

more land than they can utilise. If others are willing to use that land to the best advantage, it should be made available to them. If a man who has 2,000 acres is not in a financial position to work the 2,000 acres, it is in the best interests of the State that we should give the Government power to resume the unimproved area and hand it to somebody who will work it. When Mr. McLarty was asked whether he was apprehensive of any Government doing an injustice to any landholder, he said "No, so long as the measure gives the owner the usual protection in the way of an appeal to an arbitrator." The Bill gives that protection. It will not do any person an injury. It is devised for the benefit of the State. There is right of appeal.

Mr. Pickering: No.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: At all events there is right of arbitration.

Mr. Pickering: Only on the improvements.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Compensation will be paid for improvements. There is no danger of any hardship being inflicted.

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

| | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|
| Ayes | .. | .. | .. | 16 |
| Noes | .. | .. | .. | 13 |

Majority against .. 2

AYES.

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Mr. Angwin | Mr. McCallum |
| Mr. Carter | Mr. Munsie |
| Mr. Chesson | Mr. Simons |
| Mr. Collier | Mr. Troy |
| Mr. Corboy | Mr. Underwood |
| Mr. Gibson | Mr. Willcock |
| Mr. Heron | Mr. Wilson |
| Mr. Lambert | Mr. Marshall |

(Teller.)

NOES.

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Mr. Angelo | Mr. Mann |
| Mr. Broun | Mr. Money |
| Mr. Denton | Sir James Mitchell |
| Mr. Durack | Mr. Pickering |
| Mr. George | Mr. Piesse |
| Mr. Hickmott | Mr. Sampson |
| Mr. Johnston | Mr. Scaddan |
| Mr. C. C. Maley | Mr. J. H. Smith |
| Mr. H. K. Maley | Mr. J. M. Smith |

(Teller.)

PAIR.

Aye, Hon. T. Walker | No, Mr. Mullany

Amendment thus negatived.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT—ROYAL SHOW.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [11.2]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Thursday, the 12th October, at 4.30 p.m.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 12th October, 1922.

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

QUESTION—ROAD MAKING, COMMONWEALTH ADVANCE.

Mr. CHESSON (for Hon. M. F. Troy) asked the Minister for Works: 1, What amount has been advanced or loaned to the State by the Commonwealth Government for the purpose of road making or repairing? 2, What are the conditions attached to the grant or loan? 3, Does he propose to distribute this money on a fair basis of distribution to the road boards operating throughout the State, so that these boards may carry out urgent and necessary works?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The Commonwealth Government are granting approximately £16,000 to be subsidised by the State Government to the extent of £16,000. 2, The conditions are that work is to be found for men, with preference to returned soldiers. 3, The question of distribution through Road Boards is not involved. The matter is one of carrying out necessary works.

QUESTION—PRIMARY PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION AND THE GOVERNMENT.

Mr. McCALLUM asked the Premier: 1, Does his answer to my question of 4th October, dealing with the relationship of the Government and the Primary Producers' Association, mean that he contradicts the following reported statement of the President (Mr. A. Monger), namely:—"The Country Party are to be fully consulted by the Government in regard to policy and legislation prior to Bills being introduced to the House"? 2, If he is not prepared to contradict this statement, will he explain to the House just what arrangements have been made between the Govern-

ment and the Primary Producers' Association regarding policy and legislation?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Members sitting behind the Government meet from time to time to discuss matters of policy and legislation in accordance with the usual practice. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION—STATE BRICKWORKS.

Mr. CLYDESDALE asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is he aware that the present State Brickworks are too small to enable the management to cope with the public demand for bricks? 2, Is it a fact that the State Brickworks will not accept any additional orders until the end of February next? 3, In view of the scarcity of bricks and the urgent need to cope with the demand of the building trade, and in order to keep the wheels of industry going, will the Government take immediate steps to enlarge the plant of the State Brickworks and thereby materially increase the present output? 4, If not, how do the Government propose to meet the present shortage?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes. 3, No. 4, The privately owned brickyards are considered to be fully capable of dealing with the position.

QUESTION (2)—OPOSSUM SKINS.

Royalty increase.

Mr. JOHNSTON asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Why has the royalty on opossum skins been increased from 12s. to 18s. per dozen? 2, On whose recommendation was this action taken? 3, Are the Government aware that, following on this increased royalty, the price offering for opossum skins to the trappers (without royalty) immediately fell from 36s. per dozen to 30s. per dozen in some country centres?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, It is not considered that the royalty previously payable was a reasonable one. Skins have reached a very high price, and the increased royalty is accordingly justified. 2, The Acting Chief Inspector of Fisheries. 3, No. Within the last few weeks the Department disposed of a parcel of skins at 84s. per dozen (less royalty and five per cent. selling charges.)

Close season and trapping.

Mr. JOHNSTON asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Was a proclamation issued in the "Government Gazette" declaring a close season for opossums for the year 1922? 2, Has it since been decided to permit trapping of opossums throughout the State for the months of October and November? 3, What is the reason for this change of policy? 4, Is it the desire of the Government to exterminate the opossum by throwing open certain areas for trapping during certain months of three consecutive years? 5, On whose recommendation has this step been taken?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes; in accordance with usual procedure. 2, Yes. 3, There is no change of policy, the matter being one for consideration annually. Judging from the increasingly large number of permits to destroy opossums causing serious damage to orchards and gardens, there are indications that the opossum is rapidly increasing in numbers and in some districts has already become a pest. The action taken will not endanger the industry, and in addition revenue will benefit by a substantial sum. 4, Answered by No. 3. 5, The Chief Inspector of Fisheries.

QUESTION—RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION, BUSSELTON-MARGARET RIVER.

Mr. PICKERING asked the Minister for Works: Can he state definitely when delivery of rails for the Busselton-Margaret River railway will take place?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: First shipment of rails has been advised as leaving England on the 6th ultimo, consigned to Fremantle. No definite date can as yet be stated for delivery at Busselton, but provision has been made on indent for Busselton-Margaret River railway requirements to be delivered at Busselton, and these should be to hand towards end of present year or early next year.

SELECT COMMITTEE—SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

Extension of time.

On motion by Mr. Wilson, the time for bringing up the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the question of repatriated soldiers and land settlement was extended for four weeks.

SELECT COMMITTEE—THE PERPETUAL EXECUTORS, TRUSTEES, AND AGENCY COMPANY (W.A.), LIMITED, (PRIVATE) BILL.

Report presented.

Mr. Mann presented the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into a private Bill entitled the Perpetual Executors, Trustees, and Agency Company (W.A.), Limited, Bill.

Report read, and consideration made an order of the day for the next sitting of the House.

MOTION—GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK, MANAGER'S RETIREMENT.

Select Committee appointed.

Debate resumed from 21st September on the following motion by Mr. Simons:—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report on the circum-

stances surrounding the retirement of the late manager of the State Savings Bank, Mr. Carl Leschen.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [4.43]: I do not propose to discuss this motion to-day, except to say there is nothing so far as the files are concerned to show that there was any act of disloyalty on the part of Mr. Leschen. Mr. Leschen is lying very sick in the hospital, and probably it would be unwise to discuss the matter at all. It is for the House to decide whether a select committee should be appointed to investigate the case.

Question put and passed.

Ballot taken and a select committee appointed consisting of Messrs. Carter, Clydesdale, Pickering, Walker, and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers and to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned; to report on the 2nd November.

BILL—STATE TRADING CONCERNS ACT AMENDMENT.

Order of the Day read for the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I move—

That this Order of the Day be postponed.
Motion put and passed.

MOTION—COST OF LIVING.

To inquire by Royal Commission.

Order of the Day read for the resumption of the debate, from the 21st September, on the following motion by Hon. P. Collier:—

That in the opinion of the House a Royal Commission should be appointed for the purpose of ascertaining what sum of money is necessary to allow a reasonable minimum standard of living, having due regard for the obligation entailed in the maintenance of an average family.

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

| | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|
| Ayes | .. | .. | .. | 18 |
| Noes | .. | .. | .. | 16 |

Majority for .. 2

AYES.

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Mr. Angwin | Mr. Marshall |
| Mr. Chesson | Mr. McCallum |
| Mr. Clydesdale | Mr. Munzie |
| Mr. Collier | Mr. Richardson |
| Mr. Corboy | Mr. J. Thomson |
| Mr. Davies | Mr. Walker |
| Mr. Heron | Mr. Willcock |
| Mr. Johnston | Mr. Wilson |
| Mr. Mann | Mr. O'Loghlen |

(Teller.)

NOES.

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| Mr. Brown | Mr. Pickering |
| Mr. Carter | Mr. Plesse |
| Mr. Denton | Mr. Sampson |
| Mr. George | Mr. Scaddan |
| Mr. Harrison | Mr. J. H. Smith |
| Mr. Hickmott | Mr. Stubbs |
| Mr. H. K. Maley | Mr. Underwood |
| Sir James Mitchell | Mr. Mullany |

(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

MOTION—COMPENSATION, OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES.

Order of the Day read for the resumption of the debate, from the 21st September, on the following motion by Hon. P. Collier:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should introduce legislation during the present session for the purpose of providing compensation for workers affected by occupational ailments and diseases.

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

| | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|
| Ayes | .. | .. | .. | 25 |
| Noes | .. | .. | .. | 9 |

Majority for .. 16

AYES.

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Mr. Angwin | Mr. Munzie |
| Mr. Carter | Mr. O'Loghlen |
| Mr. Chesson | Mr. Pickering |
| Mr. Clydesdale | Mr. Richardson |
| Mr. Collier | Mr. Simons |
| Mr. Corboy | Mr. Stubbs |
| Mr. Davies | Mr. J. Thomson |
| Mr. Denton | Mr. Underwood |
| Mr. Heron | Mr. Walker |
| Mr. Johnston | Mr. Willcock |
| Mr. Mann | Mr. Wilson |
| Mr. Marshall | Mr. Mullany |
| Mr. McCallum | |

(Teller.)

NOES.

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Mr. Brown | Sir James Mitchell |
| Mr. George | Mr. Plesse |
| Mr. Harrison | Mr. Scaddan |
| Mr. Hickmott | Mr. Sampson |
| Mr. H. K. Maley | |

(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

MOTION—OIL PROSPECTING.

Order of the Day read for the resumption of the debate from the 21st September on the following motion by Mr. Underwood:—

That in order to encourage prospecting for mineral oil, this House is of opinion that the Minister for Mines, in pursuance of the powers conferred upon him by Section 7 of the Mining Act Amendment Act, 1920, should cancel all prospecting licenses which are not being efficiently worked, and that in future no prospecting license be

granted for an area greater than 1,000 square miles.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. J. Scaddan—Albany) [5.5]: Without discussing the pros and cons of the motion as submitted by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood), I desire to explain that I have on the Notice Paper a Bill to amend the Mining Act, which has to be read a second time. That deals with the question of oil prospecting and oil leases and the conditions under which they may be taken up after discoveries have been made. I have mentioned the matter to the member for Pilbara and the Leader of the Opposition. They agree that the discussion can very well take place on the Bill rather than on the motion, which deals with only one phase. I do not intend to discuss the matter now. The Bill should be before the House next week.

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [5.5]: I move—

That the consideration of the motion be postponed.

Motion passed.

MOTION—MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY.

Acquisition of Concession.

Debate resumed from the 28th September on the following motion by Lieut.-Colonel Denton:—

That in the opinion of this House, if an equitable arrangement can be made, the lands and railways of the Midland Railway Company should be acquired by the Government of this State, and that a valuation of both the railway and the unalienated and partly alienated lands be made as soon as possible.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [5.7]: I call the attention of the House to the rather loose wording of the motion, which sets out that "if an equitable arrangement can be made, the lands and railway of the Midland Railway Company should be acquired by the Government," and so on. I suppose the Government could do that. As a matter of fact, we have had a letter from the company offering to the Government the railway and the land which the company own under their concession. The railway was once before offered to the Government and all the papers are being got together.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: I am not talking about the railway, but the concession.

The PREMIER: The motion refers to the lands and the railway. The hon. member refers to both, for the concession without the railway would not be of much use. I do not think the House will achieve much by carrying the motion. The question is being looked into and if satisfactory conditions were fixed, we would naturally come to the House and consult hon. members about it. That would

clearly be the duty of the Government. The motion will not result in one step forward being taken and I do not think it should be carried.

Hon. P. Collier: Do you say you are negotiating with the company?

The PREMIER: No, the company have written to the Government and have made us an offer which, if considered satisfactory, will result in the House being consulted. The chairman of the company saw me in London about this matter and I said: "Put your offer in writing and I will consider it." That has been done.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: You did not give us that information at the interview we had with you.

The PREMIER: Yes, I did.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: I do not think so.

The PREMIER: I did do so. No good can come from carrying the motion. I know the member for Moore (Lieut.-Colonel Denton) is anxious to ventilate the matter and have it considered.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: We want more than that. We want it considered properly.

The PREMIER: I know that. The hon. member is anxious that the question of the purchase of the Midland Company's railway and lands comprised within their concession, shall be carefully considered. If the railway and the land are offered at a price that the Government consider satisfactory, naturally we will come to the House and acquaint hon. members with the fact. We want to get at that position before we come to the House with the proposal.

Mr. Wilcock: Does not the second portion of the motion provide for that?

Mr. Underwood: I think you can give the House your opinion regarding the purchase.

The PREMIER: The negotiations should be untrammelled by any resolution of this Chamber or by any expression of opinion of mine in this House, beyond the statement that an offer has been made. The matter will be considered and the House will be consulted in due course.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: When will that be?

The PREMIER: The member for Moore may think it is a simple matter to make a purchase involving one million pounds.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: It is a simple matter to get six million pounds in England at the present time.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is a different matter altogether.

The PREMIER: Every hon. member knows that a valuation of the land and of the security was made. Since then a considerable portion of the land has been sold. The railway may not be in the same position as it was when that valuation was made. All these things have to be reviewed before proper consideration can be given to the matter to enable the Government to bring it before the House. It would not be wise for the House to pass the motion or to discuss it at any great length.

Members: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I know the member for Moore is anxious that the railway should be purchased, and that the people in the districts affected, and at Geraldton as well, who are the people who use the line, are anxious that it should be made Government property. It has been said that this is the only private line in the State and that it should be taken over. The position is—and I think the House should agree with me—that the question will be considered by the Government, and if we consider the proposal a satisfactory one, it will be submitted to the House to be dealt with. The question cannot be considered apart from the financial aspect. If a satisfactory offer can be obtained and such an offer is received, the House should be in possession of the price asked for after negotiation, before dealing with the question in the way suggested. I do not wish to disguise the fact that this is an important question to all concerned, particularly those living along the railway and at Geraldton, but we cannot get finality by passing the motion.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: I think we can.

The PREMIER: No good can come from passing it.

Hon. T. Walker: It might hamper the Government.

The PREMIER: I think so. The adoption of the motion will not advance the consideration of the question by the Government or by the House. I know it is our duty to consult the House when we are ready to do so and, naturally, the House will be consulted.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: Are we to remain outside all our lives?

The PREMIER: The hon. member has lived a very short life.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: It is as long as yours.

The PREMIER: I do not think so. In any case, the House will do wrong by passing the motion. We can do no good by doing so, but rather the reverse.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [5.14]: I am surprised at the attitude taken up by the Premier and his attempt to side-track the question. The purchase of the Midland Railway Company's railway and concession is an important factor in the development of the State. It is time we heard something more about this question. If the Premier had read the motion—

The Premier: I read it carefully.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not think the Premier has read it carefully and particularly the latter portion. If the Government secured an offer of the railway and the concession for a million or a million and a half pounds, how could they say whether they had a good bargain or not? The concluding part of the motion proposes that a valuation should be made so that the Government might know exactly what is offered to them.

The Minister for Mines: If you were thinking of buying a man's house, subject to conditions, would you ask him to let you survey it before you made an offer?

Mr. WILLCOCK: He would be very foolish if he offered any opposition. If we want to buy—

The Minister for Mines: It is the Midland people who want to sell. They have made an offer.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But nobody can say whether or not it is an equitable offer. It is all in the air. I might be asked any day whether I am in favour of the Midland Company's property being purchased by the Government. As it is, I can only say "Certainly, so long as an equitable arrangement can be made."

The Minister for Agriculture: That was said 16 years ago.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The outcome of those negotiations was not very creditable to the State, so it is not advisable to reopen that subject now. The Premier did not give us any indication of whether the Government are favourable or unfavourable to the proposition.

The Minister for Works: At a decent price, of course.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Well, when are we to know whether we can get it at a decent price? It might pay the State to make an offer to the company. As it is, an offer has been made to the Government. What is the Premier going to do about it? Something ought to be done.

The Minister for Works: The line has been valued half a dozen times.

Mr. Underwood: It is the land we want.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is the land we are talking about. We are embarking on a development policy involving the expenditure of £6,000,000, all of which is to be disbursed in the South-West. Yet a considerable volume of public opinion holds that the money could be better expended in the purchase of the Midland Railway Company's property.

The Minister for Agriculture: Surely that does not come into this proposition!

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is my deliberate opinion that most of the money we are raising for the development of the State could be better expended elsewhere than in the South-West.

The Minister for Agriculture: Do you say it is better to buy the Midland Company's property than to settle 6,000 newcomers in the State?

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Minister ought to be supporting the motion instead of attempting to harass me. Everybody knows that the Midland Company's property would not cost £6,000,000 nor even £2,000,000. Probably it could be purchased for something between a million and a million and a half.

The Minister for Mines: It would be only transferring what we already have.

Mr. WILLCOCK: How can it be said that we have it? The State does not own it.

The Minister for Mines: But the land is producing, and the line is providing employment for Western Australians.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The land is not producing to anything like its full capacity. The

Midland settlers cannot get assistance from the Agricultural Bank.

The Minister for Agriculture: What is wrong with that?

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is distinctly wrong that we should have half a million acres of first-class land held out of use, and that settlers up there cannot get the assistance granted to settlers in other parts of the State.

The Minister for Agriculture: They were free agents. Why did they go there?

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is about time the Minister amended his views. If any member of the House knows the value of the Midland land, it ought to be the Minister himself.

The Minister for Agriculture: I am in agreement with you up to that point.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Premier tells us an offer has been made, and then he sits down without any explanation. I want to know whether we are to have an opportunity to discuss the offer, and whether a valuation will be made.

The Premier: Of course you will have opportunity.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Then when are we to start about the business?

The Minister for Agriculture: You want to force the Government into the purchase.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No, if a man offers me a horse, I first want to know its value.

The Minister for Agriculture: You do not want somebody to force you into buying the animal.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The motion does not do that. What we want is a valuation of the land held by the company.

The Minister for Agriculture: And are we to force that valuation?

Mr. WILLCOCK: When providing for soldier settlement, the Government went around making valuations of many properties. Everybody knew it did not necessarily mean that the properties would be purchased. The Government merely acquired the data. That is what we want now. What is the Premier going to do about the offer made?

The Premier: I have told you it will be considered.

Mr. WILLCOCK: You cannot consider it until you know the value of the property offered.

The Premier: On that subject we have files that would half fill this Chamber.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Here we have idle lands held up for years and years because an absentee company owns them, and so the Agricultural Bank cannot make advances upon them. Now the property has been offered to the Government, but its value is unknown. What steps will the Government take to ascertain that value and, if the offer be found equitable, to complete the transaction?

The Minister for Works: A motion like this will not expedite the transaction.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The motion was deliberately framed so as not to harass the Government in any way. It is not a definite instruction to the Government. It merely proposes that a valuation shall be obtained. That is not binding upon the Government. If, on

consideration, the Government are unfavourable to the purchase, they can hang it up for years. Apparently the attitude of the Government is to sit down and do nothing, instead of investigating the proposition. In the interests of the development of the State, the expenditure of £500 or £600 on a valuation ought not to weigh with us, for it is well warranted. I hope the House will instruct the Government to determine the value of the company's property.

The Premier: I have told you the question will be gone into.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The first step is to set about getting a valuation.

The Minister for Mines: We have all the values now.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not see how that can be, because the position is changing from week to week. Some of the land is partly alienated, some of it wholly, while other land is being sold from day to day. The company may have sold 100,000 acres within the last month which, of course, would affect the total value of the property.

The Minister for Agriculture: The value is what a willing buyer will pay a willing seller.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I don't know about both being equally willing. In most instances one or the other thinks he ought to get a little more.

Mr. Pickering: But generally the parties reach a point of agreement.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes; and if the motion for a valuation be carried, the Government, on having the valuation made, will be much closer to agreement with the company than they are to-day.

The Minister for Works: It is not good business to let the man from whom you are going to buy know what your valuation is.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Why not? I do not see the reason.

The Minister for Works: You must have a very lively imagination.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have sufficient imagination to know this has been a dead question for 16 or 17 years, and I have sufficient imagination to wish to make it a live question.

The Premier: It is a live question.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is not showing much sign of vitality. We should have an assurance from the Premier that authentic information will be obtained. If this is made a live question, a Parliamentary party should go through the Midland areas to see what development has taken place. Serious consideration should be given to the question of purchasing this line, and apparently this has not been done up to the present. The first thing that should be done is to obtain a valuation and if a good bargain can be made the Government should purchase the company's concession. I commend the motion to the House.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. H. K. Maley—Greenough) [5.31]: Up to a certain point the House is in complete agreement with the member for Moore (Lieut.-Colonel Denton) and the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock). The first portion of the

motion sets out that if an equitable arrangement can be made, the lands and railway of the Midland Railway Company should be acquired by the Government. There is no argument against that.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: Then why argue it?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That portion of the motion speaks for itself, but the motion goes on to state—"And that a valuation of both the railway and the unalienated and partly alienated lands be made as soon as possible." The member for Geraldton might be an authority on railways, but I do not regard him as an authority on land values. If he had told us something about the value of the railway, which is part and parcel of the contract, I would have been prepared to listen to him. The member for Moore is asking the Government to have a valuation made of another party's property, on which valuation it is to be purchased under resolution of the House. While the company may be a very willing seller and the Government a somewhat willing buyer, the House has no right to put the Government in that position. If I wanted to buy a house, I would not tolerate being told by anyone that I had to buy it on a certain valuation. Such a principle would be altogether wrong. I quite agree with the members for Moore and Geraldton as to the desirableness of the State acquiring the Midland railway and land, which should have been purchased in 1905. Nowhere in the State could more land have been made available for wheat growing and sheep grazing, and in no other part of the State could greater development have been secured.

Mr. Stubbs: Is it too late now?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not saying it is too late. What I am asking the House to do is to consider the question from the point of view of being forced to buy, or being prepared to buy. That is the whole question. It would be necessary to consider the line, the development, the equipment, and the condition of the track, and would the member for Geraldton say it is fair to ask the Government to have a valuation made for buying the railway in conjunction with the land?

Mr. Willcock: You will never buy it if you do not know what it is worth.

The Minister for Mines: And what it costs per annum to operate.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member must realise that an important consideration would be the cost of bringing the road up to a proper standard of maintenance and the rolling stock up to a proper degree of equipment. The member for Geraldton says the Government should be compelled to buy the line.

Mr. Willcock: Nothing I said can be construed in that way.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Although the company have from time to time sold some of the land comprised within their concession, it has been sold at the

market value. It is not very material to us how much the land was sold for, because the Government would probably take over the partially alienated land on the basis of the contracts.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What if the Government had to reduce the price of the land as soon as they took it over? The Midland people would want it at the same price as other settlers.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That might be a subject for investigation by the hon. member and his select committee, who are at present inquiring into certain matters affecting land settlement. The Government do not deny to Midland settlers the right to secure loans from the Agricultural Bank provided they have freehold to offer as security.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You do not deny the Midland Company's clients assistance under the I.A.B.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Government have never differentiated at all. It would be an invidious distinction if a settler, holding land on the west side of the line—the Government side—were in possession of certain advantages not open to a Midland settler who was in a position to offer equally good security. The Government say to-day that provided they can give security, they may enjoy the full advantages of the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And they are not entitled to it until the Government can get that security.

Mr. Willcock: I want to enable them to get it.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Agricultural Bank is purely a security bank; if you cannot give security, the bank cannot advance money. If we could secure the land and railway of the Midland Company, it would mark a distinct step in the development of the State, but the Government should not be forced into the position of being told they have to buy.

Mr. Willcock: All the motion asks is that they make a valuation.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is only part of the motion.

Mr. Willcock: That is the whole strength of it.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member must realise that that is only an afterthought.

Mr. Willcock: No, that is the thing to be done first.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In opening the show at Moora on Friday last, I referred to the Midland Railway Company—

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: Midland stock cannot be beaten. Look at the prizes won at the Royal Show.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member will say at least that I was perfectly fair. It would be an absolutely uncalled for procedure for the Government to

make a valuation of the land and railway for the benefit of the company, as it would entail considerable cost and would be used against the Government as the basis on which the purchase should be made.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: Are they going to know that?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member is surely not so unsophisticated as to think that a valuation submitted to the House will not come to the knowledge of the Midland Company.

MR. PICKERING (Sussex) [5.40]: I am in favour of the motion. I do not think there is any disagreement with regard to the first portion. When one hears the Midland residents referred to in the way they have been to-day, I feel inclined to side with the member for Moore when he says they are aliens.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is a case of save me from my friends.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: In what way are they aliens? You do not know as much about them as I do.

MR. PICKERING: These settlers are subject to the same taxation as other residents of the State.

The Minister for Agriculture: Of course they are.

MR. PICKERING: And in my opinion they are entitled to the privileges which other citizens enjoy. Yet we find that one of the most important directions in which assistance is rendered to settlers is withheld from the Midland people. I refer to the Agricultural Bank.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is not withheld.

MR. PICKERING: The Minister said that if Midland settlers could give security, they could obtain advances.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Would you advance money without security?

MR. PICKERING: My argument is not in that direction. As soon as possible we should purchase this railway, with a view to giving to Midland settlers those facilities enjoyed by other settlers throughout the State.

The Minister for Works: Do you know the history of the negotiations on that question?

MR. PICKERING: I have before me the "Hansard" reports for 1905 which, at page 744, show that the then Premier (Hon. H. Daglish) moved—

That in the interest of this State the acquisition of the railway and lands of the Midland Railway Co. of Western Australia, Ltd., is desirable.

I do not propose to read the report of the debate, but I am satisfied that, at that time, the members of the Legislative Assembly were at one in the desire to acquire the Midland railway. It has been rumoured that there were certain actions in connection with the disposal of the railway which were not quite what they ought to have been, and for that reason the sale was defeated. I was not in Parliament at the time.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I was, and members turned it down.

MR. PICKERING: It was turned down on the voices. I have yet to learn that the need for acquiring the railway was greater then than it is to-day.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There was a rumour that members were making something out of it.

MR. PICKERING: It would have been a good thing if the railway had been acquired at that time and not left to be purchased at this period.

The Minister for Works: There were allegations of political dishonesty.

The Minister for Mines: There was some dirty work at the cross-roads that night.

MR. PICKERING: It must be borne in mind that the position the company are in at the present time will facilitate the likelihood of the purchase being effected much more than was the case when the matter was last before Parliament, for the reason that the company are now labouring under a heavy burden of taxation. That would be a special inducement to the company to sell their property at a much more reasonable figure than would otherwise have been the case. We have heard from the member for Moore all about the value of the land, and I am quite satisfied from what he has said, and also from what we have been told by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock), and the Minister for Agriculture, that there can be no question as to that value. Regarding the area that is still available for selection, we must accept the statement made by the member for Moore that the acreage runs into 750,000, all of which is first-class. If there be such a large area of land lying idle, it should be the business of the House to see that it is made available for selection as speedily as possible. We know that the climate and the conditions generally along the Midland line are eminently suitable for all classes of agriculture, and therefore it is desirable that we should acquire that valuable country and put it under settlement at the earliest practicable date. The conditions under which the Midland Company are compelled to sell the land make it difficult to bring about its disposal. So that if it is impossible for settlers to acquire areas in that part of the State under the terms and conditions offered by the company, it should be an additional argument in favour of the State securing the railway line and the land. We are told, and we know from the statements made by the Minister for Agriculture and others, that the country is very fertile, that it produces good crops and first class stock of every description. I have made a casual inspection of parts of that country and I have come to the conclusion that there are in that part of the State some of the most favourable areas for settlement to be found in any part of Western Australia. I have no desire to repeat the arguments and statistics advanced by the member for Moore, which prove to us the number of stock raised on the Midland lands and the quantity of

wheat and other products which have been put on the markets every year. Those, however, are potent arguments in favour of the adoption of the motion. So far as I could understand him, the Minister for Agriculture was not opposed to the first part of the motion. He seemed to be in accord with the desire to purchase the railway and land, but he objected to that portion of the motion reading, "And that a valuation of both the railway and the unalienated and partly alienated land be made as soon as possible." We have an assurance from the Premier that an offer has been submitted to him by the Midland Company.

Mr. Underwood: They are negotiating.

Mr. PICKERING: The basis of negotiations must be an offer of some sort. Of course the Premier is not in a position to disclose to the House the nature of the offer submitted for his consideration, but no doubt the matter is before Cabinet at the present time. If the Premier is in earnest about this business, and if he is anxious to bring the subject to finality—remembering that the subject of settlement is that which is nearest to his heart—he must proceed as any business man would proceed, and ascertain the value of the property.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He knows that now.

Mr. PICKERING: I do not agree with the hon. member, because from my experience of the lands in various parts of the State, the prices vary, and we know too that they have varied considerably during the past decade. Land has appreciated in value everywhere, and we are justified in assuming that the Midland lands have also advanced in value. The matter is one for inquiry, and all that the hon. member who submitted the motion desires is that an investigation to determine this point shall be made. I can see no objection to this course being followed. I hope the House will agree to the motion. I can see no danger in it, and I certainly cannot understand why the Minister for Agriculture should have offered opposition to it. He agreed with the first part of the motion and disagreed with the second part, and when questioned by the member for Geraldton with regard to the first part, the Minister drifted back again to the second part. I have some doubt about the earnestness of the Minister in respect of the motion. As a representative of a part of the northern Midland districts, he should be thoroughly familiar with the possibilities of that part of the State, and the motion should have his entire sympathy. Personally I am not in any way interested in the matter.

Hon. P. Collier: You seem to be more favourably disposed towards the Midland Company's lands than is the Minister for Agriculture.

Mr. PICKERING: I hope the Minister for Agriculture is in earnest about this question.

Hon. P. Collier: Influence again; that is the way you members go when you form a coalition.

Mr. PICKERING: I regret that the Premier threw very little light upon this important matter. We have nothing to go on as a result of what the Premier said. His remarks were so brief that they shed very little light on the subject.

Hon. P. Collier: If we go by the length of the speeches, then you shed considerable light on everything.

Mr. PICKERING: Anyway, the Premier did not err in the direction of giving us very much information; he simply said that an offer by the company was under consideration, and that that was all he could tell the House. I hope that when the vote is taken there will be a sufficient number of members present to carry it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [5.55]: The Premier has told the House that he has a communication from the Midland Railway Company, and he also told the House that he was making inquiries. That is the function of the Government; it is not the function of the House to direct the Government as to what they shall do or practically commit them to a purchase such as is suggested. The Government are carrying out their part of the business. An offer has been submitted and it is receiving consideration. The Government are inquiring as to what is best to do, and hon. members who have spoken have not strengthened their case by trying to force conclusions upon the Government. The Government would be very foolish to allow themselves to be hurried in connection with a deal of such magnitude. I do not know what the figures are; I am content to wait until the Premier brings the matter before Cabinet.

Mr. Willecock: Apparently no one has taken any steps at all; the offer is six months old, and nothing has been done.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is not warranted in saying such a thing; that is only imagination on his part. The Premier told the House that there had been an offer made and that he was dealing with it. That should be sufficient for the hon. member.

Mr. Willecock: I do not want him to consider it; I want him to take some action.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member desires to purchase a house, would he make known to the people from whom he intended to purchase it all those reasons that made it desirable he should buy it?

Mr. Willecock: I would let them know what I thought it was worth.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The history of the Midland Railway, which is some 30 years old, should show members as well as the Government that they cannot be too careful about what they are doing. We do not want to cast any reflection upon the company.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They do not hesitate to cast reflections upon Western Australia.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is so, but no one takes much notice of that, not

even the shareholders. The motion should be withdrawn. If it were carried and the Government proceeded to get the valuations of the railway and the land belonging to the company, I venture to say it would not be long before some member moved for the production of the papers, and in that way exposed our hands to the company.

Hon. P. Collier: With the majority you have any silly thing might be carried.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not say that, but it is not desirable that the hands of the Government should be forced in this way. No doubt if the motion were carried some one would make it his business as early as possible to send a cable to the directors in London telling them what had taken place.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: Why do you fear that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I gather that from the debate this afternoon. The effect would be that the people in London would think they had the Government tied up, and would then submit a totally different offer.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [6.3]: Anyone looking at the country served by the Great Southern railway, since that line was purchased by the Government—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And the price of land was reduced.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The price of land was reduced as against that charged by the private company owning the line, and the land was thrown open to free selection by people who came from all parts of Australia to settle on it. All must be anxious to see for the lands served by the Midland railway an era of prosperity similar to that experienced along the Great Southern. The Great Southern line was purchased by the late Lord Forrest in 1898, and the districts served by it have become more prosperous every year since the purchase. The settlers along the Midland railway line have suffered a great deal. When they pass through the Great Southern districts and realise that all that land was one held by a private company, just as the land in their own district is now held by the Midland Railway Company, and note the progress that has been made both east and west of the Great Southern line, they too must be anxious to see such action taken by the Government as is outlined by the motion. At present it is impossible for any Government, however sympathetic they may be, to extend to the Midland settlers the financial assistance of the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board. Those settlers purchased their land from the Midland Railway Company, and many of them still owe money to that company.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: But they are assisted through the Industries Assistance Board in the same way as other settlers.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I understand only in the event of the company agreeing to waive their claims as first mortgagees, which they very rarely do. I am anxious to see the settlers along the Midland line placed on the same

basis as those who have bought Crown land elsewhere in the State. The fact that a settler owes money to the Crown upon his land is not taken into consideration when he applies to the Agricultural Bank for assistance.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Of course it is.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Only in a comparatively small way. No one, however, would agree to the Government advancing money to a settler who owed a considerable sum representing the balance due upon the land that he had purchased from the Midland Railway Company. The Company, therefore, have the first claim upon the land, and, until the balance of the purchase money is wiped off, the settler is unable to enjoy the benefits of the operations of the Industries Assistance Board or the Agricultural Bank, such as are enjoyed by settlers elsewhere in the State. There is good land, extending as far east as the Wongan-Mullewa line still owned by the company and suitable for occupation. When the Great Southern lands were purchased by Lord Forrest on the occasion of his statesman-like act in 1898, relief was given to those settlers who had already contracted to buy their land from the West Australian Land Company. A large area of land had been purchased from that company at prices ranging up to £4 an acre. When the Government bought out the West Australian Land Company they also bought the unpaid balances of purchase money for land that had been sold by the company. Where a man had paid 10s. an acre to the Land Company, all he was required to do by the Government was to fulfil the improvement conditions provided by the Land Act to acquire the freehold of his property.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And the country paid the rest.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is so. The Government bought the balances due at a low rate, and gave relief to the settlers. All that the company were concerned about was to get their full payment for the land. I hope if the Government buy out the Midland Railway Company it will be possible for them to relieve some of the present tenants of the company in the same way.

Mr. Mann: Would not the Government be in a better position under the Closer Settlement Bill?

Mr. JOHNSTON: That may be the case, but it will not enable them to buy the railway. I am anxious to see all the railways in the State under Government ownership. In regard to the question of valuation, the first thing a careful purchaser does when seeking to buy a house is to have a valuation made by someone competent to do so.

The Minister for Works: You do not suppose the Government would buy without a valuation?

Mr. JOHNSTON: No. I am amazed at the opposition to that portion of the motion which deals with the question of valuation.

Mr. Underwood: Suppose the house is not for sale?

Mr. JOHNSTON: This is for sale. The first business-like precaution for the Government to take would be to have a valuation made by a competent authority. I am aware that land valuations have been made in the past, but since then new railways have been built and some of the land has been sold, and no doubt circumstances have greatly altered.

The Minister for Agriculture: How does this affect Perenjori?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I do not know, but I am not so narrow minded as to take that into consideration on this question. From north of Midland Junction to the sea-coast, and as far as Walkaway, there is a province that has been struggling along for many years, and which it would seem to be the duty of the Minister for Agriculture to look after.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is being well looked after.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That may be the Minister's opinion, but it is at present in the hands of a private monopoly.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have land there and you have none.

Mr. JOHNSTON: That is correct. The settlers, however, should be given the same opportunity of becoming prosperous as is given by the Government to settlers in other districts, through the generous conditions attached to the land laws of the State and the generous assistance of the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board. Those of us who support the motion desire that the settlers along the Midland Railway line should be able to obtain those benefits.

The Minister for Agriculture: They have never been denied.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I know as much as the Minister does on this question. I support the motion.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN (North-East Fremantle) [6.12]: No doubt there is some justification for the opposition of the Government to this motion. In any event, worded as it is, it would not carry much weight with them, because they could please themselves as to whether they put it into effect or not. I know of an instance of the same kind where a motion along these lines was passed through the House, and the Government are still considering the question. All this land has been examined. Every acre has been marked out by Government officials as first, second and third class, and sand plain. The valuation was made, I think, in the time of the late Surveyor-General, Mr. Johnston.

The Minister for Mines: Since which time Crown lands have been reduced in value.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Yes. Some years later it was stated that land held by the Government had too high a price placed upon it. The lands owned by the Midland Railway Company were valued in accordance with the price the Government were charging at the time. Members have repeatedly said that the price of Crown lands should be reduced. To-day the price of first-class land is 15s. an

acre. If the Government were to buy the Midland Railway lands, and also buy the amount still owing by the settlers who purchased from the company at £3 or £4 an acre, the Government would have to reduce the price of that land to 15s., in the case of first-class areas, to conform with the reduced price of Crown lands elsewhere in the State.

The Minister for Mines: In some cases we would have to make a refund to the settlers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It will require most careful consideration. Members are not in a position to determine the matter, which is one for the Government to deal with. They will have to negotiate with the Midland Railway Company.

The Minister for Works: And take the responsibility also.

Mr. Willecock: That is all the hon. member asks.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I know. I disagree with the view that because some years ago this large area was conceded to the Midland Railway Company no other part of the State should be developed.

Mr. Willecock: There is no reason why this area should be held up.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It is owned by the Midland Railway Company, and our first consideration should be to develop the lands owned by the State. Settlers who have purchased from the Midland Railway Company do get assistance from the Industries Assistance Board.

Mr. Willecock: We are only talking about the Agricultural Bank.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The Agricultural Bank cannot assist without a second mortgage, and the value of that land to-day is such that the Agricultural Bank can get no security for money expended there. I would be safe in saying that no member of this Chamber would advance money on such a security, and yet members are quite willing to advance the State's money.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Before tea I was pointing out—

Mr. Marshall called attention to the state of the House.

Bells rung; a quorum formed.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I was pointing out that the reason why settlers on the Midland Company's land could not get assistance from the Agricultural Bank was that they could not give security. Any advances made by the Agricultural Bank for the improvement of the holdings of Midland settlers would be chiefly to the advantage of the Midland Company. There would be no security for the State. In 1905 I supported the proposal for the purchase of the Midland railway and lands, and I still think it would be to the advantage of the State if the railway and lands were secured. It has been urged that

the Midland district is strangled by private monopoly. Unfortunately that argument comes from those who support private monopoly in other directions than that of railway communication. It would appear, therefore, that in the opinion of the hon. members in question a private monopoly is to be done away with only when its abolition is beneficial to certain sections of the State. After the statement made by the Premier on this motion, it would be advisable either to adjourn the debate or to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Lieut.-Colonel Denton: Why?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Because the Government are negotiating at the present time. The Premier said that while he was in London overtures were made to him, and that he then asked that a proposal should be sent out here in writing. That has now been done, and the Government have the matter under consideration, we are told, though this is the first time we have heard it. Therefore it would be altogether inadvisable to do anything that might have a tendency to give those who have the property for sale an impression that the State is anxious to make the purchase. The matter should be left entirely to negotiation by the Government. If we show over-anxiety to obtain any property, undoubtedly the price of the property will go up.

Mr. Willcock: The motion merely affirms the desirability of the purchase.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: If a Bill were brought down for the purchase of the Midland line and lands on terms beneficial to the State, I do not think the House would object. But surely under present conditions we should leave the Government a free hand. They should not be placed in the position of having their hands forced, so to speak, by a resolution showing an urgent desire on the part of Parliament to make the purchase. The motion, of course, does not say that the Government shall purchase, but, nevertheless, the carrying of the motion would back up the sellers, and place the Government in a less advantageous position to negotiate. Seeing that the Government are now negotiating—

Mr. Willcock: How do you know they are?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I did not know it until to-night. I do not think any member of the House knew it until to-night. But the Premier has stated to-night that the Government have had an offer made to them from London. Like the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston), I think that all the railways in the State should belong to the Government. In my opinion, the Midland lands would be more developed to-day if they were in the hands of the Government. If Ministers bring down a Bill for purchase on equitable terms, I will support it. But as regards this motion, I say we should not pass it, because in doing so we should be depriving the Government of a free hand in the negotiations.

On motion by Mr. Mann, debate adjourned.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 28th September; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair, Hon. T. Walker (for Mrs. Cowan) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Next-of-kin of intestate without issue to include mother:

The CHAIRMAN: The member for York has moved the following amendment:—After "father," in line 1 of paragraph (b), insert "where the net value of his or her estate does not exceed five hundred pounds."

Mr. PICKERING: The consensus of opinion seems to be that a fair compromise would be reached by providing that if the father or the mother died and brothers and sisters were left, the amount should be equally divided. I have an amendment on the Notice Paper.

The CHAIRMAN: There is an amendment before the Chair now, moved by the member for York. That amendment must be dealt with first.

Mr. PICKERING: I oppose the amendment of the member for York. On a point of order, I should like to ask whether it will be competent for the member for Kimberley to move an amendment in paragraph (a), which paragraph I think has been passed.

The CHAIRMAN: We are now on paragraph (b). Unless the Bill is recommitted I cannot go back to paragraph (a).

Mr. PICKERING: Under the amendment of the member for York, the mother will have the same right as the father, whereas under the existing law the whole estate goes to the father. I take it that if the father is dead and the mother is living, the amount would be divided amongst the remainder. If the amendment of the member for York is defeated, I shall move the amendment which I have placed on the Notice Paper.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You cannot go back either.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Sussex will not be able to go back as he proposes.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: I trust the clause will be agreed to as printed. What the member for Sussex aims at is already provided for in the Administration Act and all that would be necessary to cover his point would be to have a reference to next of kin. Who has more right to the estate than the mother? Where does the right of anyone else come in?

Mr. Mann: There might be a crippled sister.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: And if there were, the mother would look after her. The mother is the proper person to handle the estate. It has been suggested that there may be bad mothers. Where we find one bad mother, we will find a dozen bad brothers and sisters. The mother bore, suckled and reared her child; she sheltered him against all troubles in his youth and protected him till he was able to protect himself. What did the brothers and sisters do? It seems to me obvious that the money so left should belong to the mother. We cannot legislate for

freaks, and a natural mother will see to it that her children are provided for. We should allow her to look after them.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Suppose she marries again?

Mr. UNDERWOOD: She will still look after her children.

Mr. DURACK: I do not think the amendment suggested by the member for York will carry out his intention. If the estate should be one of £1,200, and there were five brothers or sisters, then the position would be that the mother would get only £200; whereas if the estate were worth only £495, or £500, she would receive the full amount. I hope the amendment will not be carried.

Hon. T. WALKER: There is a good deal in the contention urged by the member for Kimberley. The amendment is vague and does not fall exactly into line with the distribution provided for in the Administration Act. Apart from that aspect, the view expressed by the member for Pilbara is the sound one. In England this provision is already law and England is a conservative country. Under the Bill we make no distinction as between the father and the mother; whereas the old law made the father stand out alone as the one who could hold property. The wife was merely a chattel. We have got away from that and now a woman can hold property and sue, and be sued, in respect of her own rights. At the same time, we linger behind England in some instances and that under discussion is one direction in which we have lingered behind. I ask the Committee to reject the amendment and adopt the clause as it stands. No possible harm can come of it, because if there is one portion of the family having regard for the offspring, it is that represented by motherhood. Even a bad mother has regard for the interests of her children. It has been suggested that by marrying again, the estate may be diverted by the mother from her children. At one time, the marriage would mean that the property went to the husband but now that is not so, and the mother retains her right to the property. A mother will always provide for her children unless she is de-natured by some means or other, but that type of woman is the exception and we do not legislate for her. The ordinary woman may be trusted to provide for her children.

Capt. CARTER: I support the clause as it stands in the Bill. When we last considered the measure, it was understood that the member for York and the member for West Perth intended to seek legal opinion regarding the former's amendment. I am sorry the member for West Perth is not present, but she informed me that she had had legal opinion, which was in favour of paragraph (b) of Clause 2. After hearing the member for Knowrna, I think we will be safe in adopting the clause as it stands.

Mr. DURACK: In my view, it is unfair that the father of a person dying intestate should take the whole of the estate. However, that has been accepted by the Committee,

and so I think the widowed mother of the deceased should be placed on the same footing, and allowed to take the lot. The only way we can achieve that is by accepting the clause as originally printed. I will vote for the clause.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—PENSIONERS (RATES EXEMPTION).

In Committee.

Resumed from 28th September; Mr. Stubbs in the Chair; Capt. Carter in charge of the Bill.

Clause 2—Exemption from Rates. Amendment by Hon. W. C. Angwin:—'That after '1919,' in line 4, 'and the water and sewerage rates' be inserted'—partly considered:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I hope the Committee will gravely consider what is proposed by the amendment. It would be a very serious thing, not only for the municipalities, but also for the Water Supply and Sewerage Department, if the amendment were carried and the clause as amended agreed to. It is not alone a question of showing sympathy with the pensioners; some regard must be had for the financial side of our public utilities. If we agree to the amendment, we might as well extend it to include trams and railways, and allow all pensioners to travel free.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: What will it cost the Government?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot say offhand. It has been stated that in Perth alone there are 1,200 or 1,300 pensioners who will enjoy this proposed exemption from rates. I should like to hear some good reasons why we should agree to it: I know of many why we should not.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I do not think the Minister can point to a single instance where this exemption is not already granted.

The Premier: Then let it go at that.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, there might be a change of Government. I have in mind a recent instance of an old age pensioner being released from the payment of his water rates on showing that he could not meet the demand. This proposed provision means, not a gift, but merely a loan.

The Minister for Works: It means a weight on the ratepayers.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I know of several local authorities who have no objection to the proposal. Even to-day the Minister is not charging old age pensioners water and sewerage rates.

The Minister for Works: How many are getting exemption? Perhaps half a dozen.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: Well, let them all be put on the same footing. It is curious that we had no objection from the Government to the Bill while it affected only the local authorities, but immediately it is proposed to include water and sewerage rates we have a protest from the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Under the existing law, if there be any case of hardship, the local authority can report it to the Minister, who shall decide the action to be taken. However, to talk of making it general is unfair to the State. These pensioners gradually gravitate to Perth and Fremantle and, perhaps, Kalgoorlie; so on those three local authorities will fall a burden which ought to be spread over the whole State. Numbers of local authorities will not be at all affected by this. No Minister for Water Supply would refuse assistance to a deserving case, but in the first place he must protect the revenue of the State. At the present time the Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Department cannot balance its ledger, so I ask the Committee to pause before seriously adding to the financial responsibilities of that department. I cannot believe there is real necessity for the proposed general exemption of rates in favour of pensioners. We have had but half a dozen requests for this relief.

Mr. MacCallum Smith: How many have you granted?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think we have granted every request that has been made. It is not a question of sympathy. We are here to adjust matters in a commonsense way.

Capt. CARTER: The Minister stated that wherever possible relief is granted in bona fide cases. I introduced the Bill to meet bona fide cases, the old age pensioner whose sole income is the 15s. a week received from the Federal Government. I take it the Minister would consider every such case bona fide. The unfortunate part is that a great many people allow themselves to be bludgeoned into paying their rates by reason of their terror at the receipt of a "bluey." They have paid rates when they could not afford to pay them.

The Minister for Works: They get an equivalent; it is not as if they paid for nothing.

Capt. CARTER: The object of the Bill is to give an exemption to people who are not in a position to help themselves; people who are beyond the working age, and who in many cases, have done much for the State. Last Thursday a case came under my notice. A man had been living in the one house for 27 years and had not got behind with his rates. Lately, he has become an old-age pensioner, and on the 5th October he received a warrant for the recovery of £4 2s. 4d., being a moiety of the year's rates.

Mr. Mann: That rate is very high.

Capt. CARTER: Still he is judged worthy of an old-age pension.

The Minister for Works: There is one whose daughter, son-in-law and two lodgers live in the house.

Capt. CARTER: I do not think that is the case to which I am referring.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: These were municipal rates.

Capt. CARTER: Such people become terrified by those notices and they pay when they cannot afford to part with the money. The amendment will remove that difficulty.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The list placed before the Minister for the striking off of rates comes from road boards and not from municipalities.

The Minister for Works: That is right.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The water rate is considerably less than one-half of the municipal rate, and the Government are not in half so bad a position as the local governing bodies. Parliament has refused the local governing bodies power to increase their rates.

Mr. Johnston: They are very heavy now.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The municipalities used to get subsidies from the Government, but they no longer receive them. They are feeling the pinch more than the Government. If I were asking the Government to give something, I could understand the objection, but I am only asking that these rates stand as a loan against the property during the last five or six years of a pensioner's life.

The Minister for Works: Look at the amount of book-keeping that would be required.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: It would require no more book-keeping than at present. I think the Government will gain rather than lose in the end. While they are now striking off rates, in many instances they will later on get the lot. The Government should be put in the same position as the local authorities.

Mr. PICKERING: The arguments of the member for North-East Fremantle seem to be unanswerable. Road boards and municipalities are in a very bad way. We are asking the local authorities to bear this burden, and yet the Government are not prepared to accede to a similar request.

The Minister for Works: The Government are not asking the municipalities to do it.

Mr. PICKERING: But we are.

The Minister for Works: Do not you urge economy in future.

Mr. PICKERING: This is economy in the interests of the pensioners.

The Minister for Works: Mandlin sympathy!

Mr. PICKERING: If we are prepared to take over so much of the pensioners' obligations, we might go a little further, as has been indicated. It is suggested that the rates be made a charge against the estate.

The Minister for Works: Do you think that is of any value?

Mr. PICKERING: Yes. The number of pensioners who have houses of their own is few, and I regret that we cannot extend consideration to all old-age pensioners. If our needs it more than another, it is the pensioner who has no property to exempt.

The Minister for Works: Should not the Federal Government increase the pension?

Mr. PICKERING: That would be better still. If the Government wish to get this proposal rescinded, they should point out to the Federal Government that the amount of the pension is inadequate and should be increased to the extent to which pensioners will be benefited by the passing of this measure.

Mr. LAMBERT: If the Minister for Works defined his attitude to the Bill as it applies to the postponement of municipal rates, his note of warning would carry greater weight. If he is prepared to sacrifice the revenue of municipalities—

The Minister for Works: I never said I was.

Mr. LAMBERT: If the Minister shows a regard for the revenue of the local authorities—

The Minister for Works: The pension is a matter for the Federal Government. You are asking us to supplement out of local resources a matter to which the Federal Government should attend.

Mr. LAMBERT: On the second reading the Minister said we should approach this matter with caution, but he did not define his attitude. Do the Government consider it essential that pensioners should be thus exempted? Are they prepared to supplement the pittance granted by the Federal Government? If the pension is inadequate, it is competent for this Parliament to supplement it by granting a rebate of rates or otherwise. If it is agreed that the State Government should supplement the old age pensions it is only a matter of degree as to whether we should extend the principle to the different rates which have been mentioned.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the clause:—"and the license fee for one dog under the Dog Act of 1903."

The Premier: You forgot the cow!

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: We will deal with the dog first. I am impelled to move this motion because of an occurrence that took place in Perth last July. An old lady, a pensioner, was fined for not registering her dog. Although she paid the registration fee she omitted to pay the cost of the summons and the fine, and she was arrested and taken to the police station and lodged in a cell. To obtain her release she had to borrow money from her landlady.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: If they can afford to keep dogs they can afford to pay the rates.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: Certain exemptions from rates are already provided in the Dog Act. Blind men, for instance, need not pay a license fee for their dogs. Surely these old pensioners should be given the same privilege. It would not materially affect the finances of any local authority. Many of these old age pensioners are without friends; indeed the dog is often the only friend they have.

The CHAIRMAN: Seeing that the member for North-East Fremantle has an amendment

on the Notice Paper, which comes before that of the member for North Perth, perhaps the latter will withdraw his amendment for the time being.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: Very well!

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 the words "either" and "or as tenant" be struck out.

It is impossible to relieve the tenant under this Bill, and I think we should afford relief to the owner only.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. MacCallum SMITH: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the clause: "and the license fee for one dog under the Dog Act of 1903."

Hon. P. Collier: I congratulate the member for North Perth upon his amendment, and also upon the fact that he has sprung it upon the Committee. He has been good enough to place it upon the Notice Paper so that members may have ample opportunity of thinking it over. I appreciate the points brought forward by him, and was deeply interested in the old lady. He did not tell us where she lived, but doubtless her home is in North Perth. We certainly ought to guard against a recurrence of that nature. I would remind members that there are dogs and dogs. The member for North Perth should amend his amendment in order that the breed of the dog may be specified. I suggest the insertion before "dog" of the word "thoroughbred." We do not want to encourage an increase of the mongrel type of dog. Old age pensioners would not be likely to acquire pedigreed dogs, and so the mongrels drifting about the city streets would tend to fall into the hands of old age pensioners. Any old age pensioner unable to secure a thoroughbred dog should be supplied with one by the Caledonian Society. If the incident narrated by the member for North Perth, of an old lady imprisoned for non-payment of 7s. 6d., being the registration fee for a dog, was well founded, it was a disgrace to the Perth City Council. I move an amendment on the amendment—

That "thoroughbred" be inserted before "dog."

Mr. LAMBERT: In some parts of the State old age pensioners keep goats. Their goats should also be exempt from fees. The amendment on the amendment discloses a leaning towards aristocracy on the part of the Opposition Leader, who seems to be slipping away from his higher principles.

The Premier: Could not this amendment be better discussed on the Dog Act Amendment Bill?

Mr. LAMBERT: Probably. I trust the member for North Perth will accept the amendment of the Leader of the Opposition.

Capt. CARTER: This particular discussion reflects no credit upon the Committee. While the mover of the amendment may be desirous of affording further relief to old people, yet he would have done better to defer his amendment until another Bill has been reached. The Committee has a serious measure in hand, and I hope the member for North Perth will withdraw his amendment.

Mr. PICKERING: I also hope the amendment will be withdrawn, because of the undesirableness of giving encouragement to the keeping of unlicensed dogs. One of the chief troubles of people in the country is the keeping of dogs by natives.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment on the amendment is the insertion of the word "thoroughbred." Let us stick to that.

Mr. PICKERING: If the amendment on the amendment is carried, I shall move the insertion after "dog" of the words "of an approved breed." The Committee should conserve the interests of the farming community in this matter. I hope the member for North Perth will withdraw his amendment.

Amendment on amendment put and negatived.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to the clause:—"in which event such payment of rates shall be deferred, and the rates shall remain a charge on the property and payable on sale of the property, or death of the pensioner, whichever event shall first happen."

Capt. CARTER: When this matter was last discussed, I intimated that I would accept the amendment, which I think will improve the Bill.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I oppose the amendment. I do not believe in this second-hand sort of charity. If we are to do anything for the old age pensioners, we should do it properly. The debt should not be handed down to posterity.

Mr. Money: It is a charge on the property.

Mr. WILLCOCK: An invalid pensioner may live for 30 years, and the rates will be accumulating all that time on the property before it can be disposed of. It is a very small thing we are proposing to do for the old people, and we should not hedge it round with such conditions.

Mr. LAMBERT: I oppose the amendment. If the old age pensioners' income is to be supplemented by the Government, we should do it in a fitting manner.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: You should have voted against the Bill.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not think it calls for that drastic action. The member for North-East Fremantle, owing to his long experience in local Government affairs, may of necessity view the question from the municipal

outlook, but if something tangible is to be done, we should exempt these old people from the payment of municipal rates altogether. I should like to see Parliament pass strongly worded resolutions regarding the niggardly manner in which the Federal Government deal with old age pensioners.

The CHAIRMAN: The principles of the Bill were discussed during the second reading stage. We are dealing with an amendment and members must speak to that amendment as closely as they can.

Mr. LAMBERT: I hope the member for North-East Fremantle will not press his addition to the clause, which will mean that the rates have to accrue until the death of the old age pensioner or the sale of the property.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: The member for Coolgardie has not studied the Bill. Without the words I propose, it will leave the matter at the discretion of the council as to whether or not relief from rates will be granted during the lives of pensioners. The amendment will make it compulsory. While we are all agreed that we should do everything possible to assist old age pensioners, it is a duty that devolves upon the State and not upon the local authorities. If the amendment be not inserted, we may as well throw out the Bill altogether. Although there is no compulsion on the local authorities to afford this relief for the old people, some have carried them on for 10 or 12 years without selling or leasing their properties as they have power to do after five years, but the rates have been paid afterwards. Unless the suggested words are inserted, the discretion will be left with the local authority, and so the position will remain unaltered.

Amendment put and passed.

Title:

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the Title: "and water and sewerage rates."

The Minister for Works: You will have to put in "storm water rates" to make that complete. Otherwise we shall be free to charge those rates.

The CHAIRMAN: Are they not all paid under the one Act?

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: No, there are several Acts under which they are paid. On the suggestion of the Minister, I will amend my amendment by including also, "storm water rates."

The CHAIRMAN: A difficulty arises. Storm water rates have not been mentioned in the previous amendment, and so before those words can be added to the Title the Bill will have to be recommitted. We cannot have in the Title reference to anything not mentioned in the Bill. The hon. member had better allow his original amendment to stand.

Hon. W. C. ANGWIN: All right, I will do so.

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

Bill reported with an amendment, and with an amendment to the Title.

House adjourned at 9.20 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 17th October, 1922.

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

QUESTION—IRWIN COAL SEAM.

Hon. T. MOORE (for Hon. J. W. Hickey) asked the Minister for Education: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to proceed with the development of the Irwin coal seam? 2, If so, will they take the necessary steps to make suitable arrangements for further boring, particularly in view of the highly satisfactory results obtained in No. 2 bore and the encouraging reports given by various authorities, including that of Professor Sir Edgeworth David?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied as follows: 1, The Government are prepared to assist on the usual terms any person or company desirous of opening up coal measures. 2, If further boring is undertaken on lands the property of the Midland Company, and on which they have exclusive mining rights, it can only be on the condition that the whole of the cost of boring is repaid from profits accruing to any person or company working the seams disclosed by such boring. The Midland Company has been asked to agree to this condition, but so far has not done so.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, MULLEWA-YUNA PROJECT.

Hon. T. MOORE (for Hon. J. W. Hickey) asked the Minister for Education: 1. In view of the necessity for opening up land in the interest of closer settlement as well as

for other good reasons, will the Government favourably consider the advisability of the early construction of the Mullewa to Yuna railway? 2, If not, will the Government undertake to build at least a portion of the line in order to facilitate transport of the produce of settlers who are located in that district and who are to-day suffering great disabilities regarding transport?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, No. 2, The reports will be examined to see whether such action is justified.

QUESTION—FEDERATION AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN asked the Minister for Education: 1, How long is it since the Royal Commission on Federation was appointed? 2, How many sittings have been held? 3, How many witnesses have been called? 4, When is the Commission likely to report to Parliament?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied as follows: 1. The Honorary Royal Commission was appointed on 11th February last. 2, Five. 3, One. 4, When the necessary information has been obtained.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Broome Hill Racecourse Bill.

PAPERS—COLLIE RIVER IRRIGATION SCHEME.

On motion by Hon. J. Ewing ordered: "That all papers in connection with the Collie River irrigation scheme be laid on the Table of the House."

SELECT COMMITTEE—ELECTRICITY SUPPLY.

Adoption of Report.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [4.36]: As chairman of the select committee, I move—

That the report of the committee be adopted.

The report is a simple one and self explanatory. It deals with another of our great State enterprises. The evidence discloses that this State enterprise is in the same category as others; no matter how good the enterprise may be, nor how much it may tend to benefit the country, the administering of it is not altogether what it should be. The Labour Party, who support these enterprises, have as much cause for complaint in respect of this electricity supply enterprise as they have in respect of other State enterprises.

Hon. T. Moore: They do not get a fair run.