrease in the mining population. We have an enormous belt of auriferous country in the North-West and it is all available to prospectors. I remember landing on one occasion at Whim Creek and traversing a belt of auriferous country running to Marble Bar. I was told that the belt existed from Balla Balla on the coast to Nullagine, and that the few people that had crossed that part of the country could not even convey an idea of its value. Therefore, from the mining as well as from the pastoral point of view, there must be unlimited opportunities in that part of the State. Whilst it is claimed that the operation of the 1917 Act in regard to the extension of leases has had the effect on the pastoral industry that we know about, it is hard to understand why the North-West, from the mining point of view, should be depressed. Unless something is done in the way of getting a definite and defined policy for the development of that part of the State, we will have a chartered company, or someone else, coming along, trying to foist land grant propositions upon us. We

do not want that kind of thing, but if we do not start to do something for ourselves, that danger exists. We also have the difficulty relating to the constant advocacy of the introduction of coloured labour. We know what Mr. Barwell wanted to do in certain parts of Australia where he claimed coloured labour could be employed with safety, and that that kind of population was desirable for country similar to that which we have now under review. Mr. Barwell got a certain amount of support, but fortunately Australia did not endorse his proposals. This only goes to show that period after period people come forward with proposals of that description because nothing else is done. Unless we actually do something, we run the risk of allowing our policy of development to slip through our fingers. It is said that Royal Commissions do no good. I suppose that is so. I have been on one or two that have not done much good. As to whether the one now suggested will prove of service to the country, is a matter for Parliament to decide when its report, if the Commission be appointed, is presented. I recognise that everything depends on the personnel of the Commission. We must have on it men capable of going into these big questions and able to investigate them thoroughly, and then submit something concrete upon which it will be possible for the Government to frame a policy that not only the Government of the day, but subsequent Governments will be able to put into effect in order to bring about results. I realise that there is opposition to the appointment of Royal Commissions, but in this case can anyone show us any other way of doing something in the matter. The member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) suggested that members of Parliament should make an investigation. Some of us have worked there, and some of us have visited the North-West, but I do not know that we have got any further. Members of Parliament can visit a place and talk, but it would be difficult for them, in such a case, to prepare a policy of development. Moreover, members of Parliament would not have the same opportunity as would the members of a Royal Commission to carry on an investigation. We must have a Royal Commission to do a job of this description, because such a Commission would be vested with powers that members of Parliament do not possess. There will be a great deal of work to be done that can only be carried out

by someone possessed of proper authority. Therefore I think the House should support the motion moved by the member for Pilbara.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [6.0]: Every member of the House would be willing to render the utmost possible assistance to any proposal calculated to benefit the North-West. But we must confess that our experience of Royal Commissions has been such as to convince us that they are not, as a rule, fruitful of much good. First of all there would be considerable difficulty in selecting the personnel of a Royal Commission to inquire into the troubles of the North; and after a long and perhaps expensive inquiry we should find the position to be just as we have found it for many years past. My limited knowledge of the North-West and limited opportunities to study the situation convince me that the development of that part of the State is almost entirely a question of finance. Governments past and present have had and have sufficient knowledge already to enable them to do much in the development of that portion of the State, if only funds were available. Unfortunately, a sum of money that would go far in developing a section of the southern part of the State, in such manner as would result in largely increased wealth production, would not go very far in the North. Whilst we may be able to do much more than we have done in the past along the lines indicated by the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson), I am convinced that it is the duty and responsibility of the Commonwealth Parliament to aid in the development of our North. There cannot be any question about that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You would not hand it over to them?

The PREMIER: Certainly not. But the Commonwealth might well aid financially and otherwise, without our handing the territory over to them.

Mr. Latham: There is a possibility of that under this new scheme, is there not?

The PREMIER: I do not know what may come of the proposals now in hand.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If they were to hand over to us the control of the tariff for 25 years we could do something in the North.

The PREMIER: But that is entirely out of the question.

Mr. Maley: If we had the cash we would soon develop the North.

The PREMIER: That is quite right, but we require millions of pounds for the purpose.

Mr. Latham: And we want the people.

The PREMIER: We require many millions of pounds to carry out development work that will make the North sufficiently attractive for people to go there and remain there. Turning to the experience of Australia, we find that in what were once the outback districts of New South Wales and Queensland, development and progress have been effected only by the construction of railways. First of all it is essential that railway communication should be extended to the North-West of this State. That, of course, would cost millions of pounds and is entirely beyond the power of the State Government. But once we could make that territory accessible by railway communication, we should overcome the great barrier to settlement. It is, of course, almost impossible to populate to any great extent any portion of the State where the disadvantages of domestic and social life are very great, where the women folk are not able to live with their husbands and rear their families.

Mr. Stubbs: There are plenty of families up North; big ones, too.

The PREMIER: Yes, I know, but mainly along the coast and, after all, the development of the North-West does not depend on its coast. The handicaps of domestic life inland so far away from communication constitute a very great drawback. When by railway communication the outer world can be reached in a comparatively short time, it gives the people that sense of security that allows them to go and settle in the outer districts. Since in recent years the Commonwealth Government have seemed to realise the importance of doing something for the North-West of Western Australia, I do think we ought as a Parliament and a people to keep on pressing upon the Federal Parliament the responsibility which is theirs in regard to this part of the continent. We ought to have their co-operation.

Mr. Stubbs: We do not want to hand the North over to them.

The PREMIER: I do not think any of us at this stage is in a position to pronounce with any degree of confidence as

to the best method by which co-operation might be brought about, but I do say the Commonwealth has a financial responsibility in respect of this portion of its territory.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If they would give us back some of the revenue they collect here from Customs and Excise, we could do something about the North.

The PREMIER: Yes, of course. The task is altogether beyond us as a State with a limited population.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We only want our own money back from them.

The PREMIER: It is quite a natural thing that we should first give our attention to developing that portion of our State which is most easy of access and which will give a quick return. The task is altogether beyond us to carry on the development of the southern part of the State and at the same time find sufficient funds to give attention to the development of the North. After all, it is largely a question of population. As the pressure of population increases, so gradually and naturally the people go out and further out. Unless exceptional facilities and inducements are offered, we are not likely to get people to go to the North-West whilst they can make a competence for themselves in the South-West. The principal industry in the North must remain that of stock-raising. Therefore it seems to me that one of the essential things to be done is to endeavour to have the size of the pastoral holdings reduced. I understand there is in the North a considerable area of good stock raising country yet available for occupation. I have no doubt the best portion of it, the most easily accessible, has already been taken up, but it certainly seems that the extension of the pastoral leases, and the large areas that are held, militate against the development of that part of the State.

Mr. Stubbs: One big pastoralist told me the other day that he was quite willing to give up his lease to the Government in return for compensation to the extent of the money expended on improvements.

The PREMIER: An inquiry might result in something being done in that way, whereas the forfeiture or repudiation of the leases could not be entertained for a moment. An understanding might be reached with the pastoral holders that would enable the areas to be reduced and

so carry in the aggregate a much larger population than they do to-day. There again we have to remember that markets come into consideration. For the past two or three years the stock raisers of Australia have not done very well; as a matter of fact the Federal Government have had to furnish a bonus to enable them to carry on.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Not for sheep.

The PREMIER: It is a bonus on meat for export, and I think it applies to sheep also, although principally to bullocks. The bonus amounts to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb. In any scheme for developing the North along the lines of cattle raising for beef export, we have to contend with the very serious competition of the Argentine.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But a very big portion of it is sheep country.

The PREMIER: Of course there is a big area of sheep country.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Once you get closer settlement it will all become sheep country.

The PREMIER: If that could be done it would be a much safer proposition, for the difficulty in respect of meat is that of markets. We are at a great disadvantage in competition with the Argentine, whose producers are only 19 days from the London market and have an all the year round production, with a regular line of steamers, and moreover are able to place on the London market chilled meat as against our frozen meat. So much has the Argentine chilled meat ousted the Australian frozen meat from the London market, that we have had to dispose of our output on the Continent. From talks and conversations I had in London, I am convinced that the Argentine is capable of an immensely greater production than it has yet reached.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: We need not worry about their competition in sheep.

The PREMIER: What has hurt the meat export trade of Australia in recent years has been the production from South America. That is why we have had meat works in Queensland and other States closed down. We cannot compete with the South American prices, because of the distance we are away from the market and the fact that we are forced to put frozen meat into competition with chilled meat.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The country north of Kalgoorlie was all cattle country a few years ago, whereas to-day it is all sheep.

As closer settlement spreads, the sheep increase and the cattle decrease.

The PREMIER: A complete transformation has taken place in the outer goldfields country. However, I am not in a position to express an opinion as to how far the North-West could be changed in that direction.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The cattle country could not be changed.

The PREMIER: Yet I daresay that a very large area could be made to grow sheep. In any event, any serious move to open up the North comprehensively necessarily involves the expenditure of a very large sum of money.

Mr. Stubbs: It cannot be done by a Royal Commission.

The PREMIER: I do not say that a Royal Commission would not be of some value, but we would get back to the problem that confronts us in respect of so many questions, namely, the financial power to do even that which we know ought to be done if only we could find the money for it. That is the position in respect of the North. I do not wish to oppose the motion, for I think all members ought to do all that they can to help the North-West. But I do not know that by appointing a Royal Commission we shall get very far.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: If you were to limit it to an investigation of the pastoral leases, and see if we cannot get them put upon a reduced basis?

The PREMIER: That might be done. But in the end the Commonwealth Government must recognise that they have responsibilities in our North just as they have in the Northern Territory, where so very much Commonwealth money has been expended. The sooner the Federal Parliament realises its responsibilities in that direction, the better for Australia and for this State in particular.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

MR. LATHAM (York) [7.30] : I do not oppose the motion, but I think the Premier has struck the keynote of the situation when he says he does not think there is any great necessity for the appointment of a Royal Commission. He knows as well as past Treasurers what is required for the North-West. What we want is money and people. If we had the money for the de-

velopment of the North-West, and the people to maintain the work that is carried out there, we should be able to do something in the desired direction. The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) told us plainly that we should get people to go up there. He lived there for a little while, but was shrewd enough not to stay there. It is a hard place to live in. The social conditions are not encouraging, and the climate is not all that could be desired. I have had experience of hot climates, and am glad to be out of them.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I do not know that it is much worse there than on the eastern goldfields.

Mr. LATHAM: The summer is hotter and longer. I do not know that we get any results from Royal Commissions. I have carefully examined the records of the House, and I find that only on rare occasions have we had any results from such a body. The member for Guildford has to-night advocated the appointment of this Royal Commission. I suppose our ideas become seasoned with age, for in 1916 he held a different view. He said then it seemed to him we were going to have Government by Royal Commission and board of inquiry. In order to get something definite as to their intentions regarding the industries of the State we would have to wait until the reports of those boards and commissions have been made available. He also said it was an old game, that of submitting things to commissions and boards. As soon as they came up against any difficulties—he was referring to the then Government—instead of facing them and taking the responsibility of them, they delayed and marked time by submitting the proposal to a Royal Commission.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That was the silliest proposition ever submitted to Parliament.

Mr. LATHAM: When propositions do not emanate from ourselves they are apt to be regarded as stupid and silly. I am not charging the Government with attempting to do this. I think they know what is required. Royal Commissions do not get us anywhere.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: In what other way should we get the information?

The Minister for Mines: What is your objection?

Mr. LATHAM: I do not want the people's money wasted. The Treasurer is already in possession of a great deal of

information. No doubt the Minister for Lands knows what is required there.

The Minister for Lands: I do not.

Mr. LATHAM: Possibly he would be able to ascertain this from the records in the Lands Department.

The Minister for Lands: The Under Secretary put up a proposition that the Surveyor General should go up and find out what was there.

Mr. LATHAM: There is no objection to that. He is paid to advise the Minister.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why not have someone to do the lot?

Mr. LATHAM: Whom should we select? Would it be a political commission, such as the Group Settlement Commission? Would it have the same result as the Group Settlement Commission?

The Minister for Lands: Was there anything wrong with the Group Settlement Commission?

Mr. LATHAM: It was a waste of the people's money. There has been no tangible result from the appointment of that commission.

The Minister for Lands: There have been some results. The settlers were objecting to piecework, and now they are all anxious for it since the Royal Commission was appointed.

Mr. LATHAM: Is the Minister serious in that?

The Minister for Lands: I am serious.

Mr. LATHAM: Some of the men were going on to piecework before the Commission took any evidence.

The Minister for Lands: Some of them objected to signing the paper, and we could not put them on to it until they did.

Mr. LATHAM: If that was the only good achieved by the Commission, it would be advisable for the Minister not to say too much about it. If it took a Royal Commission to induce the settlers to sign a certain paper, it was a waste of the people's money.

The Minister for Mines: Why did you not resent it at the time?

Mr. LATHAM: I said the same thing in the House some time ago.

The Premier: Why take part in a money-wasting business?

Mr. LATHAM: There were possibly some other reasons besides the monetary consideration.

The Minister for Mines: When you did not take it on with an open mind?

Mr. LATHAM: Yes I did, and my report was an open one. We do not get good results from Royal Commissions. There are many departmental officers who could advise the Minister as to what should be done in the interests of the North-West. We should avail ourselves of that expert advice, for which the State would be paying. We have had a report presented to us by Mr. A. Despeissis, written in 1921. This deals fully with the North-West from the agricultural point of view. Mr. W. R. Easton also presented a report to Mr. Colebatch in 1921, dealing with the Kimberleys. It seems a waste of money to have officers making extensive reports, showing the climatic conditions, the nature of the soil, the mineral wealth, the water supplies, the timber, etc., when we seem to set so little store by them.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: What we want is the policy of the Government.

Mr. LATHAM: That is an insult to the Government. Surely they have a policy. I have heard it said before that we want a Royal Commission to define the policy regarding the North-West on behalf of the Government, and to set out the systems of administration. Surely our departmental officers can do that. If not, let us appoint an officer who can do so, and let us make the appointment a permanent one.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: Have you someone in view?

Mr. LATHAM: That is a Government function.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would be difficult for him to give satisfaction.

Mr. LATHAM: Probably he would not satisfy everybody. A little while ago a Commissioner for the North-West was appointed to assist in the development of that part of the State. I do not know that any tangible results have accrued from that.

Mr. Coverley: We have never seen any proposal put up by him.

Mr. LATHAM: Sometimes we are blind when we ought to have our eyes open. The main trouble is that the seat of government is far removed from the North-West. We have a big territory to develop, very little money with which to do it, and very few people who can do the work. Until we settle the South-West portion of the State and have a surplus population to take on the North-West, I do not see what more we can do. That part of the State does not lend itself readily to settlement.

Mr. Coverley: Don't talk rubbish.

Mr. LATHAM: The hon. member may call anything rubbish. We cannot get people to live in that climate when we have better climates in the South-West, and more congenial conditions. The hon. member should take a trip to the South-West. While this part of the State still requires to be developed, we cannot expect to do better with the North-West. Possibly we could get assistance from the Commonwealth. From the defence point of view it would be their duty to give it.

Mr. Heron: You must have a scheme to put up before you ask for assistance.

Mr. LATHAM: There are schemes already prepared. One was put up recently which secured assistance from the Commonwealth Treasurer to the extent of £450,000 for Western Australia for one year, with a possibility of further extensions after a conference.

The Minister for Lands: We have not got that yet. Why do you suggest the State has got it?

Mr. LATHAM: We have the promise. If the Minister makes a promise I rely upon it. Surely we can credit others with a little honesty. We know that the money will be available as soon as it is possible to pay it over.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: How do you know that?

Mr. LATHAM: We have had the word of a man that even the hon. member knows he can rely upon.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: He has no authority to say that. Why did not the Prime Minister write, and inform the Premier of it instead of doing it through the Press?

Mr. LATHAM: I have not had access to the confidential documents of the Federal Treasurer's office. The Disabilities Commission recommended that this money should be paid after a case had been submitted by the State. We know that the report was a favourable one. I am sure the Federal Treasurer will honour the promise that has been made. The public have the information regarding this, if the member for Guildford has not. I am sure the assistance will be given and that it will be followed by further assistance, subject to the conference. No doubt we could put up a case for assistance for the North-West. It is a question we ought to go into as to whether we should hand over that territory to the Common-

wealth. I do not think it would be any better governed by Canberra than it would be governed by Perth. Judging by the experience of the Northern Territory I think we could administer affairs in the North-West as well as the Federal Government could.

Mr. Coverley: We agree with you there.

Mr. LATHAM: We are not going to give away that portion of the country without knowing that better conditions will be provided than we can now give. Let us help the North-West if we can, but it is not to be expected that public money should be expended in all sorts of directions without the prospect of a return. I agree with the member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) that the mover of such a motion as this should not air too much knowledge of the subject. However, during the few years that I have been here, there have not been any great suggestions as to helping the North. Railways are useless unless the people use the lands adjoining the railways, and the population of the North is decreasing. That of the Northern Territory has decreased very materially. Provision must be made to keep the people in the North. Without population expenditure is useless. The people on the spot should be encouraged to utilise the natural resources. In that way the present difficulty will be overcome. Undoubtedly our North is a fine country, capable of producing millions of wealth annually; but I do not think any Royal Commission will be able to advise in the manner desired by the mover.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [7.47]: The mover is to be commended for showing a keen interest in the North and for suggesting the development of that great territory. The speeches of Northern members have been interesting. Probably no suggestion of a definite character is possible even for the people in the North. The Premier is right in saying that this matter is one for men with money. Taking the first part of the motion, as to the question of development, we come to the personal equation of the pastoral lands and the carrying of more stock, and better stock, and the marketing of the stock when grown. I do not know that we shall be able to do much more on the squatting side.

Mr. Marshall: A great deal more could be done on the squatting side. There are huge areas of land still available.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I mean on the land now occupied. No doubt existing holdings can be improved, and by means of better stud stock the existing stock can be improved. The sheep man is having a good time, and not much can be done for him. It is different with the cattle man, who has had difficult seasons and low prices. The establishment of the Wyndham Meat Works was expected to bring about improvement in the quality of the cattle and increase in their number, but the price of cattle has been so low that the breeding of them has not been a highly attractive proposition. The Wyndham Meat Works are used at less than half their capacity, and the State is losing interest on them. True, we get a quarter of a million annually from the meat exporters, which is of considerable advantage to the State; but the works have not been largely utilised, owing to the want of favourable markets. Doubtless that position will improve. I doubt whether from the aspect of squatting the appointment of a Royal Commission would be justified. Mining is another matter, but it is hard to believe that a single Royal Commissioner will be able to deal with mining as well as all the other industries. Many people, however, are looking for openings in the way of gold mining.

Mr. Lamond: One Commissioner made very important recommendations last year—Mr. Kingsley Thomas.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but I do not know that anything has resulted. Many Royal Commissions have made suggestions, but I am not aware that anything much has resulted from them.

Mr. Marshall: We could not expect much to result immediately from Kingsley Thomas's report, seeing that all the big shareholders of the mines are resident in London.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member seems to believe that the only valuable recommendation was that for amalgamation of companies, improved machinery, and so forth.

Mr. Marshall: Nothing of the kind.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: On the mining aspect probably some real good would result from close investigation. The Premier knows that the rainfall of our North is much lighter than that of tropical Queensland.

Mr. Angelo: The rainfall of our North goes up to 63 inches.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, at Camden Harbour, but that is the wettest spot. Even there I do not know that it would be possible to employ men all the year round in agriculture. Twenty-five inches of rain falling in a few months may be enough to grow cotton. My belief is that irrigation will play a great part in the agricultural development of the North. Irrigation propositions abound there, and probably inquiry into the possibilities of irrigation and its cost would result in some good. An irrigation engineer would be needed for that purpose. In Egypt irrigation is entirely responsible for the support of 14 million people on 12,000 square miles. Many of them have grown wealthy through irrigation. Irrigation is essential to the agricultural development of our North because employment all the year round is essential. We should want another Commissioner to advise us how to convert the undoubted wealth of the sea on our northern coast into coin of the realm. From the aspect of defence it is sufficient to say that we can have no people without defence. When we speak of the undefended North, we should also think of the undefended South. Australia is practically defenceless, with six million people scattered over a huge continent. There are possibilities of oil being found in our North-West, if it is found anywhere in Australia. Before we appoint a Royal Commission we want to know what the Commission is to do for us. The Premier rightly says that he will want to know where the money is to come from. As he states, considerable sums of money are needed in the south of this State. I am also with the Premier in his statement that we should retain all our territory, and should not even consider the surrender of the North to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth have the Northern Territory, and have done very little with it. I have ascertained that it costs Australia £120 annually for every man, woman, and child in the Northern Territory. It is true that South Australia, in handing over the Northern Territory to the Commonwealth, handed over the responsibility to the whole of Australia, including Western Australia. At all events, it would be bad for Western Australia if our North were handed over to the Commonwealth to be treated as the Northern Territory has been. I am entirely against

any such proposal. Let me point out that the Northern Territory is represented in the Federal House by one voteless member, whilst our North is represented here by four members who vote as well as speak. So our North is well represented in the State Parliament. The four Northern members are invariably most active in this Chamber, and always endeavour to convince the House that the North has suffered grave injustice.

The Premier: For the last fortnight the Northern members have had the debate to themselves.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Since the Premier came to this House and since I came to this House we have listened to hardly anything except the needs and wrongs of the North. I do not know that in my 20 years here any proposal for the benefit of the North has not been seriously considered by the Chamber, and I do not call to mind that any such proposal has been turned down. In that respect no other part of Western Australia has been so fortunate. Before appointing the suggested Royal Commission the Premier must know what it is wanted for, and what he is to do with its report when he gets it. The question, as the Premier has said, is largely an Australian question. I fail to see that the Federal Government should collect more by way of taxation than they need for their special purposes and then return the balance to the States. I am entirely against any such system. It is true that the Federal Government have reduced their taxation, but it would be a much better thing for Western Australia if they reduced it to the extent of enabling us to meet our urgent needs. The Minister for Works is getting a grant for road making from the Federal Government, but it is subject to conditions. All the grants are subject to so many conditions. I do not like that idea. If the Federal Government were to distribute money on an area basis, we would not have much to object to because we would get more than our share seeing that we possess one-third of the Continent. When the money is distributed on a population basis, however, we do no better than we would if the Federal Government were to reduce their taxation to meet their bare necessities, leaving us to impose taxation to meet our requirements. We should consider very carefully before we think of handing over any part of our territory to the Federal authorities. Just at present they seem to be

inclined to help, and a suggestion has been made that a Commission should be appointed. I understand the idea is that it shall be outside parliamentary control. I do not know that Australia would agree to that proposition. I think this Parliament should have some say seeing that the taxpayers will be responsible. When it comes to a question of administration, I have already pointed out that four parliamentary representatives are in this Chamber. We have Ministers and the people come here to do their business. All the financial arrangements necessary are made here and the business of the North is transacted here as well. If the North is handed over to the control of others, the Federal people are likely to set up another centre in Australia. I do not know that the North will receive better treatment from Melbourne than from a centre nearer to them such as Perth. I do not see how such a proposal would benefit the people of the North from the standpoint of administration. Certainly they could not get more sympathetic administration than they get from this Parliament, no matter what they may do. It is unthinkable that with such a small population the North could set up another Government with all the necessary paraphernalia such as courts and other institutions. It could not be done. I doubt whether such a proposal would improve the position of the North from the standpoint of administration at all. I have been in Parliament for a long time and I do not know that I have heard it suggested that anything better could be done. The people of the North are restless and want something to be done. That is a very good thing. The members representing the North are also restless and are pressing for something to be done. That, too, is good. So it is with Parliament. The question is, what shall we do with the limited population and funds at our disposal?

Mr. Coverley: You did not find it hard to float a loan when you wanted to develop the South-West.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We had a definite policy to do something that the Empire wanted. Undoubtedly we could get money, but the member for Kimberley (Mr. Coverley) should realise that a great proportion of the tropical lands of the earth are already under the control of Great Britain. One-quarter of the earth's surface is controlled by the British nation and a fair proportion of that is tropical

country. The tropical requirements of the nation, apart, perhaps, from cotton, are more or less limited. Since Britain draws upon all parts of the world for her requirements, it is difficult to see how she could distribute orders to assist in the development of our northern parts to any great extent. When I first assumed office in 1919 I asked the Agent General to get the Imperial Government to suggest what we could do to supply the needs of Great Britain. I pointed out our possibilities regarding agriculture, the pastoral industry and the mining industry, and asked what we could supply. I realised, however, that so much of the Empire's lands were represented by tropical areas. I do not know just what is in the Premier's mind as to what ought to be done.

The Premier: I am a bit puzzled to know what to do with the whole thing.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not know where he will turn for the man suitable to make such an inquiry. It cannot be a mining man, who would be possessed of sufficient knowledge to deal with tropical agriculture, irrigation, pastoral matters and the industries of the sea. The best thing to do would be to get a man with a judicial mind who would be able to call evidence from all classes of people, and that would be a pretty expensive Commission to undertake. If we were prepared to embark upon tropical agriculture on an extensive scale, we would need the services of a capable irrigation engineer, particularly on account of our rainfall. The Premier would have to provide considerable sums of money, and he would have to secure the right type of people for the climate. The trouble is that Australia has too much country and too few people. There are wonderful opportunities on the coastal fringes where the climate is good. There is, too, a decided inclination on the part of people to settle around the financial centres, such as Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth. This question is rendered the more difficult because of that fact. While I have no intention of opposing the appointment of the Commission of inquiry, I could wish that the motion had been worded differently so as to give some indication of what the House desired the Government to do. The very wording of the motion shows the confusion that is in the minds of hon. members. I

hope the Premier will not appoint a Commissioner until he gets the right man, and having got him I hope he will provide that individual with something definite to inquire into. I hope he will see to it that the Royal Commissioner is asked to make recommendations for the development of the North in such a way that the development will increase the population there very considerably. If we were to multiply the people on the stations by ten, we would still have a limited number of people there. Mining has decreased and the people have gone. The use of motor cars means that one man can now do the work that necessitated the employment of two or three or more in the past. Then again, quick motor transport has enabled people to do their business with Perth direct instead of, as in the days of horse-drawn vehicles, through the towns in the North. With modern improvements and aeroplanes, the people are able to come to Perth more often during the course of the year. The result is that there are fewer people living in the North. I hope our northern parts, which represent a valuable portion of the State, will never be separated from the South. We shall have a greater say in the government of Australia while the North is joined to the South, than we would have if the position were different. In the years to come Western Australia will have a much greater say in the affairs of the nation. That is what I hope we are aiming at. It is certain no one in this House to-day will live to see any considerable change in the relative positions of Western Australia and the Eastern States. All parts of Australia will continue to develop, but possibly Western Australia will progress more rapidly than the other States. At the same time we have a lot of leeway to make up. When we appreciate the fact that our great territory is represented by only five members in a House of 75, we can realise what small potatoes we are in the Federal arena. I sympathise with the Premier in the responsibility he has to shoulder in selecting someone to conduct this inquiry. When it comes to providing funds necessary, if anything worth while is to be done, he will require our sympathetic assistance. Undoubtedly the North is well worth developing, but there is much to be done still within almost a stone's throw of us at present. Hon. members must agree that it

is the first duty of the Government to undertake that task, seeing that the facilities are here, that the opportunities are here, that the markets are here, and that the climate is so much better. We shall increase our population more rapidly in the South than we would do if we were to place the same numbers in the northern areas. While I do not oppose the appointment of the Commission, I again ask the Premier not to make the appointment at all until he is perfectly satisfied that some good will result from the inquiry. Unless he can get a man who can advise along the lines indicated, then the inquiry will not result in much good. It will be useful if we can get the right man. The report will then be available for us when we are ready to incur the large expenditure that will be involved, and when we are prepared to undertake the work we will not then be delayed because of the necessity for inquiries to be made. As a matter of fact, we know mighty little about the North. In my opinion, however, the land to be looked at for the purpose of tropical agriculture is that lying between Derby and Wyndham where the harbours are good, the rainfall fairly good, and where, we are told, there are streams containing considerable supplies of water. We have reports such as that presented by Mr. Easton and others who have made many inquiries, with the result that we know much regarding the possibilities. I hope the Premier will see to it that good will come from the inquiry and that it will be conducted along definite lines.

MR. LAMOND (Pilbara—in reply) [8.13]: I thank members for the fair and sympathetic manner in which they have received the motion. There are only one or two statements to which I desire to reply. The member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) accused me of having very little knowledge of the country, and went on to say that I was like a fly that hopped from one dandelion to another, and engaged in one particular employment. That is unfair. As a lad I went to the North-West in 1905, and I lived continuously there until I was elected to represent the Pilbara constituency in the Assembly. That means to say that I lived there for upwards of 20 years. I have travelled on several occasions from the Fitzroy River in the Kimberleys to Hamelin

Pool, 150 miles south of Carnarvon. I overlanded and therefore have a fair knowledge of the North-West from one end to the other. The Premier stated that one of the great difficulties of the North-West was on the domestic side. I understood him to mean that it was difficult to get women to live there, and that he thought it would be necessary for men to leave their homes in order to settle there because the climate was not suitable for the women folk. That is not correct. Although the climate of the North is not first-class for women—

The Premier: I meant because of the inconveniences and the disabilities inland.

MR. LAMOND: I have been in most portions of the North-West and at the farthest outposts there are white women rearing families. One of the greatest drawbacks is the lack of medical facilities. I pay a tribute to the women who go to the North-West and rear families in many instances 200 or 300 miles from a doctor. If the Royal Commission were instrumental in better medical facilities being provided for the North-West, its appointment would be justified. The member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) stated by way of interjection that the Kimberley district was not suitable for sheep and wool growing as the climate was too hot. Kimberley holds a record for wool growing. On the Liveringa station on the Fitzroy 107,000 sheep were run on surface waters without a single bore hole having been put down. I feel sure that is a record for Australia. In the wool market the same station secured top price, due to the light character of the wool. At Balmaningarra station in Kimberley a flock of a couple of thousand sheep was bred up to 40,000 without a fence having been erected. In those days the sheep were shepherded.

MR. Latham: How many are there on that station to-day?

MR. LAMOND: None, because the station is being utilised for cattle, but not because the climate was unsuitable for sheep. Members know that the greatest increase of flocks is not obtained when they are shepherded. The member for York (Mr. Latham) stated that people could not be expected to go on the land in the North-West when they could get land in the South-West where the climate was much better. That is not the position: the great considera-

tion is the opportunity offered in the South-West to get Government assistance.

Mr. Latham: But that has been granted only recently.

Mr. LAMOND: There is no comparison in the cost of developing a holding in the North-West and in the South-West. When people go to the North-West they find country that is worth developing. In fact, one acre of North-West land taken to the South-West could be sold as fertiliser.

Question put and passed.

ADDRESS—DEATH OF QUEEN ALEXANDRA.

Message from the Council received and read transmitting an address of condolence to His Majesty the King and other members of the Royal Family on the death of the Dowager Queen Alexandra and desiring the concurrence of the Assembly in it.

THE PREMIER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [8.22]: I am sure the whole House will endorse the sentiments expressed in the address from the Legislative Council. The Dowager Queen Alexandra lived a long and full life that was a fine example to her people. Although for many years past she led a life of comparative seclusion, she held the affection of the people of Great Britain in a very remarkable degree. Her passing will leave a gap in the lives of the people of England, and we join in expressions of sympathy and condolence to His Majesty and other members of the Royal Family. I move—

That this House concurs in the address.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.23]: I endorse all the words that have fallen from the Premier, and agree with him that Queen Alexandra lived in the hearts of the people of the Empire for all that long period of more than 60 years and died regretted by them.

Question passed; members standing.

BILL—ROADS CLOSURE.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [8.24] in moving the second reading said: This is another of the hardy annuals—a Bill

for the closing of certain streets. Various municipalities and road boards have to consider requests made to them for the closing of roads and, before the requests can be carried into effect, Parliament has to approve of the closures being made. This Bill proposes seven closures in various parts of the State. The first is in the City of Perth and relates to a small piece of land at Hyde Park, which makes the corner of the park not square. The closing of this portion will straighten up the street and still leave the full width. The next closure relates to Ocean-parade at North Fremantle. The land at this portion near the North Mole has been made up, and it is proposed to lease an area there for the erection of storage tanks for oil. This will have the effect of carrying Ocean-parade nearer to the sea, but the same width of beach will be retained. By this closure the Government will have an opportunity to lease the land and thus permit of competition for the supplying of oil fuel to ships calling at Fremantle. There is a small area to be closed at Narrogin at the rear of an hotel lately built by Mr. Michael Brown. It is a very small triangular piece, the closing of which will not interfere with the road, and on which it is desired to erect a septic tank. A little while ago the Cottesloe Council sold to the Government the electricity supply for the district, and in one of the side streets a sub-station had been erected, really on a road. It has been there for many years. It is proposed to close the portion of the street on which the sub-station stands and give the Electricity Supply Department the right to the ground. The next closure is at East Fremantle, a continuation of Angwin-street to Bolton-street.

The Premier: There is nothing political about that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: On top of a high cliff where the ground falls away steeply, there is a road called Richmond-crescent. It is impossible to construct the road on account of its steepness. This road has existed since the early days, dating back prior to the formation of the municipality. The property abutting on the street belongs to the Government. An arrangement has been made with the Land Resumption Office under which Richmond-crescent is to be closed and the land will then vest in His Majesty as part of his former estate. Angwin-street will be continued to Bolton-street to give ingress to and egress from

the properties there. It is impossible to make a road on top of the cliff as cuttings would have to be put in. The department consider it advisable that this street should be closed. There is also a provision that it should be regarded as a street even if it should be less than 66ft. wide. That is done for the purpose of not interfering with any building the Government have erected on the land. It is also proposed to close a road through the land occupied by Muresk Agricultural College. This land abuts on the North-East boundary. It is necessary that the Government should have the power to close this road, or perhaps to alter the position. The last clause provides for the closure of roads in the North Fremantle municipality. As a matter of fact these are mere rights of way. North Fremantle is now becoming an important industrial centre and some time back several big firms acquired a number of small blocks which were divided by rights of way. Except one small block this land is now held by Dalgety's, the British Imperial Oil Company and Kitchen and Sons. The existence of the rights of way will interfere with the carrying on of the business of these people, and it is therefore asked that legislative authority be given to close the thoroughfares, and in that way make one large block of the allotments and rights of way. There is no objection to the proposals, the consent of all the parties interested having been obtained.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Will the municipal council be able to sell the rights of way to the owners of the property?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is the council that has asked for this legislation. The rights of way are narrow. I have given the House a full list of the roads that it is proposed to close during this year. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.35]: I have no objection to offer to the Bill, but I ask the Minister not to go into Committee on it to-night because I would like some information about the clause relating to the closure of the road through Muresk grounds. I think the Minister has been mis-informed about that roadway.

The Minister for Lands: We can take the Bill through Committee up to that clause.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We must be perfectly certain that the people who need to use the road through Muresk grounds will be adequately served. The Minister for Agriculture will remember that he spoke to me about this road some time ago, and I want to be certain that access to the railway station through the grounds will be afforded in the event of the existing road being closed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 6—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—RESERVES.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [8.40] in moving the second reading said: This too is a Bill that we find it necessary to bring down annually. The papers showing the reserves that it is proposed to deal with were laid upon the Table last session. First the Bill provides for the transfer of a Class "A" reserve from the Education Endowment Trustees to the High School in exchange for an area now held by the High School. The school authorities desire to carry out some experimental agricultural work, and the land they now hold, which is all sand, is not suitable for the purpose. The land it is proposed to transfer to them is a black loam and will meet all requirements. Next the Education Endowment Trustees desire that Avon Location 29293 shall be handed back to the Lands Department on condition that the Lands Department refund the survey fees that they levied. It appears that the vermin board in that district have urged the present trustees to clear the land of vermin. The trustees say that it will cost about £500 to do that and they have no money available. It is asked that the land be handed back and thrown open for selection, and then those who require it will be able to take it up and keep it clear of vermin. The next clause in the Bill provides that the Bunbury Municipal Council shall have power to sell its present pound site, and that the money so derived

shall be used to purchase a more suitable site. The Bunbury Municipal Council desire this. The fourth clause provides that in the vicinity of Napier a small portion shall be taken out of Class A reserve 647, classified for camping and public utility, for the purpose of a site for an agricultural hall. It is only a small block that is required, but it is necessary to have legislative authority as the reserve is Class A. It is also sought to provide that the school site at Subiaco, again a class A reserve, shall have its boundaries altered. This is merely to solve some difficulties without doing any damage either to the reserve or to the school ground. The next proposal deals with Class "A" reserves 18324 and 18325 at Mt. Lawley. This is the old Perth sanitary site. It has been granted to the Perth Road Board, and representations have been made by the Lawn Tennis Association of W.A., the Football Association, and a golf syndicate, to lease the land, and expend on it immediately £3,500, with a further annual sum to put the grounds into proper order for the playing of various games. There is a sufficient area for a public park as well, and this will be retained by the Perth Road Board. I was waited on by some of the sporting bodies in respect of this proposal. The trouble is that, under existing conditions, the Perth Road Board cannot lease the land for more than 21 years from the date of the trust. Seeing that it is going to cost the collective sporting bodies from £30,000 to £40,000, it is ridiculous to ask them to accept a lease for only 21 years. Therefore it is proposed in the Bill that with the consent of the Governor, the area may be leased for 50 years, so as to enable the sporting bodies to recoup themselves for the money they will expend on the ground. Another clause provides that the purpose of a reserve in Labouchere-road, South Perth, opposite the gates of the Zoological Gardens, shall be changed. Many years ago the area was set aside for a botanical gardens. Today the Zoological Gardens have become virtually a botanical gardens, and consequently this reserve is no longer necessary for its original purpose. The proposal is to take a strip of it, fronting on Labouchere road, as a parking ground for motors used by the people visiting the Zoological Gardens or the golf links adjoining the reserve. Some years ago the Zoological Gardens committee were granted a portion of this area for the

purpose of erecting caretaker's quarters. The committee say that it is no longer required for that purpose, and they propose to relinquish that area in the reserve and in exchange take this strip for the parking of motors. Then it is proposed to alter the purpose of the balance of the reserve. Instead of being reserved for a botanical gardens, it will be set aside for recreation purposes other than golf.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why other than golf?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Because some years ago there was a movement for the handing over of part of this reserve to the Perth Golf Club, whose course adjoins the reserve. However, this was objected to by a number of the local residents, and I think by Parliament; so, bearing that in mind, it has been thought advisable in dedicating the reserve to recreation purposes to exclude golf. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.51]: I have no great objection to offer to the Bill. Indeed I think that since the educational trustees ask that their land should be taken back so that they might be relieved of responsibility, the value of the land, if it be sold, should be added to the existing educational endowment. As to the Bunbury reserve, nobody can offer any objection to that. The same may be said of most of the proposals in the Bill, but there are one or two provisions that strike me as being a little unusual. It is only right that the reserve at Mt. Lawley should be used for recreation purposes; it will be of considerable value to the people of the locality. Some time ago the road board desired to get control of that area in order to grant leases to a number of sporting bodies willing to spend large sums of money on the improvements of the grounds. It will take a considerable sum to do this, so we certainly must give those bodies a fairly long lease, if they are to recover their expenditure. But the power the Minister asks is a little unusual. It is that with the approval of the Governor the balance of the land shall be vested in the Perth Road Board, which will be able to do more or less as it pleases with the land. So long as we are sure that the land shall be used exclusively for recreation purposes, it ought to be all right. There is no other recreation ground in that locality, and I am glad that at last the road board is

to be in a position to lease the land to the respective sporting bodies. The reserve at South Perth is no longer needed by the Zoological Gardens, while a strip of it is required for the parking of motor cars. To me Labouchere road, especially as seen from King's Park, is a long, ugly, straight line. It should be possible somewhere or other to break that line, if only by the planting of trees. Seen from King's Park it is nothing but an eyesore and spoils an otherwise beautiful view. The road could be broken just where it passes this reserve.

Mr. Clydesdale: The reserve is not more than is required for recreation purposes.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But there are 24 acres in the area. South Perth is very well supplied with reserves. I do not know whether they were all declared during the hon. member's time as Mayor.

Mr. Clydesdale: You could expect that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I only wish the same thing had been done in other suburbs. However, I am not opposing the proposal, for it will result in a very fine recreation ground.

Mr. Clydesdale: It has taken 20 years to bring this about.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I remember that a Bill was introduced for this some years ago, but was lost in another place.

Mr. Clydesdale: It was in respect of the same land, but with a different division.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should like to see this land turned into cricket grounds and tennis courts. The pity is we have not more ground to give to the people for recreation purposes. Tennis courts should be so placed that the young people who are at work in the city may have ready access to them at the end of the day. This ground is particularly suited for that purpose. I am not certain why the Minister has inserted words to prevent the ground from being used for golf. There is already a course at South Perth, but it sounds rather bad to have these words inserted in a Bill of this kind.

The Minister for Lands: I think it is because these words were not inserted that your Bill did not go through.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Apparently people may play any game they like but golf on this ground. I do not suppose it will be required for this purpose, and it could not be added to the golf links without

the approval of the Minister and the local authority.

The Minister for Lands: The Minister has no power once the land is handed over.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister has power to vest these reserves in the local authority, which then could permit the golf club to play over the grounds, though I do not suppose it would be required for that purpose. The Bill will at all events meet the objection of those who thought the golf club might want to have the ground. The municipality would not have kept the present golf links in anything like the way the golfers have kept it. They have beautified the ground not only for South Perth but for the people generally. If there has been any objection, it will be removed now because there will be ample ground for all purposes. I have no objection to the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Reserve No. 3268:

Mr. WITHERS: Bunbury was established many years ago, but it is now found that this piece of land is detrimental to the interests of the town. The municipality is desirous of disposing of it with the object of getting a better site elsewhere.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Reserve A 5574:

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The words "exclusive of golf" were inserted in this clause because so much objection was raised by local residents to the area being added to the present golf links, which adjoin this particular piece of land. It was thought that the golf club already had a sufficient area. There are not many recreation reserves available in South Perth. On the small reserve adjoining the road board office there are some tennis courts, but there is scarcely room for anything else. Some additional area should, therefore, be provided for South Perth. If the area were transferred to the golf club, there would not be enough left for general recreation pur-

poses, such as football, cricket, tennis, etc. That is why these words were put in.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not see why this should not have been left to the local authority and the Minister. Possibly this is the method adopted by the Minister to get the Bill through. I will wager that it will come back to us with these words deleted.

The Minister for Lands: I would not object. They were not put in at my request.

Mr. Clydesdale: The golf club tried to get their links extended by taking in this portion of the reserve, but the local authority raised an objection.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then they could not get it.

The Minister for Lands: Sometimes local authorities are changed.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It looks as if Parliament were hostile to the game of golf, but the reverse is the case. We want to encourage good wholesome sport.

Mr. Clydesdale: The present golf links are not a championship course, and that is why it was desired to enlarge them.

Mr. Davy: They would like a little more land.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It does not seem right to leave these words in the Bill.

Clause put and passed.

Schedule—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 29th October.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [9.13]: I am afraid we have come to the end of a peaceful sitting. We now have a Bill that has been introduced by the Minister for Works. His proposals generally mean some drastic change in the existing state of affairs. The Minister in office is one thing, and the Minister in Parliament is another. His proposals are meant to be accepted by the House, and as a rule are carried, notwithstanding the strenuous opposition from this side of the House. No matter what advice is tendered

to the Minister, he sticks to his proposals to the letter. Not a word can be altered unless we find a mistake on the part of the Parliamentary Draftsman. This Bill deals with road boards. The Minister ought to be reasonable. There are many members who know more about this subject than the Minister does, or than I do, and they should be listened to. Many of the country towns are included in the road board districts. We must keep that in view when considering the Bill. Perhaps one feature of the measure will lead people to take a greater interest in road boards: the Minister proposes to dignify those boards by converting them into district councils. There is to be a president and also a vice-president of each district council, and the Minister proposes that both these gentlemen shall be honorary justices of the peace. To-day the chairman of a road board is an honorary justice of the peace, and the member for York (Mr. Latham), who is chairman of the local road board, informs me that there is no provision for the swearing-in of temporary justices, an omission which the Minister might like to supply before this Bill passes. I do not know how far it will please the road boards to be changed into district councils and to have a president and a vice-president. One objection to the Bill is that the Minister, while increasing the powers and certainly the responsibilities of the local authorities, retains to himself considerable powers. That is a mistake. The local governing bodies should have the greatest possible freedom in the management of their own affairs. They are elected, as we are, by the people, and are responsible to those who elect them. The Bill proposes to abolish plural voting. We may be, as the Minister says, the last country in the world to retain plural voting. However, plural voting has worked very well, and I do not know of any objection to it. It gives the people paying the greatest amount of rates a special say in the expenditure of the money. The Minister proposes to extend the scope of the local governing bodies, which at present is limited practically to the construction and maintenance of roads. The use of the roads to-day is a very different thing from what it was. Motor traffic is heavy, and motor owners pay a road tax, but the Minister proposes to retain that tax, and so the local governing

bodies will be left to maintain the roads. It will be very difficult for them to maintain the roads in a satisfactory condition unless considerable help is given by the Minister. The width of 66ft. proposed by the Bill for roads is the right width in most cases, but the Minister should have power to authorise roads of less width.

The Minister for Works: An amendment to that effect is being drafted.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It would be wrong of the Minister to insist on roads running through valuable land being not less than 66ft. in width. I have in mind, for instance, the swamp land in the Peel Estate. If every one of the numerous roads required on that estate were to be 66ft. wide, it would mean a great waste of valuable land. I am glad that the Minister proposes to have the clause amended. The Bill suggests many changes. Under the existing Act road boards have the right to acquire and run ferries.

The Minister for Works: Under the existing Act they can only subsidise ferries, not own them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The provision was made many years ago to meet cases where it was impracticable to bridge a river. I will leave the member for York (Mr. Latham) to convince the Minister on this point. The Bill provides that passenger services may be acquired and operated by local authorities with the consent of the Minister. I do not know that local authorities need be given that power. A district council should attend to the present work of maintenance of roads and matters connected therewith. The Minister proposes to make the councils trading concerns, running cinematograph entertainments and exhibitions of all sorts. Perhaps "White City" would come in that category. It is certainly an exhibition.

The Minister for Works: I am told good profits are made out of "White City."

Mr. Griffiths: The Kellerberrin people support their hospital by means of moving picture shows.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should not object to that, but it is quite another matter to permit road boards to use their funds for all these purposes. I hope that before the House agrees to these various activities on the part of local governing bodies, the Minister will tell us exactly what is meant. The Bill proposes to

authorise local bodies to erect saleyards. They already do that. Again, the Bill proposes that they shall have power to build, establish and maintain hospitals. I do not know how many times we are to pay for hospital services. The Government collect money for that purpose, by way of the entertainments tax for instance. And then there is ordinary revenue. It is an extraordinary proposal that people already contributing taxation for hospital purposes should be called upon to establish a hospital. It is not fair. Certainly the responsibility will not be evenly distributed, since every district will not establish a hospital. A municipality, for example, cannot do so. The proposed district councils will only be able to collect revenue from land, while the hospital will be used by all the people in the district. The Government collects revenue not only from land, but from numerous sources. Many people who contribute to the Government will not contribute to the local authority. We already have against the lands of the State a large number of taxes, in some cases amounting in the aggregate to a considerable sum per acre per annum. There is no reason why people should contribute taxation to the Treasurer for hospital purposes, and at the same time contribute directly to a local authority in order that this authority may run a hospital. The Bill contains another power to the district councils to do something that the Government are already doing. The local authority is to be authorised to erect workers' homes and sell them to people who cannot afford to build homes for themselves. We have a Workers' Homes Board which is very well and very capably managed, and excellently staffed. It operates practically all over the South-West to-day, and is doing excellent work. Certainly no local authority would have the experience of the Workers' Homes Board, and the work would not be as well done by local authorities in the interests of those buying the homes. The institution has not cost the people of this country one farthing. Very few pounds are owing by people who have homes built for them to-day. The work of advancing money is excellently managed, and I doubt the necessity for adding to the work of local authorities something that is done very much better by the Workers' Homes Board. Certainly the Government can procure money more cheaply than can the local authorities. The smaller the local

authority, the more will have to be paid for the money, and the more difficult will it be to finance the erection of homes. Why duplicate all these undertakings? Nothing is to be gained by it. The Premier said he would consider the question of expanding the funds of the Workers' Homes Board to enable them to erect homes in the country. Hon. members recognise that the rent question is a serious matter. If people could get houses at cheaper rentals, they would be more satisfied with their wages. If a worker has to pay 25s. a week for a 4-roomed cottage, that amount represents a big deduction from his wages. Under the Workers' Homes Board such a man's position would be improved, and I hope the opportunities of the Workers' Homes Board will be increased by extending the capital available. I trust that a substantial sum will be provided in the Loan Estimates for that purpose. I hope, too, that the House will agree that it is not necessary to do more than we are doing at present, and that it will be better for the workers to secure their homes through the board already established by the Government.

Mr. Latham: At any rate the work should not be duplicated.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so. If someone runs a bakehouse, I do not know that he would have the right to put a sign on his building "This is a bakehouse" unless he had the permission of the Minister. Then no advertisements are to be allowed on private property?

The Minister for Works: This merely gives the board the same powers as the municipalities have now.

Mr. Sleeman: This will prevent those "Red Revolution" placards being posted up.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Well, the people require to be warned.

Mr. Sleeman: But there was no necessity for the warning.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know that at the last election objectionable placards were displayed reflecting upon the party to which I belong.

Mr. Sleeman: Who authorised them?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member should be able to tell me. I would like to know who forged that letter.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What does the Minister mean regarding the placards on trees growing on private property? Does he mean that there will be certain revenue notwithstanding that the placards may

be displayed on private property? If hoardings are erected on private properties outside the town, they will not be of much value, but still they will have to be licensed and controlled by the local authorities.

Mr. Clydesdale: It would be better if all hoardings in the metropolitan area were abolished.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: South Perth has a road board, so that this will apply there too.

Mr. Clydesdale: And that is the only board that does not permit hoardings in the main streets.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Bill also provides that the Minister may have special valuations made, but no appeal can be lodged against it.

The Minister for Works: Yes, there is an appeal against a Minister's valuation, but it is to the court and not to the council. To that extent I am limiting the powers of the Minister.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so; I misread the clause. There should be an appeal to the council.

The Minister for Works: But you cannot take it out of the hands of the local authorities, allow the Minister to fix the valuation, and then allow an appeal back to the local authorities.

Mr. Latham: But that does not say that the Minister's valuation is right.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. I take it the Minister wants uniformity. As usual the Minister has increased the rating powers very considerably.

Mr. Griffiths: We are getting hardened to that.

The Minister for Works: I have not done that; I have merely increased the range.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We would be stupid if we did not take notice of the most that can be done under the proposals of the Government.

The Minister for Works: Do you not trust the boards?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Before all these measures are passed, these taxing proposals will be taken out.

The Minister for Works: There is no taxation suggested here.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: On the other hand the taxation is to be considerably increased.

The Minister for Works: That will be for the board to decide; it is not provided in the Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am afraid that the local authorities will adopt that attitude, particularly as it is possible for the Minister's officers to indicate to boards that if they do not increase their taxation they will not receive any subsidy from the Government.

The Minister for Works: I have had to tell that already.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And, of course, it has been done before by other Ministers. In the metropolitan area the tax may be increased to 9d. in the pound, with the approval of the Minister. That is only one of these special taxes. Then, with regard to lighting, there may be a further tax of 1½d. in the pound on the unimproved capital value in certain areas, or 3d. in the pound on rental values.

The Minister for Works: Only for the portion served.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so. I presume this is intended in case any person is willing to erect a plant, the tax being available for the purpose of a subsidy. I am afraid that when we take into consideration all these different avenues of taxation, there will be a considerable increase in the amount the people will have to pay. We have already gone far enough. I do not know if the Minister realises all the taxation that people have to pay. Does he realise that money taken from the people in this way does not mean providing as much employment as would be available if that money were left in the hands of the producers? Too much taxation means increased unemployment, for people are inclined to reduce employment if they have to shoulder such heavy burdens. It deters enterprise and makes employment difficult to expand. Employment by Governments is no substitute for employment by private individuals. Employment creates more employment. The real work of providing employment comes from the men who till the land alongside the railways, and if more money is taken from those people in the shape of taxation it means that so much land less is put under the plough.

The Minister for Works: I am not going to impose any more taxation upon them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The people resent having to pay so much in taxation and so many taxes. Land is becoming more valuable in these times and more taxation has to be paid upon it, although the

land is used for the same purposes. It is the heavy taxation that is causing unemployment to-day. On top of the money that has to be found for the needs of the State Government and the local authorities, we have the Federal taxation, which is so much heavier. The Minister should cry a halt somewhere.

Mr. Marshall: Where are you getting to? You have been talking taxation ever since the House met.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the hon. member had been here very much since the House has been in session he would know more of what has been discussed. I was endeavouring to convince him and others that increased taxation means reduced employment, that taxation refers not only to land and income tax but to the tariff imposts which apply to every person in the State. When we consider the millions collected by the Federal Government, there is no doubt it does make work scarce. The tariff is responsible for a charge of at least £5,000,000 against the people. There is not such scope for increased taxation as the Minister seems to imagine. We must cry a halt somewhere.

The Minister for Works: This Bill does not impose taxation.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It provides that it may be imposed. When the Minister is a little more experienced in the ways of Parliament, he will realise that members must consider the worst that can happen when dealing with legislation of this kind.

The Minister for Works: My experience has been that the local authorities will not tax sufficiently.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister had experience at Jandakot where they taxed agricultural land at 5s. per acre.

The Minister for Works: My complaint is that certain road boards impose only 1½d. in the pound and then come to me for grants with which to make their roads.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They have a perfect right to apply to the Government for assistance. It has always been the custom of the Government to grant assistance.

The Minister for Works: And the Government have a right to expect them to do a fair thing by themselves.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They do a fair thing.

The Minister for Works: Not when they rate at 1½d. in the pound and on an under-valuation, too.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: A rate of 1½d. in the pound might be a fair thing. We are engaged now in adding to the power of local authorities to collect more and more taxation. We are asked to give them power to collect money by way of taxation in order that they may do other than maintain roads. They may build workers' homes. They may conduct and maintain a hospital, though they would be mighty foolish to do so. They may run exhibitions and cinematograph shows. I do not know whether they would engage Madame Melba or that other singer who, we are told, is going to give 20 concerts for £20,000. But we are giving them the power to do many things which they could not do before and which they should not have power to do now. It is not necessary to give local authorities power to erect workers' homes.

The Minister for Works: You started off by asking me to trust them. Now you are complaining of giving them too much power.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: So far as we give them power, let them exercise it. The Minister reminds me of Lord Forrest when he drafted the Land Act. In each clause he said "This shall be the law," but to each he added, "Unless the Minister otherwise determines." So he became the Act. The Minister for Works wishes to follow in his footsteps.

The Minister for Works: You want to make me a dictator.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I object to that. The Minister is certainly maintaining his old reputation by wishing to be the boss. While he is going to make the road boards district councils, and the chairmen presidents, and do other things that will look like dignifying the gentlemen who undertake this work, the power will not be very real because, if the Bill passes, the Minister will be able to put his foot down anywhere. He will control in many matters. I said that so far as road boards are given the right to do things, they should be trusted, but we should not give them the powers for which the Minister asks.

Mr. Marshall: Therefore there would be no occasion to trust them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The member for Murchison knows that if we give them unlimited power, we shall be giving

them unnecessary power. Let us give them the necessary power and trust them to carry out the work we wish them to do, but do not let us include in the Bill any unnecessary authority. I am opposed to the Minister having unlimited control over the boards. Parliament should decide what their powers should be and then, so far as possible, the boards should be permitted to exercise those powers without interference. What is the use of delegating powers to them if at the same time the Minister can set their powers aside? The Minister has determined that this Bill shall become law, and although it ought not to be a party measure, I fear it will be. We shall try to make some alterations and improve the Bill in Committee. Perhaps the Minister will allow us to amend it in some directions. If he does, it will be the first occasion that has happened since he has introduced a Bill as Minister.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [9.52]: This is a measure to give road boards greater powers. There are many clauses with which I agree and there are some I intend to oppose. Naturally, I shall oppose the clause stipulating one man one vote.

The Minister for Works: Why "naturally"?

Mr. LINDSAY: From my experience road board conferences have always been unanimous in turning down that proposal. The road board members are the people who have to work under the Act, and they are unanimous in the opinion that that principle is unsuitable for them.

The Minister for Works: This is the only country in the world where that hoary old idea remains.

Mr. LINDSAY: The men who administer the Act must know their own business. They have not asked for this alteration. Still, I suppose it will be useless for me to oppose it.

Mr. Marshall: Do not get annoyed about it.

Mr. LINDSAY: I hope the Minister's proposal will not prevent two partners in a farm from having a vote. I cannot understand why the Minister, in altering the designation of chairman to president, provides for the appointment of a vice-president and for both president and vice-president to be justices of the peace. I fail to see any need for a vice-president. The fact that an acting-president can be appointed

in the absence of the president should be sufficient. Even if the president was made a justice of the peace, there is no reason why the same should apply to the vice-president. If the vice-president is granted the honour, why not extend it to the acting-president? I consider the proposal unnecessary and unreasonable. Under the existing Act is a provision which allows road boards to give a rebate on rates up to 5 per cent., but no particular time is laid down in which the rebate may be granted. Under this measure, the time is fixed as the 31st August. I am not much concerned whether the rebate is granted or not, but if the Minister intends that it shall be granted, sufficient time should be allowed to make the granting of it possible. The road boards in the wheat belt and in the drier portions of the State do the whole of their work in the winter months. They usually have a secretary and rarely are two hands employed. The principal work of the secretary is in July and August when he has to attend to the work on the roads. That is when most of the money is expended. The Act lays down that in July the board shall meet, make a valuation and strike a rate. Suppose the meeting is held in the middle of July, the secretary then has to make up his rate book and get rate notices printed and distributed. During my experience of 14 years, 12 years of it as chairman, I have never known the rate notices to be got out in August. It is usually September or October when they are distributed. Therefore, though the measure may suit metropolitan road boards, it will not suit the great majority of country road boards. I have a letter from a road board stating—

It appears that the rate book will have to be made up and the assessment notices all sent out before the 31st July to enable the ratepayers to get the allowance of 30 days for discount on payment of rates before the 31st of August. It is considered that no date should be fixed, but that the clause in the present Act is quite sufficient. The wording in the present Act allows discount to be paid within 30 days from the date of issue of the assessment notice. It is considered that no alteration of the present Act is necessary.

The writer of the letter proceeds—

Your experience of country roads boards shows that a board, at the first meeting in July generally strike the rate, which might be as late as the 14th of the month, according to when the meeting day falls. In an instance like this, the rate book would have to be held up pending the rate being struck. The order for printing the assessment notice books would also have to be held up, and these may not

be received back from the printers until nearly the end of July, so that there would be very little possibility of the notices being out by the end of July. It looks as if the proposed amendment has only been put in for the benefit of metropolitan boards. As these are now chiefly laying down roads with tar-bitumen dressings, this work can only be done in the hot weather, so that the winter is comparatively slack and allows of the office busy period being tackled without much outside interference. This works the reverse in country road boards, where the secretary, who is usually the supervisor, has to spend most of the time on the roads just at that time, and has to do all the office work at night. For the months of June, July, and August, the work of the average country road board is very badly congested on account of the road works, combined with the many returns, financial statements, balances, etc., which are all wanted as soon as possible after the close of the year at the 30th June.

The time, to be of any use to country road boards, must be extended at least to September. Another matter relates to the valuations. The Minister has asked "Why not trust the road boards?" In my experience the Minister himself never has trusted them. He has stated that the road boards must accept the increased valuations of the Taxation Department.

The Minister for Works: I have said nothing of the sort.

Mr. LINDSAY: If they do not accept such valuations, he is not prepared to grant them subsidies.

The Minister for Works: I have said nothing of the sort. I have told them that unless they struck a rate of 2d. in the pound, they would not get a subsidy.

Mr. LINDSAY: What about the valuations?

The Minister for Works: I have said nothing of the sort.

Mr. LINDSAY: I have been informed that the Minister did make that statement.

The Minister for Works: Then you have been wrongly informed.

Mr. LINDSAY: The measure provides distinctly that there can be no appeal to the board.

The Minister for Works: I am limiting the power of rating as compared with what it is at present. Under the existing Act the Minister can make a valuation as he likes. I am binding the Minister down to making a valuation in accordance with that of the Taxation Department.

Mr. LINDSAY: At present road boards hold a court of appeal. A fortnight ago I was at a road board office where 30 appeals

were pending and it was decided to hold a court of appeal. I know some of the appellants personally and I am satisfied that the valuations were made in accordance with those of the Taxation Department. I am satisfied that some of the properties were valued too high. There were also some that perhaps were too low. One first class block of land was valued at 32s., and on an adjoining block, where there was a gravel hill, the valuation was 25s. We know that is unjust. Recently I read in a newspaper that the Darling Range Road Board sat as a court of appeal, and the members of the board stated it was no use holding appeals because the policy of the department was that the valuations had to be uniform and that the valuations of the Taxation Department had to be accepted. At the present time we have the right of appeal to the board, but this is to be taken away.

The Minister for Works: The only time an appeal can be made to the board is when a Minister steps in and makes the valuation.

Mr. LINDSAY: It is set out in the Bill that the local court shall not reduce any valuation made by the Commissioner of Taxation. An appeal can only be made provided the valuation is raised and introduced. Three of the boards in my district refused to accept the valuations and they were told that they would have to accept them. I have no objection to paying taxation because I realise that roads must be constructed. In the last two years, however, my rates have been increased by 400 per cent. We should be given a reasonable opportunity to see that the valuations made by the Commissioner of Taxation are correct. I am quite prepared to agree that we should have uniform valuations, but at least those who have to pay should have the right of appeal. In my electorate the six road boards have had their valuations increased in the last two years by over 100 per cent. I do not say that the valuations are wrong, but the people think they are suffering an injustice by reason of their not being given an easy method of appealing. I agree that the boards should have further powers, and I have no objection to the increase in the rate. In some cases the Minister should force the boards to pay because the increased rates are necessary. The boards should have the proposed extensive powers, because, for instance, in the case of hospitals, they should be able

to assist in the establishment of them by granting subsidies. In my own district we hope to be able to make additions to the hospital and the local board are prepared to guarantee the interest on the outlay. Under the existing Act they cannot do that unless they form themselves into a health board. So far as picture shows are concerned, I hope that the road boards will leave such things alone. The main function of boards should be to make roads. I agree that their duties should not end there, but they should take the greatest interest in their district other than the making of roads. I support the second reading of the Bill but I hope to be able to deal with a number of other matters when it reaches the Committee stage.

MR. LATHAM (York) [10.7]: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion negatived.

MR. LATHAM (York [10.8]: I am sorry that more consideration is not being given to resolutions that have been passed by road conferences year after year. I admit that some have been embodied in the Bill, but many have been excluded. There is no one more fitted to express an opinion than those people who devote a great deal of their time to the work of local government. Considerable services are rendered by members of local bodies for the benefit of the State, and a great deal of work is done in an honorary capacity. There are proposals in the Bill that were not asked for by the conferences, but I suppose we must take what is there as being the policy of the Government, or vote against the clauses to which we take exception when the Bill reaches the Committee stage. There are many matters in the Bill that will have the effect of increasing the work of those people who voluntarily give up their time for the benefit of the districts affected, as for instance the building of workers' homes, the conduct of entertainments by agricultural societies, etc. The Minister knows that under the Bill he is trying to get through another place, he will deprive the boards of a considerable amount of revenue, namely, the traffic fees and subsidies, and that there will therefore be very little money left for building. Therefore I cannot see that there will be very much

money available for the building of hospitals or show grounds, or the running of ferries or motor buses. It would have been well to have left out these things until it was known what progress was being made with the Bill before another place. The principal amendment in the Bill is the alteration of the system of voting, and as this is not a request from the road board conferences, but a part of the policy of the Labour Government, I intend to oppose it. Australia has led the world in legislation at times, and because other places have abandoned plural voting, I do not agree that it should be abandoned here. In Tasmania it is in operation. And despite the fact that the Minister says it is not in operation in New South Wales, I think I am right in saying that it is.

The Minister for Works: I did not say that.

Mr. LATHAM: Here is a point upon which the Minister might enlighten me: Many properties are held by, say, the Railway Department, and are not rateable. In the amending Bill the word "tenant" is included in the definition of "owner." I have been wondering whether the Minister proposes to entitle the tenants in the non-rateable properties to a vote under the Bill. Of course those properties ought to be rateable, for footpaths are made in front of them. I should like to know whether it is intended to make provision for the rating of those properties. Particularly in districts like Merredin and Narrogin, big railway centres, those properties should be asked to contribute to the provision of roads and footpaths. I think a mistake has been made by the Minister in accepting too rigidly the valuations made by the Taxation Department. Really there can be only one value, whereas at present we have several to choose from. To suggest that the Taxation Department's valuations are correct in every instance is nonsense. Some consideration should be given to the taxpayer in the matter of appeal. The departmental officers are anxious that their values should be accepted. Many road boards have accepted them, but it has given rise to a good deal of discontent. If the Minister is to have the right to say that these shall be the values, and if it means an appeal to the court, it will involve considerable expense. As for the rate struck, the Minister has made the point that some of the boards strike only a 1d. rate. I have frequently

pointed out to departmental officers that if the valuation be high and the rate low, they are getting more revenue than they would on a low valuation and a high rate.

The Minister for Works: Generally we get the combination of low values and low rates.

Mr. LATHAM: The other day the Minister referred to a district without naming it. I think he meant a district down the South-West.

The Minister for Works: No, I meant York.

Mr. LATHAM: The values there are fairly high. The rate, of course, has been 1½d. Possibly York is a little more fortunate than some other districts, because when money was plentiful and Governments were generous we had some very good roads built there.

The Minister for Works: Not by the local people. I have had many complaints about the condition of the roads.

Mr. LATHAM: Those complaints must be in respect of a big stretch of road between York and Perth.

The Minister for Works: No. They have come from the district east of York.

Mr. LATHAM: There should be no complaint from that district. The trouble always has been a stretch of poor country between York and Perth. There is no value in it, and of course money cannot be taken from one ward and spent in another ward. I am sorry the Minister, with the assistance of the money he is getting from the Commonwealth, is not able to contribute something to that road, on which there is a great deal of traffic. It is time some arrangement were made under which the people using that road would have to contribute towards its maintenance. The Minister might have included in the Bill a provision under which people paying high traffic fees should have a vote in the selection of members of the board. I notice the Minister has agreed to the request repeatedly made for a variation of the term "road district." However, I do not think it matters much whether it be road district or shire or shire council; it is only a little padding to please road board members, so that they shall overlook some of the unforgivable clauses of the Bill.

The Minister for Lands: If they asked for it, it could not be padding put in by the Minister.

Mr. LATHAM: But some of the things asked for by the boards have been left undone.

The Minister for Lands: Then you expected to get the lot!

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, perhaps by way of recompense for their free services to the State. No great alteration has been made in the Act since 1919. Of course it is a big, comprehensive Act and perhaps the less it is amended the better for the local authorities. I think some provision should be made for the swearing in of justices of the peace. To-day they sit on the bench without having been first sworn in.

Mr. Griffiths: We are going to have two justices now.

Mr. LATHAM: Well, I find very great difficulty in getting these gentlemen appointed through the Premier's office, so I will not say one word about that. Then there is the tenure of road board members. I do not know whether the Minister has given much attention to this. It means that there can be no continuity of policy if the board is to come out every three years. Of course the Minister will tell us that it is done here in this House. But then we have the Legislative Council.

The Minister for Works: Worse luck!

Mr. Griffiths: Thank God!

Mr. LATHAM: It is a Godsend to the people we represent and, I think, to everybody.

Mr. Davy: It is a Godsend to the Minister for Works.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, what would he do without it? In country districts we have the greatest trouble in getting road board members. Nominations have to be invited three or four times before a vacancy can be filled. If the whole board are to go out there will be difficulty about filling all the vacancies.

The Minister for Works: They will be more important men under this Bill than they are now. They will have larger functions.

Mr. LATHAM: Very few of the functions will be touched by the road board districts, especially where they are on the verge of settlements and do not know where to get the money to carry out the necessary works.

The Minister for Lands: There will be no compulsion about using these powers.

Mr. LATHAM: They will not be used in such cases. We want workers' homes in the country, but it is no good duplicating the present system.

The Minister for Works: I think that request came from your district.

Mr. LATHAM: I think not. One department is sufficient to control this matter. The Government can borrow money cheaper than road boards can.

The Minister for Lands: Road boards and local authorities have been getting money from the Commonwealth cheaper than we have been able to get it.

Mr. LATHAM: To-day it is impossible to borrow money from the Commonwealth Bank because they will not lend it to local governing bodies.

Mr. Chesson: Is the security not good enough?

Mr. LATHAM: I would not like to express an opinion. Workers' homes can be built cheaper by the Government. They have their experts and their standard drawings. Road board secretaries cannot be expected to be constructors of roads, and authorities on buildings, agricultural societies, motor buses, and ferries, etc.

Mr. Marshall: If the local authorities cannot do it, the Government cannot do it. I would rather have the local authority when it is a question of being 200 miles away from the seat of government.

Mr. LATHAM: The work can be done cheaper by the present administration. I commend the Minister for introducing a provision giving power to the boards to appoint an engineer. Of course, they can already do that.

The Minister for Works: Not in that way.

Mr. LATHAM: An engineer may be appointed by three or four boards. This new provision, however, will be of a beneficial nature. Better value will be obtained from the money spent if the local governing bodies have an engineer to carry out the work. A lot of Commonwealth money will be spent in the country districts. When the boards tender for work this particular clause will assist them. Work can be carried out more cheaply by the local governing bodies than under the system followed by the Public Works Department. I will vote for the second reading of the Bill, but in Committee will oppose some of the clauses.

On motion by Mr. Marshall, debate adjourned.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.*Council's Amendment.*

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2, Subclause (2).—Insert after the word "applicant" in line five the words "or his predecessor in title":

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I see no objection to the amendment. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed; the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—NEWCASTLE SUBURBAN LOT 88.*Council's Amendment.*

Amendment made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2.—Insert at the end the following words: "for the purposes of the trust as stated in the schedule":

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

This will make the clause more clear so that when the area is vested again in the new trustees it shall be set aside for the purpose set out in the schedule.

Question put and passed.

Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolution reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

House adjourned at 10.40 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 26th November, 1925.

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

QUESTION—IRRIGATION, HARVEY WEIR.

Hon. A. BURVILL asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Is it a fact that it was proposed to erect shutters on the weir of the reservoir of the Harvey irrigation works? 2, If so, was the proposal approved by the ex-Engineer-in-Chief? 3, If approved, why has not the work been carried out? 4, Will the Minister lay the papers on the Table?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes. 3, The late Minister decided that, as the ratepayers were not meeting their obligations, he was not justified in adding to the capital cost. 4, The papers are in use, but can be seen at the department by the hon. member, if he so desires.

SITTINGS, ADDITIONAL HOURS AND DAY.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.35]: I move—

That during the month of December the Council shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday in each week at 3 p.m.

If the motion be carried, we shall sit on Friday in addition to the other three days and we shall start at 3 p.m. instead of 4.30 p.m. each day. I should like to close down about a week before Xmas. If we do this we shall have 12 sitting days up to and including the 18th December. A similar motion was moved on the 27th November, 1924, but that session was not closed until the 23rd December, and we finished after a sitting that extended over 21 hours. The legislation before us this year is not so contentious as