

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 4th December, 1946.

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

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Charitable Collections.
Without amendment.
- 2, Factories and Shops Act Amendment (No. 2).
With an amendment.

BILL—COMPREHENSIVE AGRICULTURAL AREAS AND GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [4.36]: I think the Government is to be commended for introducing this Bill. The remarks I shall make will apply to both Bills, and I shall certainly support the second reading in each case. The scarcity of water is probably the weakest point in our Australian economy and, while that applies to the Commonwealth generally, I think it has greater application to Western Australia than to any other State. We have a larger area of what may be described as good productive land, which is of little use because of the scarcity of water, and consequently any attempt that may be made to conserve all the water that can be made available deserves, at all events, the fullest and most sympathetic consideration.

I have always deeply regretted the adoption of the Financial Agreement and the subsequent departures which practically robbed Western Australia of its financial independence, but I recognise that we must look facts in the face. We must accept the position as it is and, as applying to these Bills, there are two outstanding facts that cannot be overlooked. The first is that the Commonwealth Government and the State Governments have launched, to some extent, an enormous number of public works, the estimated cost of which runs into many millions of pounds, far exceeding, I think, the capacity of Australia to put into operation within any reasonable period. The second and related fact is that it will be for the Loan Council to say in what order these works shall be proceeded with. I would suggest that the immediately future meetings of the Loan Council will be the most important that have ever been held, and that on the wisdom of its decisions will rest, to a great extent, the future prosperity of Australia.

The Loan Council will have to decide as between Commonwealth desires and those of the States. It will have to decide as between the wish of one State and that of another. It will also have to decide the relative merits of the proposed work in each of the different States. To my mind, there are three principles that should guide it. The first is the capacity of the proposed work to produce real wealth within a reasonable period. The second is the extent to which the proposal will open the door for the profitable settlement of returned soldiers and immigrants. The third is the conservation, as far as may be necessary, of manpower. I think it would be a tragedy if, because of a decision to carry out a large number of governmental public works, labour was not available for the rehabilitation of our primary and secondary industries.

The Australian White Paper on unemployment and Beveridge's comprehensive book on full employment in a free society both contemplate that Government work should be put in hand when there is a slackening of private employment. Both suggest the danger of taking from the ordinary industries of a country more of the labour supply than can readily be made available. I attach more importance to the

manpower phase than to the money phase. I am in entire disagreement with those people who say that, since Australia could afford to spend hundreds of millions of pounds during the war, she can afford to spend further hundreds of millions on this or that. The premises are false. No country could afford to spend hundreds of millions of pounds on the war. They all have to face the responsibility and reckoning afterwards. I regard the manpower situation as of greater importance than the money position.

Looked at on the basis of those three requirements, a water scheme such as this should have a very high priority. At all events, I think it should be placed a long way ahead of the proposal to standardise our rail gauges. In fact, I think the putting into order of our existing country lines should come a long way before that much larger proposal. The estimated cost of this undertaking is £10,000,000, and the proposal is that it should be spread over ten years. That may be the best way of going about it—I do not know. It is a matter for experts to decide, but in a general way the cost of an undertaking is kept down if it can be carried out quickly.

The longer the period over which it is spread, the higher the cost is bound to be, and in that connection I hope the Minister, in reply, will give some information as to when this estimated cost of £10,000,000 was prepared. Was it long ago? Has anything happened since to suggest that there should be a revision because of the increased costs in all directions? Is it possible or probable that the unpegging of wages may add a further amount to the £10,000,000 cost that is suggested? I do not suggest that, if instead of £10,000,000 it is to cost £12,000,000, for that reason the scheme should be turned down.

I have a vivid recollection of the Murray River scheme in the Eastern States, of which I think the final cost was about three times the amount of the estimate, but I do not think anybody would say that that scheme has been a failure. However, it is important that we should know, as nearly as we may, what the cost is likely to be. Then the estimated loss that the taxpayer will have to make good is stated to be something like £300,000 per year, which is considerable, and a lot for a small population

such as ours to meet. It is a lot in view of the losses at present sustained on different governmental undertakings, but again I do not suggest that should cause us to turn the proposal down.

With those members who urge that just treatment should be extended to landowners who, at their own great expense, have provided themselves with adequate water supplies, I am in full accord. The success of the scheme, I believe, will depend to a very large extent upon the restoration of some measure of industrial order. Unless we get that, I do not see how we can make a success of this or any other undertaking. When I speak of the restoration of industrial order, I do not mean in Australia only. There are many countries from which we shall have to purchase considerable quantities of materials to carry out the scheme and, unless industrial order is established in those countries, it will be difficult to obtain supplies and we shall not get them except at an excessive cost.

I do not intend to touch at all upon the details of the Bills; they can be thrashed out in Committee. All I have to say is that this is an enterprise not without risk, but in a young and developing country like ours, we must be prepared to take risks so long as we do not abandon caution altogether. To my mind, a well-considered project for conserving water and supplying it where it is needed is one of the best schemes that any Government could put forward.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [4.48]: I support the second reading of the Bill and the companion measure seeking authority for the carrying out of this scheme. We can say that this legislation will introduce one of the most ambitious projects upon which Western Australia has yet embarked. Dealing with the scheme as outlined, it seems to me to fall almost naturally into two parts—that portion serving the northern areas, where, to a considerable degree, there is a fairly general acceptance of the proposal, though perhaps some slight modification may be desired, and that portion to serve the Great Southern where there is more hostility from the farming areas, although the major towns of the Great Southern urge the need for better provision

in the way of water supplies than they enjoy at present. My remarks will be addressed entirely to the proposals as they affect the portion of the country I represent.

It seems to me rather unfortunate that the Minister in another place was not prepared to have this scheme dealt with in the two parts—the northern portion served by the Mundaring catchment and the southern portion served by the Wellington Dam. A great majority of the farmers in the Great Southern at the moment have ample water for their requirements, and they can provide as much more water as they will need and far more cheaply than they will be able to obtain it from the scheme. From the point of view of the farmers, except perhaps in isolated instances in that area, the scheme is not by any manner or means an economic proposition.

The Bill proposes that 2,880 farmers shall pay an amount of £81,000 a year in water rates, and this, as I have pointed out, for water that they neither need nor desire. If this scheme is to be thrust upon them and a high-handed attitude is to be adopted, the proposal will become an outrageous one viewed from any point of justice or equity.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Are your figures based on the rate of 5d. per acre?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Yes. The 2,638 townspeople who will be assessed under the scheme will be rated to the extent of £7,915 a year. They are the people most if not all of whom need the scheme to improve the present water supplies. There is a marked difference between the figures for those who do not want the water and those who do want it. The Chief Secretary, when moving the second reading, said the scheme would effect a revolution in the areas to be served. I do not believe it will effect any form of revolution, though, if it did, not the sort of revolution he had in mind. I consider that the farmers who do not need the water would be justified in adopting any means in their power to obstruct the completion of the scheme or its application to them.

While it can be said without fear of contradiction that west of the Great Southern and along the Great Southern itself the farmers have all the water they can use within the limits of the scheme, east of the Great Southern much the same position applies, because the areas east of the Great Southern that really need the water will not be brought

within the scope of this project. The scheme certainly takes in Gnowangerup, where there is marked hostility to it. It does not take in Ongerup where, year after year, a water shortage is experienced. It does not take in Nyabing and Pingrup where, year after year, there is a shortage of water. It does not take in Lake Grace or any of the lake country. It takes in Kulin, where there is marked hostility to the scheme, but it does not take in the Jilakin country or the country to the east of it. I want members to understand that there is not the need for the scheme in the farming areas of the Great Southern, though there is a very urgent need for better supplies in the country towns of that area.

In the report that was furnished by the Minister for Water Supplies—the Chief Secretary, in moving the second reading, quoted the same figures—a farm of 1,000 acres was taken as a standard. I have no exact figures and I doubt whether the Minister has any, but I suggest that by far the greater number of farms within the ambit of the scheme would be of more than 1,000 acres. According to the figures in the report, the farm of 1,000 acres is considered to have capacity for carrying 300 sheep and a few head of cattle. West of the Great Southern a vast majority of the farmers are running far more than 300 sheep on 1,000 acres today. In those instances where that is not so, it will be found that most of the men who are stocking only 300 or less sheep are on the verge of bankruptcy. This scheme provides for a water supply for 300 sheep. All of the holdings which are running on 1,000 acres more than 300 sheep now have an adequate water supply. Even if the water supply is put in it will be of no economic value whatsoever for that area. There would not be one extra head of stock or extra grain of wheat grown there if the scheme were put in tomorrow.

Hon. A. Thomson: So far as the farmers are concerned.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: The farmer usually runs the stock and grows the grain. Whilst there may be increased production in the areas further north, so far as I can ascertain and from my experience of the area in the part of the State I refer to, not only west of the line, I should say that very little value whatsoever will accrue from the

scheme. The talk about increased production does not mean anything. From the engineering point of view this measure is a very fine scheme. I am uninitiated in such matters but to me it seems a fine one. We might, however, have made more progress, and there would have been much less hostility engendered against the proposal throughout these areas, had the originators of the scheme first studied the economic aspects before submitting so sweeping and all-embracing a project to Parliament to cover that portion of the country.

The Government even at this late stage will, I hope, give consideration to the elimination of the farming areas from the proposal as it applies to them, and the taking of a pipeline direct to Narrogin, along the Great Southern line north as far as Brookton and thence south to Katanning, so that some adequate provision can be made for the towns along that line, and the expensive and comprehensive reticulation proposals to serve the farming areas dispensed with. Although I support the second reading, before I can agree to this legislation becoming law, I consider an amendment will be necessary to permit of any considerable number of farmers in an extensive area, who do not want the scheme and find it uneconomical and imposing an unjustifiable charge upon them, to contract out of it.

I understood the Chief Secretary to say that the scheme would lead to the development of those areas, and that development had been retarded in the southern parts because of the lack of water. With all respect to the Chief Secretary I submit that the statement, as it applies to the areas to which I have referred, is such nonsense that I am surprised his advisers suggested that it should be put to the House as a reason for the acceptance of the Bill. I have some figures, which are not my own but I have checked them to the best of my ability. They refer to the provision of water by dams under the methods being used at present and in the past by individual farmers. I think these figures can be accepted as accurate. The other figures I have, relating to the cost over a 20-year period that will fall upon the 1,000 acre farmer who will come under the scheme, seem to be soundly based.

Under the proposal for a farm of 1,000 acres, which is a comparatively small one for those areas, and taken over a period of 20 years, the rates at 5d. per acre will amount to £417; the service fees per annum will be £20 and the meter reading at 10s. per annum, £10. Then there is the item, "Three troughs and fittings." Anyone who has any experience in stockraising, particularly sheep, will agree that three troughs on a holding of 1,000 acres is the minimum. The cost for that item, however, will be £20. One mile of 1¼ inch piping will cost £220, and for laying, £20. That is based on the landed cost at Katanning, and the pipes will then have to be carted to the property. The interest for 20 years at 5 per cent. will come to £240.

The depreciation on the materials will be £146 and there will also be the extra depreciation on troughs. Renewals for 10 years will come to £15. The corrosion of anything in the nature of metalwork in that country is very serious. Although I have had no experience in connection with troughing for this purpose over any extended period, I do not think the amount is excessive. For supervision and servicing over a period of 20 years £300 has been allowed. I think that is a moderate charge when we take into account the wages allowed at the rate of £1 per day. The troughing in particular will need inspection at least twice a week. In the case of a dam where there is a big volume of water, such frequent inspections are unnecessary, unless the water level becomes low, and the dam boggy; the stock can help themselves. If anything goes wrong with the reticulation system or the troughs, unless there is frequent inspection over the summer months a farmer can make considerable losses in stock.

The total cost under this scheme for 20 years would thus amount to £1,408, which is an average of £70 8s. per annum. On a 1,000-acre farm that represents a considerable increase in the capital charge. When a 1,000-acre farmer does not really require the water and is able to provide that commodity much cheaper than if it came from the scheme, this seems to be an unnecessary charge.

I will now deal with the cost involved in providing water by the existing method. I would instance three dams, each of 1,000

yards. At the outset those dams will provide for twice the amount of water that will be supplied to a farm under the scheme. The three dams would cost £75. That figure is taken as the cost to the owner who has his plant, and works out at 6d. per yard. I know the work can be done for that figure because I have had it done on my own property.

The Honorary Minister: Sixpence a yard in these days?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: It can be done if a man owns his plant. The highest price I have ever heard of being paid for dam sinking in those areas is 1s. 6d. a yard, contract price. If we take it at the contract price instead of the figure of £75, we arrive at a total of £225 for the installation of a 3,000-yard dam providing twice as much water as the scheme would give, and that is only equal to the cost of piping under the reticulation proposals. These figures are based on the cost to the farmer who has his own plant, as many of them have. The cost of cleaning out the dams at periodical intervals would be £20 and the cost of cleaning drains and supervision, £20. Instead of the farmer incurring a liability over the 20 years of £1,408, which represents an annual charge of £70 8s. as provided by the scheme, he would, by establishing his own supply, incur a total liability of only £200, which would represent an annual charge of £10.

The farmer has every justification for asking that he should have the right to contract out of this proposal. There is a contention that this scheme if installed in these areas will serve as an insurance for the producers, that in the event of a very bad year occurring the farmers will still be supplied with water somewhere. I think the idea is mooted that standpipes should be installed and that the land will be rated at 3d. per acre. In the bad year of 1940 a lot of people did run short of water. During the last 51 years much of the country around Katanning has been settled. The year 1940 was a bad one and the worst year experienced in that district. If we assess a 1,000-acre farm at 3d. per acre for 51 years to meet the possible danger of another very bad year, we arrive at a figure of £637 10s. which is a very expensive form of insurance.

It must be borne in mind that the shortage of water in 1940 was brought about largely from the fact that in the early days of settlement it was so easy to conserve water that the majority of the dams sunk were small ones. There had been no similar year to 1940 and many of the dams had not been attended to and kept clean. If we have a similar year next year it is most unlikely that the same difficulty will be experienced. In the Gnowangerup district, having learned their lesson, many farmers after that year sunk bigger dams. The road board of the district sank a 10,000-yard dam as a key dam, with the result that in 1944, which was not a good year in that district, there was no great shortage of water. Even anticipating the worst, over a 51 year period the cost of insurance would be very high, and it is most unlikely, in view of what the farmers have done since their experience that year, that they will ever again face the same difficulty.

I wish to refer to the report on the water scheme that I mentioned previously, and which, to my mind, is in some respects capable of being misunderstood, even if it is not misleading. I realise that the report was prepared in as favourable terms as possible, with a view to influencing the Commonwealth authorities. At the same time, it can be misleading to other people. On page 17 we find this statement—

The country suitable for farm dam sites being more or less of a plain type, some difficulty is encountered on the majority of farms in finding a favourable catchment where a dam would have a reasonable prospect of being filled during the average winter months.

That is just not true of the country from Wellington Dam to Dumbleyung. This scheme extends only to about 10 or 12 miles east of Dumbleyung, and that stretch of 10 to 12 miles is not plain country. The report continues—

In the early days of settlement, the first dams were excavated on the most favourable catchment areas, and naturally dams subsequently excavated, not having so favourable a catchment area, do not fill as regularly as those more favourably situated. Many farms have not even one reasonably good catchment area.

I do not know of any farm in that position west of the Great Southern or on the Great Southern. I have heard of one east of the Great Southern and there may be more. But one swallow does not make a summer, and neither does one farm justify the imposition

of this scheme on 2,880 farms. Another portion of the report states:

Since 1935, farmers have experienced ever-increasing difficulty in obtaining supplies, and the present acute water shortage over the whole eastern portion of the area is the worst yet experienced.

But that is the area not included in the scheme. These remarks should be subject to some qualification as they apply to the Great Southern. On the same page, some statements, dealing with the increase of sheep population, are made with a view to substantiating the case for this scheme. Certain districts are mentioned—road board districts presumably, but that is not stated—and Lake Grace is one of them. So far as I can follow the plan in the report, and the one hanging in the Chamber, no portion of the Lake Grace district is included in the areas to be reticulated. The Kent district is also mentioned here. Well, the scheme goes fairly close to Nyabing township but only includes the extreme western edge of the Kent Road Board district.

To quote these figures and statements, and just leave the matter at that, would lead to considerable misunderstanding. I appreciate the necessity for some far better provision than has been made in the past for the towns of the Great Southern, but I want the House to realise that it would be manifestly unjust to include arbitrarily in these proposals for reticulation the rating of farmers who own large areas on which they are satisfied they have ample water supplies and therefore wish to contract out of the scheme.

HON. G. W. MILES (North) [5.20]: The Government, which is to be congratulated, has shown foresight and statesmanship by introducing this scheme. As I have often said, we have one of the best countries on the face of the earth, and we have a magnificent rainfall which we have allowed to run into the sea in the years gone by. I can remember when the first Coolgardie water scheme was introduced. At that time there was an outcry and we were told that the State could not stand the liability. But we have to thank Sir John Forrest, as he was then, for inaugurating that scheme which has proved to be such a godsend to the country and to the development of the State.

I think the whole of the water supplies of the State should be nationalised and we should get water at the one rate so that the

people in the metropolitan area would pay a little more to enable those in the back country to get their water at a reasonable cost. That would apply not only to the Goldfields and the Great Southern, but to the north of the State. In that area we have to provide our own water schemes so that the sooner the Government takes in hand the whole of the water supplies of the State the better it will be. Our water supplies should be run on similar lines to the post office. One fee is charged for the delivery of a letter to any portion of the State, and a similar principle should be adopted in regard to water. If Australia is to be developed and peopled as it will have to be—and pretty quickly, too, if we are going to hold the country for the white races—we will need to do something along the lines that I have mentioned. I support the measure.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan) [5.23]: I commend the Government for introducing this scheme which deals with a huge undertaking. Having had some little experience of the lack of water in farming areas I am able to appreciate the necessity of water for the man on the land. If we went back over a period we would find that more farmers in the State have been forced to abandon their holdings through lack of water than from any other cause.

Hon. H. L. Roche: What portion of the State?

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: Possibly every portion with the exception, perhaps, of the Midland country, which is fortunate in its water supplies. In that area water is plentiful at not very great depth. What I have said would apply to the outer eastern areas where some of our finest wheat lands are situated. The costs that the farmer would have to pay under the scheme struck me as being rather high, but I feel, like many other farmers—it will not affect me personally even though I have large farming interests—who have a satisfactory water scheme, that we should contribute something towards helping the other fellow who is not so fortunate.

Nothing can be more heartbreaking to a farmer than having to cart water five to 12 miles, not only for domestic purposes but also for stock. While the Bill may not go as far as the Government hopes it will, it is certainly a step in the right direction, and it will be the means of further developing

many areas of the State, and helping many farmers, on small holdings, to increase their stock carrying capacity. I have not gone carefully into the measure, but I certainly commend the Government for introducing such a necessary scheme. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central) [5.25]: I, too, commend the Government for bringing down this comprehensive water supply proposal, but I consider I would be lacking in my duty to my province if I did not express keen disappointment at the fact that the scheme, for some unaccountable reason, is to stop short at the town of Dalwallinu. Mr. Bolton can speak about the Midland country for only as far north as his farm is situated, which is just past Moora. In fact, I do not know that he can speak even for that area because I make Moora, although it is not in the Central Province, my headquarters when electioneering, and it is the only town where, in the hotel, I found a notice on the bathroom door stating, "Closed, no water."

Hon. L. B. Bolton: How long ago was that?

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Not very long ago. At Coorow, a little further north, the water is as salt as the sea, and it is not much better at Carnamah. Mr. Bolton might be able to speak for his farm, but not for the Midland line. I notice that this Government, which has been in power for many years—far too long for my liking—does not have much regard for the Midland line. It adopts that attitude for the inadequate reason that the Midland country is served by a private railway line. When the Chief Secretary is replying, if he deigns to take any notice of my remarks, he might say that I have no justification for making this statement. But I say that I have every justification. The failure to pay any regard to the development of the coal seam at Mingenew is one reason for my making that remark.

There is no justification for the Government's introducing what it terms a comprehensive water supply scheme, and stopping short at Dalwallinu. Every town on that line, as far north as Mullewa, is as much entitled to an adequate water supply as is any town on the Great Southern. After listen-

ing to the carefully prepared speech made by Mr. Roche I fail to see how any member can have any doubt about this Bill, insofar as it seeks to provide farmers with a water supply. The cost is the basis of the whole scheme and if an expensive water supply is to be loaded on to the farmers who are unable to bear the cost even at a time like this—and present prices will not continue indefinitely—then they will have something for which they will not be able to thank the Government.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: They may be better off with a water scheme.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: We have heard this afternoon from a man who is a practical farmer and knows what he is talking about. In addition, he lives in a district to be served by the proposed scheme. We should hesitate about adopting the scheme at a period when the decision of the Commonwealth Government, which is to provide a large proportion of the money required for the scheme, has not been arrived at in that respect. We, as a House of review, should consider very carefully the provisions of the Bill insofar as the interests of the farmers themselves are concerned. If we could provide necessary water supplies right throughout the State at a cost that would enable the farmers to show reasonable profits on their operations, I would be quite in favour of such a plan, but, in face of what we have heard this afternoon, I am not going to vote for a Bill that will load the producers with heavy financial burdens. I have made my protest against the application of the Bill stopping short of Dalwallinu. If the Government introduces what it is pleased to describe as a comprehensive water supply—

Hon. A. Thomson: It should be comprehensive.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Exactly. I think it should be a scheme to cover the South-West Land Division of the State. I would be content if it stopped at Mullewa because beyond that centre we get into the marginal areas, which have been proved unsatisfactory and uneconomical from the standpoint of wheatgrowing. In Geraldton we have a hotch-pot water scheme. The Government spent a large amount of money in putting down a dam, but the fat-lamb and other industries in that district are still hampered because of the lack of a decent water supply.

When the dam fills, it is all right, but it is constructed in the midst of a huge sandplain and the rain has to fall heavily for hours before there is a run-off. It would be a statesmanlike action on the part of the Government if it made up its mind on this question once and for all. If it did that, then, when it went out of office, even if that end can only be achieved as a result of senile decay, it will be able to look back with pride that it provided the South-West Land Division with a comprehensive water supply. I shall support the second reading but will assist those who will seek to amend it to make it more suitable than it is in its present form.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.34]: I would not have spoken to the Bill had it not been for the remarks of Mr. E. H. H. Hall. I sympathise with him in his desire that the scheme should extend to the districts he mentioned as far as Mullewa. In that respect, however, we must bear in mind that the quantity of water that will be available in the south-western portions of the State will not be unlimited. I have looked at the plan more than once and have wondered how far the rainfall will suffice to meet the demands that will be made upon it.

Most of the rain we get is precipitated along the Darling Ranges and west of them. In the South-West we are blessed with an ample rainfall and easily-obtained water supplies. We recognise that in the past a great deal of valuable water has been allowed to run away, as Mr. Miles said, to the sea. Before we condemn the Government for not extending the scheme further north and east, as Mr. Hall would have us do, we must be sure that there is likely to be for all time sufficient water available to supply the areas it is proposed to serve.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: More water runs to waste every year than is used.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I have lived in the South-West for a long time and have had a little experience in connection with water supplies. I recollect vividly that when the Mitchell Government was in power it was proposed to establish an irrigation scheme in the South-West. I accompanied the then Under Secretary for Works, Mr. Munt, on a tour through that part of the State to

explain the scheme to the farming community. The first meeting, which was held at Dardanup, was large and enthusiastic, and the farmers there had no doubt as to the value of irrigation. Then we went to Waterloo, where there was an equally big meeting but not quite so enthusiastic.

The third meeting was held at Brunswick, where some hundreds of farmers were in attendance, and they would not give us a hearing. The meeting proved a fiasco, and neither Mr. Munt nor I was able to explain or even outline the scheme. The farmers there had two objections. One was that the scheme would cost too much and that they would not be able to get their outlay back. That was a foolish and feeble attitude. The second objection was that they did not consider sufficient water would be available to put in an irrigation scheme as then proposed. It is very gratifying to know that today those same people are reaping wonderful advantages because of irrigation. I relate that experience because we should not entertain the idea that there is more water available than is necessary to cover the whole of the State. Western Australia embraces a huge territory and tremendous quantities of water would be required to supply all its needs. The scheme will not provide for irrigation works, but it will meet the needs of the towns.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: That is all I am asking for.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Mr. Craig made a valuable suggestion yesterday with regard to dealing with the poorer types of land. His proposal may not be perfect, but it seems to provide a jumping-off place for the start. For goodness' sake, do not let us urge the Government to overdo this scheme, only to find that as a result the whole project ultimately has fallen down. I am satisfied that the engineers in this instance have made adequate calculations and have very carefully arrived at their estimates indicating that there will be sufficient water available for the scheme as proposed. I would not for a moment be a party to condemning them for having begun the scheme before it is known what additional water supplies are needed for the South-West and other parts of the country as well. I support the second reading

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [5.40]: Because I believe water and electricity are essential to the development of the country and the effecting of an increase in the population, I shall vote for the second reading of the Bill. After listening to some of the speeches delivered on this measure, I am inclined to the view that more investigation should have been made. I was very interested in the remarks of Mr. Roche and, from my own experience, I know there is a great deal in the views he expressed. It would be wrong, if it could be avoided, to supply water in areas where it was not required. It would represent so much waste water and unnecessary expense to the farmers concerned. For instance, take the position regarding Mr. Bolton's farm. If the scheme were taken to his property it would represent a very heavy impost on him, because he has spent a great deal of money in providing a very fine scheme of his own. While no doubt he would be prepared to assist other farmers less fortunate in that regard, I do not think he would be happy about paying 5d. an acre.

It seems to me that it would have been better had further investigations been made. For the sum of money that is to be spent—I think the amount will be upwards of £10,000,000, which is the estimate that has been provided to the House—I think better provision could be made for serving the drier parts of the State where water is very scarce. About two years ago, the Director of Works explained this scheme briefly to a road board conference. The idea was to secure the support, as far as possible, of road boards throughout the districts concerned. Naturally, all the local authorities affected were keen to support the Government scheme, and the engineers went ahead with the preparation of the plan that is before Parliament today. I think it would have been better if the engineers had conducted public inquiries in the various areas concerned and thereby secured the benefit of the practical experience of settlers who had spent hundreds of pounds in providing their own water supplies and probably knew more about local conditions than the engineers.

Provision had to be made by those in authority to take out their mains in order to reach the various centres and, from that point of view, it was really an engineering proposition. There are two aspects. One is that

it is an engineering proposition and the other is a proposal to serve people who are in need of water. Mr. E. H. H. Hall suggested that the supplies should be taken further afield, and that in one respect the mains would stop just where the supplies were most needed. Subsequently Mr. Mann expressed the opinion that, because the water supply available in Western Australia was not unlimited, the scheme could not be taken to the outer areas. That seems to suggest all the more reason why a full investigation should have been made in order that water would not be supplied to those who did not require it, while at the same time making it available in other parts where the farmers were willing to pay a high rate for it.

This is a big job. I do not think any body of engineers could determine what is necessary without going into the various districts, taking evidence and acquainting themselves with local conditions. Mr. Mann has said that the supply of water in the South-West is limited. Of course, the impounded supply is limited, but not the rainfall, which is almost unlimited. We usually lose much more water to the sea than is impounded or used by the people. One of our greatest difficulties is that we have not suitable catchment areas in which to impound water. At times, we get so much water that it causes destruction, in spite of the quantity locked up in the ranges. Our ranges do not provide areas where large quantities of water can be easily impounded. We have the water, but the difficulty the engineers must overcome is to impound it. Very extensive surveys have been made throughout the ranges, and I know that it has been difficult in some cases for the engineers to decide on a scheme suitable to their requirements.

I have been informed that even the Avon Valley has been examined with a view to damming that area. I understand that it is the largest catchment area in Western Australia; but some time ago it was suggested there was a possibility of the Trans. railway running through the valley and therefore the idea of damming it for the conservation of water was out of the question. I do not know whether that is actually so, but it will indicate that the question of catchment areas is very serious for this State, which is in dire need of water supplies in the summer-time.

Hon. A. Thomson: You are quite right. The conservation of water in that valley would be more valuable than the train.

Hon. H. TUCKEY: Probably it would. I think it would pay to dam the valley and find some other route for the railway. Mr. Craig said that we could hardly measure the value of water, but he was speaking of irrigation. I agree with him that if it is possible to irrigate dry country, it is surprising indeed what a great increase in production can be brought about. But suppose a 6-in. pipe were laid on to Mr. Bolton's farm tomorrow in order to provide him with extra water, I do not think it would have the effect of increasing his turnover one iota. It would not make a difference of £5 a year to him, because he can carry on all his farming operations with the supply he has. However, if he could irrigate part of his farm it would be a different matter. The supply of water for stock, household requirements and garden purposes will not make much difference to the production of many farms.

One other aspect I would like to refer to is that the estimated cost of the scheme is £9,000,000. I think that figure was mentioned by the Road Board Association, but the cost could be easily £10,000,000 or £12,000,000. Whatever it costs, the scheme would have to be completed; and this huge amount of money should be spent carefully and in the right direction. If the scheme could be improved by further investigation, then such investigation should be made. I am not losing sight of the fact that only a few years ago the price of wheat fell to 1s. 10d. or 2s. a bushel, and we have had drastic restrictions since that time. Those days could return. Therefore, from a wheatgrowing point of view, I am not very concerned about the Bill; but I am concerned about the scheme making it possible for our lands to be used for mixed farming.

Many people will have to undertake mixed farming if they desire to remain on the land. I hope, and feel quite sure, that our exports of meat, wool, fat, and other commodities will continue to be profitable for the man on the land; but it seems to me that wheatgrowing may before very long get back to the state which existed a few years ago. We have to adopt a long-range view of the scheme. I think it should be

taken to the areas where it will do most good and not to the areas where the farmers have, by great expenditure, already provided their own water supplies. Why put the scheme in such districts? Why not take it to the dry country?

I commend the Government for bringing down the measure, but even the Government is not infallible. Perhaps the Bill can be amended in such a way when we reach the Committee stage as to make it the best possible legislation in this regard that Parliament can pass. The Government requires our help in the matter. I know it is the desire of the Government to make the most of this huge expenditure. We need money to develop this country, but that is no room for waste. Recently I was interested in a loan of £5,000 and thought we could get the money merely for the asking. The security was gilt-edged, but the amount was cut down to £4,000 and we were told to come along after the 1st July, when the other £1,000 would be forthcoming. As I said, there is no room for waste. and the £9,000,000 or £10,000,000—what ever the cost of the scheme may be—should be spent in the best possible direction. I shall support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East) [5.53]: I intend to support the Bill and I commend the Government for bringing it down. I do not profess to know much about the territory which this proposed scheme is to serve. I do know, however, that on the whole this State has a sparse rainfall and that if it is possible to harness water by means of this scheme for irrigation purposes, something will have been achieved of great service to Western Australia. In travelling by air I have often been struck by the fact that from Laverton as far as Merredin, and from Perth to Esperance, one can see large lakes, the majority of which are salt and most of which are dry. I often think that we would have had no Goldfields had it not been for the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme. Many men lost their lives through lack of water in trying to blaze the trail to the Goldfields.

Hon. R. M. Forrest: What would Perth be like without a water supply?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I hope that the Government has taken into consideration

the cost of the scheme and that rates will not be imposed on farmers which they will find it impossible to pay.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. W. R. HALL: I do not profess to know much about farming, but I do know that the farmers have had a hard time. They have always had my sympathy, especially when I read in the paper that they are praying and waiting for rain. If this scheme proves of benefit to them, something will have been achieved, whether the scheme costs £9,000,000 or, as some member said, £12,000,000. I hope the water will be reticulated to the areas where it is most required and, if possible, without much expense. One of the first essentials to life is water. We cannot live without it. One member pointed out that the scheme could benefit those engaged in mixed farming. This might have the effect also of reducing the cost of living, as cattle could be raised more cheaply.

We have read from time to time about the precarious position in which farmers find themselves. Year after year they are losing sheep owing to droughts, and if the scheme can benefit them in any way at all this measure will have my whole-hearted support. I hope that if the Bill does pass the Government will proceed with the scheme as quickly as possible in order to assist those who are really in need of adequate water supplies. But, as I said, I hope the Government will not rate the farmers in such a way as to drive them to the bankruptcy court. Most members are aware that the Goldfields people have to pay dearly for their water, but they are pleased to get it. Nevertheless, there has been much criticism of the high cost of water on the Goldfields and I hope we shall not have such criticism from the people whom this scheme will serve. Although I am not conversant with the particular area which the scheme will serve, I feel that it is a step in the right direction, and that it will benefit the State directly and indirectly. For that reason I shall support the Bill.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [6.0]: Notwithstanding the criticism of some aspects of this scheme, I feel sure that every member will agree that a more satisfactory water supply is required for the large areas

covered by this proposal. I suppose it is not surprising that objections should be raised by some people who take the personal view rather than the broader view. In other words, those who have spent money in providing themselves with something they require, do not like the idea of spending additional money in order to assist other people who have not been able to acquire what they themselves have obtained.

The history of all schemes of this kind is, I think, rather similar. It must be remembered that no matter what the scheme is—no matter what area it might serve; no matter how successful or otherwise it might be—it still has to be paid for. So we can assume, I think, that the professional men who are responsible for putting forward this scheme have taken into consideration every possibility of which they could think; and we can assume, too, that there have been engineering problems which they have had to solve.

The project outlined by the map on the wall is aptly described as a comprehensive scheme. It covers a very big area, and there can be no question that it will serve some districts where water supplies are not as difficult to obtain as they are in many other regions. But I think we have to look at this scheme as a whole. There may be some grounds for the argument used by Mr. Roche in regard to a particular district, and those grounds are entitled to consideration. On the other hand, we must expect those people to be prepared to take a broader view than that which Mr. Roche has expressed this afternoon.

Hon. H. L. Roche: They will pay as taxpayers.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr. Roche said that the people for whom he spoke would be justified in going to any length to obstruct the completion of this scheme.

Hon. H. L. Roche: As it applies to them.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. Is that a fair outlook? Is that the outlook of men who are looking forward to progress and prosperity in the whole of their district; or is it just a personal outlook, because their pockets are going to be affected? I have no doubt that even in the area mentioned by Mr. Roche—and he should know it very well—while a considerable number of farmers have spent large amounts of money in

making themselves self-supporting in regard to water, there are also, in that district, a considerable number of farmers who have not been able to do so for one or more reasons. One reason may be that they have not had the finance. Another reason may be that it is not possible to provide themselves with water because it is not there to obtain. If we adopt the viewpoint of Mr. Roche, we may find certain areas excluded from this scheme and probably anything up to 49 per cent. of the farmers in those districts will be denied for all time the opportunity to obtain the water which is so necessary in order that they may successfully work their holdings. That is a position which could occur.

So we have to view this scheme with a broader outlook than that indicated by Mr. Roche. In making that point, I would like to say to Mr. E. H. H. Hall that in schemes of this kind one has to take a realistic view and have some regard for what is actually possible. We believe that the engineers associated with this scheme have provided us with a proposal that goes as far as it is possible to proceed at present in regard to the areas that can be served from the catchments involved—that is, Mundaring and Wellington. Everyone knows that the Geraldton district has a very unsatisfactory water supply, and it is not the only district in this State in that position. Large sums of money have been spent in an endeavour to provide a more satisfactory water supply for that district; but to argue that because this scheme goes only to Dalwallinu and not to Mullewa—I think he said—we should not be prepared to accept the scheme as it is submitted—

Hon. A. Thomson: I do not think he said that. He wanted to see it extended to that area.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: He suggested that this Government was suffering from senile decay, mainly because it was not prepared to extend this scheme as far as Mullewa. I consider that the introduction of the scheme is an indication of the opposite, and that the hon. member might apply the same reasoning to himself. Sir Hal Colebatch raised a very pertinent point when he asked when this estimate of costs was made, and also when he suggested that it is quite possible the scheme will cost more than the estimate. I think that experience generally in-

dicates that estimates are exceeded. I can only say to him and to the House that this estimate was prepared somewhere towards the end of 1945; and I am assuming, without knowing exactly, that it was based on costs as they were at that particular time.

If there should be a large increase in wages or in the cost of materials or machinery, the estimate will be affected. The figure submitted by the engineers is £9,330,000. If members have read the report, I think they will agree that the engineers have done a pretty good job and have provided quite a lot of information which must have taken a long time to work out. In general it can be said that the information contained in the report is a credit to those responsible for it. I have already told the House that the idea behind the scheme is that it is too large for the State to undertake on its own responsibility. Consequently we have approached the Commonwealth Government on the matter and have suggested that that Government should bear a portion of the cost to the extent of £500,000 a year for a period of 10 years, which is the estimated time it would take to put the scheme into operation. If there is any very great increase in cost the estimate must necessarily be exceeded, and the possibility is that any additional cost would be the responsibility of the State Government, even if the Commonwealth Government did agree to assist to the extent we have requested.

I said, when introducing the Bill, that I believed it was a far-sighted scheme; that it looked to the future. I say again that the scheme is an indication of the far-sightedness of the engineers and the department and all those who have been associated with the desire to provide better water supplies for these particular areas than they have had in the past. Listening to Mr. Roche, one would imagine that there was very little ground for some of the agitation of which we have had experience in years gone by, an agitation raised not only by the townspeople in those areas, but also by the farmers.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Do you remember whereabouts?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In various places. There have been demands over the years that something should be done to enable them to avoid the disabilities under which they were suffering in those times.

I think it is perfectly true that every town on the Great Southern line—I believe that is admitted by Mr. Roche—has been in a most unfortunate position in recent times, more particularly in the dry seasons we have experienced rather frequently in the last 10 to 15 years. In order to supply those townships, it is necessary that the water shall come from either the Mundaring Weir or Wellington Dam—so far as the Great Southern is concerned, from the latter source.

It is unthinkable that we should submit a scheme which would be so very costly and which would be expected to provide water only for those townships. Even in those areas where farmers have their own supplies, there are many others who are not in that position and for whom a scheme of this kind would be a godsend. I do not want to go into too much detail in replying to the debate, because I realise that both these measures will reach the Committee stage, and there will be considerable discussion, more particularly on the points which have been referred to by members. Therefore, I will conclude by saying that I hope the amendments foreshadowed are all on the notice paper; because I want members to realise that I am not an expert on water supplies nor in regard to the requirements of any particular area, large or small; although I do believe I have a very good superficial knowledge of the needs of the area to be supplied as a whole.

I feel members generally are agreed that we must have a scheme; and if this particular scheme does not meet with their approval, whatever alterations are made will have to receive the very serious consideration of the Government and, from what I have heard, also of our professional men and particularly the engineers who devised the scheme and who will have to say whether it is practicable to do some of the things I feel sure will be mentioned in the Committee stage. I am rather pleased with the way in which the Bill has been received, and I hope that eventually we will have a very satisfactory comprehensive water supply for the area involved.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Petitions for exclusion:

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 the words “may in his absolute discretion” be struck out and the word “shall” inserted in lieu.

That will safeguard the position of farmers who do not wish to be incorporated in the scheme. If the amendment is carried, where there is an area of not less than 50,000 acres, not being a townsite, and where not less than 50 per cent. of the owners of ratable land petition the Minister to be omitted from the scheme, they will be left out. Under the present proposal it is intended for a 1,000-acre property, on the basis of 300 sheep and a smaller number of other stock, to allow 200,000 gallons of water per annum.

The scheme is designed to deliver a maximum of 900 gallons daily, and the pipes and equipment are to be provided for that purpose. Therefore there is no margin for an increase in the number of stock carried in cases where the farmers become entirely dependent on the scheme. In the Great Southern areas to be embraced within the scheme it is not added water supply that is necessary in order to increase production. There are already adequate catchment areas in good holding country, but the developments necessary for increased production are clearing, and rabbit netting. Mr. Mann said that the water supply in Western Australia was not inexhaustible. One of the best ways to conserve the supplies we have is not to force them on people who do not need or want extra water. The reticulation of many of these areas will not be an economic proposition.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I think discretion in this matter should be left to the Minister. It can be assumed that in cases such as have been referred to, when representations are made to the Minister he will view the situation in a reasonable light, and those concerned will have a good chance of being granted exemption, but there are many other factors to be considered. Assuming that

51 per cent. of the farmers in such an area petition the Minister, it may be assumed that they are favourably situated. The other 49 per cent. might then be denied the use of the water, if the Minister acted on the representations of the 51 per cent. There might be other farmers outside the 50,000-acre area who would desire to be served by the scheme yet, if that area were exempted, there would be the cost of piping and so on through that area in order to reach those beyond it, which would make the reticulation of water to them an uneconomic proposition. I think the Minister would be sympathetic where such representations were made.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Are you assuming that he will be there for many years after the next election?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I will assume the same thing about his successor, if one is appointed. The argument is as to whether a particular area should be absolutely excluded because a majority of the farmers therein do not desire to have anything to do with the scheme. They may have spent a great deal in providing their own water supplies, but I think they should have some regard for the position of the district as a whole and for those who are not in the same favourable position as they are.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I think the Chief Secretary is taking assumption a good way, and I am not prepared to leave it at that. If he or the Minister for Works wants to leave in the scheme people who do not want it, and who already have ample water, purely for the purpose of collecting a rate from them in order that it may be possible to service people further out, I do not think that is right. When are those people to be served? It is suggested that the present scheme will take anything up to 10 years to complete. It seems to me that the Minister regards the Bill as a means of taxing those who do not want the water in order to provide it, in years to come, for others who do want it.

Hon. A. THOMSON: It should be realised that there is general opposition by farmers throughout the southern areas to this scheme, and that it is based on sound grounds. Some of them have been there for up to 30 years, and have provided ample supplies for all their requirements. As Mr. E. H. H. Hall said, by way of interjection,

millions of gallons of water are wasted every year. During my second reading speech I indicated that I would move for a Select Committee, which would ultimately be appointed a Royal Commission. If we had such a committee and were able to visit those areas with Mr. Dumas or some other engineer, it might be possible to arrive at a compromise, but at present there is uncompromising opposition to the clause that will compel men to pay additional taxation for water that they do not require and are not likely to require.

The Government should have discussed this matter with the farmers that have already provided water supplies of their own. The Minister, at his discretion, may charge a rate of 3d. an acre. On a 1,000-acre farm that would amount to £12 10s. a year for something that farmers, in my province, do not require, and there would be the holding fee as well. The scheme should be inquired into by a Select Committee, which could be converted into an honorary Royal Commission and gather the requisite information. Nyabing and Pingrup, as Mr. Roche pointed out, will not be served by the scheme, and last year and this year those places suffered severely from a shortage of water. In fact, water had to be carted there from Elleker by motor truck. If irrigation were practicable on the proposed allowance of water, I would whole-heartedly support the measure, because the carrying capacity of the Great Southern area and the population could be doubled, but irrigation will not be possible under the scheme. I commend the Government for looking to the future, but members for my province have a duty to perform. We might lose our seats.

Hon. C. B. Williams: How could you lose your seat if you perform your duty?

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. A. THOMSON: We have a definite obligation to the farmers who have protested against their properties being brought under the scheme. The amendment represents an honest desire to meet the objection. Mr. Roche, when speaking on the second reading, submitted an excellent case as presented by farmers who will be put to this extra expense without deriving any benefit from it. Would it be fair to expect the farming community of the Great Southern to pay £80,000 compared with what the towns will pay? The towns badly need water supplies,

and I hope means will be found to provide for their requirements.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I think the electors of the South-East Province would reject any member who did not strive to get a better water supply for the towns than they had when I travelled through. This Bill proposes to give an efficient supply to the locality, farmers included, for all time. Why should my electorate on the Goldfields be taxed every year to supply water to those districts?

Hon. G. Bennetts: On the Goldfields we pay 7s. 6d. a thousand.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: The people at Norseman pay more than that.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Yes, 10s.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: Our electors have to pay heavily for water, and the farmers of the South-East Province could not exist if the mining industry did not continue. The farmers ask too much of the taxpayers. The Government cannot waste money in providing farmers with water for nothing. Some members seem to be living in the days when they had prisoners from England working for them, and they cannot get away from recent times when they had prisoners of war working for them.

Hon. A. Thomson: Rubbish!

The CHAIRMAN: We are debating the amendment moved by Mr. Roche. Will the hon. member keep to the question.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: You allowed other members to stray from the amendment, Mr. Chairman, but you are new to the Chair. If you limit me, you will be doing a wrong. My electors pay a much higher rate for water than is provided for in the Bill. Whenever there is a scarcity of water in the farming areas, it is carried to these people who, we are told, have inexhaustible natural supplies. They have nothing of the sort.

We are trying to civilise the farmers and to get them beyond the stage of relying on dams that suffice in good seasons only. In parts of my province, water is very difficult to get. A standpipe is available to some of my electors, but I only wish that the farmers who are left in my province and the graziers could get a scheme such as this, which would be as permanent as is the Goldfields scheme. If a farmer could not carry

many more sheep to the acre with the aid of a scheme like this than is possible under the haphazard methods of today, he should not be on the land. I should like Mr. Forrest or Mr. Welsh to tell us something of the water difficulties in their province. The Minister for Works definitely said, "If the country people do not want this, it suits us." If I were a member of the Government I would say, "There will be no water supply for the country districts except on the principle of one in, all in."

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I think Mr. Williams is in error in suggesting that the farmers are to get the water for nothing. Whilst I entirely share his view as to the importance of the Goldfields, I would remind him that the Coolgardie water scheme could not have been put into operation if the Parliament of that time had not regarded it as a national undertaking and been quite willing, as were the people of the more settled portions of the State, to be taxed to make good any loss. It would be fruitless to go on with this scheme unless we regarded it as a national undertaking, and something to which the general taxpayer should contribute. I do not altogether like the amendment, for the reason given by the Chief Secretary. In a particular locality 51 per cent. of the people could say that they did not want it, and it does not seem right that they should be able to prevent the remaining 49 per cent. from having it.

I shall support the amendment in the hope that it will lead to a re-drafting of the clause so as to make it apply more justly to those people who have spent large sums of money in providing themselves with adequate water supplies. The clause should provide that those who do not want to take advantage of the scheme shall be excluded. That would mean that instead of the taxpayer, generally, having to bear a loss of £300,000 a year, he would have to bear a slightly heavier one. Speaking as a representative of the metropolitan area, I would sooner see something of that sort than that an injustice should be done to settlers who had spent large sums of money on their own water schemes.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The financial aspect of the scheme is an interesting one. If we are to accept Mr. Roche's statements at their face value, many farmers will secure exemption from the scheme. The hon. mem-

ber admits that the scheme is required for the townships, but not so much to serve the farms. If we read the report, upon which the Bill is based, we find that it has been estimated that the scheme will do no more than pay the operational costs and the sinking fund, leaving the interest to be provided by the State. According to the report the interest charge, if the estimate is not exceeded, will be no less than £326,655 a year. The estimated receipts are such that they will make no contribution towards this sum unless 100 per cent. of the rates are paid.

I am, therefore, quite safe in saying that approximately £300,000 will be a charge against the Consolidated Revenue of the State. If any large number of districts are exempted from the scheme the figure will be correspondingly increased and that, in my opinion, will imperil the scheme. If the Commonwealth can be persuaded to come into the undertaking to the extent mentioned, namely £500,000 a year for ten years, it will make the position much easier for the State Government.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: There would not be any loss then.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes, there would, and a substantial one too. The State Government has also provided the money to raise the wall at Mundaring Weir and also the one at Wellington Dam, without having regard to anything the Commonwealth might do in connection with the scheme. If we want this undertaking we should not imperil it by an amendment of this kind. The Minister will be as anxious, as is Mr. Roche, to see that these areas get as good service as is possible. At the same time we must have some regard for the economics of the scheme and if we make it obligatory on the Minister to exempt certain areas, the position might become so insecure that the whole scheme would be endangered.

As to Sir Hal Colebatch's suggestion that by agreeing to the amendment a conference might result, out of which we might get something better than we have at present, perhaps he is right in that assumption, but the Government has gone to a lot of trouble in order to make the scheme possible. We believe that it is the best that can be introduced in the present circumstances. The report gives full particulars of the maximum

amount of water that will be available to individual holdings and one can easily see, reading between the lines, that there is not a big margin to work on. If the areas mentioned were exempted there would be an additional amount of water available for other centres, but nevertheless the maximum allowed for is not so great that one can say that it is as satisfactory as one would like. I suggest that Mr. Roche should not press his amendment, but take my word for it that where representations are made, as suggested by him, they will get fair consideration at the hands of the Minister, whether it be the present one or any other.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I regret it is impossible for me to accept the suggestion of the Minister. If making it obligatory on the Minister to exclude these people is going to imperil the whole scheme, it is obvious to me that, if the matter is to be left entirely to him, he will have no intention of excluding them. I do not see why the amendment should destroy the scheme. In effect, the argument on behalf of the Minister for Water Supplies is, to all intents and purposes, that it will not be possible to give all the water required on the majority of these properties, because they are already carrying more stock than the scheme will be able to cope with, but they are to be rated just the same. It is only pretending to be a national scheme when an unfair type of taxation is to be imposed, such as will be the case in this instance.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: The position has been put quite plainly by Mr. Roche. This is a national work. If that is so, why is it not treated in a national way? Were the people of Fremantle called on to foot the bill for the Fremantle harbour works? Were the Geraldton people asked to pay the sinking fund on the Geraldton harbour improvements? The Government, to my way of thinking, has no right to ask the farmers in the Great Southern, or in any other district, to pay for this national work which should be a charge on Consolidated Revenue.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: There is a great deal in favour of Mr. Roche's amendment but I think the percentage is too low. For a long time it has been the practice of the Government to impose taxation of this description on people but that does not indicate that the proper basis has been adopted. Many of the farmers have struggled

for years to shoulder the financial burden involved in providing themselves with adequate water supplies, which they have established, and do not want any water at all from the proposed scheme. They are to be mulcted in charges just the same as are those who may have been less provident and have not provided themselves with water supplies or who live in the town. It is grossly unfair.

Incidentally, this is not a new scheme. A similar proposition was under consideration during the regime of the Mitchell Government but it was set aside then because of the heavy burden it would impose upon the community. It is now brought forward again but at an increased cost which was to be expected in view of present day higher charges all round. I support the amendment although I think the provision for 51 per cent. is too low and a proportion of more like two-thirds of the settlers should be required.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	10
Majority for	..	..	..	5

AYES.

Hon. O. F. Baxter	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. F. B. Welsh
Hon. A. L. Loton	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. R. M. Forrest
Hon. H. S. W. Parker	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. G. Bennetts
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 8—Exemption from rating along mains outside scheme areas:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The last words in Subclause (2) set out that the Minister may do certain things under such terms and conditions as he may consider reasonable. In view of the implications right through the Bill, the Minister should explain what is meant by the words "consider reasonable." This involves giving the Minister very wide powers.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If the hon. member does not understand the implication of the words he has referred to, I am sorry I cannot help him.

Clause put and passed.

Schedule, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILLS (9)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Wheat Industry Stabilisation.
- 2, Companies Act Amendment.
- 3, Stipendiary Magistrates Act Amendment.
- 4, Financial Emergency Act Amendment. Received from the Assembly.
- 5, Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment. Introduced by the Chief Secretary.
- 6, City of Perth Scheme for Superannuation (Amendments Authorisation). (Hon. L. B. Bolton in charge).
- 7, Mines Regulation.
- 8, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.
- 9, Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment. Received from the Assembly.

BILL—COUNTRY AREAS WATER SUPPLY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 27th November.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West—in reply) [8.29]: I think it was generally understood that the debate on this Bill and on the Comprehensive Agricultural Areas and Water Supply Bill could take place on either measure and I do not propose to add anything to what I have previously said. I feel sure the Bill will go into Committee and as there are several amendments on the notice paper, we shall have to spend some time in that direction.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

To Refer to Select Committee.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [8.30]: Would I be in order, Mr. President, in moving that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee, which later could be con-

verted into a Royal Commission, to inquire into the scheme and make such recommendations as it deems will be in the best interests of the farmers who have already made ample provision for their water supplies? I indicated when speaking to the second reading that I intended to move that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee. I also said that in my opinion the whole of the water supplies of the State should come under a board or commission. Many of our troubles in this connection could be overcome by the appointment of a board or commission to control our water supplies. The appointment of a Select Committee would not delay the work which has already been put in hand by the Government at the Wellington Dam and the Mundaring Weir. Next year there will be a general election of members of the Legislative Assembly, and this Committee would be able to carry on its work and submit a report to the House when Parliament assembles next year. The farmers have not been consulted about this scheme and I believe a Select Committee would be able to obtain much information which would be both practical and helpful. I move—

That the Bill be referred to a Select Committee.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [8.34]: I hope the House will not agree to the motion. A Select Committee could be of very great value in certain circumstances, but a Select Committee to deal with this Bill, which is a consolidation of the Goldfields Water Supply Act and the Water Boards Act, together with one or two new provisions, is not likely to get the hon. member very far. Even should he succeed in obtaining the appointment of a Select Committee, I wonder how long it would take the Committee to deal with the subject-matter of the scheme. A number of professional men have been engaged on it for many months. After all, the scheme is really an engineering problem, and all that the Select Committee could do would be to hold up the putting into operation of the scheme for an indefinite period. That being so, and in view of the fact that the Government is anxious to have this legislation passed—no matter what its final form might be—and because it is necessary for the legislation to be passed before the Commonwealth can undertake to assist the State in the matter, I suggest to the House that

it would be dangerous if we agreed to appoint a Select Committee at this stage.

Question put and negatived; the motion defeated.

In Committee.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Clause 6—Extent of application of this Act:

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That in lines 2 and 3 the words “except that part which is comprised within the metropolitan area” be struck out.

As I have already said, my desire is that all the water supply schemes of the State should be brought under the control of a commission, similar to the Electricity Commission. This would be advantageous from an administrative point of view and would make for economy.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am afraid the hon. member is optimistic. I have already said that this measure is a consolidation of two Acts, in addition to one or two new provisions, and therefore I cannot see that the amendment will have the slightest effect.

Hon. A. Thomson: Could not the Government bring down another measure?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Government would be unlikely to bring down another measure simply because the hon. member wants these words deleted from the clause.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 7 to 63—agreed to.

Clause 64—Land subject to water rates:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That at the end of paragraph (b) the following proviso be added:—“Provided that no portion of a holding distant more than one hundred and twenty chains shall be ratable.”

Under the old Goldfields Water Supply Act, only land within 120 chains of a pipeline was ratable. That proviso has been excluded from this Bill; and in the case of a property of 15,000 or 20,000 acres, simply because one portion comes within ten chains of the pipeline, the whole property

will be ratable at 5d. an acre, which will impose a considerable burden.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The clause should remain as it is. I think the hon. member is making a mistake when he suggests that properties of 50,000 acres will be liable to a rate of 5d. an acre.

Hon. A. L. Loton: I said 15,000 acres.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member was thinking of the comprehensive water scheme. This Bill is a consolidation of the Goldfields Water Supply Act, plus the Water Boards Act, and it deals only with those sections necessary to provide a means whereby rating can be effected. It concerns the areas that can be rated, and the amount of the rate. I do not see why a property which is within 120 chains of a pipeline and which may be well served as a result, should be exempt from payment of whatever the rate may be in respect of the balance outside the 120 chains. Why do we arrive at the 120 chains? Why fix that line of demarcation?

Hon. A. L. Loton: Why was it in the Goldfields Water Supply Act?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It is not the wording at the present time.

Hon. A. L. Loton: It is omitted altogether at present.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Of course it is! Why do we make that line of demarcation in a particular property? It may be that only one-quarter of the property will be 120 chains from the pipeline. Who will determine what that area is? It is almost unworkable, I should say.

Hon. A. L. Loton: They determine an area within 10 chains of a pipeline.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I suppose we can measure any distance we like, whether large or small; but here we shall be dealing with a large number of properties which are adjacent to a pipeline covering a big area of country. To have a line such as the hon. member suggests, 120 chains from the pipeline, would be unworkable. It would be all right if there were only one or two properties of the size the hon. member was talking about—50,000 acres or more.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Fifteen thousand acres.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member said 50,000 acres.

Hon. L. Craig: He said 15,000 acres.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Well, it is immaterial to the argument. We are dealing with a comprehensive scheme and there is a pipeline running for many miles, and hundreds of properties will be affected, many of which will be on the borderline. The probabilities are that the portion of a property outside the 120-chain line will be getting just as much service from the main as that portion which is inside. I hope the amendment will not be agreed to.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: The idea of the amendment is to overcome what would be a very unfair imposition. Under the Goldfields Water Supply Act, this proviso was apparently workable, and 120 chains was the limitation. I do not see why it should not be workable under this legislation. In effect, we are dealing with the rating Bill, and this is the measure we need to amend on the lines suggested. The main may come within 10 chains of one corner of a property—it need not be a 15,000-acre property but only a 4,000 or 5,000-acre holding—and may be seven miles from the other corner; and it would be a heavy impost for a man to have to pay rates on the whole of the property.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Apart from the merits of the amendment, one or two words must be added to give it any meaning. The amendment does not say from what the holding is 120 chains distant. To give it anything like a precise meaning, it will be necessary to add after the word "distant" the words "from such main or other pipe."

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 65—agreed to.

Clause 66—Amount of rate:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause (1) the word "three" be struck out and the word "two" inserted in lieu.

The object is to put all the rating on the same basis. At present it is 3s. in some areas and 2s. in others. I do not propose to raise the 2s. to 3s. but to bring the 3s. down to 2s. I think that is only fair. Why should one district have water at a rate different from the next?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: In many townships the rate at present is 3s. in the pound and the water supplies are in some cases being run at a considerable loss. The hon. member wants to ensure that such losses will be increased by reducing the maximum rate from 3s. to 2s. It is already provided that where the maximum rate at present is 2s. it shall not be increased, but the Government cannot afford to agree that where the maximum rate is 3s. it should be reduced by one-third.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I hope Mr. Loton will not press this amendment. Right through the discussion on this Bill we have stressed the advantages country towns are to receive from the scheme, and the heavy charges that country lands will be asked to bear. The country towns will benefit more than will others under the scheme, and if we reduce the charges on them the losses will have to be made up by somebody else in the country areas. I do not want to see country land rated any higher than is proposed. The difference for country town houses will only be a matter of 10s. or 15s. per year, and therefore I do not think the amendment should be insisted on.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: What is the meaning of the word "exigible" in line 5?

The CHAIRMAN: The Concise Oxford Dictionary reveals that the word means, "that may be demanded or extracted."

Hon. L. CRAIG: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause (2) after the word "rated" the following words be added:—"or three per cent. of the unimproved value of such land, whichever is the lesser, such unimproved value to be determined by the Minister on application by the owner."

I think this is the most important clause in the Bill, as on it rest the charges to be made for supplies of water under the scheme. Fivepence per acre represents roughly two per cent. on the unimproved value of land valued at £1 per acre. That is not the best, but is good quality agricultural land, and I take that as a basis. On good land the return might be 10 or 15 bushels per acre and on poorer land eight or 10 bushels, so one quality of land is worth much more than the other. I say it

costs 10 bushels per acre to grow and handle the crop, and therefore a 15-bushel return is worth many times as much, as for instance, a 12-bushel return. The Bill shows no differentiation in the quality of the land. The amendment will allow easement to people with large areas of poor quality land. I am taking land at 5s. per acre unimproved, which, under the amendment, would pay 1.8d. per acre.

Hon. A. Thomson: Where can you get land at 5s. per acre?

Hon. L. CRAIG: There are hundreds of thousands of acres of unimproved land that can be bought for less than that now. I have taken that as my low basis. Land at 10s. an acre unimproved value would pay 3.4d. and at 15s. per acre it would pay 5d. Some such provision is necessary because many farmers have 1,200 or 1,500 acres of first-class land and 4,000 or 5,000 acres of sand plain or light country on which charges such as have been suggested would be more than they could bear. I hope the Committee will accept the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I appreciate the viewpoint expressed, but unfortunately there is a large area of poorer class land included in the area to be dealt with, and to accept the amendment would have serious financial repercussions on the scheme. The three per cent. quoted would bring the rate to less than 2d. per acre on a large area of land, the unimproved value of which is 5s. per acre or less. On land worth £1 per acre or more, on Mr. Craig's basis the maximum would be 5d. per acre. Therefore the proposal is to go as low as possible, but not to go as high as possible with the better land to compensate for the lower rate. I am afraid that at present I cannot accept the amendment, as the scheme is based on the 5d. and 3d. rates that I have frequently mentioned.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I support the amendment. My only complaint is that the three per cent. or 1.8d. per acre rating will be a fairly severe impost on the land I have in mind.

Hon. L. Craig: It will be less on sand-plain country.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: It seems that for the sake of the scheme the Minister is prepared to take the risk of driving people

off this class of property by heavy rating. There is land I know of that I would not have as a gift. On it is a farmer who is managing to survive. He is gradually developing the property and maintaining his family and ought to be encouraged, but if this scheme were applied in the terms of the Bill, I do not think he would remain there for three months. He has about 6,000 acres and the difference would be something like £100. There is much to commend the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Much of the poorer land held in fairly large areas is used mainly for grazing and not for cropping. This being so, a much larger quantity of water would be required. Such land might not carry the number of stock per acre that better land would, but the total number of stock would necessitate a comparatively greater supply of water. People on holdings of the poorer class are entitled to all possible consideration, but I have to regard the scheme as a whole and to consider whether, by making concessions of this sort, we shall render it harder for other people who will be included in the scheme. I am wondering whether the percentage mentioned by Mr. Craig is not too low. If it were increased, we might get a little nearer to equity from my point of view. Suppose it were made 5 per cent. instead of 3 per cent. We have to bear in mind that it is a percentage on the unimproved value which, in many instances, is very low. Probably the unimproved value of the greater part of that area would not exceed 10s. per acre, and some of it would be below 5s. Other areas, of course, would run to 30s. or even more.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am not prepared to say what the effect would be. I think that would have to be determined actuarially. I have tried to strike an average. The Chief Secretary said the light land would probably need more water than would heavier land. As a rule the reverse is the case. On most light land, water is easily procured, but on heavy land it is difficult to get water, and that is where the scheme is so urgently needed. The people on the light country will carry a large part of the burden—much more than their share—and will not need the scheme. I do not wish to condemn the scheme by reducing the revenue too much.

If we passed the amendment and found that a large proportion of the land within the area was valued at less than 5s., it might be possible to raise the figure to 4 per cent. My desire is to be fair to people with large areas of light land. Our aim should be to encourage them to accept the scheme. I want them to accept it because some day they will bless us for bringing it to them. People who have been used to managing with a minimum of water do not know the value of it. If we can encourage them to accept the ample supply that the scheme would give, they would soon appreciate its great advantages. The people on the light land are not well off. I would not have a light land farm if it were given to me.

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: There is merit in the amendment. I suggest that the clause be postponed with a view to obtaining additional information. Mr. Craig's amendment appeals to me as being equitable. The scheme is less necessary to the light land than to the heavy land. Good land will carry perhaps ten times as much stock as light land, but on the light sandplain, water can be obtained almost anywhere. I am afraid the provision in the Bill will operate harshly against the farmer who has a large proportion of light land.

Hon. L. Craig: I think we ought to pass the amendment and recommit the clause, if necessary.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I am not particular whether we vote on the amendment or postpone the clause. To obtain the desired information may take some little time. I agree with what has been said as to the value of light land as compared with heavy land, but I do not agree that good water or even stock water may be obtained anywhere on light land.

Hon. L. Craig: On most sandplain country.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I can speak feelingly, having paid for my experience. If the amendment be passed, I will have inquiries made with a view to getting further information.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That in line 7 of paragraph (b) of the proviso to Subclause (2), the words "including domestic purposes" be struck out.

The paragraph refers to an owner who has provided a sufficient water supply adequate for all purposes including domestic purposes. If the term "all purposes" does not include domestic purposes, I should like to know what the devil it does include.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member to withdraw that unparliamentary word.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I withdraw.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A farmer might have provided a water supply quite adequate for stock but unsuitable for domestic purposes. Members should bear in mind the desire to improve the amenities of country life. What would be the effect of the amendment?

Hon. W. J. Mann: It does not matter whether the words are retained or struck out. It would not alter the position much.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It would, because he would not get a concession unless he satisfied the Minister that he had an adequate supply for both his farm and domestic requirements. If the scheme provides water for the domestic requirements of the farmer he is not going to object to being rated as provided for in the Bill.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I think that the words "satisfied that such water supply is adequate for all the purposes" cover domestic purposes.

Hon. G. Fraser: Then why not leave these words in?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Why leave them if they are not necessary?

Hon. L. CRAIG: This rests entirely in the hands of the Minister. An owner might claim that he has a good water supply but the Minister, on the advice of his officers, might say, "I am advised that you have not a good supply and it is in my discretion to allow you anything or nothing." If the owner has not a decent domestic supply he is going to forfeit the use of a water supply, for 2d. an acre.

Hon. H. L. Roche: That figure may be amended.

Hon. L. CRAIG: As the Minister says, a property that has water but no domestic supply, is not properly watered at all.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Yes.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member is deleting it altogether from the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I must ask the hon. member to cease this conversation across the Chamber.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I am sorry.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: If there is any doubt I am prepared to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That in line 8 of paragraph (b) of the proviso to Subclause (2) all the words after the word "Minister" be struck out and the following words inserted in lieu: "shall stipulate an amount of water rate to be charged against and be paid in respect of such holding for a period of seven years next following the commencement of rating but so that the amount of water rate to be paid by such ratepayer shall be the same amount in each year of such period and shall not in any one year during such period be more than a sum computed at the rate of twopence per acre of the area of the holding or the sum of two pounds whichever shall be the greater amount."

My purpose is to make it perfectly clear that a person can apply to the Minister for exemption, and the rate shall not be alterable during any one year in the seven year period. This also gives the owner the right to appeal after he has received notice of his first assessment. The amendment will make the clause better for the Minister and also for the farmer.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Under the amendment the concession will be on a maximum rating of 2d. per acre for a period of seven years, whereas under the Bill the maximum rating is 3d. per acre with the right of being assessed each year. The hon. member would be well advised to leave this portion of the Bill as it is. It is possible that on many occasions this would react in favour of the farmer. Circumstances may be such that the Minister may vary the rate to the benefit of the farmer. Instead of that Mr. Loton desires to reduce the rate from 3d. to 2d. and make it constant during the seven years. I must again refer to the effect that it would probably have on the financial aspect of the scheme, and for that reason alone I must oppose the amendment, but I am suggesting that he should leave this portion of the clause as it is in the interests of the farmers, and not in the interests of the scheme or the department.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: If the Bill is left in its present form, how can it operate more favourably to the farmer than it would under the amendment? Under the provisions of the Bill the rate would be liable to variation each year, and the concession rate is to be not less than a sum computed at a rate of not less than 3d. per acre. That does not seem to be as good a proposition, from the farmer's point of view, as having a reduction to 2d. Mr. Craig said that he wants the farmers to accept the scheme. The Bill seems to be designed to thrust the scheme down their throats. As the amendment is not likely to be vital to the financial provisions of the undertaking, I hope it will be carried.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: When the Bill was drafted provision was made for a concessional rate for a period of five years. That was altered to seven years as a result of the representations made on behalf of the farmers who have provided their own water supplies. By this amendment, we would, in addition, have to reduce the concessional rate from 3d. to 2d. That would have a marked effect on the financial aspect of the scheme, more particularly if such large numbers of farmers, as stated by Mr. Roche in his second reading speech, have provided themselves with a water supply.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Most of them, because of the amendments passed, will be out of the scheme.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That may be so, but that is the position as I see it.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I ask members to accept the amendment because it will mean a lot to the farmer who has provided a water supply. I point out that the Minister has to be satisfied before he grants the concessional rate.

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

Ayes	15
Noes	9
Majority for	6

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. A. L. Loton	Hon. U. B. Wood
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. L. Craig
Hon. H. S. W. Parker	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. E. M. Heenan	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That a new paragraph be added to the proviso to Subclause (2) as follows:—“(c) Any owner or occupier may within one month from the service on him of a notice of assessment of the amount of water rate to be charged under the provisions of the last preceding paragraph appeal against such assessment and any such appeal shall be made heard and determined in the manner provided in Division two of this part of this Act.”

This is more or less a consequential amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I cannot possibly accept the amendment. What Mr. Loton is endeavouring to provide for is an appeal by an owner to the Minister against a decision made by the Minister. I do not see what is to be gained by that, particularly if reference is made to Clause 60, which provides for appeals.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Clause 60 provides that appeals shall be made to the Minister and from the decision of the Minister there may be a further appeal to any local court having jurisdiction within the country water area, as provided in the Bill. That is all I want to do.

The Chief Secretary: It will not be workable if the amendment be agreed to.

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

Ayes	14
Noes	9
Majority for	5

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. W. J. Mann	Hon. A. L. Loton
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. E. M. Heenan	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That a new paragraph be added to the proviso to Subclause (2) as follows:—“(d) Where not less than fifty per cent of the owners of ratable land in any portion of the country water area, such portion comprising not less than fifty thousand acres and not being a townsite, petition the Minister in writing asking that the holdings comprised in such area shall not be ratable under this Act, and stating that the majority of such owners do not desire to be supplied with water under this Act on the ground that they have supplies of water previously provided upon their own holdings at their own expense sufficient for all their purposes, holdings in such portion of the country water area shall not be supplied with water and shall not be ratable under this Act.”

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I would like to hear what Mr. Loton has to say in explanation of the amendment.

Hon. L. Craig: So would I.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: The amendment is in exactly the same terms as that which the Committee agreed to when considering the Comprehensive Agricultural Areas and Gold-fields Water Supply Bill. The matter was discussed then, and there is no need to repeat the arguments.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not propose to spend any time discussing the amendment. It may be similar to the amendment inserted in the previous Bill, but I remind the Committee that if it is accepted, we shall say to a minority of farmers in a particular area that in no circumstances are they to have a water supply unless they provide it for themselves. It may be that the water is not there for them to obtain, and so we shall condemn them to the position in which they are today, with no chance whatever of improving their situation. Mr. Loton should not press the amendment—in the interests of people who cannot help themselves.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: It is extremely unlikely that in any district there would be 51,000 acres in respect of which farmers have been able to provide themselves with adequate water supplies, and 49,000 acres in respect of which the farmers could not do so. The argument advanced by the Chief Secretary is all right, but from a practical point of view it is hardly convincing. The amendment will simply bring the rating Bill into conformity with the comprehensive Bill.

In an extreme case, if one exists—which I doubt—it would not be possible for 51 per cent. of the farmers in a 50,000-acre district to deprive 49 per cent. of the farmers from the opportunity of obtaining a water supply. This particular provision should be in conformity with the provision in the other Bill with which we have dealt.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I was absent when the previous amendment was agreed to and am sorry that on this occasion I cannot support my colleagues from the country. This will give power to a section of farmers who are opposed to the scheme to damn the whole scheme. Many farmers would desire to play safe and would petition the Minister to be exempted from the scheme because they were in doubt as to what might happen. I have already heard opposition expressed to this scheme and, under the circumstances, I cannot support the amendment.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: As Mr. Roche has pointed out, this is a machinery provision.

Hon. A. Thomson: We have included this provision in the other Bill and you are proposing to make this measure agree with it.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Yes. As a matter of fact, the provisions agree word for word. I ask members to support the amendment.

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

Ayes	13
Noes	10
Majority for	3

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. R. M. Forrest	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. A. L. Loton	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. W. J. Mann	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. F. E. Gibson
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 67 to 89—agreed to.

Clause 90—Land may be sold for arrears of rates, etc. remaining unpaid for three years:

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of paragraph (a) the word "three" be struck out with a view to inserting the word "five."

My object is to lengthen the period after which, if rates are unpaid, the Minister can sue the owner.

Hon. G. Fraser: If the owner cannot pay in three years, he will not be able to pay in five.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: Farming goes in cycles. A man might be hopelessly behind at the end of three years and in another two may be able to pay all his debts. It is a gamble as far as the Minister is concerned.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The Committee should not agree to the amendment. The power is not frequently exercised and would only be exercised when the Minister was satisfied that it was the only procedure to adopt.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of paragraph (c) the word "shall" be struck out with a view inserting the word "may."

As the paragraph stands, the magistrate has no option. If the amendment is accepted, he could impose some penalty other than the forfeiture of the land.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This is a case where we should be positive. If we analyse the clause, it will be found that the magistrate has to be satisfied of proof of the circumstances; and if he is satisfied, the penalty should be as provided by the clause. I believe this is taken from the Acts which are being consolidated by the Bill; so why should there be an alteration at this stage?

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. A. L. LOTON: I move an amendment—

That the paragraph commencing with the word "Fourthly" be struck out.

I would like to know why this one bank is given some protection as compared with

the other trading banks. The Rural and Industries Bank is a trading concern and I cannot see why it should have any more protection than its competitors.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This bank is a State instrumentality and if it incurs liabilities the whole of the taxpayers have to meet them. The same provision occurs in the Rural and Industries Bank Act and also, I think, in the Industries Assistance Act. Here again there is an attempt to exclude something which appears in the Acts being consolidated.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I understood that since the legislation was passed concerning this State instrumentality, the Rural and Industries Bank has functioned as an ordinary banking institution. It should therefore not be carrying any greater liabilities or responsibilities in regard to these securities than any other institution. Had this referred to the agency portion of the bank, I could have understood it, because I think it is in the agency portion that the lame ducks of the Agricultural Bank regime are being carried. But we have established a bank which we are given to understand functions as a trading bank, and it is therefore hardly right to give it a priority over other institutions with which it is competing.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 91 to 111, Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Assembly's Message.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to amendment No. 1 made by the Council, had disagreed to Nos. 2 and 3, and had agreed to No. 4, subject to further amendments.

House adjourned at 10.27 p.m.