

BILL—BUSSELTON-MARGARET RIVER RAILWAY DEVIATION (No. 2).

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [9.0] in moving the second reading said: The state of the Notice Paper now, thanks to the assistance of hon. members, fully justifies the motion they were good enough to endorse this afternoon. We have cleared a good part of the Notice Paper and now have an opportunity to go ahead with the more important business. Last session authority was given for a deviation of the Busselton-Margaret River railway, which is called deviation No. 1. It has been found that the limits of that deviation fall a few chains short of embracing what is thought desirable for the construction of the line. Hence the necessity for this Bill. The proposed deviation is warranted in order to provide a good junction with the Flinders Bay-Margaret River railway, which was purchased many years ago from Millars'. The second deviation will avoid the steep grades and unnecessarily sharp curves at the extreme north end of the Flinders Bay line. I have the plans here and shall table them so that members may investigate the matter for themselves.

Hon. T. Moore: Are the people of the district satisfied with the deviation?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think so, because it certainly improves the grades and shortens the distance. The Bill of last session was not quite sufficient by a few chains to cover the deviation required. The length of the deviation is $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles, the ruling grade 1 in 60 and the sharpest curve 10 chains. That is a pretty sharp curve. I should like to have curves of 20 chains radius.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Cannot you get better grades than 1 in 60?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is a reasonable grade.

Hon. A. Lovekin: It is costly to work.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes. This deviation will improve the line and the cost will be £7,000.

Hon. A. Burvill: What is the existing grade?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think 1 in 50. I take it this is the best that can be done to improve the line.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What about the resumptions of land?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: They are the ordinary powers embodied in every Railway Bill.

Hon. H. Stewart: They are not the ordinary powers.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Point of Order.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: On a point of order, is not this Bill foreign to the title? The title is "An Act to authorise a deviation of the Busselton-Margaret River Railway," but the

Bill contains clauses for the compulsory purchase of land.

The Minister for Education: It is possible to alter the title. I think there is something in the hon. member's contention.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Can you deviate without resuming the land?

The Minister for Education: If the hon. member will move the adjournment of the debate, I shall make inquiries and ascertain whether there is anything in his contention.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I did not ask the Minister to make inquiries. I asked for your ruling, Mr. Deputy President, as to whether the Bill is in order.

The Deputy President: Unless the hon. member wishes to proceed with his point of order, I would like him to accept the suggestion of the Minister and move the adjournment of the debate. To-morrow the President will be here and the hon. member can obtain a definite ruling from him. I have not yet had time to read the Bill.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Certainly.

As to papers.

Hon. H. Stewart: Will the Minister obtain any reports on the deviation and any information regarding the resumption?

The Minister for Education: Yes, and if I cannot get the papers by to-morrow I shall agree to a postponement until they are available.

On motion by Hon. J. J. Holmes, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 28th November, 1923.

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

QUESTION—PIECE WORKERS.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Works :
 1, Is it the policy of the Government that piece workers should not be included as employees in agreements with the Public Works Department ?
 2, If so, what are the reasons ?
 3, If not, will he notify the Public Service Commissioner to that effect ?
 4, Has he any objection to including a clause in public works agreements similar to Clause 14 of the existing carpenters' award, also paragraph (d) of Clause 8 of miners' award, both issued by Mr. Justice Draper, providing minimum wage for contractors ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied :
 1, Yes. 2, The men concerned do not work under direct supervision or control. 3, Answered by No. 1. 4, Yes.

QUESTION—CLOSE OF SESSION.

Mr. PICKERING (without notice) asked the Premier : Is he prepared to make a statement as to the probable date of the prorogation of Parliament ?

The PREMIER replied : No, but it will be as soon as possible.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Mullany, leave of absence granted to Mr. J. MacCallum Smith (North Perth) on the ground of urgent private business.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Brookton-Dale River Railway.
 2, Lake Grace-Newdegate Railway.
 Introduced by the Minister for Works and read a first time.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

Standing Orders Suspension.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [4-35] : I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Appropriation Bill to be introduced and passed through all its remaining stages this day.
 This is merely the Appropriation Bill appropriating the votes we have passed on the Revenue Estimates and the Loan Estimates. We can have the Bill later in the day.

Mr. SPEAKER : I have counted the House. There is an absolute majority present and, there having been no negative voice, I accept the motion as having been carried.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending the Bill.

BILL—VETERINARY SURGEONS ACT
AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX.

In Committee.

Resumed from 22nd November. Mr. Stubbs in the Chair ; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN : The Committee resumes consideration of the following new clause moved by Hon. P. Collier :—

8. Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act to the contrary, the income tax to be charged, levied, collected, and paid under this Act for the financial year ending the 30th day of June, 1924, shall be charged, levied, collected and paid on the income chargeable of the taxpayers, subject to the following deduction therefrom :—

(1) Any charge or expense other than capital expenditure incurred in the carrying on or conduct of any business, profession, trade, employment, or vocation.

(2) The travelling expenses incurred in producing or protecting income.

(3) Donations in money or kind to Government or incorporated institutions established for benevolent, charitable, scientific, or educational purposes.

(4) Moneys expended or placed in the hands of trustees for educational scholarships or bursaries.

(5) The sum of £50 for each child under the age of 16 years dependent upon the taxpayer.

(6) The sum of £50 as travelling expenses to every member of Parliament representing a Metropolitan, Metropolitan-Suburban, or West Province or an electoral district therein ; and a sum of £100 for every member of Parliament representing any other province or electoral district.

The provisions of this section shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the Dividend Duties Act, 1902.

The deductions and allowances set out in paragraphs (1) to (6) herein shall be in addition to and an extension of those prescribed by the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act, 1907.

The PREMIER : These deductions are already allowed, but I understand the hon. member wishes to make the position quite clear. In the Bill as it stands, mention is made of expenses actually incurred in Western Australia. We ought to add those words to the new clause. I move an amendment on the new clause—

That after "incurred" in line 2 of Subclause 1 the words "in Western Australia" be inserted.
 Amendment put and passed.

The PREMIER : Subclause 2 reads :—

The travelling expenses incurred in producing or protecting income.

These words are in addition to those already appearing in the Act. I have consulted with the Solicitor General and the Commissioner of Taxation, and we have no objection to this new provision. Sub-clause 3 reads :—

Donations in money or kind to Government or incorporated institutions established for benevolent, charitable, scientific, or educational purposes.

The Act dealing with this question uses the words "subsidised by the Government," and there has been some little trouble because of these words. Some educational institutions, for instance, are not subsidised by the Government. I do not think this subclause need be objected to if it is restricted to money given. I fail to see how the Commissioner could arrive at the value of donations in kind. Such donations could cover all manner of things, such as clothing or other small gifts, the value of which it would be difficult to ascertain. I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 3 the words "or kind" be struck out.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I realise there may be a difficulty in ascertaining the value of donations or gifts in kind, and that in the vast majority of cases these will be of small value. There are cases in which public spirited men have made valuable gifts, and it is unfair they should be called upon to pay income tax on them when they have given away such donations. A certain public man gave to a public institution in the city a gift valued at about £700, but he was not allowed to make any deduction from his income tax of this amount.

Mr. WILLCOCK: During recent years many donations in kind have been made to various charitable objects, and could not have been given in any other manner. I would quote the case of farmers who have contributed bags of wheat for some charitable object, and of squatters who have been kind to give bales of wool for the same purpose.

The Premier: The Lord loveth the cheerful giver.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We should encourage philanthropy of this sort as far as possible, and although difficulties may arise on occasion in assessing the value of donations in kind I think we should pass the subclause as printed.

Mr. PICKERING: This subclause would undoubtedly create difficulties in the Taxation Department. I question whether there is so much in the way of giving in kind in this State to warrant the making of such a provision. When gifts are made the donor does not usually wish to derive any financial benefit therefrom.

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

| | | | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Ayes | ... | ... | ... | 20 |
| Noes | ... | ... | ... | 17 |
| Majority for | ... | ... | ... | 3 |

AYES.

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Mr. Angelo | Mr. H. K. Maley |
| Mr. Broun | Sir James Mitchell |
| Mr. Davies | Mr. Pickering |
| Mr. Durack | Mr. Piense |
| Mr. George | Mr. Richardson |
| Mr. Gibson | Mr. Sampson |
| Mr. Harrison | Mr. J. H. Smith |
| Mr. Johnston | Mr. Teesdale |
| Mr. Latham | Mr. Underwood |
| Mr. C. C. Maley | Mr. Mullaney |

(Teller.)

NOES.

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Mr. Angwin | Mr. Lutey |
| Mr. Carter | Mr. Marshall |
| Mr. Chesson | Mr. A. Thomson |
| Mr. Clydesdale | Mr. J. Thomson |
| Mr. Collier | Mr. Troy |
| Mr. Corboy | Mr. Walker |
| Mr. Cunningham | Mr. Wilson |
| Mr. Heron | Mr. Willcock |
| Mr. Lambert | (Teller.) |

Amendment thus passed.

Mr. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 3 "incorporated" be struck out.

There are charitable institutions that are not incorporated.

Hon. P. COLLIER: This refers only to incorporated institutions that are established for charitable purposes.

Mr. LATHAM: It refers only to gifts made direct to hospitals under the existing Act. The word is not necessary. I have in mind institutions—not only hospitals—in country districts that are not incorporated.

Hon. P. Collier: This is in addition to all such reductions allowed for in the Assessment Act.

Mr. LATHAM: Anyhow, I hope the word will be struck out.

The PREMIER: The amendment is in addition to what is already provided for in the Act. The present provision reads—

Any payment to the board or trustees of any charitable institution incorporated or otherwise, or of a public park or reserve, or a university or public school. . . . subsidised by the Government.

Mr. Latham: Very few are subsidised by the Government; strike out "subsidised by the Government" and it will meet the case.

The PREMIER: The provision goes on—

Provided that such payment is applied solely to such charitable or other public purpose.

We want to encourage people to give, and so far as small amounts are concerned I agree with the hon. member. In regard to big sums, the taxpayer should be relieved of having to pay tax.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The word should certainly be left in, otherwise there will be an undesirable loophole. We know that all the institutions that are worthy of support are incorporated. I have in mind several funds in certain districts that are not incorporated, but to those nobody ever gives large amounts. There are people who might seek to evade payment of income tax by giving donations to educational institutions that are not incorporated, and in return secure free education for their children, and perhaps by reason of their gifts escape the payment of taxation.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: If a man gives £1 or £5, he gives it—

Hon. P. Collier: He might give £500 or £5,000.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: He gives it without troubling our taxation friends. If a man were giving, say, £5 and he knew that the income tax on that would be 5s., then he would give £4 15s. I do not give very much, but occasionally I give

away a shilling or so and I never deduct it when I send in my assessment. Certainly if the income tax were lower people might give away more. The thing remedies itself. If the Leader of the Opposition gave away £5,000 and the income tax on that, for the sake of argument, was £1,000, he would reduce his gift by that amount. The deductions only go towards creating an excess of officers in the Taxation Department, officers who have to go into the question of deductions. I want to see those officers growing spuds or onions, or something of that description. If taxation is too heavy, we do not give, but for goodness sake do not say, "I want a deduction from my income tax because of what I have given."

Hon. P. COLLIER: The hon. member's argument is not sound. If he is going to vote against the amendment mainly because of his desire to reduce the staff of the department, those men who are engaged in calculating deductions, the best thing would be to have an amendment of the Assessment Act and wipe out all the deductions.

Mr. Underwood: I would support you in that, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not think the hon. member would. It may be that the purpose for which the money was required, would not permit the individual to make the presentation unless someone else joined him in the contribution. In that case he could not follow the course suggested by the hon. member. If we have men who are prepared to come forward and render assistance of this description, it is only reasonable that relief from income tax should be given to the extent of the money involved.

Amendment put and negatived.

The PREMIER: Subclause 4 reads—

Moneys expended or placed in the hands of trustees for educational scholarships or bursaries.

I do not know that the proposed amendment is clearly worded. At times men invest a certain amount, the income from which is devoted to some educational fund. The money so invested reverts to the individual at the end of the period for which the investment is made. I take it the Leader of the Opposition does not wish to relieve that individual from the payment of tax on the amount invested.

Hon. P. Collier: No.

The PREMIER: The Solicitor General has expressed the opinion that such investments would come within the scope of the proposed amendment. I take it that what the Leader of the Opposition intends is to allow a deduction representing the amount actually spent in connection with educational scholarships or bursaries.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes.

The PREMIER: In that case the money would represent a donation and would be covered by Subclause 3 which we have already dealt with.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, that is not so.

The PREMIER: Perhaps the inclusion of the word "permanently" would meet the position and show that the exemption would only be in respect of money permanently expended for such a purpose.

Mr. Willcock: Like the Rhodes Scholarship Fund.

Hon. P. Collier: If the word "permanently" were included, the amendment might be construed as having no application to the man who invested money over a period such as five years.

The PREMIER: That would not get over the difficulty. The deletion of the words "or placed in the hands of trustees" would make it refer to a donation, and Subclause 3 would then apply.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, it would not, because Subclause 3 refers to incorporated institutions.

Hon. P. Collier: If those words were struck out only money expended would be taken into account in the exemption. That would get over the difficulty.

The PREMIER: Then I move an amendment—

That the words "or placed in the hands of trustees" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

The PREMIER: Subclause 5 reads—

The sum of £50 for each child under the age of 16 years dependent upon the taxpayer. The subclause seeks to fix the deduction for each child under the age of 16 years at £50, whereas the present deduction is £40. If the Committee agree to the amendment it will be necessary to secure a further amendment which will make it £90 altogether. It has to be remembered that men in receipt of lower incomes are not taxed now, and this will not apply to them. Men will require to have a reasonable income before any benefit will be obtained from the amendment. In my opinion £40 is a fair deduction for each child. I know that the amount involved does not represent a considerable sum. Under the existing provisions if a man has a quiver-full and a reasonable income, he is exempt from taxation. The proposed amendment would increase the number of people exempt from taxation. Our scale of exemptions is liberal and our taxation, particularly of the lower incomes, is moderate.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The amendment will bring Western Australian legislation into conformity with the Federal law.

The Premier: We do not do that in other matters.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But this is rather an important matter.

The Premier: Our exemptions are liberal and our taxes low.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But the exemptions disappear quickly. The amendment will encourage men with children to spend money that is necessary on their upbringing. If the proposal be not granted we shall be regarded as a poverty-stricken people that cannot follow the example of the Federal Government in granting exemptions for children. I move an amendment—

That the subclause be amended by striking out "£50" and inserting in lieu "£10."

This will have the effect of making the exemption for children £50 per annum.

Amendment put and passed.

The PREMIER: Subclause 6 reads—

The sum of £50 as travelling expenses to every member of Parliament representing a

Metropolitan, Metropolitan-Suburban, or West Province or an electoral district therein; and a sum of £100 for every member of Parliament representing any other province or electoral district.

To make more clear the intention of Parliament, I move an amendment—

That the subclause be amended by adding, "in lieu of expenses not exceeding £50 and £100 respectively."

Mr. CORBOY: Does the proposed amendment mean that in future the allowance will be definitely granted in lieu of the contentious allowance we previously had?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. MUNSIE: The Premier's amendment should not be agreed to. That is the law at present. The Taxation Department take the stand that if a member can produce a receipt they will allow the deduction.

Mr. Harrison: It is impossible to do that.

Mr. MUNSIE: Of course it is.

The Premier: They do not insist upon it.

Mr. MUNSIE: Last session an amendment similar to Clause 6 was passed at my instance, but another place added like words to those now proposed by the Premier.

The PREMIER: The present deduction appears in the Assessment Act and provides that the travelling expenses of a member shall be assessed at not exceeding £50 and £100 respectively.

Mr. WILLCOCK: This deduction, instead of appearing in the Assessment Act, will be in the Taxation Act. Unless it be carried members might be able to claim double exemption.

Amendment put and passed.

The PREMIER: I do not think the hon. member has taken into account that the tax under the Dividend Duties Act is paid by the company. I move an amendment—

*That the following words be struck out:—
"The provisions of this section shall apply mutatis mutandis to the Dividend Duties Act, 1902."*

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

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVES.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [5.46] in moving the second reading said: This Bill refers to two reserves. The first is reserve A 6922 at Darlington, where we have a National Park of 3,200 acres. This reserve contains about 156 acres. No portion of the reserve is suitable for a sports ground. Therefore it is proposed to buy 8½ acres quite near the railway

station, which are suitable for a sports ground. Those 8½ acres will cost £380. The 78 acres of the reserve which the Bill proposes to deal with are worth about £25 per acre. If this measure passes, £380 of the proceeds of sale of the 78 acres will be used to buy a sports ground as mentioned, one suitable for football and other sports. The reserve is gravelly, stony, and for the most part rough; but it is suitable for building purposes. I consider that more building land is wanted at Darlington, and certainly that more people, particularly those working at Midland Junction, should have the opportunity of living in the hills. The part in question is beautiful, very healthy, and high up, instead of being low down like the flats at Midland Junction. I do not think the reserve will ever be needed for a public park, and the National Park of 3,200 acres adjoins it. Part of the reserve dealt with by the Bill fronts the road to York, beyond Midland Junction, just on top of the hill. There is on it an old decayed wall, and an abandoned well. I will show hon. members the plan, so that they will understand the position exactly. But apart from the portion of which this Bill authorises the sale, there will be 3,278 acres left, which area I think quite a sufficient reserve for the locality. We do wish to preserve that part of the reserve dealt with which faces the road. The wild flowers and the timber on that part really constitute its beauty. The vegetation will be preserved to a considerable depth from the road. A deputation of local residents, accompanied by the chairman and secretary of the road board, gave me to understand that there was no objection to the proposed sale of part of the reserve.

Hon. P. Collier: Has the proposal become widely known amongst the residents?

The PREMIER: I believe so. The residents are more concerned to secure a sports ground on which they can have sports, such as tennis, cricket, and football.

Mr. Johnston: The reserve is further from the railway station, too.

The PREMIER: Yes. The other proposal of the Bill is simply to take portion of reserve A 136 at Donnybrook, on which school quarters are erected, and to hand over that part to the Education Department for educational purposes. The reserve being of class A, there is really no right for the existence of the school quarters on it. There was also a school on the reserve, but that was lately destroyed by fire. The school itself has been re-erected elsewhere, but the quarters remain on this reserve. There appears to be some objection to that, and so, if the House agrees, the reserve will be changed from class A and converted into a reserve for public purposes. Notwithstanding, the reserve will remain in the hands of the Crown. I trust the House will agree to both proposals. I have here two maps which I will make available to hon. members. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.53]: I understand that two separate blocks of land at Donnybrook are concerned, one on which the school originally stood, and the other on which the school quarters now stand.

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. PICKERING: Is it intended to treat the reserve as one block under this Bill?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. PICKERING: The area is a very attractive one. Having been used as the site of a school, it has had a certain amount of money expended upon it in the way of planting trees; and it forms an attractive feature of the town. On the reserve there is also a tennis court, which is used more or less by the public. It was hoped that the block would be gazetted as a public reserve. I should be sorry to think that at any time, the Government might sell a portion of the block for building purposes.

The Premier: That will not be done.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [5.55]: This Bill does not seem to be very important, but we have need always to be careful of the manner in which we dispose of class A reserves. For that reason it has been the practice to adjourn the debate on such a measure as this, in order that the public and more especially those persons who are particularly concerned, may know of the proposal. There is a danger that if Bills are brought in and passed at one sitting, the deed may be done before the outside public or those concerned know anything about it. In the past Bills which looked harmless, but which really meant a good deal to the people of the locality concerned, and in fact to the people of the State, have been passed too quickly. In this case perhaps the Premier will agree, in the event of the second reading being carried to-day, to take the Committee stage to-morrow. In the Darlington case a considerable portion of the reserve is involved, though, as indicated by the Premier, the area remaining will be considerable.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [5.57]: From the plan referring to Darlington I notice that the land known as Bilgoman Well is not situated on the section proposed to be alienated.

The Premier: No.

Mr. JOHNSTON: It is just as well that that should be made clear. The area referred to is one of the most beautiful spots on the main road. Moreover it is a watering place, and a most delightful picnic ground.

The Premier: That piece is not being disposed of.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I would offer strenuous objection to its being alienated. However, I now understand that the Government do not intend under the Bill to dispose of it, but to alienate land adjacent to and south of Bilgoman Well.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—YARRAMONY-NEWCARNIE RAILWAY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 22nd November.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [5.58]: I have no objection to the construction of this railway. It is a line which has been promised for many years. The necessity for it arises from the fact that the Dowerin line was carried too far over from the Eastern Goldfields railway, and that thus there is too great a distance between the two lines. But I fail to understand the necessity for going to Newcarnie, nor has that necessity been explained. The Minister for Works merely said that by going to Newcarnie it would bring railway communication to settlers in close proximity. But it would make no difference to the residents of the area if this line were carried into Merredin, where a railway depot already exists. That course would also assist greatly in the working of the railways. A good deal of harm will be done by carrying the line on to Newcarnie. It should be carried into Merredin, in order to save expense. Merredin, as hon. members know, is becoming one of our principal country centres. Three or four lines already run into the town. It will make no difference whatever to the residents adjoining the route if the railway is carried into Merredin. The present railway Bill has one exceptional aspect, and that is the distance it proposes to allow for deviation. From a point about ten miles from the junction of the line on to Newcarnie, the margin allowed for deviation is two miles, on both the northerly and the southerly side. Then for the next 10 miles a deviation of five miles on the north side is provided for. Why should there be a greater deviation along the last 10 miles? It almost appears as though the survey had not been properly carried out.

The Minister for Works: I should not say that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I can see no other reason for it. If for 70 miles a deviation of only two miles be required, and then it suddenly becomes necessary to provide for a deviation of five miles, there must be something wrong with the survey. Alternatively, is it the intention of the Government to carry the railway nearer to Nungarin instead of to Newcarnie? Merredin, to the south, is on the main goldfields line. Newcarnie is further north. Then we have an angular area going down 10 or 12 miles from Newcarnie, the line being taken in a northerly direction to Newcarnie, where another depot will have to be erected. I am not a railway expert, but I cannot see why that line could not have been carried down to the existing depot at Merredin. The Railway Department is ever anxious to have as few depots as possible.

Mr. Harrison: Yes, it tends to economic running.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: This is the only objection I have to the line. The people in the district have been there for many years, and the land is as good as is to be found in any other part of the State. The line will serve Yorkrakine, where, in 1909 or 1910, I assisted the Premier to settle a lot of unemployed from Fremantle. Many of those men went to Yorkrakine without a shilling.

Out of 50 men 35 still remain and are now thoroughly established on their holdings. They have been handicapped by reason of their distance from the two existing lines. The proposed line has been promised for many years, in fact I think it was first promised by the Labour Government. Before the Bill goes through Committee we should have all information on the Table, including reports from the Railway Department, we should have a thorough knowledge of the necessity for diverting the line as has been done, and should be informed of the reason for this six-mile deviation. Personally I think Merredin should be the terminus of the railway.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [U-4]: I quite endorse the hon. member's remarks. This railway runs largely through the Avon electorate. For part of its length it is almost on the boundary between Avon and Toodyay. I know the area fairly well. I went up there with the first Railway Advisory Board, of which Mr. Brockman was a member. We then inspected the various classes of country to be traversed by the line. The farmers midway between the Dowerin-Merredin loop and the Eastern Goldfields railway have been under great difficulty in point of carting. Only yesterday I received a letter from one of them who has to cart 18 miles into Wyalcatchem from Hindmarsh at a cost of 2s. 3d. per bag. He puts down 9d. per bushel as the tax he has to pay to get his wheat away. Other farmers are carting up to 24 miles for the reason that they cannot get a direct route to the nearest siding. The average distance carted by those farmers not within the policy zone of 12½ miles is from 17½ or 18 miles up to 24 or even 25 miles. In consequence, it is two months and even three months after they have their harvest off before they can get their cereals away to a receiving centre on a railway for transport to the port. We can imagine the handicap under which those farmers are labouring in point of their seed bed preparations for the next crop. Had it not been for the exceptionally good quality of the soil where this proposed railway will run, the men now on the land and making good in spite of the existing difficulties, could not possibly have remained on their holdings.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And but for the good prices they have had for their products.

Mr. HARRISON: Yes, they certainly had good prices during war time. To-day we have the seeding prices and the increased preparation of the soil to be provided for. In future those men must have more time for the preparation of their seed beds than was necessary in the past when their seed was distributed on newly cleared land. If they are to continue farming an area largely in excess of their existing fallow, they must have more time on their fallow land. Unless they have railway facilities they cannot continue their present mileage of carting and at the same time clean their fallow land to prepare a proper seed bed. Several of the districts to be served by the railway constitute fine tracts of country. The line is not starting, as was previously expected, at Ucarty, but at Yarramony, slightly nearer to Northam and takes a curve on account of the rise in the country. I am told the department has been able to get

through with a grade of one in 80, a much better grade than we have on many other agricultural railways. The line runs from Yarramony to Hindmarsh in very fair country, which at Hindmarsh is particularly good. From that, for a distance of about 18 miles on to Yorkrakine, there is some good country near the proposed railway, but on the south it is not quite so good. The railway will mean that a lot of land other than that the Advisory Board dealt with, will be brought into cultivation. At Yorkrakine and at North Baandee we have some of the best agricultural soil in the State. I endorse everything the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) has said in that respect, and so, too, in respect of the junction at Newearnie. I am not aware why the junction should be there. I do not know if there is anything in the mind of the Railway Department or of the Government in respect of future railway propositions. I have seen certain plans showing the existing Bencubbin line curving round to Newearnie. But to go in a direct route from North Baandee, where the line turns northward into Newearnie, two or three miles from that point the surveyors could not have got through to Merredin at a grade of one in 80. They were not told to make further surveys to prove whether it could be done by deviation. I think the officer must have been authorised to junction at Newearnie. Newearnie is nearly midway between the two wider positions. As the line curves into Merredin it almost strikes the centre. It will save a few miles by going on the proposed route, as against the route to Merredin, but the distance from Newearnie to Merredin is about 13 miles. The engine can be stabled at Merredin with a light run on the present loop, while the cars go on. It will not be necessary to take the goods through, for they can go to Perth via Northam without being taken on the full train. From that point it would mean a saving of four miles.

Sitting suspended from 6-15 to 7-30 p.m.

Mr. HARRISON: After we get a few miles past North Baandee towards Danbarring there is a specially good belt of country. I notice the deviation referred to by the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) goes in a northerly direction. From the plan it appears that this is done because of the Lake country taking a curve northwards. There is specially good country from the two lakes running north into Newearnie. I am not sure whether that is the reason for the railway taking that direction. I am informed that had the line gone straight through, making a curve into Merredin, the nature of the country would have been such that it would have been difficult to get a grade of 1 in 80. In the vicinity of Kodj Kodjin the deviation is one of only two miles. The reason why the deviation northward is of five miles is on account of the large lake, that is 2½ to three miles across. That would be one of the reasons why on the north side, from Kodj Kodjin right through to Newearnie, there is this particular deviation of five miles. I am not prepared to say whether this is right or not. I wish to pay a tribute to the settlers in the district. When the Minister for Works was

through the area two years ago he stated at the various centres, where he addressed the farmers, that he wanted no battle of routes, that there would be great danger if there was any controversy that the capital outlay would be spent in some other part of the State. The Minister has carried out the survey, and no attempt has been made by me or anyone else that I know of to cause the Government officials to make any alteration in the line north or south.

The Minister for Works: I stated that when speaking.

Mr. HARRISON: I support what the Minister says. I congratulate the Minister and his officers on having carried out the survey so soon after his visit to the district. I also wish to pay a tribute to the settlers, who have freely allowed the departmental officials to survey a route that will traverse as nearly as possible through the country to be served. I do not think there has been any influence at work in this connection. I have received letters from two settlers suggesting a different place for a siding as it would better suit the roads already constructed. When the line is constructed I hope the opinion of these two settlers will be taken into consideration.

The Minister for Works: That was one of the reasons for latitude being allowed in the deviation. A siding should be placed on the most convenient site from the road point of view.

Mr. HARRISON: The estimate of the Advisory Board made some years ago was that this line would meet running costs. There has been a good deal of soldier settlement in the district consequent upon the purchase of the Quelagetting estate, north of Meckering. There are now returned men settled over the full length of the proposed line. When the Advisory Board reported to the House there was scarcely a returned soldier settled there, because the Agricultural Bank did not consider it advisable to advance money on property so far from a railway. The estate I refer to was purchased prior to the survey, but the settlers were given to understand that a line would go through in the near future. Soldier settlers were placed on the area and some of them are doing remarkably well. I am safe in saying that since the report was furnished there has been nearly 100 per cent. increase in the area cleared and brought into cultivation. That is a great advance in four years. Holders who established themselves there four years ago have increased their areas, and the new settlers have added to the acreage under cultivation. At the time the report was made, of the 223,013 acres in the area, 126,529 acres of forest country were cleared, the balance, 96,584 acres of forest land, being uncleared. In their report the board mentioned only the area outside the 12½ mile limit from the existing railways north and south. The area that will be served by this railway will extend over a greater distance than was taken into account by the board. I know of no other part of the State where there is so much need for railway facilities, and which has waited so long a time for them. I have the greatest confidence in appealing to both sides of the House to support this Bill. I am sure members will do so. I trust when the Bill is passed the line will be constructed at an early date.

Mr. PIESSE (Toodyay) [7.40]: The farmers who will be served by this line will be most grateful to the Government. The development of this part of the country fully justifies the speedy construction of the line. The position of the farmers in this district has been a hard one. When they cart their wheat on their 12 mile journey they have to start at 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. I was informed by the wife of one farmer that during the carting of the harvest she had to rise every morning at three o'clock in order to cut sandwiches for her husband and the teamster. One farmer in the Yorkkrakine district has to cart 6,000 bags. These conditions will exist until the line is built. I wish to impress upon the Government the need for doing this at an early date, and for constructing other lines where farmers are similarly situated. The settlers cannot successfully carry on their operations if they have to wait 12 years for railway communication. There are many cases of this kind. Farmers working under these conditions are entitled to special consideration at the hands of the Government. In one or two instances I know of men in the district started farming late in life. They are nearing the end of their allotted span, and the work is extremely hard for them. Not only is the strain felt by the farmers but by their stock. Horses are worn out carting grain 12 or 15 miles. In one or two cases farmers have to cart a greater distance than that. I hope members will realise the position of these people and will permit, without delay, the construction of the line. I am grateful to the Government for bringing down this Bill.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams - Narrogin) [7.43]: I support the construction of this line and commend the Government for introducing the Bill. Undoubtedly this railway will serve one of the best wheat and sheep areas in the State. By this Bill the Government are remedying a mistake made in the past when the Dowerin-Merredin line was built so far north of the main goldfields line. Perhaps it is a good thing it was built there, because when the new line is constructed this entire area of magnificent fertile country will be properly and adequately served and developed. I endorse the remarks of members who have spoken on this subject with regard to the fine type of settler in this area. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) had a good deal to do with the settlement of the Yorkkrakine portion of the district. The settlers have won success in the face of very adverse conditions. I am delighted to think that the authorisation of this railway will bring a ray of hope to them and enable them to properly and profitably work their holdings. It appears to me that the construction of railways is getting a good deal behind their authorisation. One railway of great importance to the State and to my electorate has been authorised for nine years, but has not yet been built,

though this is not the fault of the Minister for Works or the Government. The local irritation as to the route was responsible for the delay. Now that the railway is to be authorised by Parliament I hope there will be no delay in its construction. Whilst I commend the Minister for introducing the Bill, I am sure the settlers of the whole of that area would be pleased if he would outline the intentions of the Government in regard to the early carrying out of the work. The Government too, have done a wise thing in deciding to build this railway right through to the existing railway system at the eastern end. Dead-end railways are objected to by the Railway Department and by everyone else, and the Government have done the proper thing in deciding to make this a through route line as proposed in the Bill. It would have appeared to me as a layman that the proper place to take the line to was Merredin, and I hope the Minister will tell us the reason for not doing so. Of course if he acted on professional advice, I shall be quite content.

Hon. T. Walker: It may go further north.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I would like to know, whichever route was decided on by the Government, whether the decision was arrived at on the advice of the professional officers of the working railways and Public Works Department.

The Minister for Works: You may be sure of that.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I remind the Minister of the difficulties being experienced by the settlers in regard to cartage of wheat. Now that the line has been surveyed, I ask the Minister to seriously consider whether it would not be the proper thing to attempt to provide transport facilities for the next harvest and to give settlers "dumps" for their wheat in the meantime.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [7.50]: With almost everybody who has spoken, I am desirous of obtaining more information in regard to this line. Seeing that the proposal will involve an expenditure of half a million we should be entitled to the fullest information. The Minister did not give us many particulars that we were entitled to expect from him. For instance, we were not given an idea of the advisory board's report in connection with the project; we were not told what difference the line will make to the working railways, how much freight it will carry; how much land is available for settlement along the route; whether there are any big estates likely to be served and which can be acquired by the Government before the construction is authorised, and many other details of a similar nature. Personally I am in the dark about the whole proposal. It is all right for the Minister to declare that the member for the district can give the House all the information, but if I were member for the district, of course I would be biased in favour of the construction, and I would get

everything that was favourable to the carrying out of the work and place it before the House. We should, however, get an entirely unprejudiced statement from the Minister. Looking at the plan I noticed that there are one or two large estates that are likely to be served by the construction of the line. There is one of between 6,000 and 7,000 acres in extent. We have no particulars regarding that.

The Minister for Works: I am not aware of anything of the sort.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Glancing casually at the plan we find that this big property is in the hands of one individual. There may be other blocks of a similar size, or areas that have been subdivided which will ultimately benefit from the building of the line.

The Minister for Works: What is the name of the owner of that big estate?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I did not take particular notice of the name on the plan. We are also entitled to know what freight is likely to be available for this railway to carry, and whether it will or will not pay from the commencement. We know nothing at all about it. Apparently the Railway Department and the Advisory Board have confidence in it because a new departure has been taken in connection with the construction of the work, inasmuch as there has been a recommendation that 60lb. rails should be used instead of rails of 45lbs. That recommendation would not have been made unless the officials were certain that the railway will handle a good deal of traffic.

The Minister for Works: The 60lb. rails are to be adopted by the Government for all new lines.

Mr. WILLCOCK: For experimental lines, and lines that will not carry much traffic?

The Minister for Works: This is not an experimental line.

Hon. T. Walker: There will be a lot of traffic on this line as well as on all the new lines on the wheat belt.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I agree with that policy and I am glad to know that someone has seen the light in connection with railway construction in respect of the permanent way, and more important still, the question of grades. For too long have we carried out railway construction on grades of one in fifty and one in sixty. When it is realised that a difference of 100 per cent. will result in the haulage capacity of an engine by having easier grades, the economic importance of this question will be generally admitted. The policy of the past apparently has been to declare that a grade of one in sixty would do well enough. It would pay the department where such grades exist to spend £5,000 or £6,000 in effecting alterations so as to permit the haulage in many places of at least 50 per cent. more freight.

Mr. Harrison: It would be sound economy.

Mr. WILLCOCK: On the Wongan Hills line a mistake was made in some places of having the one in sixty grade instead of taking the line around the side of a hill, even

to the extent of going 40 or 50 chains further. If this had been done, the expense of running would have been materially reduced. Generally speaking the question of regrading should have been taken seriously into consideration by the department long before this. I notice that a certain amount of money is to be spent on the regrading of the line from Geraldton to Mullewa. There are places along this section where for years train loads of 180 tons have been carried, and where, with an expenditure of between £15,000 and £20,000, the grades could have been so altered over the whole of that distance of 60 miles to provide for an additional load of at least 40 per cent. This would mean the running of two trains in the place of three.

The Minister for Works: And you could take a 300-ton load.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I repeat that I am pleased that in connection with future railway construction the question of grades will receive consideration. A grade of one in eighty is reasonable, unless of course the conditions are exceptionally favourable such as those existing between Kalgoorlie and Port Augusta. The member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) expressed the hope that this line would be constructed immediately. Some time ago the Premier said that the utmost the country could do in the way of railway construction for the next four or five years was to build 100 miles annually. According to the report of the Commissioner of Railways we have now under construction 350 miles of lines. If that is all that the Government intend to do in the immediate future, and as the member for Williams-Narrogin pointed out there are several lines to be constructed before this is put in hand, we cannot expect that a commencement will be made with the work in question for at least four or five years, unless of course the Government have materially altered their policy. The Government's policy in regard to railway construction, however, was definitely announced. In any case it is not desirable that we should have so much railway construction, because it has been represented often that the lines already built equal a mile to every 95 persons in the State. If we carry out the lines already authorised and complete those under construction the ratio in the space of a couple of years will be a mile to every 90 persons. We cannot afford to build railways at that rate. I was rash enough to say on one occasion that I would not vote for the construction of any railway until we had put through a closer settlement Bill by which we could deal with all unsettled lands adjacent to railways. I do not know that we can continue to construct railways at the rate at which we are authorising them at the present time. We have two railway Bills already introduced and two more are to follow. I suppose, in the aggregate, they mean between 200 and 250 miles of line. It is ridiculous to expect the country to be able to stand railway extensions at that rate per annum. Our

interest bill will be enormously increased, and we are already overburdened in that respect.

Mr. A. Thomson: You voted for the expenditure of four millions very cheerfully last night.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not mind so far as the Loan Estimates are concerned; I am talking particularly about railway construction.

Mr. Harrison: The Advisory Board declared in regard to this railway that it would pay expenses from the commencement.

Mr. WILLCOCK: As to the Loan Estimates dealt with last night, 50 per cent. of the money voted was to be loaned to individuals to be repaid eventually.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think we had better keep to the Bill instead of discussing the Estimates.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The expenditure on railway construction is an entirely different matter. Although the Advisory Board have reported that the line will pay, the fact remains that we have never had an agricultural railway line constructed which has paid from the inception.

Mr. Harrison: But this is an exception.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is all very well. They are all exceptions when they are placed before the House, and we are then told that the necessary expenditure will be more than met by the freight derived from the working of the line. Notwithstanding optimistic reports, it is not often that they prove to be correct in practice. Western Australia cannot afford to pursue the policy of railway construction at the present rate and continue to be solvent. We are getting too far ahead of development. Everywhere one goes, one hears an outcry for the development of the land adjacent to existing railways. Despite that fact, year after year Bills are brought before Parliament authorising the construction of additional railways. In some instances these Bills are placed before the House without adequate information to warrant members in agreeing to the proposals. We have now a mile of railway to every 95 people in the State. That is a proportion practically unequalled in any other part of the world. We are told that we are a virile people, but notwithstanding that, we cannot make the railway position worse to any considerable extent, without jeopardising the safety of public finance. I do not feel that I can take strong exception to the present proposal at this stage, because I believe that the railway will not be constructed for two or three years. When it is constructed I hope the line will prove as profitable as hon. members suggest. I commend the Public Works Department officials or whoever was responsible for the ruling grades being kept down as low as has been done. The department should not stop at an expenditure of £10,000 or even £15,000 in order to avoid the heavy grades we have in other parts of our railway system at the present time.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [8-3]: When members accompanied the Premier through the Eastern Wheat Belt we had an opportunity of seeing some of the fine country along the route, through Yorkrakine, North Baaandee and other centres. We were impressed by the valuable tracts of country we traversed. Since then I have

had opportunities of getting more in touch with the country in that part of the State, and have travelled considerably throughout those areas. There is every warrant for a railway through these districts. It would have been wiser had the original route been more closely followed, and then extensions could profitably have been made in one or two directions. As the position stands to-day, however, the settlers concerned have made good, and they should be supplied with the railway facilities that are so necessary for successful farming operations. Every hon. member knows it is necessary that a farmer should be within a reasonable distance of a railway. If mistakes have been made by previous Governments in constructing lines, it would be penalising the people concerned if we did not take their interests into consideration. I am satisfied that every member will realise that an obligation is due for fulfilment in connection with this particular railway. I hope the Minister will take heed of the advice given to him and show the utmost expedition in proceeding with the work when the line is once authorised. I trust the prediction of the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) as to the delay that will take place in connection with the line will prove to be incorrect. It would be a great pity if the Government found it impossible to proceed with the construction of the railway for some considerable time. It has been the practice to authorise the construction of a line and then to refrain from constructing it at the earliest possible moment. Once the settlers know that a line has been authorised to their district, they expect the construction to be proceeded with as soon as possible. I support the second reading of the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington—in reply [8:8]): I thank hon. members for the considerate way they have discussed the Bill. I have nothing to complain of concerning their remarks because they have been characterised by common sense. I thank the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) for what he said regarding the grades. It should be self-evident that the better the grades the larger will be the amount of traffic to be carried at practically the same expense in engine power and staffing. As I mentioned by way of interjection, instructions were given to the surveyors to get all the levels they possibly could. A grade was given to them, of course—I in 80—but they were instructed to look for levels wherever possible. The reason why 60 lb. rails will be used is as suggested by the member for Geraldton. We know that the heavier rails are more economical because we can use heavier engines on the lines so constructed. There is another consideration, and I am sure the member for Geraldton will appreciate the point too, and it is that the train crews have greater confidence when they know that they have a really strong line under their engines. They can carry out their duties with more justice to themselves and to the department as well. I am not aware of any big estates along the route of the proposed line. No question of that sort has been raised within my knowledge. I have been through the district personally, accompanied by the member for the district, and I know that a large number of settlers there deserve every consideration possible

to enable them to get their produce away with the least expenditure of time in carting to the line. At one particular place we went to, it was pointed out to us that it was all the settlers could do to get in with a load by starting early in the morning, and getting back late at night. If the line were constructed as proposed, we were assured that they could take two loads daily to the railway line within a reasonable time. As to how much extra freight will be secured when the line is constructed, all the wheat produced along that line makes its way to the railway now, but when the line is constructed I am convinced it will encourage other people to settle on the undoubtedly large areas of fertile land that the railway will serve. Those areas were referred to by the Advisory Board in their report and they are known to every hon. member who has been through the district. I know the feeling of members is that every assistance should be given to men who have gone out into the back country and faced the conditions ahead of them—men who have stuck to their guns through good and through bad times. It is such men who are entitled to the consideration of the House. The main question raised to-night was as to why the terminus had been fixed at Newcarrie instead of Merredin. I gave a few reasons when I introduced the Bill, but, judging by the course of the debate to-night, I think the House is entitled to have some more information under that heading. If members will agree to pass the second reading of the Bill, we can take the Committee stage to-morrow, and I will have all the information asked for by members ready for them. There is no desire to hide anything. No arbitrary instructions were given to the surveyors, who were simply told that the Government desired a line that would fairly serve the people on both sides. They were asked to consider the road approaches to the line and to place stations where the main roads would fit in for the great bulk of the produce to be carted. Hon. members will find that due consideration has been given to those points.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister should have made these points more clear when moving the second reading of the Bill. These questions have not been raised during the course of the debate.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I had a note saying that the member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) referred to the question of sidings and to the roads leading to the line.

MR. SPEAKER: Then the Minister may proceed.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I thank hon. members for the way they have received the Bill, and I will have all information necessary for them during the Committee stages.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Will you place the file on the Table?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will endeavour to collate all the information asked for and give it to the Committee in tabloid form.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: This represents such a departure from the usual procedure in railway construction that I would like to see the file.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will have the file for the perusal of hon. members.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILLS (3)—RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

- 1, Inspection of Machinery Act Amendment:
- 2, Lunacy Act Amendment:
With amendments.
- 3, Kojonup Racecourse:
Without amendment.

BILL—APPROPRIATION.

All Stages.

Introduced by the Premier and read a first time.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [8.17] in moving the second reading said: This is the usual Bill to appropriate the moneys already voted by Supply Bills, by the Revenue Estimates and by the Loan Estimates. It is not necessary for me to speak on the Bill, because we have so recently passed the Estimates, which now take appropriation form.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have not passed the amounts of Advance to Treasurer.

The PREMIER: They are all set out clearly in the Bill.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They are paid and we have no voice regarding them.

The PREMIER: I think you have too much voice. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Clauses 1 to 3 and Schedules A to E—agreed to.

Schedule F—Consolidated Revenue Fund:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I wish to draw attention to page 7, "Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, Soldiers' Land Settlement." When the Estimates are introduced each year we have no votes under this heading, and members consequently are debarred from discussing either of these departments, except on the general discussion immediately after the Estimates have been introduced. Yet we are asked to vote under this Bill £7,147 5s. 3d. If that amount were included in the Estimates, it would lay the whole of those departments open to discussion. This amount has been paid from Treasurer's Advance. I do not wish to enter into a discussion on the workings of the departments at this juncture, but amounts are paid from Consolidated Revenue to those departments and the Estimates are framed in such a way that we are debarred from having a proper discussion, as we are entitled to have. There have been complaints before of the Estimates having been drafted in this manner.

I hope that in future an amount will be included, instead of showing transfers to this and transfers to that account and the vote "Nil." The Treasurer should direct the attention of his officers to the matter and avoid a repetition of this sort of thing.

The PREMIER: I agree with the hon. member that the House should have an opportunity to discuss every item of expenditure, unless governed by special Acts. Of course the hon. member did discuss the departments concerned fully. His suggestion that a vote be left so that members may discuss every item will not be lost sight of.

Mr. PICKERING: Does the Premier intend to give effect to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on soldier settlement?

The Premier: We are giving effect to them at once.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Will the recommendations of the select committee on the Industries Assistance Board be given effect to as far as possible?

The Premier: I cannot say they will be given effect to, but they will be considered.

Schedule put and passed.

Schedule G, Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—LAND ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 22nd November. Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Improvements under Parts V. and VI.:

Mr. A. THOMSON: Under the Act certain conditions are laid down. Is it intended to depart from them, are lessees to comply with them, or is the Minister to have the right to say what shall or shall not be done?

The PREMIER: Hon. members know full well that a selector under residential conditions must take possession of his holding within six months, and thereafter carry out improvements. All that is asked for under the Act is that certain improvements shall be made over 10 years. Certainly, they are twice the value of the improvements to be made under residential conditions. But as the improvements under the Act can be made in less than two years, many people neglect to touch their land in those two years. So we say that the work of improving the land shall be commenced within six months, and that the stipulated value of improvements shall be done within two years.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I have no objection to the clause, although I doubt whether it will effect its object. Improvements should be made; and the sooner they are made, the better for the country. However, it is one thing to make laws, and another thing to see

that those laws are respected. What strikes me in regard to the existing law is the manner in which improvements are frequently neglected. There are very few Lands Department inspectors: rarely does any inspection take place. If the Lands Department desire to have more frequent inspections, they should have inspections made by the Agricultural Bank and Industries Assistance Board inspectors. The Bill promises well; but unless administration follows up legislation, there can be no result. That is the position to-day.

The PREMIER: Many inspections are made by the Agricultural Bank inspectors; and we have also special inspectors, who have done a great deal of inspecting during the last few years.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Pastoral leases:

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The clause is indeed difficult to read.

Hon. P. Collier: Difficult to understand.

The PREMIER: It is very clear.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I have two Land Acts here, but when one comes to study the Bill, and compare it with those two Acts, one finds that one must go back to the principal Act, and possibly to three or four more Acts, before one can get the sense of the present Bill, and particularly of this clause. It seems to me that the word "until" in line 3 of Subclause 1 must come out; otherwise the subclause will not read at all. Apart from that, the clause is still very difficult to understand. I wish to know what is meant by the "excess of rent" or "double rent" with 7 per cent. added. Does that mean double rent, or does it mean the price at which the land is now classified?

Hon. P. Collier: The difference between the old price and the new.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Exactly. But as the clause reads, those words mean double rent. Numerous areas have been classified at less than the double rent.

Mr. Teesdale: Not much up our way. We got it in the neck.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Some of the country has been classified at three, four, or even five times the rent specified in the principal Act. Does the subclause mean that rent with 7 per cent. added?

The PREMIER: It means 7 per cent. on the amount fixed as rent.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: But that is already paid. To me it does not seem clear that the intention of this Bill is to allow holders who have declined to come under the Act previously to come under it now.

The PREMIER: They can all come under it.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I think that should be stated. The PREMIER, when introducing the Bill, said that there were—as is indicated by Clause 1—certain people who held over 1,000,000 acres of land. In 1918 such holders were given to the end of the war to dispose of their surplus land. Such a holder must have come under the Act either for the whole of his land or for none of it.

The PREMIER: No. Such a holder could renew 1,000,000 acres, and leave half-a-million acres under the 1920 Act, or sell out.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Of those who declined to come under the Act, there were some who held less than 1,000,000 acres. Does this Bill permit them to come under the Act?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: By which clause?

The PREMIER: By Subclause 2 of this clause.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: That subclause merely extends the time of the 1918 Act till one year after the close of the war. The provision refers to people holding more than 1,000,000 acres.

Hon. P. Collier: No; to those who did not take advantage of the other provision within the time limit. Under this clause they may now do so until June of next year. Quite a number did not take advantage of the provision allowing them to convert.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I assure hon. members that this Bill requires some considerable time to look through. We want to know that we are not passing legislation which will cause complications in the future. Having made a fairly good attempt to read this Bill, I say that I find it most difficult to understand.

Hon. P. Collier: All our Land Acts are.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: Our principal Land Act dates back to 1898, and there are at least 20 amendments of it. To get at the meaning of a little Bill like this, one has to go through perhaps 20 Acts of Parliament. The Act we passed this year was not a consolidation but merely a different system of printing the Acts.

The PREMIER: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 the word "until" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have delved into this and I find that, as the member for Pilbara says, it is very difficult to understand. It means giving to those persons who did not renew their leases from 1928 to 1948, an opportunity to do so now.

The PREMIER: That is right.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am not prepared to vote for that, except in respect of leaseholders having but comparatively small areas. The people regret more than any other piece of legislation in recent years the scandalous Act of 1917.

Mr. Underwood: It was a very bad Act.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It was indeed. The Bill seeks to allow those who did not avail themselves of the Act of 1917 to come under it now. It means that those who had leasehold at that time and who continued to pay the lower rent, enjoying good seasons, have been able to sell out to unfortunate persons when the leases have only a couple of years to go. In that way a number of people have been practically taken down, believing that the leases would not expire until 1948, whereas, when too late, it was found they would expire in 1928. To other leaseholders the Bill affords an opportunity to correct the mistake they made six years ago.

Mr. Teesdale: It does not matter so long as they pay up.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But it does. The passing of the Act of 1917 was a scandal.

The Premier: Some of the leaseholders bought excess areas.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Even so they should not be allowed to retain a million acres. At this stage of our development we have no right to be leasing a million acres to one person or syndicate. Unless the areas be reduced, where are we to get land for the population of the future?

The Premier: The areas can be taken for agriculture at any time.

Mr. WILLCOCK: That is not of much practical use. We thought that in 1928 a number of the leases would be surrendered, thus affording opportunity to establish closer settlement on them.

Mr. Teesdale: Most of them are but small.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Some of them are, but others run up to a million acres. There are persons who, notwithstanding the law, are beneficially interested in more than a million acres. By forming themselves into a limited liability company they are able to dodge the law.

Mr. Teesdale: It means separate holdings with separate managers.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Well, what does that matter? It can be done and has been done. The majority of those desiring extensions hold areas of over 200,000 acres. Those big leases within 50 miles of Sandstone could with advantage to the State be cut up into small areas. The holders of those leases have dodged their responsibilities and avoided paying the extra rent, declaring that they were prepared to surrender in 1928. Some lessees have since unloaded on to unsuspecting persons, while others are now asking the Premier to be allowed to come in under the 1917 Act. It is peculiar that at the end of each session we should have some Land Act amendment dealing with pastoral areas. These Bills are brought down at a time when we cannot give them proper consideration.

Mr. Pickering: The leaseholders will eventually pay additional rent.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, on the newly appraised value. But they ought to have paid double rent until the land was re-appraised.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They did not get interest on the money they paid in. This puts some on a better footing than those who originally took up the land.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, it does. The House would make a grievous mistake to perpetuate these leases.

Mr. Teesdale: There are a couple of teamsters with 50,000 acres. You would not handicap them?

Hon. M. F. Troy: You have a lot of sympathy with teamsters, you have.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But the Bill must treat everybody alike. Why should any man or syndicate want a million acres in Kimberley? Such an area cannot be fully utilised without very great capital.

Mr. Pickering: What do you suggest as an alternative?

Mr. WILLCOCK: That the leases continue until 1928, and then be surrendered to the Government. The Government could then renew them in smaller areas. The Government would willingly grant a renewal of a small lease, but where there are 750,000 acres in question, and a leaseholder wants a renewal, the Government

would be justified in saying it was too much for one man and restrict him to, say, 200,000 acres, utilising the remainder for further settlement.

Mr. Angelo: Where are the 750,000 acres?

Mr. WILLCOCK: Some 50 miles from Sandstone, towards Leonora. We never seem to have an opportunity of discussing arbitration awards and industrial matters, which may seriously affect the development of the State, but when it is a question of some little privilege given under the Land Act we always get it at the end of the session. The newspaper this morning shows that the pastoral industry is the most important in the State, from the wealth point of view.

Mr. Teesdale: At present.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am speaking with regard to the production of wool. If it can be proved that an area of 250,000 acres is sufficient to enable a man to keep 20,000 or 30,000 sheep, the Government should give an opportunity to other settlers to take up such holdings. I cannot support the pernicious principle contained in this clause.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I move—

That progress be reported.

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

| | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|-----|----|
| Ayes | ... | ... | ... | 16 |
| Noes | ... | ... | ... | 19 |

Majority against ... 3

AYES.

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Mr. Angwin | Mr. Marshall |
| Mr. Chesson | Mr. Munle |
| Mr. Clydesdale | Mr. Troy |
| Mr. Collier | Mr. Underwood |
| Mr. Cunningham | Mr. Walker |
| Mr. Heron | Mr. Wilson |
| Mr. Hughes | Mr. Willcock |
| Mr. Lambert | |
| Mr. Lutey | <i>(Teller.)</i> |

NOES.

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Mr. Angelo | Mr. Mann |
| Mr. Broun | Sir James Mitchell |
| Mr. Carter | Mr. Money |
| Mr. Davies | Mr. Pickering |
| Mr. Durack | Mr. Plesse |
| Mr. George | Mr. Sampson |
| Mr. Gibson | Mr. J. H. Smith |
| Mr. Johnston | Mr. Teesdale |
| Mr. Latham | Mr. Mullany |
| Mr. H. K. Maley | <i>(Teller.)</i> |

Motion thus negatived.

The PREMIER: There are leases aggregating 258,000,000 acres that will expire in 1948. During the six months ended 30th June last we released Crown lands, which had never been settled, to the extent of 9,275,000 acres, and we are releasing month by month land at the rate of a million acres a month. All these leases expire in 1948. We, therefore, have 258,000,000 acres, the leases of which expire in 1948, 6,000,000 expiring in 1928, and many other million acres of country leased since 1918, Crown lands, that are being utilised for the first time, also expiring in 1948. This clause says that those who hold leases that

expire in 1928 may, after June, 1924, apply to come under the extended term.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : One extension was given previously. That is quite sufficient.

The PREMIER : The leaseholders will then have to pay additional rent from 1918, and 7 per cent. interest on the money above the ordinary rent they have paid in the meantime from 1918 until now. That is reasonable, and gives them an opportunity of bringing their leases under the Act. There is some slight doubt about the proper time for dating the leases already taken up, but this clause sets that beyond doubt. The extensions are provided for elsewhere in the Bill.

Hon. M. F. TROY : The clause now under discussion contains the real intention of the Bill. The Premier : Yes.

Hon. M. F. TROY : It confers upon certain individuals a privilege which they could have availed themselves of previously. One can truthfully say the Bill was brought in, not because of any general demand for it, but at the request of certain individuals who will profit by it. Whilst legislation affecting the great masses is readily thrown overboard, this type of legislation always find a place with a Government of this character. On the last day of last session a Bill was introduced giving the pastoralists the right to pay lesser taxation under the system of road board taxation than other people. These leaseholders received the 1948 tenure, and despite that, they wanted a decreased rating value as against other people. And they got it, too. There was no demand for that legislation except from the Pastoralists' Association. The unfortunate thing is that other legislation, absolutely important legislation, such as the Fair Rents Bill and the Workers' Compensation Act Amendment Bill, will not get any consideration. But at the last moment legislation of this character is introduced. The Premier made certain statements which will not bear too close inspection if any weight is to attach to them. The Premier stated to-day that he wished to bring about uniformity in regard to this legislation. He says that 258 million acres have been leased under the 1948 tenure. There is a large acreage yet to be leased under the 1948 tenure, and there are the six million acres which were leased prior to the amendment Act of 1918, and in respect of which the privilege of extending the lease has not been availed of. The Premier tells us that he wants to secure this legislation because it will bring about increased revenue. Of course it never appeals to the Premier that four years hence these leases fall in, and become Crown lands, and that the improvements on them then become Crown property.

The Premier : Oh, no !

Hon. M. F. TROY : Don't they ?

The Premier : No.

Hon. M. F. TROY : I am pretty sure that a lot of this land legislation, if tested, would be found to be invalid. One of the Kimberley 1,000,000-acre leases was held by Mr. Emanuel, who did not bring it under the 1948 tenure. It has been sold by Mr. Emanuel.

Hon. W. C. Angwin : It was some of the best land there.

Hon. M. F. TROY : It must have been good land, because Mr. Emanuel was a pioneer. A

pioneer must get the good land, or be a foolish man.

The Premier : He deserved it.

Hon. M. F. TROY : Quite so. However, he did get good land. I read recently a reference, I think by Dr. Battye, to the settlement of the pastoral country of Western Australia. It stated that the Emanuels went into the Kimberleys first, and that they got the best land. They deserved to get it, being there first and encountering all the early difficulties. However, the lease I speak of was never brought under the 1948 tenure ; why, I do not know. Possibly Mr. Emanuel was holding more than he was entitled to hold under the Act. Now that lease has been sold, and the only purpose of this Bill is to bring the new lessee, and other lessees similarly circumstanced, under the new Act. If the Premier wants revenue, let him bear in mind that in four years these areas will fall in, and that then the Crown can get more for the leases than is being obtained to-day. Of course the Premier does not want that. On this list which has been produced there are altogether about 70 lessees who hold land and have not brought it under the 1948 tenure. I am strongly of opinion that a large number of the people to whom the member for Roebourne refers as holding 10,000 acres are people who have no desire to come under the 1948 tenure, and who have never asked for the privilege to do so. Their names are on the list in order to camouflage the purpose of the amendment.

The Premier : No.

Hon. M. F. TROY : One of these lessees owns a station in Nannine, and holds 20,000 acres in the Kimberleys. One can understand that 20,000 acres in the Kimberleys are not of much use to a squatter who has his station at Nannine. I am perfectly satisfied that he, like many others, took up blocks here and there for speculative purposes, and let them drop as he went on. I know of dozens of persons who have taken up Crown lands in the Murchison and abandoned them—journalists, for instance. I draw attention to the facts as I see them. There are other cases of holdings in the North-West by southern pastoralists similar to the case I have quoted.

The Premier : If a man does not use his land, it is forfeited.

Hon. M. F. TROY : From a perusal of this list one might be led to believe that the holders of these small North-West areas are desirous of obtaining the extended tenure. This Bill has been introduced for the purpose of serving two or three people. The 750,000 acres adjacent to Sandstone, to which the member for Geraldton referred, is a district I know very well. There is no reason whatever why the original holders should not have transferred to the 1948 tenure. They knew all about it. Not one of them could plead ignorance. They were well aware of the object of the 1917 amendment. The nearest boundary of the 750,000 acres is within 50 miles of Sandstone. I know the gentleman who purchased the area, and it is he who desires the extension. The 750,000 acres represent a remarkably large lease to give to one man, being so accessible from the railway line. My objection is that the 1948 tenure should never have been established, and, particularly, not 10

years before it was necessary. I have heard it put up from time to time that the lessees must have some guarantee of tenure. They had the guarantee they stipulated for. They had their contract with the Government. Their leases were due to expire in 1928. Evidently the lessees knew it. Any man who leases a property knowing that it is to fall in within three, or five, or 10 years, has no cause for complaint when it does fall in. Our contract had been kept with these pastoral lessees and theirs with us. Therefore, so far as we are concerned, the lessees can have no complaint against this House. In 1917 a majority of this Chamber gave them the right to extend their leases. Some of them did not avail themselves of the opportunity. Some of them still refuse to avail themselves of the opportunity, some of the very people on this list. Small areas in the Kimberleys and in the North-West, areas like 20,000 acres, are too small to bother about. Even on the railway line 20,000 acres is too small an area. I am sorry for people who purchased with the full knowledge that their leases expired in 1928, but that is not our fault.

Mr. Teesdale: You will admit that but for the extension there would not have been many improvements.

Hon. M. F. TROY: That would not have mattered. The leases would have fallen in, and in 10 years' time there would have been double the present improvements. I am satisfied of that with regard to any pastoral country within 50 miles of a railway line or a port. In Mt. Magnet there have been 20 applications for an annual lease. I have been deluged with correspondence from men anxious to secure an annual lease. For one block at Mt. Magnet recently there were 16 applicants. I have several objections to this amendment. The Bill was brought in for a privileged few. The other amendments are merely camouflage.

The Premier: No, they are not.

Hon. M. F. TROY: This clause is the purpose of the Bill.

The Premier: Improvements are the purpose of the Bill.

Mr. Teesdale: Improvements have been made.

Hon. M. F. TROY: It must be remembered that these people purchased their properties with a full knowledge of the facts. No one can deny that. They knew what the tenure was. No matter what political party may be in power, Ministers will not act unfairly towards anyone. If these men came forward and declared that they had done certain things which entitled them to a continuance of their leases they would receive that consideration. It is not to be conceived for one moment that any Government would penalise a lessee who took up Crown lands in the Kimberley district after 1928. Nor would greater consideration be extended to such individuals than to the existing leaseholders. Valuations are made by the valuers appointed in accordance with the legislation and those officers will not give a man land at 10s. or £1 per thousand acres and yet assess other men's holdings taken up later at £2 per thousand acres. The House would not approve of that practice unless it could be proved that the land assessed at the higher rate had additional advantages or was more valuable. I cannot support the Bill. I did not approve of

the amendment proposed in the 1917 Act. I looked upon it then as a breach of faith with the young men of this State. That legislation anticipated events by at least 10 years. It was legislation such as has not been enacted elsewhere in Australia.

The Premier: You are wrong there.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I am right. I was in Parliament at the time and know the facts. The Government of the day took advantage of the pre-occupation of the people in the progress of the war, and passed that legislation. For 20 years there can be no closer settlement in those great pastoral areas adjacent to our ports and railways.

Mr. Teesdale: You can get a few million acres in the Kimberleys.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Away back from the coast?

Mr. Teesdale: No, on the coast.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Even the most conservative Government may require to purchase estates for closer settlement, but they would not go to the Kimberley areas for that purpose. They would purchase areas close to the big centres of population and to the ports. In this way, the development of Western Australia must proceed outwards from the centres of population. Pastoral leases, too, must be developed in this way. Had the 1917 Act not been passed, the time was not far distant when the pastoral leases adjoining the railways and out from Carnarvon would have been cut up into smaller areas and thus carried three or four times the existing population. That is how the settlement of the State must progress. That is how it has progressed. I will not support this legislation because it is introduced for the sake of a privileged few. On their account important legislation is thrust aside and this Bill given precedence. It is unfortunate that these people can demand that precedence as against more pressing legislation.

The Premier: They have not done so.

(Mr. Munsie took the Chair.)

Mr. ANGELO: Until the 1917 Act was passed the pastoral leases were to expire in 1928. It was pointed out to the Government, and the explanation was later advanced by the Government, that the reason why the extension of the pastoral leases was required—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No reasons were advanced for it at all.

Mr. ANGELO: The explanation was that the financial institutions and bankers generally would not lend money for the improvement of pastoral leases having such a short tenure as existed at that time.

Mr. Lambert: That was bluff.

Mr. ANGELO: If hon. members know anything about pastoral areas, they will realise that it takes from 10 to 11 years to build up a station.

Mr. Lambert: But the institutions had already lent the money!

Mr. ANGELO: It is only during recent years that the price of wool has reached its present figure. Three years ago they talked about dumping wool.

Mr. Willcock: Yes, for about two or three months.

Mr. ANGELO: It was because they could not get a decent price for the wool. The 1917 Act—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Which is the greatest blot on the Statute Book—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Hon. members must keep order.

Mr. ANGELO: The 1917 Act allowed pastoralists to continue their leases with the 1928 tenure at the existing rents, but gave them the opportunity of extending their leases till 1948 subject to a re-appraisal of rents. Many pastoral lessees, particularly those owning the older established stations, as well as those who were making profits out of their holdings, took advantage of the opportunity offered to them and extended their leases to 1948. It was anticipated at the time that double rent would be secured from the pastoral lessees throughout the State. In some cases, however, the rent was multiplied five times. Instead of paying a rental of 10s. per thousand acres, some leaseholders had to pay 50s.

Mr. Hughes: And those are the people who are making enormous profits.

Mr. ANGELO: They are making good incomes because two splendid seasons have been experienced and because wool has reached a phenomenal value previously unknown in Australia. A few of the lessees did not take advantage of the opportunity to extend their leases. The Premier in introducing the Bill said that the total area of the leases affected represented six million acres out of 300 million acres of pastoral lands within the State. The number of lessees quoted by the Premier was 85. If we strike an average therefore, it means that the area per lease is about 90,000 acres. A perusal of the list furnished by the Premier shows that at least two-thirds of the acreage with which we are concerned will be found in the Kimberley, Eastern and Eucla divisions. In the Kimberleys there are tens of millions of acres for anyone who desires to take up holdings there. Government surveyors have furnished reports showing that magnificent country is available there, well watered and with an abundance of fodder.

Mr. Marshall: And well infested by dingoes and other pests.

Mr. ANGELO: I would not care how much land a man took up in the Kimberley district because it is empty at the present time, and the improvements carried out would assist in development there. The area affected by the Bill in the North-Western division is small indeed. With the exception of one or two holdings the acreages are trivial. It may be asked why these people did not take advantage of the opportunity extended to them in 1917 and renewed again in 1918, and thus extend the tenure of their leases from 1928 to 1948. Members may not credit the fact but I know some of those leaseholders who were not aware of the legislation referred to.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You must be pretty soft to let them put that up to you.

Mr. ANGELO: The member for North-East Fremantle lives in the middle of a flourishing city with all the comforts of modern civilisation.

Newspapers are brought to his door day and night.

The Minister for Agriculture: Don't paint too alluring a picture!

Mr. ANGELO: The member for North-East Fremantle also has the privilege of listening to the enlightening debates in this Chamber and probably knows what legislation has been dealt with. Many of the people in the back blocks however, are working 200 or 300 miles away from the nearest port. They do not see newspapers unless it be, perhaps, a copy of the "North-Western Times," which is more often than not filled with news of local happenings.

Mr. Marshall: Sometimes the papers are so old that the print is worn off them.

Mr. ANGELO: In several instances men who have taken up pastoral leases have been drovers, teamsters, station hands and others. In one instance a telegraph operator took up portion of a block. These men did so in the hope that at some time they would have sufficient money to enable them to establish a station. When the rents were doubled, however, they could not afford to keep on their holdings. They stuck to the 1928 form of lease in the hope that they would be able to get into the business later on. There is only one instance of a decent sized station in the North-West which is included in the list referred to. I specially mention that station because I feel confident that the Committee will be sympathetically inclined in that instance. The lease is owned by a dear old gentleman in South Australia who has been blind for many years. Having money, he assisted four of his nephews, who represent as fine a type of lad as ever came to Western Australia, to purchase the station. He retained the balance of shares in connection with the lease, but gave his nephews working interests. In the first two or three years the boys encountered dry seasons and they have been battling ever since. The old gentleman was satisfied with his lease and much against the wishes of the four lads, did not apply for an extension of tenure till 1948. It is the lads who will suffer now because of the circumstances. They are anxious to push their station ahead. Unfortunately, having only a 1928 tenure, the banks will not advance sufficient money to enable them to put in improvements. They have not the security required by the banks, who recognise the value of long tenure and would assist financially if a 1948 tenure were secured by the lads.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I suppose the Primary Producers Bank will step in?

Mr. ANGELO: We will probably do that now that we have started operations.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You are as bad as the rest.

Mr. ANGELO: If the lads secured an extension of the lease till 1948, they could obtain the necessary assistance. Unfortunately this station is one of those partially, if not wholly destroyed by fire within the last week. The member for Mt. Magnet (Hon. M. F. Troy) said that in 1928, these men would not get their improvements. But the Land Act distinctly stipulates that the improvements shall be paid for; so I do not see what the State can lose by this concession. In many cases the omission occurred from want

of knowledge, and in others through misadventure. I trust the Committee will agree to the clause.

Progress reported.

BILLS (2) RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

- 1, Native Mission Stations.
 - 2, Gnowangerup Reserves.
- Without amendment.

BILL—OPTICIANS.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. R. S. Sampson—Swan) [9-50] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is for the registration of opticians and to regulate the practice of optometry.

Mr. Marshall: At whose instigation is it introduced?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: According to the interpretation clause "optician" means a person who practises optometry, and "optometry" means the employment of methods, exclusive of drugs, medicine and surgery, for the measurement of the powers of vision, and the adaptation of lenses for the aid thereof.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Is that Webster's definition?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is the definition according to the Bill, and I think it is the popular one. Hon. members will agree that legislation to control this calling that has been sought for a long time past by opticians is well justified. Three years ago a private Bill was introduced in another place by Mr. Nicholson. After the passing of the second reading a select committee was appointed to go into the Bill. That select committee held several meetings, took a good deal of evidence, and finally recommended to the Council that the Bill be withdrawn and a new one prepared by the Government for the consideration of Parliament. The Bill was accordingly withdrawn. Now we have this Bill brought down by the Government. The reason for the defeat of the Bill in the Council was largely because the end of the session was approaching.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Does not that apply to this Bill?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Numerous deputations asking for the Bill have waited on previous Colonial Secretaries. Quite early in my experience a deputation waited upon me urging that such a Bill should be brought down. When the earlier Bill was introduced in another place there were in Queensland and in Tasmania Acts for the registration of opticians, but they were the only Acts of the sort in the Commonwealth. Since then South Australia has passed an Opticians Act. Similar Acts operate in 47 of the American States, and there are indications that other States of the Union will fall into line. The Bill does not apply to medical practitioners, whose rights and privileges are in no way interfered with. The Bill creates an honorary board of opticians. The first board will be appointed by the Governor and will hold office for one year. Subsequent Boards will be elected

by the registered opticians and will hold office for three years.

Mr. Chesson: An honorary board is exceptional.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I hope this will prove to be an exceptional board. It will certainly prove to be a very earnest board, consisting of gentlemen having in view the protection of the public and the elevation of their profession to its proper status. Provision is made in the Bill for the election of the board, and for the board proceeding on the usual lines. The board is invested with defined powers as to the admission of applicants for registration and for the removal of names from the register for misconduct and incompetence. There is, in addition, the right of appeal to a judge, a very necessary right that, however, I hope will never have to be used. The prohibition in the Bill is only against the practice of optometry and the dispensing of prescriptions for spectacles.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Are you going to make all applicants for registration pass an examination?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I will tell the hon. member that later on. It is provided that none but registered persons may sue for fees for practising this calling, but the prohibition will not extend to any person selling spectacles as merchandise. There is a number of itinerant opticians in the State, many of whom are excellent men.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Everyone of them can be registered under the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Subject to certain conditions.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Only the condition of having been three years in the trade.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: One condition is that nobody can be registered under the Bill unless he has a place of business in the State. Thus it will be impossible for anyone to arrive here from overseas or from the Eastern States and, without having a place of business, to carry on the practice of optometry.

Hon. P. Collier: We have a lot of peddling going on in the country districts.

Mr. Marshall: It is a good job the Minister is not wasting the time of many members with this Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think we need pursue that. Qualified men need have no fear regarding the Bill, and every member will agree that quacks should be suppressed.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They will not be suppressed under this Bill.

Mr. Marshall: I do not know how you got in here.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is claimed that certain individuals without qualifications have imposed upon the public. When I was in Adelaide two or three years ago a friend referred to the fact that an Opticians Bill had just been passed there. He pointed out the difficulties that the people of South Australia had experienced with unskilled opticians.

Hon. W. C. Angwin called attention to the state of the House.

Hon. P. Collier: Where are the militant cross-benchers to-night?

Mr. A. Thomson: Like Johnny Walker, still going strong.

Bells rung and a quorum formed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: My Adelaide friend told me there had been several instances of trickery in respect to advertisements published by men claiming to be opticians. One was that of a man who added after his name on his business cards the letters "O.I.A." A committee ascertained that the letters stood for "opposite institute Adelaide." That sort of thing is not in the public interest. The registration of opticians would give control over those practising the profession. It is said that occasionally a person carrying on business as an optician has been known in one part of the State by one name, and in another part of the State by another name. Such a person, besides being unqualified, imposed upon the people in the charges he made. Glasses worth 20s. to 30s. were frequently charged for at £2, £3, £4, and even £5. It might be argued the sight-testing may safely be left to the medical profession. There is something in that, but comparatively few medical men are eye specialists. The advantages of the proposed legislation may be summarised thus: (1) it would ensure sight-testing being properly conducted; (2) prevention of misleading advertisements; (3) pathological cases would be passed on to properly skilled persons for treatment; and (4) registered opticians would be trained. The eye is a very delicate organ and it is essential that only qualified men should be allowed to measure the sight and prescribe glasses. Care and proper treatment are of the utmost importance. It is not proposed to create a close preserve.

Mr. Hughes: You are not putting over another Dental Bill?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I wish to review the details relating to the registration of opticians. Clause 21 reads:—

Any person of or over the age of 21 years being a natural born or naturalised British subject who, (a) before the commencement of this Act has been engaged as a principal manager or assistant for at least three years in the practise of optometry and has for the three months immediately preceding such commencement been continuously resident in the State and applies for registration within three months after such commencement, or—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That is very wide. It covers all the quacks.

Mr. Marshall: What about the men that have been practising for years?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am giving information about them—

(b) has been employed as an apprentice or engaged in the manufacture of spectacles and spectacle lenses in the business of an optician for a period of at least three years, and passes the prescribed examination, or—

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister is not in order in reading clauses of the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I wish to refer to Clause 21 only.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister can refer members to the clause without reading it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I should like to be permitted to finish reading the clause—

(c) proves to the satisfaction of the board that he holds a certificate or diploma of competency as a sight-testing optician from a society, college, or board of opticians recognised by the board by its regulations, or (d) before the commencement of this Act has been engaged as a principal in the practice of optometry, or has been employed as a manager or assistant in optometry, and passes the prescribed examination and applies for registration within 12 months after the commencement of this Act, shall be entitled, on payment of the prescribed fee, to be registered as an optician and to receive the prescribed certificate of registration.

Similar provisions appear in legislation controlling admission to other professions.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have seen the fruits of it here lately.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: But in other professions, where registration is essential, the necessary protection can be given. It is desirable that the public should be protected against those persons that claim to be opticians. The time is passed when anyone having a slight and uncertain knowledge of optometry should be allowed to travel the country and claim to be proficient in sight measuring. The business of an optician is to test sight and correct errors of refraction. It is work that calls for a good deal of skill, technical knowledge, and integrity of character because it is easy to mislead people—

Mr. Teesdale: And ruin their eyesight.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, and defraud them by making unreasonable charges. In no profession is there greater need for registration than in this. If it is essential that architects and other professional men should be registered, it is equally important that opticians should be similarly controlled. Qualified men should be protected against unqualified men, and also against those who may come here from other States and cause permanent injury to the most delicate organ of the body. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move—

That the debate be adjourned till this day fortnight.

Motion (adjournment) put and passed.

BILL—WEST AUSTRALIAN TRUSTEE, EXECUTOR, AND AGENCY COMPANY LIMITED, ACT AMENDMENT (PRIVATE).

Second Reading.

Mr. MANN (Perth) [10.12] in moving the second reading said: This Bill has already passed another place.

Hon. M. F. Troy: This is another of yours.

Mr. MANN: The Act was passed in 1893, and the Bill is necessary to bring it up-to-date.

Hon. M. F. Troy: This is the rival company asking for the same privileges.

Mr. MANN: The object of the Bill is to bring the company's Act up to present day requirements. The Lunacy Act has been amended in such a way that the company is outside its scope. The Insolvency Act has been amended, thus necessitating amendments to the company's Act, so that the company can deal with insolvent estates and the appointment of liquidators. Most of the amendments are formal and have been found necessary to bring the legislation of this company into line with that of another company recently started. The Bill seeks to widen certain interpretations, while the interpretation of "committee" and of "trustee in bankruptcy" have been altered. Of the 16 clauses in the Bill, ten are formal. The company have had experience such as justifies them in asking for legislation to enable them to deal with certain cases when they occur again. The company, acting for an estate, and having loaned money to a client, may have been appointed trustee for the client's estate prior to his decease, and would then find themselves in the position of being both mortgagor and mortgagee. They desire to have legislation to enable them to deal with such a position as it arises.

Mr. Hughes: They should not undertake to act as trustees where they have a client.

Mr. MANN: The position as it occurred was one it was impossible to avoid.

Mr. Hughes: They need not act as trustees. They can get someone else to do that.

Mr. MANN: It is necessary they should do so. They desire to have power to appoint a liquidator to deal with estates that come into their hands, and to have power to appoint official trustees. The new company has that power. The trustee company has been operating since 1893 and is performing a necessary work.

Mr. Johnston: Give them all a fair deal.

Mr. Hughes: It makes very extortionate charges.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MANN: The Bill gives the company power to deal with probate and transfers. The other clauses are all of a formal nature, and of the 16 contained in the Bill nine are similar to those passed last year for the benefit of the other company. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Hughes, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.13 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 29th November, 1923.

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

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—INSURANCE COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Extension of Act to certain brokers and agents:

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Having looked into this clause, I think it is quite in order, and I regard the proposed amendment as very desirable.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Remaining Stages.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time, and passed.

BILL—ANZAC DAY.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. J. Ewing—South-West) [4.39] in moving the second reading said: This Bill will appeal to every member. We regret, naturally, that the necessity for such a measure should arise; but we recognise how necessary it is to keep Anzac Day as a sacred day. During 1919 an Act was passed declaring Anzac Day a public holiday. That measure did not, however, declare how the holiday should be observed. All hon. members will agree that Anzac Day should be