

Legislative Assembly,*Thursday, 19th January, 1911.*

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: By-laws of the Menzies Local Board of Health.

By the Minister for Lands: Return showing the resumptions made of pastoral leases.

QUESTION—RAILWAY CROSSING, WEST PERTH.

Mr. DRAPER (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways: Have the plans of the bridge over the railway line at the Melbourne-road crossing been prepared? If so, when will the construction of the bridge be commenced?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: Sketch plans have been prepared but no definite decision has yet been arrived at owing to the proposed alterations at the Perth yards. The work will be put in hand as speedily as possible after the general scheme of the proposed alterations has been approved.

QUESTION—GOVERNMENT LOAN TO FREMANTLE MUNICIPALITY.

Mr. BROWN (without notice) asked the Premier: Has his attention been called to a paragraph in this morning's

paper containing a statement by Councillor Nicholas of Fremantle with reference to a proposed loan, and if so, what steps he intends to take?

The PREMIER replied: My attention has not been called to any announcement about the loan, but I saw the paragraph in this morning's paper. I intend to take no steps.

Mr. BOLTON: It was an understanding that the council would not have to pay it back, he inferred.

QUESTION—LAND RESUMPTION FOR RAILWAY PURPOSES.

Mr. HARDWICK asked the Minister for Railways: In view of the proposed alteration in the railway system between Perth and East Perth, is it the intention of the Government to make provision for the construction of bridges and subways at the principal crossing places in order to facilitate traffic and ensure the safety of the travelling public?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: It is intended to erect bridges in lieu of the principal road crossings between Perth and East Perth.

QUESTION—RAILWAY OFFICERS' SALARIES.

Mr. GILL asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it the practice in the Railway Department to pay increased salaries to officers performing duties in a higher class than that in which they are classified as is done in other branches of the Public Service? 2, If not why not?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: (1.) It is not the practice, and is not considered necessary except in special cases. (2) See answer to question No. 1.

QUESTION—COAL MINING DISASTER, COLLIE.

Mr. A. A. WILSON asked the Minister for Mines: In view of the answer given by the Hon. the Minister to the question asked by me on January 5th in relation to the Proprietary Colliery disaster,

will the Hon. the Minister get the reports of the Coroner, Resident Magistrate, State Mining Engineer, and Inspector of Mines expedited in order that same may be laid on the Table of the House before the session closes?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: Yes, providing the hon. member formally moves for their production.

QUESTION—MATERNITY HOMES IN COUNTRY TOWNS.

Mr. PRICE asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been drawn to the fact that resolutions have been carried in several country districts urging the Government to establish maternity homes in country towns for the convenience of settlers' wives? 2, What action, if any, does the Government propose to take in the matter?

The PREMIER replied: 1, The only resolution that has come to my knowledge was carried by the Dorakin Progress Association at a meeting held on the 4th December. 2, The policy of the Government is to subsidise maternity nurses in country districts, whose services are available for all classes of cases, and provision has been made on the Estimates this year.

QUESTIONS (2) — BULLFINCH MINING DISTRICT.

Labour Covenants.

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Minister for Mines: 1, Whether in view of the large number of men unemployed at Bullfinch every effort will be taken to compel all leaseholders to immediately fulfil the labour covenants? 2, Whether the Minister will refuse to grant exemption or protection on any lease until such time as a reasonable amount of development work has been done and exemption justified?

The MINISTER replied: 1, I am not aware that there are a large number of men unemployed at Bullfinch. 2, No exemption or protection will be granted on leases on which no development work has been done, unless the reasons advanced in support of the application justify an approval.

Reduction of Wages, Proprietary Mine.

Mr. HOLMAN asked the Attorney General: 1, Whether he is aware that, owing to the reduction of wages in the Bullfinch Proprietary mine, a large number of men are idle? 2, Whether, seeing that proceedings were taken against the tramway employees for an alleged strike, it is his intention to take proceedings against the company for a lock-out? 3, If not, why not?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, I am not aware that any men at Bullfinch are idle. 2, If consulted by the Registrar of Friendly Societies the Crown Law Authorities will advise whether, on the facts submitted, a prosecution for doing an act of the nature of a lock-out is likely to succeed. 3, Answered by reply to No. 2.

QUESTION — RAILWAY CON- STRUCTION, DOWERIN — MER- REDIN.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1, Is it a fact that the first section of the Dowerin to Merredin Railway was to have been taken over on the 9th January? 2, Has a further extension of time been granted? 3, Is the Premier aware that owing to the settlers having to pay both the Government and the contractors' rates it is costing settlers 1d. a bushel more to land wheat at Fremantle? 4, Will the Premier see that if the line is not taken over only Government rates will be charged? 5, Will the Premier announce a definite date for the taking over of this railway?

The PREMIER replied: 1, The time for the completion of the contract was extended until 9th inst. 2, No. 3, No. 4, The extension of time until the 9th instant was given on condition that Government rates were charged. 5, The section is expected to be completed by the end of this month.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

*Mr. Heilmann and the Minister for
Lands.*

Mr. HEITMANN (Cue): On a question of privilege I desire to make a personal

explanation. The night before last, in speaking on one of the Railway Bills, the Minister for Railways was pointing out the desirability of each department in the Government following out the recommendations of the advisory board. At that time I interjected by saying that it was not always the desire of the department to follow the advice of its officers, and I went further on to say, when dealing with the purchase of the Avondale estate, that the Minister for Lands did not act upon the advice of one of his officers. The Minister contradicted this most emphatically, and I went further on to say that the Minister for Lands had placed a minute on the papers to be presented to Cabinet contradictory to the report he had received from his officers. He also denied this three times, and I stated that the officer had reported that there were nearly 2,000 acres on the Avondale estate practically worthless or uncultivable. The Minister denied this also, and he invited me to look up the files, and so that the public might not be misled by the interjection, I did look up the files, and from the report which the Minister asked me to inspect I take the following extract from a minute placed before the Premier by the Minister for Lands. The minute goes on to say—“Whilst the selling price of the land at this estate will necessarily be fairly high to the purchasers, the land is undoubtedly all good and can be brought into profit at once.” The officer to whom I referred was one, Marshall Fox, a surveyor; he reported about the Avondale estate in this way—

To the Surveyor-General. In accordance with verbal instructions I have inspected the Avondale estate, and estimate that 1,800 acres are unfit for the plough. The largest area is one beyond Gnurdung Trig Hills, practically all non-cultivable, and there are fair sized patches of rocks on the Western end.

I will leave it to the House to say whether the files bear out my statement or otherwise.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: May I ask the hon. member whether the files

are on the Table of the House now?

Mr. Heitmann: No.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If I may be permitted to get the files I also will make an explanation. I understood the hon. member to say that there were 1,800 acres of land that were not fit for cultivation on this estate. If the hon. member had got the minute I wrote before this estate was purchased, and after I made a personal inspection of the estate (I am quoting without having the files before me), he would have found there that I advised Cabinet that there were 1,800 acres which were not fit for cultivation. If hon. members desire I will get the files to-morrow or on Tuesday next.

Mr. Heitmann: Here is your latest minute written after the report of this officer.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I desire to have the file in order to straighten out the matter.

PRIVILEGE—INACCURATE PRESS REPORT.

The PREMIER (Hon. Frank Wilson): Yesterday afternoon I promised the House I would carefully consider the letter which has been addressed to your Honour by the proprietors of the *Daily News* newspaper, and then to advise the House as to what action, if any, I deemed it necessary should be taken in consequence thereof. I have now to report that I have carefully read this letter from end to end, also the letter which you yourself wrote to the proprietors, and I have further refreshed my memory by perusing *Hansard*, reading the report of the remarks which the member for Kanowna and I, myself, used on the occasion when the complaint was made against the newspaper, and I am bound to say, whilst I cannot, perhaps, admit that this letter in reply is couched altogether in the language which I should desire, more especially in one or two clauses, and whilst it is certainly ample enough in accordance with your request, Mr. Speaker, I cannot see that any good purpose would be served, or that the dignity of Parliament

would be enhanced, by taking any further action in connection therewith.

Mr. Heitmann: The paper relies on your attitude, I am afraid.

The PREMIER: I do not know what anyone relies upon. I have carried out my duty as promised to the House, and am now giving the House the decision I have come to after mature consideration.

Mr. Heitmann: I have no doubt about that.

Mr. Walker: Do you approve of the insults to the Speaker and to the House?

The PREMIER: I do not approve of insults to anyone. The letter written by you, Sir, clearly asks that an ample explanation should be made of certain erroneous statements, which were made in that paper, of the proceedings in the House on Wednesday, 11th January; and I can see at once that this letter is based upon the speech of the hon. member for Kanowna when making his complaint, for your letter says—

Inter alia the report stated as follows:—A wild scene—Four members suspended—You are a disgrace—I will withdraw nothing—Mr. Walker challenges Mr. Nanson—Will you come outside?

The letter goes on further to say, "Mr. Walker described the statements as grossly inaccurate, and the official reports of the proceedings proved his statement to be correct"—that the whole of these statements are grossly inaccurate. There the proprietor had an opportunity, and he took it; indeed, I must say at once that he was asked by Mr. Speaker, and in the terms of my resolution, to give an ample explanation of these erroneous statements, and therefore he went into this lengthy discourse, challenging five of the headlines complained of, and admitting his error in regard to the sixth. But notwithstanding that he challenges the statement that these headlines are incorrect, and notwithstanding that some of the language used is perhaps not the language which one could have wished, the fact does remain that on two occasions he expressed regret for the error which I referred to

as a grievous error, namely the reference to Messrs Walker and Nanson. On turning up the member for Kanowna's speech, I find that he was not quite as explicit as he usually is, and I dare say that is quite excusable because he was no doubt somewhat annoyed. He says on page 296—

The breach of privilege I have to complain of is chiefly contained in very blackly printed large type on page 8 of that issue, and these headlines read as follows:—

and then he read the headlines, conveying the impression that he complained of the whole of the headlines as being grossly inaccurate. Therefore, I can quite understand that this letter which you, Mr. Speaker, wrote to the newspaper, based upon the complaint and not based upon my subsequent remarks, wherein I clearly defined the inaccuracy as the reference to Mr. Nanson and Mr. Walker only—I can quite understand that the letter sent to the newspaper proprietors demands an explanation of the whole of these headlines, hence the lengthy reply we have seen. I admit that the member for Kanowna later on said in a few words that the charge was that he had challenged the Attorney General to come outside and fight, but nevertheless the whole of the headlines were taken exception to in the earlier part of his speech. The proprietor of the newspaper immediately his attention was drawn to the fact that an error had been committed, and that two members of this House had been mentioned in error in his journal as having been guilty of having participated in some disorderly scene, made a correction and printed it. The words he used in that correction were—

There is no doubt however that Walker and Nanson must be excluded from those who participated in the unseemly proceedings, hence we hasten to make the correction, and to express our regret to both the members.

Again, in the letter the proprietor refers to the same incident, and says:—"an unfortunate error, which we much regret." Now, Mr. Speaker, I have very carefully considered what attitude

I should take up, as Leader of the House, in connection with this letter, and, notwithstanding the fact that I should have liked the letter confined simply to one charge with a straight out withdrawal and expression of regret, I am bound to come to the conclusion that cause having been given for a lengthy reply of this description, and an expression of regret having been published in the newspaper and included in the letter which you have received, the dignity of Parliament would be best served by now permitting this matter to drop.

Mr. WALKER (Kanowna): For myself I hold that I have been quite sufficiently exonerated. The apology made, and the correction tendered are quite sufficient to satisfy anyone. It satisfies me as to that particular fact, but notwithstanding the carefully thought out speech which the Premier delivered I submit that the letter of the *Daily News* is one of intentional insult to this Chamber, and moreover it is one that is not fair. If the Premier will allow me the use of the papers in his possession I will show that there could be no possible misunderstanding as to what the nature of the error was, and although perhaps the letter from the Speaker might have been more carefully worded, yet in effect it conveys all that was intended. This letter from the Speaker read—

Sir: At the sitting of the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, January 12, Mr. T. Walker, a member of the House, drew attention to certain statements in your journal purporting to give an account of the proceeding which took place in the House on the preceding day. Inter alia, the report stated as follows:—A Wild Scene—Four Members Suspended—You are a Disgrace—I will withdraw nothing—Mr. Walker challenges Mr. Nanson—Will you come outside? Mr. Walker described these statements as grossly inaccurate, and the official records of the proceedings prove his statement to be correct. This being so—

I ask the Premier to notice this.

This being so, the House, on the

motion of the Honourable the Premier, passed the following resolution—

This is all the paper was asked to deal with.

That the Speaker write to the proprietors of the *Daily News* pointing out this error in the report of the proceedings of this Chamber during this morning's sitting, and demand or ask from them an ample explanation as to the error—

Not as to whole of the report but as to that particular error.

and a withdrawal, or expression of regret, and apology for the committal thereof.

Of what? That error, nothing else. That is what the House ordered, and no proprietor of the *Daily News* can make that an apology for going beyond the request made for the purpose of abusing this Chamber and certain members. There was one error to correct; no more. They were asked to correct that error, instead of which the whole debate is raked up for the purpose of throwing mud at this House. I will not mention the bad taste which characterises it all through. For instance—

Your letter complains of six specified statements in our report of the proceedings of the 12th inst., alleged as being, according to Mr. Walker, grossly inaccurate, and you, sir, assert that the official records of the proceedings prove his statement to be correct.

In order that this letter might be written the whole of *Hansard* were sent to the *Daily News*, a most unexampled courtesy in circumstances like this, where an obvious error had been made and it was a question of withdrawal or apology. The whole of the *Hansard* proceedings were sent to Mr. Lovekin, and they declared, both in my speech and in the Premier's speech, that all that was condemned in challenging the report was that statement in regard to the Attorney General and myself. That was in *Hansard*, and what was the excuse for insulting you, sir, and practically accusing you of an untruth? Is there to be no protection afforded to the House?

Are we to be at the mercy of the Press?

Mr. Underwood: They are only sand-flies.

Mr. WALKER: They go on to inform us about this correction—

This paragraph makes the necessary correction; it expresses regret for the error, and is sufficient to satisfy any gentleman.

The scribe who can write that, in the person of the proprietor of the *Daily News*, can hardly claim that title. It is not gentlemanly, say what you will, and it is written to you, Mr. Speaker, who have to protect the members of this House; but, apart from that, let us read what follows:—

An unfortunate error which we much regret.

That is true. Personally I am done with that matter; it does not concern me any further. But this does—

As far as we are concerned, we have adopted an honourable attitude—

That is the attitude of abusing every member on this side of the House, and repeating the reports of scenes which are not too creditable.

Mr. Underwood: And not reporting unparliamentary remarks on the other side.

Mr. WALKER: Yes, and not reporting what caused these scenes.

The letter proceeds—

and it follows that if those honourable gentlemen are not satisfied, they have a remedy open to them which, unfortunately, is not available to ourselves and other members of the public when scurrilous attacks are made upon them by privileged members of Parliament, who are among the first to seek your Honour's protection against the slightest error on the part of others.

Now is there an hon. member who can approve of that language? Does the Premier approve of it?

Mr. Holman: Yes, he pays them to print it by the advertisements he gives.

Mr. WALKER: There is no hon. member in this House who can approve of it. It is an insult. It is an insult to all of those privileges which are necessary.

I want to say just here in passing that whoever wants to be defended in this House can find his defender. There is no cause, or any person having a grievance or wrong but can find some champion here. So far as making attacks and seeking your Honour's protection from injury in concerned there is no license in modern times equal to that of some sections of the Press which hound men to their political doom, and follow them continuously without a chance of protection. That does happen—I do not say in this case—but the point I am making is that this is gratuitous, it is not called forth by Mr. Speaker's letter, it is not necessary; all that was necessary was a correction of that error. That error being corrected, there the matter ended; but for the sake of copy, for the sake of filling the paper with a lot of injurious stuff, for the sake of insulting Mr. Speaker, and this Chamber, this tirade of abuse was poured out against this Chamber, and we have no protection. "Let it go on; it does not matter." Very well, I am satisfied; but let those take the consequences by and by, having degraded this Chamber to that extent that it is so soulless and so spiritless and can say nothing in its own defence from the Leader of the House or elsewhere, and then let them not complain if the people take matters more forcibly into their own hands.

Mr. SPEAKER: I desire to add that so far as the letter is concerned, I carried out the instructions of the House. I could not make any exception as to the points. I followed upon the speech of the member for Kanowna and conveyed that strictly in accordance with the resolution of the House. I had no other course open to me. I should probably have submitted myself to the criticism and censure of the House if I had confined myself to one point only.

Mr. Holman: I would like to ask the Premier if he will increase their advertisements by 100 per cent. next year?

ANNUAL ESTIMATES 1910-11.

Committee of Ways and Means.

The House having resolved itself into Committee of Ways and Means,—

The PREMIER (Hon. Frank Wilson) moved—

That towards making good the supply granted to His Majesty, a sum not exceeding £2,189,018 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Western Australia and a further sum of £56,553 from the Sale of Government Property Trust Account.

Mr. Scaddan: Why the necessity for passing this motion?

The PREMIER: To follow the course adopted in recent years we could have gone into Committee of Ways and Means the previous night after reporting the resolution from Committee of Supply. It was merely a formal motion and was not absolutely necessary at this stage, because it could be done after the Loan Estimates were dealt with, and then there would be one resolution covering the authorised expenditure from revenue and loan, followed immediately by an Appropriation Bill. The custom was, however, to go into a Committee of Ways and Means when the Revenue Estimates were passed and get a resolution of this nature, and then after the Loan Estimates were passed to introduce an Appropriation Bill covering the lot.

Mr. Scaddan: When do you propose to bring down the Loan Estimates?

The PREMIER: I hope to bring them down on Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

BILL—SUPPLY (£377,000).

All Stages.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending Appropriation for the purpose of a Supply Bill.

Committee of Supply and Ways and Means.

The House having resolved into Committee of Supply, Mr. Taylor in the Chair,

The PREMIER [Hon. Frank Wilson] moved—

That the House do now resolve itself into a Committee of Supply to consider a Message from His Excellency

the Governor recommending a Bill for "An Act to apply out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund and from Moneys to Credit of the General Loan Fund and from the Loan Suspense Account the sum of Three Hundred and Seventy-seven Thousand Pounds to the Service of the Year ending 30th June, 1911.

This was to enable the Government to have sufficient money at their disposal to pay the liabilities of the State during the present month and the first ten days of February. That would mean taking six weeks' supply. It was the practice on previous occasions once the Estimates were passed to consider that sufficient and not take Supply, but it was contrary to the Audit Act and it would certainly not be legal for the Governor to sign warrants for the necessary expenditure unless a Supply Bill was put through. The Bill provided for one-eighth of the amount on the Estimates less the statutory amounts, and in addition provided for £150,000 from Loan Fund and £54,000 from Loan Suspense Account.

Question passed.

Resolution reported and the report adopted.

The House having resolved into Committee of Ways and Means the formal resolution was passed, reported, and adopted.

Bill introduced, etc.

In accordance with the foregoing resolutions a Supply Bill (£377,000) was introduced and read a first time and a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Taylor in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—Issue and application of £377,000:

Mr. SCADDAN: The Premier should state definitely when the Loan Estimates would be brought down for the consideration of members. Seven months of the year had gone by and the Government had been drawing on loan funds, yet members had not considered or authorised any of the new works. This was the third time in the session the Government asked for Supply without members

having any knowledge of how the money was being expended. It was not possible to pass the Loan Estimates earlier, but there was nothing to prevent their being presented to the House, and then if members found anything objectionable in them they might take the opportunity of opposing the granting of Supply. Under the existing circumstances, there was no information before members, but we were expected to grant further supplies to carry the Government on for eight months of the financial year. This was a practice that was becoming too common, and government in this manner was not warranted. It was time members protested against this procedure. The Government ought to take members into their confidence and give them an opportunity of considering the passing of Supply instead of their having to do it blindly.

The PREMIER: If the position were exactly as the hon. member thought, his objection would be easily understood; but most of the work on which loan funds were being expended had already been sanctioned by the House. Only the amount he was asking for from Loan Suspense Account represented new items; that was to say, there was £16,000 from Loan Suspense Account under this Bill, £58,500 under Supply Bill No. 1, and £55,000 under Supply Bill No. 2, making a total of £129,500. Of that, £40,000 was for the Bullfinch railway already sanctioned, while £50,000 was for the grain sheds and equipment at Fremantle. The Loan Estimates were almost ready, and he hoped to introduce them on Tuesday.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2—agreed to.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Third Reading.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL—BROOKTON-KUNJINN RAILWAY.

Introduced by the Minister for Works, and read a first time.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVES REDEDICATION (No. 2).

Order discharged.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. Mitchell): I beg to move—

That this Order be discharged.

The Bill dealt with one reserve only, but I find now there are three reserves to be dealt with. Consequently I would like the order to be discharged, and subsequently I shall bring in a Bill dealing with the three reserves.

Question put and passed, Order discharged.

BILL—FERTILISERS AND FEEDING STUFFS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. Mitchell) in moving the second reading said: I desire to point out the existing Act has worked satisfactorily so far as it goes, but it has been realised by the inspectors that it would be wise if the vendor were compelled to give a certificate with the making of a contract. At the present time a farmer may buy verbally 50 tons of phosphates, and while it is necessary to get a certificate with the delivery of the stuff it is not necessary to get it when making the purchase. It sometimes happens that the material delivered is not exactly what the farmer expected. We propose therefore, that the vendor should give a certificate on making the contract, and that a similar certificate should be handed to the purchaser at the time of delivery. We also provide that samples may be taken, not only as at present in the warehouse of the vendor, but that an inspector may at any time take samples from the railway truck, car, lorry, or van. This will considerably extend the powers of inspectors, and will enable us to take samples at the outlying railway stations if it be deemed necessary. This provision will, of course, extend the opportunities of the inspector, and will enable us to do a little more for the protection of the purchaser than is possible under existing conditions. A further amendment throws greater responsibility on the seller, for it pro-

vides that any omission to comply with any of the provisions of the Act shall be considered an offence and punishable under a penalty of £50. This clause will correct the omission made in several sections in the Act. In Sections 4, 7 and 8, offences are described, but no penalty is provided; therefore it will be necessary to insert this new clause to make the penalty cover the whole Act. I daresay hon. members know that every brand of fertiliser sold is registered, and the vendor is compelled to sell according to the registration, allowing a margin of $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. I believe the purchasers of fertilisers have been very well served. The truth is, we are using phosphates largely which arrive in bulk from oversea, and the samples can be taken from the ship and an analysis made, so that a perfect check is possible. We can congratulate ourselves that on the whole the vendors have treated the agriculturists very fairly indeed. During the past year 192 samples were taken, and we had several prosecutions, in all of which we succeeded. The reason for asking the House to amend the Bill just now is merely to afford greater protection to our purchasers. I hope the House will pass the Bill without amendment.

On motion by Mr. Scaddan debate adjourned.

BILL—UPPER CHAPMAN RAILWAY EXTENSION.

Order discharged.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Daglish): I desire to move—

That this Bill be discharged.

My object is to introduce a new Bill for the construction of a railway from Naraling to Yuna Area, an extension of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles, or 12 miles altogether.

Question put and agreed. Order discharged.

BILL—NORFOLK RAILWAY.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Daglish) in moving the second reading

said: Partial provision for this work has already been made by Parliament to the extent of an amount of £5,000, which was ear-marked for the purpose. Parliament has, therefore, recognised the desirability of the construction of the line. The line, as proposed, will cover a length of 30 miles. It will commence at a distance of 340 miles from Perth, and of 34 miles from Geraldton. The gauge will be our ruling gauge of 3ft. 6in., while the weight of rails will be 45lbs., and the ruling gradient 1 in 40. The sharpest curve will have a 12 chains radius. The estimated cost of the railway will be, for construction £16,000, and for rails and fastenings £19,650, making a total of £65,660, or a cost per mile of £2,188. These prices, perhaps, will seem somewhat high to hon. members, but I want in the first place to point out that the estimate submitted with a Bill for the construction of a railway is not the working estimate but an approximate estimate merely, and that approximate estimate will be modified when the quantities are taken out in order to prepare the working estimate. In this case the basis on which the calculation has been made is the cost of the Upper Chapman railway, which ran into £1,193 per mile for construction. To this has to be added the extra provision for telephone material, £30 per mile in this case, the extra cost for sleepers of £30 per mile, and extra contingencies of £60 per mile, making altogether, £129 per mile, or a total for this case of £1,322 per mile. This brings the cost of construction up to £39,660. To this again has to be added the cost of the triangle at Northampton, which will amount to £400, and additional freight on the permanent way material at the rate of £31 per mile for the added distance over which it has to be carried, amounting to £930, bringing the cost of construction up to £40,990, or, roughly, £41,000. To this again has to be added the provision for the alterations which will be requisite at the Northampton station which will cost altogether about £5,000, making the estimate I have already quoted to the House for construction of £16,000 in all. To this we add for rails and fastenings

the amount already mentioned, £19,650, making the figures I have given earlier of £65,660 and establishing a rate per mile of £2,183. The line extends during the course of this 30 miles in a northerly direction near Northampton and reaches within about seven miles south of the Geraldine mine. The country served by the extension represents an area of about 449,000 acres, of which about 110,000 acres are alienated and 339,000 acres are vacant. The area of first class land is approximately 170,000 acres, and the rainfall is an exceedingly good one, 21 inches. In recommending the extension the Railway Advisory Board takes some notice of the probable opening up of payable mines in the Geraldine mining area, and this line, therefore, may be looked on as likely to serve the purpose of mining as well as an agricultural railway. The State Mining Engineer reports that the value of the copper and lead ores produced from the mines in this district is £148,744 for copper and £364,756 for lead; but it is some years since the mines were energetically worked. The Baddera mine is now being systematically worked, and should it prove a success it is anticipated that other mines may likewise come into operation again and the railway will be of no small assistance to their profitable working. I may state that the Baddera mine at present is installing a large and valuable plant and is being carried on with a great deal of confidence by those interested in it. Members know the price of copper and lead at present is, unfortunately, low, and this has led to considerable difficulty in securing capital to work new mines or to re-open old mines, but the fact that the natural climatic conditions are favourable to mining, coupled with the construction of the railway, will, of course, add immensely to the mineral deposits north of Northampton and give them an opportunity for which they have been waiting so long. Members will remember just before the heavy and sudden fall in values of copper and lead a great deal of activity was being exhibited in this particular district and a large amount of prospecting work

was being carried on. The mines which had been neglected, for perhaps, running up to 30 years, were being worked in a small way by poor men with very great success. Unfortunately the collapse of prices had disastrous results not only on the mines but the individuals who had put their money and labour into the industry, and the result has been that for some few years past these branches of mining had been, in that district, comparatively neglected. The advisory board also were guided, to some extent, in recommending the railway by the possibility of the line being the means of testing other lands to the north of the Murchison river for agricultural purposes outside the 12½-mile radius. It is reported that the quality of the land north of the proposed line is good, but so far it has not been proved to be suitable for the profitable growing of cereals.

Mr. Troy: 'They have grown crops there already.'

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is anticipated to be good and this railway will give the opportunity to thoroughly test this land. It is expected that the Wibi, Wundi, Yuba and Ajana subdivisions, through all of which this line passes, will furnish sufficient freight to make it a payable proposition. These areas, as I have said before, will provide 170,000 acres of first class land, and at present there are about 200 residents. A large number of applications were received for these various blocks when they were thrown open. It is also anticipated that the line will serve the purpose of the pastoralists, and a considerable number of fat stock will constantly be brought for railage to the southern markets from the Murchison, and districts further north. As an agricultural proposition there is every reason to anticipate the line will be payable, and bearing in mind likewise the many possibilities of the district a few miles beyond it, I have the greatest confidence in submitting the Bill to the favourable consideration of the House. I beg to

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. TROY (Mt. Magnet): I have no intention to oppose this Bill, rather I welcome it. Whilst in this House a considerable expenditure has been agreed upon for the construction of agricultural railways in the southern portion of the State, very little consideration has been extended to the north, and seeing that a great deal of settlement has taken place in the areas mentioned by the Minister, I am satisfied that agricultural development in the north will proceed apace, as it has done in the south, if the people are only given railway facilities. I regret there is a considerable disparity as to the cost per mile for the construction of the different railways, and even admitting the extra cost for cartage from Perth to Geraldton, and other small expenditure, I do not think there should be that marked discrepancy in regard to this line compared with the Dumbleyung Extension, the Kattanning-Nampup and other lines. Similar material is being used, the gauge is the same, the weight of rails is the same, also the sleepers, the ruling gradients are all one in 40, and whilst I am prepared to admit that there will be some extra expenditure for the cost of carriage over the long distance, I do not think the comparison is fair in connection with this railway. I should have liked more information from the Minister in regard to it. Then, of course, there is the extra expenditure of the triangle at Northampton, and I am not a sufficient railway authority to say whether a triangle is necessary or otherwise. But if Northampton is to be the terminus as at present then, of course, there must be some arrangement at Northampton to reverse the trains. One objection I take to this project is the proposed alteration to the Northampton station at a cost of £5,000. This is added to the cost of the railway. I do not think that cost should be added to the railway; it is not proposed to expend that money on the railway but for an altogether different purpose. I believe the proposal of the Government is to have a new station at Northampton about one mile away from the present railway station.

Therefore there is no reason why the expenditure should be charged to this railway line. If that is the reason why the cost is increased over that of other agricultural railways then this item should not be agreed to. The £5,000 should be obtained from some other source. I am doubtful in my mind whether it is necessary to provide that new station at Northampton. I have heard no complaint regarding the existing station, and if the station is carried a mile further on, from my knowledge of the country, the new station will be situated in a gully. I have been to Northampton; it is a little town hemmed in among the hills. There is plenty of room for station purposes where the station is at the present time, but the country closes in at the proposed site. I do not think this expenditure of £5,000 is altogether necessary. The money could be expended in the direction of carrying some existing railway another five miles, thus granting a considerable benefit to some of the settlers. I agree with what the Minister has said with regard to the settlement that has taken place in that district. I know of hundreds of Murchison people, with whom I have been acquainted for years, who have taken up land in that district. They have come from the Murchison with some money which they have been able to save after working for several years and have become legitimate settlers who are applying themselves most industriously to the land. They are people who I am sure will do their best to develop that country, and the railway is necessary to assist them in their endeavours. There is one great obstacle that these people in the Ajana area have to contend with and that is the existence of a sand plain between Northampton and Ajana, which extends over an area of seven or eight miles.

Mr. Butcher: There are two of them.

Mr. TROY: I am stating what has been told to me by people in that district. We know well that a sand plain covering seven or eight miles would prove a tremendous obstacle to settlers, and if there are two of

them there would be absolutely no possibility of the people ever getting their produce to the market without a railway. With regard to mining development, that locality has always been famous for lead and copper. The district surrounding Northampton was exploited many years ago and produced a considerable quantity of lead and copper. The Geraldine mine I know well, and I remember when it was last worked. I have always been told that if there was better communication with Geraldton it would be possible to again work that mine with profitable results. I know two gentlemen who afterwards did well in Cue who worked the Geraldine mine. One of them is now a Roman Catholic priest in Geraldton and he and his cousin worked that mine for a considerable time and they have always impressed upon me the fact that with railway communication it could again be worked with successful results. They also assured me of the great agricultural possibilities of that district. Personally I have never been to the Murchison River.

The Minister for Works: A number of agriculturists went up there four or five years ago.

Mr. TROY: These two young fellows about whom I have been speaking went there eight or nine years ago. When they left that district they took up the Queen of the May mine at Cue, and afterwards sold it, but they have always had a hankering after this district. Since we are going to agree to this expenditure I hope that not only will agricultural development be encouraged, but that mining development will be encouraged also. I hope as a result of the stimulus which will be given to mining and agriculture that this line will not remain a non-paying one for any length of time. I want to say a few words with regard to the country north of the Murchison River. From what I have been told, and I believe the statement to be fairly accurate, crops have been grown at the Murchison River for many years past. People who own stations in that country have grown hay for themselves and they have had few

failures as far as I can learn. I believe if this line were extended to the Murchison River and the opportunity were given to people to exploit the country further north, the result would be profitable. We can only find out the possibilities of the country by exploiting it and by this experience, the country will be made gradually productive. If this line were continued to the Murchison River it would encourage settlers to go beyond that river and it would prove to us whether the land could be made productive from an agricultural standpoint. Of course I know well that the parties who hold land in these parts will not be agreeable to such a proposal. The Attorney General, who represents that district, knows that persons there have always made it known that the land in that country is not fit for agricultural purposes. The same argument will be applied to the land north of the Murchison River, but the sooner we know for ourselves the better it will be. While I desire to see agriculture extended, I think it would be a pity to ruin good pastoral areas by ploughing up the natural grasses and the natural scrub. In bad periods the place would be an absolute desert and it would not get back to its original state for many years, I welcome the Bill because it gives that portion of Western Australia an opportunity for development. I believe there are real possibilities there, not only from an agricultural but from a mining point of view. I do not rely very much on the argument that it will be possible to bring stock down from the northern districts by opening up this country because the stock route does not go to the Murchison River. I was along that stock route 12 years ago and I know that it goes more in the direction of Yalgoo. Stock will always come down *via* Yalgoo, because it is the better route. The Bill has my hearty support and I hope members will also give it their unanimous approval.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray): I have listened with considerable attention to the remarks of the hon. member who has just sat down, and there are two or three points I would like to deal with. I do not think he need worry

his head about the necessity for changing the station at Northampton. If this line goes on and the traffic comes to it as the Government think will be the case, there is not the slightest doubt about it that Northampton station will have to be considerably altered and as far as an expenditure of £5,000 is concerned, I do not think members need worry about that either. They may be quite sure whether the work of alteration is done by the Public Works Department or by the Existing Lines Department, the money will be spent to provide the best facilities.

Mr. Troy: This money is for the purpose of providing a new railway station in an entirely different place.

Mr. GEORGE: I am not concerned about that, but I have sufficient confidence in the officers of the department to know that they will use their judgment to place that station where their experience will tell them it will best serve the interests of the country. In my time the Northampton station was hardly adequate for the limited traffic we had then and any extension of traffic which has taken place during the last few years must have taxed the capabilities of that station very considerably to enable the work to be done. Now, with the extension of the railway from Northampton I should say that the probabilities are that they may have two trains a week over the extension but Northampton itself will have trains every day and there must be conveniences there for carrying on this railway. As far as the turntable is concerned, that is absolutely necessary; it is required at that station which partakes of a partially terminal character, and there must be a turntable or a triangle to enable the work to be done. In looking through the particulars given to members by the Government, there are various items on which I may perhaps be permitted to say a few words. With regard to the area, it is stated on the map to be 110,000 acres alienated and 339,000 acres available for selection, making a total of 450,000 acres. The particulars given on the sheet which I have in my hand vary materially

and are not as carefully put together as should have been done when this project was submitted to the House. I am not speaking with the idea of blocking the railway, but I think such a matter should be pointed out to the Minister so that he might see that more care is taken in connection with the expenditure and other things. For instance, I see here that the area available for selection, of which about 6,000 acres is already surveyed, is 440,620 acres, yet the map which we have here tells us that there are only 339,000 acres vacant; that is a difference of about 100,000 acres. A little further down we are told that the land available for pastoral leases is 300,000 acres, which I naturally assume is in addition to the 440,000 acres referred to above. Taking all these figures it appears that there are about a million acres to be served by this railway, but at the bottom of the paper I find this significant remark—"The total area within 15 miles of either side of the proposed line, exclusive of 15 miles from the starting point, and inclusive of 15 miles radius from the terminus, is 530,440 acres." Now, those figures do not agree.

Mr. Bolton: They are all guess work.

Mr. GEORGE: I would not like to put it in that way, but some explanation of them is due to the House. If the Minister has the figures he should give them to members: if not, it will be necessary for him to make enquiries, because this is information which a business man would naturally want to know. Then again, the Minister told us that there is a rainfall of 21 inches. I do not know much of this area myself, but I am inclined to think that this is a most optimistic estimate, and cannot be claimed to extend over the whole area. We are told that the land under cultivation this year totals 5,000 acres, and this, out of practically a million acres, is not much. It simply shows the buoyant spirit with which the Government have tackled the subject, and I take it they are acting on the report of the advisory board. Let me say here that the advisory board is a great safeguard for the House and the country in regard to

these matters, but whilst I am prepared to go nap, as the saying is, on their advice, I think that we ought to be careful in these particulars because they might leave the Government open to attack. One hon. member made reference to the Murchison River, and the member sitting on my right states that he has an extensive knowledge of this country, and that a great portion of it is sand plain, but it does not come within the range of practical politics for the present, at any rate. I quite agree with the member for Mount Magnet when he said that the pushing forward of these lines will encourage the people in prospecting and exploiting the land; that is what we ought to do in this country, and we are doing it at the present time. Some people may say we are going a little too strong, but I think we are quite justified in what we are doing, although it is just as well to have that little caution which experience gives us. There is another point to which I would like to draw the attention of the Minister for Works and of the House. We have here a line which is going to cost for construction alone about £1,500 per mile, and with rails and fastenings over £2,300 per mile. It is only a few years ago that a gentleman, who was regarded as a great authority in connection with railway construction in this State, and who has now gone into contracting, was pelting into me in the newspapers, which I suppose allowed him free space, and asserting that all these agricultural lines should be built at a cost of about £600 per mile, including rails. I am referring to this statement to show the absolute absurdity of the House allowing itself to be misled by persons, for objects of their own, with statements of this sort. The statement was ridiculous when we bear in mind that at that time rails alone cost over £450 per mile to land them at Fremantle. In this instance we find that the cost is going to be £1,500 per mile. Of course, the engineers may not spend all that, but I think they are quite right in getting a large amount so that there will be no trouble in the financing of the work.

Seeing that that is to be that cost, seeing that the ruling grade is to be 1 in 40, and seeing that the expense of the freight on rails and materials must be very heavy, something like £30 per mile, I am going to ask the Government to put decent sleepers into the line. It is proposed to use 8 x 4 sleepers, but those sleepers belong to the Noah's Ark time. Any practical man who owned a railway and had money enough, would throw those sleepers out of the line. The 9 x 4½ sleeper will hold the dogs and hold them for a long time, and there is not the same early necessity for re-boring them as there is with the 8 x 4 sleepers. During my term of office I was pitched into by members of this House for throwing sleepers out of the line, and great complaint was made about the waste of good timber, and the bad advertisement which the rejection of these sleepers was for the State, but if hon. members had been practical men and had seen those sleepers, they would have known that the frequent dogging and boring of them had practically cut them in halves. For that reason I am asking in behalf of the department and in behalf of the State, that in this instance, where the extra cost of supplying 9 x 4½ sleepers would be so small, and seeing that the life of a sleeper of that size is more than double the life of an 8 x 4 sleeper, that we should give the Commissioner and his men a decent line on which to run their trains. The extra cost in supplying these larger sleepers would be an absolute flea bite, and I am sanguine enough to believe that this amount of £1,500 per mile would be quite sufficient to put a decent sleeper into the road. The 9 x 4½ sleeper is strong enough to carry 60lb. rails, and on some lines where I replaced the 8 x 4 sleeper with the 9 x 4½, I afterwards put 60lb. rails on them and found that they were strong enough to carry them. If we put down 9 x 4½ sleepers on this line less ballast will be required, the cost of maintenance will be reduced tremendously, the knocking about of the rolling stock will be greatly diminished, and the confidence of the men working on the lines will be largely increased. We have

no right to give these men anything but the best road we can possibly afford. If the Minister will look into that matter he will find that the departmental officers will agree with me.

The Minister for Works: I will confer with the Engineer-in-Chief.

Mr. GEORGE: I am naturally interested in trying to get a good road for whoever has to run the railway. Even if it cost an additional £100 per mile, I ask the House to provide the money and put down a good line. I repeat that the maintenance would be cheaper and the rolling stock would not be knocked about to the extent that it is on the light road. I have not said anything about the other railway Bills, but where there are lines of this sort I would apply the same remarks in regard to the sleepers. I say that even if the Government have to ask the House for more money, we should give the men a decent line on which to run their trains.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. J. Mitchell): I would like to point out for the information of the hon. member who has just spoken that the figures on the map disclose the acreage under crop within a radius of 12 miles from the railway, whereas the figures supplied to members refer to the land within a radius of 15 miles on either side of the line. If the hon. member will total them up he will find that the difference is explained. It is true that we can find a mistake of about 10,000 acres.

Mr. George: There is more than that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the hon. member will add the figures up he will find that they agree approximately.

Mr. George: What about the pastoral leases?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is land suitable for pastoral purposes within this district, not necessarily within 15 miles of the railway, but sufficiently close to be improved by the building of it. I visited this district at the request of the Attorney General some 18 months ago; he had an idea that the Northampton railway should

be made a paying proposition, and he asked me to visit the district as honorary Minister, to see if something could be done to assist in the development of the country. We travelled over a fairly large extent of country and came to the conclusion that there was no reason why the Geraldton to Northampton line should not be made a payable proposition, nor why Geraldton should not benefit very considerably by the development of this country. We further came to the conclusion that such development could only be retarded by the lack of railway facilities.

Mr. Angwin: You forget that this is a mining railway as well as an agricultural railway.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not forget that, but I say that if there was no mining there the railway would still be justified.

Mr. Hudson: Do you consider 5,000 acres under cultivation justifies the building of a railway?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, but we have cut up 170,000 acres; 5,000 acres would not be sufficient to justify a railway anywhere, but it is the quality of good land available that justifies the line. The land in this district is fairly uniform, being in about the proportion of 40 per cent. indifferent, and 60 per cent. good; and if 10 per cent. of the land that is within 15 miles of the railway were to be put under the fallow system, the earnings of the line would be considerable. We realised that this district should receive attention, and that it would be necessary to build a railway if the best results were to be obtained.

Mr. Hudson: What is the difference between the land fit for selection and the land which is already thrown open for selection?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: So far as I am concerned there is no difference; the railway is quite justified. The land is not only good for agriculture, but it is particularly good for stock; I know of no sweeter bit of country in Western Australia. It is the desire of the Government to supply railway

facilities to every part of the South-Western division of the State.

Mr. Hudson: What about the South-East?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and the South-East too. I think that the South-East will need a railway if it is to be opened up. I went through that South-Eastern country not long ago, as the hon. member knows, but railway facilities to that district are not quite so urgent a matter as the building of this line from Northampton to Ajana.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have already pointed out that the railway will open up a magnificent stretch of country. I welcome the idea of developing the land nearest to our ports. This land is only sixty miles from Geraldton, and naturally the settlers will pay much less in freights than settlers in some of the areas recently surveyed. It is right the magnificent country around Geraldton should receive attention at the hands of the Government. Indeed it has received attention at their hands during the past year or two. I venture to say when this land is brought under the plough, when the area that claims Geraldton as its port is brought under cultivation, the North will tell a very different tale to the tale it now tells. The member for Mount Magnet made some reference to the question of encroaching upon the squatters' runs to the north of the Murchison. I agree with him heartily that it will be a bad idea to cut up a good pastoral proposition to make indifferent farms. I applaud the idea. I hope it will always be followed in Western Australia. I have no desire to take settlement outside a good safe rainfall, but I desire to see every acre of land capable of being put under plough put to its proper use. I have nothing more to say except to express the hope that when this railway is built all we expect of this district will be realised.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL.—ROADS.

In Committee.

Mr. Taylor in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: There are two copies of the Bill on members' files. The Bill we are dealing with is the one that has been amended by a select committee.

Clause 1.—Short title:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Bill had already been submitted to a select committee, and subsequent to the report of the select committee a conference of members representing both sides of the House who were largely interested by virtue of the electorates they represented in roads board administration met and went through its provisions and agreed that it would be advantageous to accept the Bill *pro forma* with the exception of a few clauses that might satisfactorily be discussed, and a few that might perhaps be amended. The clauses that this conference suggested should be amended were 196 and 64. They objected to the provision in Sub-clause 8 of Clause 196 exempting new settlers from rating for three years; and in Clause 64 they objected to the provision whereby a deposit of £2 was required from candidates for election. There was also a consequential amendment to Clause 64 in Clause 91. The conference further desired to strike out a few words in Clause 197. With this exception they recommended the Bill be passed *pro forma*.

Mr. Bath: What does that mean?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It meant in this case "without undue delay." The members for Pilbara, Perth, Guildford, Katanning, East Fremantle and Swan were those who took part in the conference, and their suggestion might be adopted, because there was not a single element of political

character in the whole of the Bill. The measure should be passed this session because so many requests had been made to him since he had become Minister for Works for some of the improvements the Bill contained. The roads boards urgently demanded it, and the previous Minister had received many communications on the same subject. The Government were prepared to assure members that if they were in office when the next session of Parliament took place, the House would be given a very early opportunity of reviewing this Bill and discussing any points in regard to which there might be some doubt. The effect of changes in legislation could only be found out after some little trial, and the passage of the Bill in its present form after analysis by two committees of the House was justifiable, because the work of these committees gave the measure a more thorough dissection than probably three out of ten measures brought before Parliament received. The merits of the measure could only be learned by actual practical test, and it was to be hoped the Committee would allow this practical test to be made in the interests of the roads boards.

Mr. UNDERWOOD : It was distinctly noted at the conference that Clauses 8 to 12, dealing with the power of the Governor to constitute road districts, would be discussed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS had quoted only the amendments recommended by the conference. Certainly the conference proposed that Clauses 8 to 12 might be discussed, but they agreed the clauses should stand as printed.

Mr. Underwood : That is so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : The conference recommended the same in regard to Clause 123.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 2 and 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Repeal ; First Schedule.

Mr. ANGWIN moved an amendment—

That the following subclause be added :—“(2.) In every un repealed Act in which reference is made to the ‘ District

Roads Act, 1871” or any other repealed Act providing for the constitution of road districts such reference shall be construed as having been intended to extend to the enactment for the time being in force providing for the constitution of road districts.”

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : There would be no opposition to the object the hon. member was aiming at, but the proper place for the amendment would be in the Cart and Carriage Licensing Act. A similar amendment to that measure had already been drafted, and he would have brought it in had time permitted. To put such an amendment in this Bill would only cause confusion. The first opportunity would be taken to bring down the amendment to the Cart and Carriage Licensing Act, and this amendment would meet the purpose aimed at by the hon. member.

Mr. ANGWIN : It was to be remembered that some of the roads boards in existence had not the power they were actually exercising. He had referred this matter to the proper authorities and been informed that this was the place for it. It might be two or three years before the Minister had an opportunity of bringing down his alternative amendment.

Amendment put and passed ; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 5, 6, 7—agreed to.

(Mr. Brown took the Chair.)

Clause 8—The Governor may constitute, unite, divide, or abolish districts :

Mr. BATH : Paragraph (e.) of Sub-clause 1 read as follows.—“The Governor may alter the boundaries of any district or ward by transferring any portion thereof to any other district or ward, or to a municipal district.” As had been pointed out by the late Premier, Sir Newton Moore, in reply to a deputation, Section 25 of the Municipal Corporation Act provided that outlying land could not be annexed to a municipal district except as the result of a petition signed by not less than 20, or by the majority of owners of rateable land in such outlying district. Since hearing that from Sir Newton Moore he had received a communication from

the Public Works Department enclosing the opinion of the Crown Law Department which, in effect, held that it was not necessary that the petition of 20 should constitute a majority of the owners of the rateable land. Consequently it seemed that less than a majority, if they happened to be 20 and signed a petition, could be made a basis of the transfer of the property. But, apart from this, the provision in paragraph (e.) of Subclause 1 was in conflict with Section 25 of the Municipal Corporations Act. This being so, which provision would decide the Executive Council in their determination of any question arising under the clause? Apparently there was no desire on the part of the Government to allow outlying territory to be summarily transferred to a municipal district without the consent of the residents thereof, and that being so he would suggest that the paragraph be amended by the inclusion of the words, "Subject to Section 25 of the Municipal Corporations Act." That would mean the land could not be transferred without compliance with the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act. However, even that did not appear to be entirely satisfactory. Possibly it would be better to add the words "Subject to the approval of the majority of ratepayers in such transferred portion."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Perhaps the wishes of the hon. member could be better met by still a third amendment. The fear of the hon. member was that a portion of a roads district might be annexed to a municipality without the consent of the owners of the annexed area. If the concluding words of the paragraph "or to a municipal district" were struck out, the whole difficulty would be removed, for any such annexation would then be subject to the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act. If the hon. member would move that amendment, he (the Minister) would accept it.

Mr. BATH moved an amendment—

That in paragraph (e) of Subclause 1, the words "or to a municipal district" be struck out.

Amendment passed.

Mr. BUTCHER: Was the discretionary power given to the Minister sufficient with reference to the abolition of the boards when their revenue fell below a certain figure? The Minister should have power to extend the life of boards to continue under a lower revenue.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This was entirely the same as the provision placed in the last amending Bill as introduced to Parliament, but the amount then was £200 and now it had been reduced to £150. The desire was that there should not be existing boards with powers of taxation yet with a revenue that was only sufficient to pay office expenses and to be of no service to the ratepayers. He had come across cases during the last few months where the roads boards spent more in administration expenses than they were receiving from the ratepayers. Instead of being a blessing they were a curse to the district. There might be exceptional cases, but this clause gave no power to deal with boards in exceptional circumstances. When the clause became law there would be no discretionary power whatever to the Minister.

Mr. BUTCHER: It would be unfair to some districts if that was the case. In principle the Minister's contention was a good one but there should be exceptions. It would be an extreme hardship to some boards in the northern part of the State if there was not discretionary power given to the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: An endeavour would be made to try and meet the desire of the hon. member by an amendment, if necessary on recommitment.

Mr. OSBORN supported the contention of the member for Cascoyne. There was a number of roads boards whose revenue from rates was not £150, yet he was sure they were doing very good work for the districts in which they were situated.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The only trouble was in the northern portion of the State and he might be able to meet the difficulty by exempting some

of the northern boards from the provision by an amendment in a later clause.

Clause as previously amended agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 12—agreed to.

Clause 13—Constitution of boards :

Mr. PIESSE moved an amendment—

That in line three the word "nine" be struck out and "eleven" inserted in lieu.

If the number of members of a board was limited to nine the usefulness of the Bill would be done away with in so far as some of the larger roads board districts were concerned. He referred to the districts which had large townships within their borders and these townships desired to recede from municipal power and to re-form into a roads board district. In the townships he referred to, especially those enjoying municipal government now, the rate-payers would not be content with the number of members the Bill entitled them to. A roads board district that had nine members, after absorbing a municipality, would not be content with nine members, therefore the number should be increased.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : There was no serious objection to the amendment but he did not like members moving amendments after an arrangement had been made. There were a few districts where the change would be advantageous, therefore he would offer no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed, the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 14 to 31—agreed to.

Clause 32—Manager to be registered :

Mr. BATH : The clause stated that the "manager or the owner" was to have the representation if requested. It should be manager "for" the owner.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : There was no need to make a formal amendment as the intention was to give the representation in the hands of the manager when the owner required it.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 33 to 48—agreed to.

Clause 49—Copies of rolls to be supplied :

Mr. BATH : The charge of 5s. for a roll was too high. He moved an amendment—

That the word "five" be struck out and "two" inserted in lieu.

Mr. PIESSE : Many local boards did not have their rolls printed, and therefore it entailed a considerable amount of labour to make these copies. From past experience the charge of 5s. had not been too much. The object of the hon. member might be met by amending the clause in such a way as to provide that the payment of 5s. should be in the case of where a roll was not printed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : The principal users of the roll were members of the roads boards themselves, who used them for election purposes. The printing of these rolls was very expensive work, and those who required the rolls should pay for them.

Mr. BATH : The charge was very exorbitant, and facilities should be given to enable the ratepayers to become possessed of copies of the rolls. He would agree to withdraw the amendment if the Minister gave the definite promise to provide something which would have the effect of enabling the ratepayers to copy the rolls themselves without a charge.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : The ratepayers had the right to inspect, and the inspection carried with it the right to copy. He would not object to making the right to copy undoubted.

Mr. BATH : Under those circumstances he would withdraw the amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

(Mr. Foulkes took the Chair.)

Clauses 50 to 63—agreed to.

Clause 64—Moneys to be deposited with returning officer :

Mr. PIESSE : The clause should be deleted from the Bill. Many of the country districts, especially in the newer districts, experienced great difficulty in getting candidates to nominate ; therefore, we should not place any difficulty in the way of inducing persons to come forward. He had never heard of a district having been put to unneces-

sary expense by a needless nomination, and, therefore, the Committee should agree to delete the clause.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No objection would be offered to the deletion of the clause.

Mr. ANGWIN: It was thought that a number of municipalities which existed to-day might become roads boards under the Bill, and there should certainly be a small deposit accompanying a nomination. If a candidate nominated, and he did not intend to go on with his candidature his deposit should be forfeited.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The clause was inserted at the request of a conference of roads boards. It was true that in some districts at different times abuses had arisen owing to persons nominating solely to create an election, or to cause vexation to other candidates, when they themselves had no intention of trying to become members of the board. There were many small districts covering large areas where it was difficult to obtain candidates, and any discouragement that was offered to them would be likely to create great difficulties. The Bill dealt with many widely diverse interests, and many districts which differed in character, and he had come to the conclusion that in spite of the recommendation of the conference, in the interests of the struggling districts, it would be better that the clause should be excised.

Mr. BUTCHER: The remarks of the Minister were appreciated, because he thoroughly grasped the situation. At one time he (Mr. Butcher) was chairman of a roads board, and he had to ride 125 miles to attend a meeting. If he had had to put up a deposit before his nomination was accepted or received, the chances were that he would have hesitated to nominate.

Clause put and negatived.

Clauses 65 to 90—agreed to.

Clause 91 (consequential) struck out.

Clauses 92 to 122—agreed to.

Clause 123—Appointment of officers:

Mr. BATH: This clause provided that in no circumstances could a secretary be appointed or removed unless with the

approval of the Minister. That seemed to be too great a limitation upon the powers of the local governing bodies. The Bill in many directions gave increased powers to the local bodies, but in this clause it was practically stated that the roads boards had not sufficient power to determine whether a secretary was suitable, or whether, if he proved to be unsuitable he should be removed. That did not seem to be in keeping with the spirit of the measure. What was the justification for the proposal?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The reason for the proposal was that the department had been asked to take that power to itself. Not long ago a case had occurred in which a man had been appointed as roads board secretary who was apparently unsuitable for the position, but as soon as he was appointed trouble was raised by the ratepayers, who appealed to the Minister for Works at that time to have the man dismissed by the board. The Minister had no power to intervene, and had necessarily to decline to act. This was what had led to the submission of the present clause. What was really wanted by the department was not the exact power conferred by this clause, but power to make regulations governing the appointment of such officers. The roads boards were doing all their work under the direct supervision of the Public Works Department, and were expending a large amount of public money. In the circumstances it was only reasonable that a fair amount of supervision over the expenditure of public money should be exercised. However, he would not object to the excision of the words of which the hon. member complained.

Mr. BATH moved an amendment—

That the following words be struck out of Subclause 2:—"and no secretary shall hereafter be appointed without the approval of the Minister, and any secretary may be removed from office by the Minister."

Mr. JACOBY: At the last conference of roads boards a conclusion had been come to that it was desirable that this power should be retained in the hands of the department. Practically half

the money expended by these boards was State money, and in those circumstances as a last resort in case of extreme necessity the Minister should have power to cause the dismissal of an officer.

Mr. BATH: How many cases are likely to arise?

Mr. JACOBY: One case that had arisen was of such a flagrant nature as to warrant the department taking such power. The power was not likely to be exercised improperly. Members had heard of such happenings as a family clique getting possession of a board, and appointing a family connection as secretary.

Amendment put and passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 124 to 195—agreed to.

Clause 196—What shall be rateable property:

Mr. JACOBY: Seeing services were rendered by roads boards whether the settlers were new or old, the question arose whether it was equitable to exempt new settlers from payment of rates to roads boards. The Government were fairly liberal with expenditure for main roads, but the roads must be maintained, and unless the boards had some revenue from the districts served by these roads it would be very difficult to keep the roads in order. The conference of members referred to agreed that Subclause 8 should be struck out, as it exempted new settlers for three years. He moved an amendment—

That Subclause 8 be struck out.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The subclause was inserted at the request of the Lands Department in order to serve the case of new settlers. It recognised the hardships incurred by men during the first two or three years after settling on the land. These new settlers used the roads to a limited extent only. They were also exempt from the land tax. However, he would not oppose the amendment.

Mr. PIESSE: If the subclause could be carried into effect its object was good; but in the new districts where the new boards were created the people were quite prepared to rate themselves as long as they had the power to do so.

Secretaries of boards looked upon this subclause and the work it would entail with a certain amount of horror. Unless it could be shown to him that the work could be carried out without any extra expense in regard to the valuation and office work entailed, and that the new boards could get larger amounts from the Government in the way of grants in the future, he would vote for the amendment.

Mr. DRAPER: If the subclause was inserted with a view to encouraging settlement it should not be struck out. It was a popular fallacy to suppose that settlers on conditional purchases were exempt from the land tax. We all thought they would be exempt, but that was not the case. The exemption was 1,000 acres of cultivable land, 2,500 acres of grazing land, or 2,500 acres of cultivable and grazing land combined. If a farmer held 1,500 acres of cultivable and grazing land he was liable to be charged 1d. in the pound as if the land was unimproved. Section 11 of the Land Tax Assessment Act provided that the holder must obtain a certificate from the Under Secretary for Lands that all improvements prescribed by the Land Act were carried out if he desired to obtain the rebate from improved land; but no improvements were prescribed by the Land Act except over a period of two years; the settler had two years in which to effect his improvements; and in consequence, the Under Secretary for Lands refused to give a certificate. So land held under conditional purchase, if it exceeded the limits mentioned, was chargeable under the Land Tax Act as unimproved land and liable to be full 1d. in the pound.

Mr. COWCHER: The subclause should stand. It was fully three years before settlers got any return after taking up land.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 197 to 205—agreed to.

Clause 206.—Valuation of subdivided lots:

Mr. DRAPER: Would the Minister explain why the words "or are not open for sale" had been inserted in the

proviso? He had spoken to several who were interested in the matter, but nobody seemed to know why these words had been inserted, or where they had come from. Briefly, it meant that if a man cut up a block of land into, say, 20 smaller blocks, so long as he did not declare those smaller blocks open for sale he could not be rated on the total number of smaller blocks in a larger amount than he had been paying on the whole block before subdivision. How had the words got in?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The amendment had been made at the request of one of the roads boards, which had given what appeared to be good reasons for the amendment. However, it was clear that it would be difficult indeed for a roads board to determine in some cases what land was or was not open for sale. As the department was not vitally concerned in the words he would offer no objection to their deletion.

Mr. DRAPER moved an amendment—

That in line 1 of the proviso the words "or are not open for sale" be struck out.

Amendment passed; the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 207 to 216—agreed to.

(Mr. Jacoby took the Chair.)

Clause 217—Board to prepare annual estimates:

Mr. BATH: Provision was made that the estimates should be prepared in July. Certain boards had pointed out that as they did not at that time know what subsidy or grants they would receive from the Government it was very difficult for them to make up their estimates. Could not the time for making up these estimates be extended?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The object of the clause was to force on the boards a due sense of their financial responsibilities in regard to the proper allocation of funds raised from their own ratepayers. This was why they had to make their estimates in July. The same provision applied to municipal bodies, but the time at which they had to make up their estimates was December,

in accordance with their financial year. The question of Government subsidy was not very seriously to be taken into consideration in making up these estimates, because the Government subsidy was not intended for maintenance, but rather for new works. The object of the estimates was to show what the boards were going to do for themselves in regard to local requirements. With certain boards which habitually rated too low, it had become a practice to allow important roads and bridges to fall into woeful disrepair, and then to approach the Government with a request for renovations which should never have been necessary. It was to keep a check on maintenance that these estimates were required. The provision was a valuable one, and he hoped nothing would be done to interfere with it.

Mr. Bath: It is not the estimates, but the time for making them up.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The estimates should be made up apart altogether from any question of what the boards were to get from the Government. Certain proposals had been submitted to him for an alteration of the year. One was that the year should end on the 30th June, and another that it should harmonise with the municipal year. If any change in the roads boards' year were made a corresponding change would be made in the date when the estimates were to be framed.

Mr. BROWN: There ought not to be any great difficulty about the making up of these estimates at the specified time. The majority of the boards knew what subsidies they would get from the Government, and it was quite easy to make their estimates in accordance with the clause. At the most it only meant carrying over a few pounds of unexpended money.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 218—Board authorised to strike rates:

Mr. GEORGE: Would the Minister explain the clause? Subclause 2 read—
"No such rates made in any one year shall (a) Exceed threepence, or be less than one penny, in the pound on the capital unimproved value of rateable

land." In the old Bill it had been left to the discretion of the roads board; why had the innovation been made? The rating power had been increased, and the clause was taking away from roads boards the discretionary power which they should have.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A very wide discretionary power still was left. Some of the boards had not shown their willingness to impose a proper rate. The time had come when roads boards should be made, if they were to get Government help, to rate themselves. During the last year there were no less than four boards who imposed a rate of a half-penny in the pound; three imposed a rate of only three farthings, and eight of one penny, and, amongst others being districts like York and Northam. If a board was not prepared to tax their own ratepayers the Government were not justified in taxing other sections of the community to improve the property in those particular road districts. Therefore the provision in the clause was a very moderate one indeed. In all the districts where the rate was low there was always a section of the ratepayers who were willing to pay more. They wanted improvements, and were willing to pay for them.

Mr. George: Only in words, and not in cash.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: While these subsidies and special votes were made, Parliament was entitled to demand that the ratepayers should contribute to the development of the district.

Mr. ANGWIN: If members referred to the report of the select committee they would see how this matter was managed. The Minister said that it would not be fair for the Government to tax other people to assist those who would not strike a rate. According to the evidence given before the committee when the Government forced a board to strike a rate, then the board reduced the valuation. It would be better to leave the minimum and give the roads board discretion. The Government could stop the subsidy to a roads board until a fair rate was imposed.

Mr. GEORGE: The minimum rate of 1d. in the pound was an innovation, and it could be well left to the discretion of the roads boards to fix the minimum. There were places in the South-West where not a pennyworth of service could be rendered, or was required, in fact the service could not be given, yet the people were heavily rated. The clause was quite sufficient when it said that no rate should exceed three pence in the pound. There were thousands of acres in the South-West that were not worth anything, and yet this land would have to pay the rate. He moved an amendment—

That in line 1 of paragraph (a.) of Subclause 2 the words "or less than one penny" be struck out.

Mr. BATH: The Government had a remedy against roads boards who, being required to tax themselves, reduced the valuation, for the Government had a supervisory power over the valuation of the roads boards. So far as the South-West district was concerned, the valuation was undoubtedly under the actual unimproved capital value of the land. There was no hard and fast rule to say that all should be rated alike irrespective of the value of the land. If there was no value there was nothing to tax. If settlers desired conveniences, these conveniences could not be carried out without money. The money had to be provided and the settler had to make up his mind that it was desirable he should have these things and pay for them or that he would grub along without them. There were those who desired to maintain large areas and secure those advantages and yet avoid the responsibility which they ought reasonably to incur, but at the same time under our inadequate system of representation they were given such an undue amount of power that they were able to control those who were desirous of having effective government and paying for effective work. If they wanted conveniences they should be prepared to pay a reasonable amount. It seemed to him that the minimum was a very modest one, and he could not see how anyone could object to a minimum of 1d. in the pound.

Take a block of one thousand acres, valued roughly at £1, the taxation on that would be £4 3s. 4d. If the person holding that block was situated half a mile further along than his nearest settler, how far would £4 3s. 4d. go in the very primary matter of clearing the road. If ratepayers took an interest in the matter and saw that the valuation was made on the unimproved value, there would be no injustice done. If they had valueless land then their value would be proportionately low.

Amendment put and negatived. Clause put and passed.

Clauses 219, 220—agreed to.

Clause 221—Rates to be made for the financial year:

Mr. BATH: It had been brought under his notice by the roads board in his district that it would be much more suitable if the roads boards were brought into line with the municipalities in this particular matter, and that the financial year should be made to end on the 31st October. Elections were held in March while the financial year ended in June. Candidates had to make a declaration of policy whilst the financial year was actually in progress, whereas in the municipalities the elections took place at the beginning of the financial year. The ratepayers in exercising their choice could have the views of the candidates as to the policy which was to be carried out for practically the whole of one year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The matter had been brought under his notice by the Kalgoorlie roads board and it had received a fair amount of consideration, but no case had yet been made out sufficient to justify an alteration. From enquiries made among members of several boards it was found that March and April were about the slackest months of the year for them, and for that reason the elections coming at the end of March came at the time when they had most leisure. If the elections came at the end of November, as in the case of municipalities, they would happen at a very busy time for them.

Mr. TROY: Which was the most important matter to consider, the leisure

of the settlers or the policy which had to be put before the ratepayers? After all there was a good deal attaching to the question of policy. The ratepayers were not likely to know how work had been carried on until there had been a declaration of policy and that could not take place until the end of the year. It was advisable in his opinion that the elections should be deferred until the end of the financial year.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 222 to 227 agreed to.

Clause 228—Appeals to the board:

Mr. FOULKES: This clause provided that "No appeal shall be entertained unless the appellant deposits in the hands of the Secretary, with the notice of appeal, the amount of the rates due and payable on any instalment there or then payable." This often worked a great hardship. Many ratepayers were not particularly well off and they were not able to pay the full amount of the rates in one year. If they did not pay the rates for one year and the rates for the next year fell due and they were still anxious to appeal, they would have to pay up all arrears before proceeding with the appeal. This clause was the only provision by which the appellant had to pay up the whole amount. His proposal would be to strike out certain words in the clause, and substitute words to the effect that the appellant should deposit the sum of £2 which would be regarded as security for costs in an appeal.

The Minister for Works: The hon. member must be looking at the old Bill.

Mr. FOULKES: There were two Bills on his file and he had picked up the old one. He hoped he would have the opportunity of moving the amendment even at this stage.

The Minister for Works: I will give you an opportunity of moving the amendment on recommittal.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 229 to 340—agreed to.

Schedules, Title agreed to.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 9.55 p.m.