

Hon. J. CORNELL: There is more justification for an inquiry into this Bill than there is for an inquiry into the Factories and Shops Bill or into the Arbitration Act Amendment Bill. We got away from our line of reasoning last session by constantly rejecting these Bills. I say there is reason for an inquiry. I have yet to learn that inquiries do any harm. If this proposed inquiry were to elicit evidence in favour of certain things being done, then I would say, let us do them. If the House is not prepared to do that, I suggest that the Bill be made applicable to the goldfields, and if the House is not prepared to do that, I do not know whether I can offer any alternative. The Government, I suppose, will have to extend as far as possible the operations of the Workers' Homes Board. I will support the second reading of the Bill, not in the interests of the metropolitan area, but in the interests of the province that you, Sir, and I, represent.

On motion by Hon. A. Thomson, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [8.15]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.16 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 29th, September, 1937.

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

QUESTION—SEWERAGE CONNECTIONS.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Water Supplies: 1, Have several hundreds of those who applied for sewerage connections under the deferred payment plan been requested to apply again in six months' time? 2, Does such postponement have the effect of rendering the applicants liable both for pan-service rates and for sewerage rates? 3, Has he power to exempt such applicants from sewerage rates in these cases? 4, Will he suspend liability for payment of such rates until the work can be carried out?

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes, if property is not served by a septic tank. Owners can avoid dual charges by having connections made privately. 3, No. 4, The Government does not accept liability for financing house connections. A limited sum is now available for connections under repayment conditions.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Land Tax and Income Tax.
- 2, Forests Act Amendment Continuance.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands, for the Premier.

RETURN—TOTALISATOR OPERATIONS.

MR. RAPHAEL (Victoria Park) [4.35]: I move—

That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing:—

(1) The number of totalisators registered in this State, or operated under registration,

since the commencement of the racing year in 1927, and where each is situated, separately set out, and if more than one is in operation on any one course.

(2) The gross takings of each totalisator, set out for each year, since 1927 to date.

(3) The annual net takings of each totalisator remaining undistributed after the declaration of dividends.

(4) The total amount of dividends unpaid, for each year, for each totalisator.

(5) As every statement of such figures is statutorily declared by the secretary, or a member of the committee, of a club, whether the statement of such figures has been annually checked and verified by the Auditor General.

(6) If not, why not, and whether such a check will be inaugurated immediately.

(7) Whether it is legal for totalisator tickets to be sold at less than five shillings each; if so, under what authority.

I had intended to ask for these particulars by way of question. However, I was advised that what I required was in the nature of a return, and accordingly I changed my notice of motion. I desire the information, in the first place, because Eastern States racing clubs include fractions in their dividends. To my mind, persons who invest their money on the totalisator are entitled to be informed where the fractions go. In 12 months those fractions must amount to a large sum. I do not know whether the Treasurer is aware where that sum goes. It is time the information was brought to the light of day. The racing clubs should be forced by some means to pay out fractions as well as the equal shilling. That is done in Victoria; and if it is done in a State where totalisator investments are much larger than those in Western Australia, it can equally well be done here.

Mr. Sleeman: In Victoria the sixpences are paid out.

Mr. RAPHAEL: In Western Australia everything over the shilling is taken by the clubs. I repeat, who gets that money? We know that prosecutions of starting-price bookmakers take place continually, though it is no more legal to bet on a racecourse than to bet on the street kerb. I had always been under the impression that the lowest amount for which totalisators here could issue tickets was 5s. It appears, however, that it is now possible to invest half-a-crown on the totalisator. Is that legal? I wish to bring to the notice of the public what takes place on the racecourse. The workingman bets with the starting-price bookmaker. It is my opinion that the racing clubs have insti-

gated the attacks on those bookmakers. I hope that the clubs will be forced in future to disgorge what at present they take in the form of fractions.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT

(No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 1st September.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [4.40]: The Bill is identical with a measure introduced previously. I opposed it then, and shall oppose it again. The hon. member sponsoring the Bill repeated his previous statement that I had not made clear it was not I who granted the reservations in question at the first onset. Having looked up "Hansard" since, I find that I have already explained exactly what occurred. It was the previous Coalition Government that granted the reservations to the Western Mining Corporation. Some four or five years previously, they had granted those reservations to Mr. Claude de Bernales. I said last year, and I say again, that when the Labour Government took office I did not object to the attitude of the previous Minister for Mines in the matter. My reason was that I believed his attitude to have been in the best interests of the mining industry, having regard to the position it was in then. I make that explanation again in order to clarify the position to the hon. member. I was not responsible for the granting of any of the reservations referred to; but I did agree with, and supported, the action of the previous Minister for Mines. The sponsor of the Bill also said, when I opposed the measure previously, that I had stated some millions of money would come into the State for investment in mining. By way of interjection, while the hon. member was moving the second reading of the present Bill, I said the money had already come, to a large extent. In fact, I have evidence sufficient to prove that. Leaving that particular point for the moment, I wish to say a few words on another aspect. After I had made my previous reply to the hon. member, the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) questioned my legal right to grant reservations under Section

297 of the Mining Act. I believe the forcible argument of the member for Nedlands had a fair amount of influence on some hon. members opposite, and resulted in their voting for the former Bill. Those hon. members believed that legally I had not the right referred to. I do not place my legal knowledge against that of the member for Nedlands. However, I submitted a copy of his speech to the Crown Law Department, and I have here in my bag a reply from the Crown Solicitor to every point made by the member for Nedlands. I do not propose to weary the House by reading the reply; but may say that the Crown Solicitor declares the member for Nedlands is under an absolute and total misapprehension, and that he is confusing Section 296 with Section 297. The Crown Solicitor states that it is not possible to read those two sections together, as they refer to entirely different reserves. The hon. member in his last speech went so far as to say that although he had been on the goldfields for a good many years and had had many cases before the court in connection with the Mining Act, he had not known of the existence of Section 297 until his attention was drawn to it. Thereupon, evidently, he went into the section fully, coming to the conclusion that I had no power to grant reservations. The Crown Law authorities declare definitely, and without any hesitation, that I have that power. I may add that when another eminent legal gentleman was here some little time ago inquiring into various statements which had been made, the question was put to him whether the Minister for Mines had power under Section 297 to grant the reservations in question. He also, after a study of the Act, quite definitely declared that the Minister was within his rights in granting reservations under Section 297. Section 296, of course, deals with reservations but that section is concerned with land that was reserved from mining. The member for Murchison contended that Section 297 provides for the power to make reservations for the purpose of town lots or any other concession of that kind, which is reserved from mining. But that is done under Section 296 and not Section 297. It is definitely specified in the Act. I get that power under Section 296 and not 297 and Section 297 does give the power to grant mining reservations. I could

read the three sheets of foolscap which have been prepared as the Crown Law opinion on this matter, but I do not want to weary the House. I admit that the hon. member gave me a certain amount of credit by declaring that he was perfectly satisfied that I honestly believed I had the power. Of course I did honestly believe I had the power and I am backed up now by the Crown Law authority. In his speech he tried to show the House that I was granting reservations illegally, but that Crown Law opinion shows him to have been under a misconception throughout. Now on the question as to when the capital is coming to Western Australia. The two bodies which have caused most of the criticism have, to my mind, even up to date, thoroughly justified the attitude of the previous Government and of the present Government in granting these reservations. I am not going to say what capital they have brought into Western Australia, but I am going to give an indication of what money they have expended in Western Australia. The total expenditure by the group comprised in the Western Mining Corporation from its inception to the 30th June, 1937, was £1,498,914. That is the actual money they have expended in this State. They have certainly brought a good deal more than that, but that is the amount which they have actually expended. The other companies, controlled by Mr. de Bernales, from their inception until the 31st July, 1937, have expended £1,516,329. That makes a total for the two companies of £3,015,243. Then again I would point out that the Big Bell Mines Ltd., which would not have been here but for the reservation, have expended up to date £650,000. Consolidated Gold Mines at Coolgardie have £300,000 as their capital and the Paget Gold Mines £200,000. The total for those five mines, therefore, is £3,015,243. If ever there was a justification for reservations surely those figures provide it. I will undertake to say quite definitely that the Western Mining Corporation would never have invested one shilling in Western Australia had they not had a reservation from the coalition Government. They had no intention of coming here except under those conditions. They came here specifically to see whether they could get those reserves, and the Government agreed to give them the reserves for the purpose of their bringing capital to exploit the gold mining industry, and they justified the decision of the Govern-

ment by expending £1,516,329. I say quite definitely, too, that in almost every instance wherein Mr. de Bernales was given a reservation there would have been no capital invested without the reservation. I am sorry to say that a good number of the reservations are not panning out too well, but I am pleased to say that four are in the production stage and a fifth will shortly be producing. I want to claim that in both those instances very little, if any, capital would have been invested here but for the granting of the reservations. With regard to the Big Bell mine also, not a penny piece would have been expended but for the reservation being granted. As a matter of fact the Big Bell was already—or at least a portion of it, the Little Bell, which adjoins it at one end—held by a local syndicate which never did any work on it at all. But when Mr. Mandelstamm came to me and asked for a reserve around the Big Bell, including the Little Bell, he then expended a fair amount of money for which he was subsidised pound for pound by the Government. The Government did the boring—we had the plant at that particular period—and he found half the money. Boring was done and the result of that boring was that he was then able to get Mr. Guest, the American, interested in the prospects of the Big Bell. When I went to England Mr. Guest was then certainly not definitely decided as to whether he would continue with the Big Bell or not. But he had authorised a considerable amount more boring and it was done by his company on the reservation without expense to the State. I met him one day by arrangement. I do not mind saying candidly that the reason for his asking to meet me was to ascertain from me what chance I thought the company had of a railway being built from Cue to Big Bell. He pointed out that after the tests which had been made they had discovered from the samples they had taken that they were taking on a proposition which was admittedly low-grade, and that if they had to cart plant and material by road from Cue, the re-handling costs would probably make the concern a non-paying proposition. So he asked me what chance there was of a railway being built. I could not tell him what chance there was, but I told him that I thought if he were prepared to spend the money which he told me at that period he was prepared to spend on the development of the mine and erection of plant, namely about £400,000, the Government would

seriously consider the building of a railway for a distance of 19 miles to serve that mine. He asked me whether it could be done at once. There was only one reply I could give. I told him that the earliest date at which it could be built was after authorisation had been passed by Parliament. I told him I did not know what the conditions were in America but that in our State no Government could build a railway without first getting the authorisation of Parliament to build it and that that took some little time.

Mr. Sampson: That is a good principle.

Mr. Patrick: They would not do that in America.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I told him that if he wanted the opinion of the Government I could send a cable but that he must make an application as well, personally. I told him to get his manager in Australia to put up a case to the Premier and see what attitude the Government would adopt. I pointed out that our Parliament adjourned some time in December and that if he missed that session he could not get the sanction for a railway until the following year. It would then be somewhere about September or October before it could be decided. His general manager in Australia, who was at that time manager at Mt. Isa, was then in England. Mr. Guest got in touch with him and asked him to break his journey at Fremantle. He called on the Premier when he arrived in this State and the following session a Bill was put through the House. The company had agreed to spend £400,000 but we asked them to lodge sufficient security with the Government that if they failed to complete their contract they would forfeit £50,000. The anticipated cost of the railway was £68,000 in all. That guarantee was put up, the railway was built and the company have expended to date £650,000. I claim that the reservations and the fact of my happening to be in London and my having impressed Mr. Guest that there was a possibility of getting a railway built had a good deal to do with the opening up of the Big Bell. I claim also that not only has the amount of money that has been expended justified the granting of reservations but the granting has also been justified by the employment it has given. On the 1st July, 1937, the men employed on the various mines numbered as follow: Western Mining Corporation mines, 727; the De Bernales group,

1,005; Big Bell, 359; Consolidated Gold Mines, 132; Paget Gold Mines, 67; total, 2,290. I claim that the employment of those 2,290 men at the mines has meant the employment of at least another 1,500 men throughout Western Australia. There is not the slightest doubt about that. Therefore I claim that from the two points of view, namely, the capital which has been brought here and the amount of employment provided, the letting of those reserves has been justified. I might also mention, because it is only fair—though this is by the way—that quite recently the Commonwealth Government asked this State to make available an officer of the Mines Department to make suggestions for amendments and co-ordination of the mining laws. They made that request because, as they said in their letter—and it is true, of course—Western Australia was the chief gold producer and should have the best experienced officers to advise them.

Mr. Marshall: We have got the best in the Commonwealth.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I took that as a compliment. Mr. Telfer, who has been appointed Acting Under Secretary and will become Under Secretary when the leave of Mr. Calanchini expires, was made available. After he had started his work, he was requested by the Commonwealth Government to provide in the Federal amending measure the conditions adopted in Western Australia authorising the Minister to grant reservations. The Commonwealth appreciated the benefit arising from those conditions. Anyone would be inclined to think from the hon. member's remarks that only mining companies had been granted reservations. As a matter of fact, 15 reservations are held by private individuals, so the granting of them has not been restricted to rich companies. I wish the individuals possessed money to test them. In most instances where individuals have reservations they have been granted because the individual has had reasonable prospects of interesting capital to have the ground tested, but I admit that those individuals themselves have not had the capital.

Mr. Marshall: Did I ever discriminate between individuals and companies?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. Since the 1st of January of this year I have granted 10 reservations, refused applications for 22, and cancelled 28. I give those

figures to show that anyone who applies for a reservation does not get it unless there are reasonable and logical grounds for its being granted. If he has good reasons, I believe that he is entitled to a reservation and to grant it is in the interests of the State. The hon. member quoted a certain reservation. At the time I did not know where it was located, but he said it had produced 60 tons of ore, which had been crushed.

Mr. Marshall: I think I said 100 tons.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The difference is not material. He said that practically nothing had been spent on it, and that no men were being employed on it.

Mr. Marshall: Not at present.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It was correct to say that at the moment no men were being employed, but I think the hon. member went further and said that the company had never had more than four men on the reservation. As a matter of fact, they had three men at one period, two lots of seven men, four lots of nine men, two lots of six men, one lot of four men, and two lots of ten men. That shows how the number varied. The company have expended on the reservation to date £4,630. That is no infinitesimal amount. Unfortunately they have got no prospects. No one is employed on the reservation at present, but the company desire to hold it a little longer to enable them to remove some buildings and small machinery to the asbestos show a little distance away. This reservation is in the Pilbara district: the total area is only 210 acres, and £4,630 has been spent on the mine. In addition, £1,500 was paid to the prospectors for the original prospecting areas. There were three prospecting areas, and the company paid £500 for each of them. I do not intend to say much more. I am convinced that I have the legal right, under the Act, to grant reservations. I am positive that the attitude I have adopted has been of benefit to the State. I say definitely that no man can come along and obtain 20 reservations, certainly not with mining flourishing as it has been in the last 18 months or two years. No individual has received more than one reservation. I repeat that the granting of reservations has fully justified itself, both from the standpoint of the amount of money expended in the State and the amount of employment created. I am more than ever positive that I have

the legal right under the Act to grant reservations.

Mr. Marshall: I do not think you have explained it very fully.

MR. WELSH (Pilbara) [5.8]: I listened with great interest to the Minister's remarks. In some instances the probability is that the granting of reservations has been justified, but in most instances and in my district particularly, I consider that the granting of reservations has simply meant the locking up of auriferous areas for no useful purpose. It is certainly against the best interests of prospectors that such reservations should be granted. The prospector lives a hard life and works hard, and he is entitled to what he can find on practically virgin country. Such virgin country abounds on mineral reserves, and often the prospector has no means of ascertaining where the boundaries of the reserves are. Most of the known gold-fields in this State have been located by dinkum prospectors or dish men. Such men go out for months at a time looking for new fields, but owing to the fact that some of their finds prove to be on reservations, they are unable to take them up. In almost every instance, reservations have been granted on or around old shows, and the reservation might extend miles from the original show. There is a reservation 25 miles down the river at Nullagine and there is another of four miles square.

The Minister for Mines: That is so.

Mr. WELSH: If a prospector discovered a show on the banks of the river, it would be within the reservation.

The Minister for Mines: No, if a reef ran through the bed of the river the prospector could work it.

Mr. WELSH: From the four-mile square reservation, all the gold obtained in the Nullagine in the early days was taken, and prospectors have made a living there for about 40 years, to my knowledge. There is another reservation of 200 acres in the same district. None of the reservations, so far as I know, has a man working on it at present. I maintain that the prospector is entitled to what he can find on those areas. It is not as if any work was being done on them, or any capital was likely to be introduced to develop those shows. Some of the reservations have been held for six or seven years, and to my knowledge no

work has been done on two of them for years.

The Minister for Mines: Which two are those?

Mr. WELSH: I am referring to the Nullagine area, the conglomerate and the Bill-jim of 500 acres.

The Minister for Mines: What is the number?

Mr. WELSH: I do not know the number of the reservation, but the area is 500 acres. Those areas are still locked up. Men have been prospecting in the district for years, and they are debarred from going on to those areas because, if they found anything, they could not take up the ground. I repeat that this policy of granting reservations results in locking up large auriferous areas for no useful purpose. I agree with the Minister that capital has been brought into the State, particularly for the Big Bell mine, but I consider that the granting of reservations in my district is not justified. Reservations have been held for years and no work has been done on them. Either those areas should be abandoned or taken up as prospecting areas so that work might be done on them. Excepting the Little Wonder, I do not think many men have been employed on any of those reservations. The same company had an area at Marble Bar where thousands of pounds were spent on drilling and then it was thrown up. That reservation was justified. The reservations at Nullagine, however, include practically all the old mines, and I say that they should not be locked up. I support the second reading.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [5.13]: The object of this Bill is to amend Section 297 of the Mining Act.

Mr. Marshall: On which your legal interpretation was entirely wrong.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The proposed amendment would restrict the right of the Minister to grant any person anything beyond the right of occupation; it would not allow the Minister the right to authorise mining on the land in respect of which he allowed occupation. I must confess that if I had been asked to interpret Section 297 of the Act, I should have said that that was the meaning, independently of what is contained

in this Bill. The Minister says he is advised otherwise. I can only say that I differ from him. I propose to show why I differ. The mere statement that one differs is of very little value without the reasons for such difference of opinion being given.

The Minister for Mines: I place some value on the advice of the Crown Law Department.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not suggest the Minister advises himself. He must have received advice from the Crown Law Department. The assertion that a section bears one meaning, or does not bear that meaning, is of very little value by itself. If one gives reasons for that then it will be open to every layman to see what the weight of those reasons amounts to. It may then be that if the layman is not otherwise prejudiced he will allow for those reasons, and will be convinced. Let us see what the language of the section is. It says—

The Minister and, pending a recommendation to the Minister, a Warden may temporarily reserve any Crown land from occupation, and the Minister may at any time cancel such reservation: provided that if such reservation is not confirmed by the Governor within 12 months the land shall cease to be reserved.

It must be brought to the knowledge of whoever is attempting to discover the proper meaning of this section that Crown land is open to occupation for mining purposes. The whole scheme of the Mining Act was to give to a person who had a miner's right the privilege of taking up any Crown land which was not reserved, for the purpose of conducting thereon mining operations. The section in question begins—

The Minister may temporarily reserve any Crown land from occupation.

That has nothing to do with entering upon Crown land for mining. In the next succeeding sentence it is provided that having reserved a certain section of Crown land for occupation, he may then, with the approval of the Governor, authorise any named person temporarily to occupy such reserve, upon such terms as he may think fit. I do not see how there can be any doubt that the only intention of the section was to give the Minister power to do something which was necessary he should have power to do, that is, take away the right of the public at large, who possessed that right, to enter upon Crown land and reserve it, and to grant that reservation

by way of a right of occupation to some person named by him. The intention was to provide for schools, police stations, recreation grounds, public halls and all other things necessary for our social life, but not for mining. To my mind it is quite clear, not only from the language of the section, but also from a perusal of the section which precedes it. In that other section the Governor, not the Minister, may by notice in the "Government Gazette" declare any reserve to be open for mining.

The Minister for Mines: That is where it has been reserved previously.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Before the Minister can allow anyone to occupy it, he must reserve it. He can then give the right of occupation, after he has reserved it. That policy has been pursued by other Governments. The Minister is not in any sense to blame, as the author of it. It was undoubtedly interpreted by previous Governments as having exactly the same meaning as the Minister has placed upon it. He is, therefore, not the author, but that does not make it right. The fact that it has been done before does not make it right that we should continue it, if it is against the policy and provisions of the Act so to do. I submit it is against both. There can be no doubt that the Act did not mean that even the Governor, that is Executive Council, should have power to lock up large sections of mineral-bearing land, and hand them to individuals or corporations. The Minister may plead that this was done by other Governments. The only question now is that he has been good enough to allow the practice to be continued.

The Minister for Mines: All I plead is that when the member for Murchison said I had granted certain reservations, I did nothing of the kind. I explained that.

Mr. Marshall: You have perpetuated the evil

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Minister is not the author of this policy.

The Minister for Mines: You were good enough to say that before.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I object to an improper construction being placed on the section, such as has been placed upon it by other Governments, and I strongly object to a continuance of that practice. I will support the Bill.

The Minister for Mines: Especially as in both instances a Government of which you were a member followed the same practice.

HON. N. KEENAN: That is correct.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [5.20]: For years past I have been opposed to the policy of the Minister granting these reserves. I have discussed it with him on more than one occasion. In another capacity, associated with the administration of Labour affairs, I was called upon some years ago to circularise all the mining districts to get them to appreciate the seriousness of the Minister having power under the Act to grant reservations. I support the Bill because I do not believe in that practice. I do not distrust the present Minister nor any other Minister, but on broad principles, that no one individual should have the right to grant a special reservation, I think the whole thing is wrong, and contrary to responsible Government. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Welsh) represents his district. The responsibility is placed upon his shoulders to become conversant with the particular activities of his electorate, so that he can represent the best interests of those who are connected with such activities. He, therefore, should have the right to decide in Parliament whether or not certain concessions should be given, and whether or not they interfere with or may lead to the expansion of the particular activities of his district. No reservation can be granted to any other activity by the consent of the Minister. We cannot interfere with Crown lands or give them away unless that is specially provided for in an Act of Parliament, and Parliament is consulted by the Minister concerned. There are sound reasons for that procedure. Under representative Government members of particular constituencies should have ample opportunity to decide whether a certain action is wise or not. It is on that broad principle that I have objected to these reservations. Whether or not they are wise from a mining point of view it is not my province to consider. I do not represent a mining constituency. I am not prepared to endorse all the credit for the improvement in mining conditions being given to any reservations. The old mining conditions were good enough to attract capital in the past, and are capable of attracting it in the future. I do not believe in giving special consideration as a means of attracting capital for any particular activity. Capital can

look after itself without any special privileges being granted to it by particular attractions afforded by our Act or by special administrative acts by Ministers of State. The Bill is necessary so that we can revert to the position when members can protect their own constituencies. They should have the right to make representations on behalf of their constituents. From the parliamentary representation point of view, it is wrong that a Minister should have the power it is said, by the authority of the Crown Law Department he has rightly exercised. It was previously claimed by the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) who no doubt has taken advice on the subject, that there is a grave difference of opinion between what the Crown Law Department has submitted to the Minister and what other competent authorities have said. Let us put the matter right and decide that if the special reservations are required, they must be given by Parliament itself. Let members of the districts concerned have a voice in the matter. We are not supporting this Bill for the purpose of preventing reservations being made, if that is desired. Parliament is all powerful in such matters. If the Minister feels it is in the interests of this important industry that reservations should be made he can bring his case before Parliament, and Parliament will decide whether it is wise to give them or not. The member for the district concerned should have full knowledge of this kind of thing. He should be able to ventilate any matter that requires ventilation and should be consulted in his place in the House, so that he may either support or oppose the project. To-day he knows nothing of the matter. The reservation is granted without his knowledge and without his being consulted. That in principle is wrong. I appeal to the House to support this Bill so that we may give back to Parliament the right to decide these matters, rather than that they should be decided either by the Government or by the Minister concerned. This would not injure the industry if it is desirable that reservations should be granted. They can be granted by the House as the occasion arises.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison—in reply) [5.28]: The passage of this measure has shown that the debate, as it were, has resolved itself into a difference of opinion between the Minister and myself. It seems that we shall always be prepared to agree, but to agree to differ. I was astounded at

his brief address in support of his right to grant reservations under Section 297 of the Mining Act. I had hoped he would have explained his reasons for having closed up the reservations.

The Minister for Mines: Not one was ever open.

Mr. MARSHALL: This is not the first occasion when a like measure has been before the Chamber. On a previous occasion, and I think on a motion I moved the year before, he advanced the argument that because a number of reservations were open reservations they offered a wonderful opportunity to prospectors inasmuch as they had rights over any discovery they might make. I was surprised that the Minister did not tell us why he had closed these areas against the prospectors.

The Minister for Mines: I did not close them against the prospectors.

Mr. MARSHALL: Obviously they have been closed against prospectors.

The Minister for Mines: They were always closed against them.

Mr. MARSHALL: Then the Minister's argument that he had granted reservations in order to give prospectors a chance to secure buyers, completely vanishes.

The Minister for Mines: Not at all.

Mr. MARSHALL: On a previous occasion the Minister advanced that argument as a good reason why members should support him and oppose my Bill. To-day he has made no mention whatever of that phase, and each and every reservation that I know of is to-day a closed reservation. No prospector can go on to them. In the course of his remarks, the Minister differed from my contention regarding his legal right to grant reservations under Section 297. I advanced an argument similar to that propounded by the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) to the effect that Section 297 only permitted the Minister himself, or on the recommendation of the warden, to grant temporary reservations for the purpose of public buildings or facilities such as racecourses, golf links, or provision for the erection of public utilities. The Minister said I was entirely wrong and under a misapprehension and added that Section 296 gave him that power. Let me read to members Section 296, and if after hearing it they can agree with the Minister that it gives him power that I say Section 297 does give, then I will be most sympathetic with them be-

cause of their lack of reasoning powers. Section 296 reads—

The Governor may, by notice in the "Government Gazette," declare any reserve to be open for mining, and thereupon and until such notice is revoked, such reserve shall be deemed Crown land within the meaning of this Act.

That does not give the Minister the right to grant reservations.

The Minister for Mines: Of course not.

Mr. MARSHALL: But the Minister said it did.

The Minister for Mines: I did not; I said that Section 297 gave me the right to grant reservations. The area has already been reserved for the purposes you refer to. If you want any of those areas thrown open for mining, the application has to go through Executive Council.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not know what the Minister meant to say; I listened to him and I merely know what he did say. Section 297 does not give the Minister the right to grant reservations for the mining of gold, and I advanced as an argument in support of that, the contention that those reservations were for public utility purposes, but the Minister said that Section 296 gave him the right to grant reservations for that purpose. Members may regard as irksome my reiteration with regard to this point, but if the Minister's legal advisers and if his own contentions are correct, why did they put at the bottom of Section 297 the following words:—

The Minister may, with the approval of the Governor, authorise any person to temporarily occupy any such reserve on such terms as he may think fit.

It would not have been necessary if the Minister had power to grant reservations for mining.

The Minister for Mines: That is your opinion.

Mr. MARSHALL: Members should watch the position closely. An application for a reservation is granted by the Minister now. There can be no reservation until the application is made.

The Minister for Mines: None whatever.

Mr. MARSHALL: So the Minister agrees with that contention.

The Minister for Mines: Obviously you cannot grant a reservation until it is applied for.

Mr. MARSHALL: It is Crown land until an application is lodged for the granting of the reservation. If the Minister's conten-

tion were right, all that the individual should be required to do instead of applying for the reserve would be to apply for the occupancy right to go on the area. Applicants do not ask for that. They make application to the Minister for a reservation as though it were a goldmining lease or a prospecting area. There is no provision under Section 297 for them. Again it is reiteration, but it has to be stated over and over again because of the Minister's emphatic opinion on the subject. He admitted, by way of interjection, that most of the holders of reservations hardly ever deviate very far from the known ore channel on old or abandoned mines.

The Minister for Mines: Quite 90 per cent. of the reserves have been around old or abandoned mines.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is right. I suggest that there is no abandoned mine in Western Australia that a 24-acre lease would not completely cover, so why all these large areas in the reservations that have been granted? Why shove out the men who find the ore channels? There has not been one discovery made as a result of granting these huge reservations. Although I differ from the Minister, it is true that the reservations have been in and around certain abandoned mining areas that have now a new lease of life, as at the Big Bell. On the other hand, as the result of expenditure of capital involved through the securing of the reservations, has there been any actual discovery of anything new? That phase of this most important industry is invariably left to the prospector. There is no security for those who are prospecting now. Obviously if an individual goes out to prospect, he does not go to the registrar's office first and pick out a block of land in the wilderness, intimating at the time that he proposes to prospect that particular country. He cannot do that. He explores the country and tests it thoroughly. Should he find any indication that there is gold, he returns to the registrar and lodges his application. Naturally when a prospector makes application for a lease or P.A., it is known that he must have found something, that there must be some object in his application for the area. Thus the fact that the man has discovered something immediately becomes known. The registrar knows when the prospector applies for an area inside a reservation, that the prospector must have found something worth while, and so the prospector loses the advantage of his

labour. I tell the Minister quite definitely that, although I cannot say what is happening on the Eastern Goldfields, his action has intimidated the really bona fide prospectors in the Murchison area. They will not leave for the back country because of the fear that, should they make any discovery, they will merely find that the area tested is within a reservation. Two of the finest prospectors in the State have refused to shift out to Naberu because there is no guarantee that there will be no reservation granted when they return. Those men would have to go out into the wilderness for 120 miles or so and remain there for four or five months. In the meantime some speculative carpet-bagger may step in, knowing that the prospectors are out, and secure a reservation. Then when the prospectors return, they would find that all their labour had gone for nought. If the Minister had been wise, he could have obviated a lot of this trouble by requiring those who apply for reservations to do so in the ordinary way as for prospecting areas and leasehold tenures. The application should go through the warden.

The Minister for Mines: I have no power under the Act or the regulations to do that.

Mr. MARSHALL: That may be so, but I suggest, even if the Minister has not the legal right, he could make it obligatory upon the warden to listen to the application and then send a recommendation to the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: I could not ask him to do that.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Minister could intimate that he would not grant the reservations personally but would require such application to be made to the warden. The application could be heard in the local court, and the Minister could say that if the warden forwarded a recommendation that the application be granted, he would consider it. That would be fair and would afford the people of the mining districts some knowledge of what was going on. As it is, no one knows what is happening until the reserve is granted. That is wrong in principle and has operated harmfully in the Murchison and North-Western areas. I am sorry the Minister has been so determined on this matter. The Minister advanced a very good argument with regard to the amount of capital that the granting of reservations has been instrumental in introducing to the State, and, side by side with that, the number of men employed by the companies concerned. It is all a matter of opinion. I tell the Min-

ister that if I were one of those who had succeeded in securing reservations, I would be hard pressed before I would advance an argument other than that I would not have invested any capital unless I had secured those reservations. The man who has a reservation and can advance the argument now that he would have taken up the total area in 24-acre lots had he not been granted the full reservation, can be regarded as treacherous. On the other hand, naturally the people concerned would say, "If the Minister had not granted the reservation, I would not have spent a shilling here." It is natural to assume that is the attitude that would be adopted. Of course it is. I would do it myself; I would stick to the Minister because through him I had become a privileged individual. So it is that they always stick to the Minister in that contention.

The Minister for Mines: I have not discussed it with one of them. I do not know whether they are sticking to me or are against me.

Mr. MARSHALL: But the Minister would never have any fear that any one of them would now turn against him and say that Marshall was right, because the price of gold was so inviting and they had the capital and that they would have taken up the ground in 24-acre leases had the Minister not granted them the reservation. I am confident that had there never been one reservation granted we would have had just as much capital coming into the country and just as much employment afforded. The prospects of further discoveries of newly-defined lines and lodes might have been more favourable, because the granting of reservations excluded other men from coming on to country of any quality. To that extent it deterred prospectors from prospecting. If the Minister had stuck to the Act as it is and said to those people that there was no limit to the area they could hold and that they could take up 24-acre leases; the Minister could have said to them "You have abundance of capital and I am putting you on the one footing with everyone else." Had the Minister said that, those companies would have taken up whatever area they required, but would never have taken more than they required, because of the cost and of the working conditions. But having granted reservations to one or two, no Minister could withstand the barrage of applications for further reservations. The Minister has said that pri-

vate individuals have applied. But I have always objected to it. It is most remarkable that in the early boom days on the goldfields we could find those well-defined areas, which are now known to everybody, without any reservations at all. I suggest that millions of capital came into the country when there were only 24-acre leases available to be taken up. Yet to-day we have to give square miles of auriferous country to induce capital to come in. I disagree with that; I say it is entirely wrong. As to employment, I want to show the Minister that although he himself refused to permit men to work on those reservations, those who hold them presumably are prepared to allow some individuals to work.

The Minister for Mines: You are not getting me into that!

Mr. MARSHALL: I have the idea that the Minister is on good legal grounds in that. He might get into a very bad position if he interferes there. So I will not bother the House by following up that point. The Minister mentioned the Big Bell reservation. He knows that that reservation was not granted until a considerable time after a certain company had operated on that line. I think there are two companies, but anyhow the Mt. Ida was on it and had been boring on it for years.

The Minister for Mines: They never put a pick into a hole in the ground without a reservation.

Mr. MARSHALL: I know all about it, because I had an interview with the Minister's predecessor in regard to the granting of that reservation. It was granted a considerable time after the revival of the Big Bell proposition and it was only granted—according to the Minister's predecessor—because they contended that the dip of the Big Bell line was to the eastward. And this company, I understand, has already taken what they wanted in leasehold tenure and surrendered the rest.

The Minister for Mines: They have taken 49 leases for which they are paying rent, but they have not surrendered the balance.

Mr. MARSHALL: I thought they had. On the north end of the line where there is no reservation, and in close proximity to the present mine, there is a new and promising discovery. That could never have occurred had the reservation led round north, because the prospectors could not have gone on to that ground. I have always opposed

reservations on principle. It is a bad advertisement for the State when we say that one requires to have four square miles or more of country in order to find a mine in Western Australia. Two of the finest gold producers in this State are only 6-acre blocks each; but now one must have six square miles or more if he would find a mine in this State. The privileged nature of the people who can get reservations, as against the bona fide prospector who has to pay his pound per acre for his lease, is the galling aspect of it all to me. It is taking away from the prospector his means of livelihood, and it is of no use paying a man 15s. a week to go out prospecting when he knows that if he does discover anything it will almost certainly be on somebody's reservation.

The Minister for Mines: A large number of them went out, but not one has asked for a reservation, and there has been no complaint made to me.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, there is one in my electorate, and there is another out from Nullagine that I know of.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think the hon. member is in order in introducing new matter when replying to the debate.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not introducing new matter. The Minister says that this does not prevent a legitimate prospector from achieving success, but I say that a prospector is seriously interfered with by these reservations. The principle of reservations is wrong from every aspect. However, the Minister and I will never see eye to eye in this, so I will merely submit the Bill and let the House decide.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

MOTION—RAILWAY MANAGEMENT AND WORKING.

To Inquire by Royal Commission.

Debate resumed from 8th September upon the following motion moved by Mr. Seward:—

That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into and report on the management and workings of the Western Australian Government

Railways, with particular reference to their relationship to modern transport facilities.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [5.57]: According to the returns published in the "West Australian" the State Government railways show a profit of three per cent. or more. So although the remarks of the hon. member who moved the motion revealed a great need for reform in our railways, it would seem that they are making a clear profit certainly higher than are the English railways or perhaps the Midland railway. Of course, such profits are submerged under bonds and so we do not hear much of them, but nevertheless they are there.

Mr. Doney: Why, the railways could not pay the whole of the interest owing!

Mr. NORTH: We have an exact parallel in any company that has subscribed the whole of the money used. If that company were showing a profit of $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., as I think our railways are doing, it would be considered a very fair profit and, as I say, would be a higher profit than the English railways can show. So I do not think from that point of view that we should be too harsh on our railways. Of course every word uttered by the member who moved the motion was no doubt correct, and his speech went to show a lamentable condition in our railways. But it must be remembered that they were built at a very low capital cost, merely for the purpose in the first place of developing primary production, taking loads to the coast and earlier to carry loads to the goldfields. So it could not be expected that our railways should be very efficient, or capable of meeting any stringent emergency. But we have reached a point in the history of the State where it may perhaps be an advantage that we have held back so long from improving our railways just as Great Britain gained a tremendous advantage by holding back so long with her re-armament, for today she can provide herself with the best of everything, to the chagrin perhaps of certain other nations. Similarly we shall find here opportunity through having for so long held back from improving our standard equipment and our very light rails. We shall now have a chance of bringing our railways right up to date, whereas had we spent millions in the past on improving our narrow gauge we would now again perhaps be needing further improvements, not only

in our rolling stock, but also in our railway tracks by laying down broad gauge lines. It may also provide the opportunity for us to use many of our roads and so increase transport by road. All these possibilities are ahead of us. I am aware of the low capital cost of narrow-gauge lines, but if the State should industrially expand and carry a larger population we should easily be able to face the question of building our lines on the proper Australian gauge. If it is proposed to spend thousands per mile on reinforcing the existing lines to bring them up to modern requirements, why not give consideration to the advisableness of doing it by reconstructing our lines on the standard gauge, and so doing the job properly and not wasting money in that direction? I am sure the member for Kalgoorlie will support me when I say that the actual results achieved in South Africa on a narrow gauge were obtained only at a very high cost per mile and on improved specifications. I am not at all pessimistic as a result of the story told us by the hon. member who submitted the motion, but at the same time I congratulate him upon the way in which he presented his case. If we can find money to spend on a Royal Commission to conduct the investigation suggested, would it not be better to obtain the services of an officer and send him abroad to obtain the latest information about railway construction in other countries?

Mr. Withers: An officer of the present railway system?

Mr. NORTH: If the Government are considering the spending of money in that direction, they should secure the services of someone competent to carry out the job. The money would be well spent in getting information from abroad so that we might learn what could be done here. I remind the House that we did have a Royal Commission on the railway system some years ago, and I do not know that very much followed from whatever recommendations were made by that Commission. On that occasion the Commissioner of Railways had a hot answer for every charge that was made. What resulted from the findings of that Commission?

Mr. Withers: There were some results.

Mr. NORTH: I expect the recommendations were carried out only when money was available. The House really should consider the suggestion that rather than have a

Royal Commission we should appoint a competent person to obtain from other parts of the world the latest information available regarding everything to be known about railway construction and management.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) {6.3}: I support the idea of having some inquiry into the railway system as it is operating in the State to-day, though not necessarily in the form of a Royal Commission. I would prefer the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the question of modernising the system. The suggestion has been made by the member for Claremont (Mr. North) that we should send someone outside the State to collect information. Candidly I do not like the idea of sending a man from this State to other parts of the world; I would rather that the Government secured the services of a man from a country having a gauge similar to ours. If such a man came here, he could be given the powers of a Royal Commission and he would probably be able to make recommendations which would be the outcome of experience in his own country as to the direction in which we ought to improve our system. There is not the slightest doubt that our railways in Western Australia are antiquated. Our road beds do not conform to modern standards, our locomotives are grossly out of date; indeed, some were placed in commission at the end of the 19th century and are still in service. I shall deal with them as I go along. There is not the slightest doubt that we have not been keeping abreast of modern railway standards, and I am quite prepared to allow that we cannot get the service from a 3ft. 6in. gauge that we could obtain from the standard gauge of 4ft. 8½in. In countries such as Java, Japan and South Africa where they have a gauge similar to ours, they have shown us that we are lagging far behind in respect of railway transport, even on a 3ft. 6in. gauge. The other night South Africa was mentioned, and it is to that country I propose to refer for comparison, though it is a black man's country. In the railways there, a number of coloured men are employed at low wages in the minor or medium occupations. I shall not make comparisons of the financial results achieved, but I can say that though it be a black man's country, their white employees are treated considerably better than are the employees of the railways in Western Australia. I was particularly struck by one matter in the

report of the Railways Commissioner of South Africa, and it was that where they have a number of apprentices; they provide accommodation for them at a cheap rate. This is in striking contrast to the course followed in Western Australia. Take a boy living in Kalgoorlie who is apprenticed at the Midland Junction workshops. He will get 16s. or 18s. a week, and we know, of course, that it is utterly impossible for him, while he is living so far away from home, to pay for his board and lodging out of such wages. The result is that the lad's parents have to subsidise the wages. In South Africa, however, the railway authorities provide accommodation for their apprentices who are away from their homes. In addition I find that there is an elaborate housing system and there they do not call upon a man, as we do here, to go out to any place where no accommodation is provided. It is true that we provide homes in outback places, but in 90 per cent. of the instances they are built only for the salaried staff. A man who is on a regular job has a house provided, but the driver, fireman or guard who has to go out at all hours of the night and in every kind of weather, must provide his own accommodation, and, in many instances, sleep out. In the early history of the State, railway employees were compelled to sleep under gum trees in the wheat areas. Then, again, in the black man's country of South Africa they do not scrap their employees after those employees have rendered a lifetime of service, as we do in Western Australia, but they provide superannuation. During the service of the employee both the industry and the employee contribute to a fund and from that fund superannuation is granted when the individual reaches the retiring age. Looking up the record of railway improvements, I find that Western Australia has remained almost stationary for the last 25 years, and when we stand still in an age of progress we not only remain stationary but we slip backwards. That is what has been happening in Western Australia. The first essential in running an efficient service is a good roadbed. It is no use having up to date rolling stock if the roadbed is deficient. Taken in conjunction with the condition of the roadbed is the length and weight of rails. In Western Australia we have 153 miles of track laid with 80-lb rails. That is the maximum weight of rails used in Western

Australia, and we find that type of rails only in that section between Northam and Fremantle. We have 2,600 miles of 60-lb. rails laid and an alarming feature is that we have 1,884 miles of 45-lb rails. Now 45-lb. rails for railway transport were out of date 30 years ago, and yet we have 40 or 45 per cent. of the total length of our lines laid with rails of that weight. Let me compare our position with that of South Africa. In that country there are 880 miles laid with 96-lb. rails, and they too run their trains on a 3ft. 6in. track. South Africa is engaged in relaying all their lines now with 96-lb. rails. That is an absolute necessity if the intention is to accelerate the service. The first thing we have to do is to alter the length and weight of the rails. At the beginning of this century the maximum length of rails was about 45 or 50 feet. Our rails are 30 feet in length. The London and North-Eastern Railway Company found that they could with economy and benefit run trains smoothly with rails of 120 ft. in length. Naturally that is economical because there are fewer joints and fewer bolts, and smooth running also follows.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. STYANTS: Before the tea adjournment I was dealing with the weight of rail used in the roadbed of South African railways. The cost of sleepers enters into the question. It is interesting to note the cost of jarrah sleepers supplied to the South African Government, particularly as Western Australia has in the past supplied quite a number of sleepers to South Africa. It is interesting to compare the price of those jarrah sleepers with the price of steel sleepers, which are chiefly used by the South African railways. The steel sleeper landed in South Africa costs approximately 6s. 10d., whilst the cost of the 7ft. x 10in. x 5in. jarrah sleeper free on board at Western Australian ports is 6s. 6d. Somebody must be getting a wonderful rake-off in connection with those jarrah sleepers. In view of the free-on-board cost of jarrah sleepers, it is no wonder that the South African order has dropped from 210,000 sleepers in 1935 to 60,000 in 1936. The Commissioner of Railways in his reports quotes only the free-on-board price of jarrah sleepers, as against the delivered cost of steel sleepers. Another factor as regards modernising our railways is that of locomotives. I think even

the officials of our Railway Department will admit that they have not an up-to-date, modern locomotive in conformity with railway standards and the improvements which have been made during the last 30 years. Many of the locomotives operating on the Western Australian railways were placed in service at the end of the 19th and early in the 20th century. They are a simple, saturated type of engine, and are less efficient to-day than when they were first placed in service, because in most cases the boiler pressure has been cut down, thereby reducing the tractive force. They are uneconomical and inefficient compared with locomotives used in countries where improvements have been adopted right along the years in regard to railway transport. Our Commissioner's report for 1936 states that with 50 per cent. of the locomotives considerable expense and trouble was experienced owing to broken frames, due to metal fatigue. When locomotives have been in service for such a long time that the steel is deteriorating and the frames are breaking, one can understand that those locomotives are out of date. One-third of the boilers, according to the same report, have been in use for 20 years. If they were 20 years old at that time, they have attained their majority this year, and are now 21 years of age. It is no exaggeration to say that of our locomotives not one is up to date. Our latest "P" class engines, of which 10 are now being constructed in the Midland Junction workshops, are identical in specification with those placed in service 12 years ago. Any person familiar with the development of railway traffic in other countries knows that vast improvements have been made in the locomotive stock during the last 12 years. Yet we find that something in the neighbourhood of £80,000 or £100,000 is being spent in the Midland workshops to produce engines to specifications exactly the same as those of locomotives placed on the road 12 years ago. The "P" class engine, while economical to operate, is the least efficient in point of tractive force in comparison to its weight, of any locomotive in the service. The "E.S." class of engine, weighing 85 tons, will pull a load over a grade of one in sixty of 360 tons, while the "P" class engine, weighing 102 tons, will pull a load of only 380 tons over the same grade. Therefore the extra loading is only on about a par with the difference between the weights of the two

engines, 85 tons and 102 tons. It is interesting to compare the respective weights and specifications of the locomotives used in this State and those used in South Africa. The latest South African type of express engine, which a special committee of experts has recommended, weighs 98 tons as compared with 102 tons, the weight of our "P" class express engine. The coal-carrying capacity of our locomotive is 8 tons, whilst the South African engine carries 12 tons. The water-carrying capacity of our engine is 2,800 gallons, compared with 6,000 gallons capacity in the South African engine. Diameter of driving wheel, which is a considerable factor when it comes to high speed, is 4ft. 6in. for the West Australian engine and 6ft. for the South African. The tractive force and the power of locomotives for West Australian "P" class is 23,638 lbs., and for South African locomotives 35,280 lbs. Thus the South African engine has approximately 50 per cent. more tractive effort, and yet is lighter than the West Australian locomotive.

Mr. North: Can we build those locomotives here?

Mr. STYANTS: Yes. It is only a matter of getting specifications. There would be no difficulty in building them in the Midland Junction Workshops. An important factor in dealing with the tractive effort of locomotives and comparing ours with the South African engines in that respect is that in the latter engine tractive effort is estimated at 75 per cent. of the boiler pressure, whilst in the case of the Western Australian engine it is 85 per cent. This should be in favour of our engine. It is easy to recognise the importance, particularly in a country like Western Australia, of having large water-carrying capacity and coal-carrying capacity. This renders fewer stops necessary for replenishments of those necessities. Running express trains, we cannot afford to go on as we do now, stopping every 60 or 80 miles for water. A modern railway service to compete with road transport requires engines with water and coal-carrying capacities enabling them to run great distances without stopping for replenishment of those necessities. Particularly would the provision of large water accommodation be an advantage in our dry areas, where there is no natural water, where water has to be carted over great distances. If a locomotive has to haul a couple of trucks of water for its own use, that reduces the quantity of payable goods

it can move. South Africa is at present, according to its Commissioner's report, building a tender, to be attached to a locomotive, which will carry 15 tons of coal and 7,000 gallons of water. To compare the average weight of all classes of locomotives in the South African Railway Department and in the Western Australian Railway Department, and their tractive forces, is also interesting. It shows that whilst our locomotives are in weight only 11 per cent. lighter than the South African, they have 60 per cent. less tractive force. It is rather puzzling to me that our locomotives, being only 11 per cent. lighter than the South African, should on the average have 60 per cent. less tractive effort. It appears to me that something is radically wrong in the designing of our locomotives or the steam pressures which our boilers are carrying. An important factor in the tractive effort of a locomotive is the steam pressure. When super-heating of locomotives was adopted as a general practice in this State some years ago, the boiler pressures were reduced. A boiler which was carrying 175 lbs. per square inch pressure was reduced to 160 lbs., because of the super-heating. Lower pressure in a boiler is, of course, conducive to long life of the boiler; but it is not conducive to efficiency of tractive effort. The average weight of all Western Australian engines in the service is 68 tons, as against 74 tons in South Africa. The tractive force in Western Australia averages 18,374 lbs., while in South Africa it averages 29,347 lbs., again a difference of about 60 per cent. The most powerful type of engine in South Africa has a tractive force of 53,650 lbs., whilst the Western Australian Government locomotive has a tractive force of only 26,784 lbs., just about half that of the South African engine. I would again impress on hon. members that South Africa has a 3ft. 6in. gauge, exactly the same as our own. I am not going to make any comparison with any railway which has the standard gauge of 4ft. 8½in., because the comparison would not be fair. Then there is the factor of coaching stock. Some years ago, for the purpose of reducing the gross weight of their coaching stock, some of our engineers hit upon the idea of building corridor coaches. These are being used particularly on the East-West trans. train between Perth and Kalgoorlie. The number of bogie wheels has been reduced from six to four. There has been a slight saving in

weight, but all I can say is that the men who designed those coaches should be compelled to ride over the wheels of them, or next to the wheels, between Perth and Kalgoorlie for a month by way of punishment. That would convince them that their idea of economy was a false one. The carrying capacity of goods vehicles in South Africa on the average is 23 tons, whilst in Western Australia, apart from guards' brake vans, it is 11.3 tons. The advantage of having heavy-carrying goods vehicles is that it reduces flange friction and the number of couplings. I am not so particularly concerned about that aspect, because the matter of building large carrying vehicles can be overdone, especially in a small community like Western Australia. Dealing with the matter of population, South Africa has an average white population of 147 to each mile of railway, while in Western Australia we have 104 to each mile of railway. The average person regards the narrow gauge as an insuperable obstacle to fast speed. But while it has to be admitted that speeds which can be attained on a 4ft. 8½in. gauge cannot with safety be attained on a 3ft. 6in. gauge, we have an ample margin to increase the average and maximum speeds provided we can get modernised road beds, rails and up-to-date locomotives. Given this equipment there is nothing to prevent us from running at the same speeds as are accomplished in Java, Japan and South Africa.

Mr. Cross: And there is no need to waste so much time at some of the sidings.

Mr. STYANTS: That is so, although much of the delay at sidings is brought about by unforeseen circumstances. Nevertheless, there is far too much stopping at sidings on the part of express trains, which stop to put out small parcels. Only two months ago I was going to Kalgoorlie on a Friday night when two expresses leave Perth for Kalgoorlie. I travelled on the second express. Upon arrival at Southern Cross the guard informed me that he had to stop at the next station, under instructions from an official, to put out two loaves of bread. And there had been an express train which stopped at all stations and which had gone through only four hours previously. That kind of stop is not necessary and should be done away with. To give an idea of the speeds attained and maintained as average speeds elsewhere I would quote the following:—In South Africa the Johannesburg to Capetown ex-

press travels 958 miles. The timetable provides for 25½ hours for the trip, an average of 37½ miles per hour. The ruling grade is one in 40, comparable to our ruling grade from Perth to Northam, and one in 60 from Northam to Kalgoorlie. According to a report of the Commissioner of Railways in South Africa they are hopeful of reducing the time this year from 25½ hours to 23 hours running period. This will considerably increase the average speed of 37½ miles per hour. In Japan a service is run from Tokio for a distance of 374 miles, or one mile less than the distance from Perth to Kalgoorlie. The latter journey takes 16 hours 40 minutes if the train gets there on time. The journey in Japan takes 8 hours 55 minutes in one direction, and 9 hours in the opposite direction. It will be seen therefore that provided the necessary modern equipment is provided the narrow gauge is not such an insuperable obstacle to speed as some people believe it to be. In Java, which probably runs the fastest narrow gauge railway service in the world, a journey is made from Batavia to Sourabaya, a distance of 512 miles, in 12 hours 20 minutes, an average of 41½ miles per hour. There are 12 stops, and an altitude of 1,614 feet is reached. Another instance is that of the Weltwerden Ltd. from Batavia to Charibon, a distance of 133½ miles covered eastward in 171 minutes and westward in 172 minutes, an average of about 47 miles per hour. Java has the fastest narrow gauge railway in the world, and the trains are run as safely as ours which run at an average speed of 22 or 23 miles per hour. From Sourakata to Madwin, a distance of 60.8 miles, the time occupied is 77 minutes, or an average of 47.4 miles per hour. In passing, I would suggest that one of the chief reasons for the slow running of our expresses is that the engines are loaded up too close to their full hauling capacity, thus preventing their negotiating the up-grades at a reasonable speed and maintaining a reasonably average high schedule. The "P" class engine on a one in 60 grade has a full hauling capacity of 380 tons, but they put 330 tons on it as an ordinary express load, or within 45 tons of the full hauling capacity, and make further provisions in the timetable to put 350 tons on the engine, and to run at a slower speed than the already snail's pace at which they are running. If they reduced the load of that engine by 50 or 60 tons it

would enable the locomotive to negotiate the bank at 35 miles an hour, and level ground at 45 miles an hour. That would enable some hours to be cut off on the journey between Perth and Kalgoorlie. I notice that a special through train was run from Perth to Kalgoorlie for the Kalgoorlie Cup meeting. I am not going to be so vain as to suggest that any notice was taken of my suggestion here last year along those lines, but it was pleasing to note that that scheme was being adopted by the Railway Department. I understand that when the transcontinental engines are modernised and the new timetable is brought into force it is the intention of the Railway Department to adopt that principle of running a through train with a reduced load and a faster timetable. They propose to take only 15 hours between Perth and Kalgoorlie, instead of 16 hours 40 minutes. They gave this train a trial with a reduced load and arrived 10 minutes ahead of schedule. That bears out my contention that if a lighter load is put on a locomotive it is capable of reducing the running times considerably, even with obsolete equipment. If we are to continue with our railways as the chief transport system, we must bring them up to the standard which is demanded of modern railway systems. From the experience I have gained I consider that the railway, at any rate up to date, is the only transport system which can successfully carry all classes of freight offering at a reasonable rate. We know that the motor transport system successfully operates against the railways if allowed to pirate or bushrange the freight offering. But the motor traffic would not be capable of carrying at a reasonable rate many of the commodities, the greater bulk of which the railways have to lift at low freights which will enable the primary producers to carry on. When it comes to a matter of carrying petrol or sugar or any other high-priced commodities, and passengers, which are lucrative freights, motor transport can successfully compete.

Mr. Cross: They would not be able to do so if they had to pay for the roads they run on.

Mr. STYANTS: When they are paying 7½d. a gallon duty on their petrol they must be providing something towards the roads on which they are running. It is a pretty severe impost to have to pay 7½d. a gallon on their petrol. But motor transport is not

capable of catering for all classes of freight, whereas the railways are prepared to carry all classes. As a matter of fact the railways are performing innumerable free services for the community. I believe that the solution of the problem is to have a systematic process of rehabilitation of our railway system. I do not in any way complain against the administrative or operative staffs of the Railway Department to-day. With the material placed at their disposal they are doing a particularly good job. There are certain phases of railway management which I think are wrong. There are certain matters with which I do not agree and with which I propose to deal when the Railway Estimates are before us. But what I want to deal with now is not so much the administration of the railways as the obsolescence of the plant in which £25,000,000 of the taxpayers' money has been invested. The present time would be an opportune time to institute some general betterment policy, to set aside a certain amount of money every year to rehabilitate the service. Before making a commencement along those lines it would be a good plan to appoint a Royal Commission, to get some competent authority from, say, South Africa, to inquire into the whole ramifications of the railway service in this State. Acting upon the suggestions of such a Commission Parliament could provide certain money every year for a betterment scheme. To provide the money necessary for the total rehabilitation of the railway system would be too much to expect in one swoop. But it should be possible to have a five or seven years' betterment plan and start off with our road beds which, of course, is the first essential. We could then proceed along the lines of getting up-to-date locomotives for the 3ft. 6in. gauge and at the end of five or seven years we would have something in the nature of a modern railway system. It is an impossibility with the obsolete plant we have at present to put up anything like a decent service. Unless all parties of the House subscribe to the idea that there must be a re-modelling and bringing up to date of the whole railway service, it is no use our spending £4000 or £5000 in holding a Royal Commission. The recommendations of such a Commission must be carried out. Not to do that would be to waste the taxpayers' money. But if all parties are agreeable to find the money to carry out the recommendations of

a Royal Commission I am prepared to support the motion.

On motion by Minister for Lands debate adjourned.

BILL—LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Mr. Hegney in the Chair; Mr. Sleeman in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Repeal of Section 13:

Mr. NORTH: I move an amendment—

That the word "repealed" be struck out with a view to inserting the following in lieu:—"amended by adding thereto a proviso as follows:—'Provided that the written consent of the board shall not be withheld in such cases until satisfactory adjustments have been made to meet the problem of mechanisation in industry.'"

The member for Fremantle desires to enable a law student to earn money outside during the currency of his articles. As soon as this problem is adjusted students will not need to earn a living when studying law. They will have other emoluments coming to them, either from the State or from their parents. Until then they should have freedom to this extent and should be placed on a par with those who now enjoy that liberty. The problem might be solved in a short space of time. If the hon. member accepts the amendment, he will achieve his objective.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I ask for a ruling whether the amendment is in order. It would be useless to strike out "repealed" unless it were possible to insert other words.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is in order in moving to strike out the word "repealed," but I cannot anticipate what he might move to insert in lieu.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4 to 6, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL — FREMANTLE MUNICIPAL TRAMWAYS AND ELECTRIC LIGHTING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [8.10] in moving the second reading said: This is a

short Bill containing nothing of a controversial nature.

Mr. Marshall: So you tell us.

Mr. SLEEMAN: If the hon. member can find anything in this Bill on which to argue, he is a better man than I think him. The Bill simply makes provision for the Fremantle Tramway Board to contribute to a fund now being conducted by the employees. They are contributing one shilling per week per unit for a fund in the nature of a superannuation fund, although it cannot strictly be called a superannuation fund. The board have decided to contribute to the fund to the extent of 1s. per unit with a maximum of one unit per man. It is pleasing to know that the board are in a position to do this. Next June they will have paid for the whole of the tramway system and be out of debt. That is a remarkable performance for such a board. Consequently they are agreeable to subscribe 1s. per unit with a maximum of one unit per man to augment the fund. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [8.11]: I have no objection to the Bill. In the circumstances it is desirable, and I am very glad that the Fremantle Tramway Board are in a position to make this provision for their employees. I hope the principle will from time to time be extended because it is a proper provision to make. Therefore I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Hegney in the Chair; Mr. Sleeman in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 19:

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I move an amendment—

That in line 2, the letter “(D)” be struck out, and “(E)” inserted in lieu, and that in line 3 the letter “(E)” be struck out and “(F)” inserted in lieu.

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

Clauses 3, 4, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—STATE TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading—Defeated.

Debate resumed from the 8th September.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn) [8.17]: An attempt was made last year to include the word “honey” in the First Schedule of the State Transport Co-ordination Act. I intend to speak only briefly to this Bill. We have to consider honey under two headings, as crude honey and refined honey. Crude honey is extracted from the hive. The Transport Board realise the desirability of honey being conveyed to the refinery without undue delay, and the necessity for its being packed in suitable containers, and have granted licenses on liberal terms. The licenses include conveyance from place to place, of all bee-keeping requisites such as beehives, frames, and the supply of petrol for the use of the apiarist. Refined honey comes into a different category. Honey that has been refined and packed in proper containers for marketing is no longer a perishable product. That being so, the Transport Board, while of the opinion that honey is not perishable, have decided to grant permits to bee-keepers with refineries in country centres to bring refined honey to the metropolitan districts, so as to put them on an equal footing with refineries in the city. In view of the scope of the territory over which beekeepers operate it is essential that the Transport Board should exercise control through the granting of licenses or permits to avoid abuses of the Transport Co-ordination Act. This control is exercised in a very lenient way, and the fees charged are low. I am informed that one of the biggest apiarists in the State notified the board officially that he was entirely satisfied with the treatment accorded to him. So that members may understand the position better, I would point out that the First Schedule is controlled by Section 33 of the Act, which reads—

No license shall be necessary under the preceding section in respect of any commercial goods vehicle or trailer or semi-trailer which (a) operates solely in the area within a radius of 15 miles from the G.P.O. in Forrest Place, Perth, or (b) operates solely within a radius of 15 miles of the place of business of the owner, or (c) is used solely for any of the purposes mentioned in the First Schedule of this Act.

For all the purposes mentioned in the First Schedule, no license is necessary. The particular section which the Bill seeks to amend means that no license is necessary for a vehicle used solely for the carriage of livestock, poultry, fruit, vegetables, dairy produce or other perishable commodities. Then come in the words "or wheat." It continues—

From the place where they are produced to any other place, and for the carriage of on the return journey any farmer's requisites for domestic use or for use in producing the commodities named therein, and not intended for sale, in a vehicle owned by the producer.

The Act was introduced mainly to protect the railways and, to an extent, the tramways and public transport utilities. From that time onwards there has always been a considerable difference of opinion as to how that should be interpreted by the board. The board have in the main satisfied most of the people with whom they have had differences. It is true that many of those who, at the time, owned transport vehicles, trucks, etc., suffered severely. We agree about that, but it had to happen. Some member remarked that the financial position of the railways today has reached a fairly satisfactory position. Despite our disadvantage in respect to the running of the railway system, I do believe the railways are in a more satisfactory financial position than is the case with railways in the Eastern States. I found that in Victoria there was very serious competition between the railways and road transport. The authorities there would like to have the control we have here. After a thing becomes established, there is great difficulty in getting the control back again. During the years the Act has been in operation, a great advantage has resulted in our transport system. Those who sometimes complain, nevertheless admit that they could not do without the railways. People who have asked for concessions in the carriage of wool admit candidly that they must have railways. However, the Transport Board must have control. They have to regulate what shall be permitted to owners of vehicles regarding back-loading. That is practically what the argument turns on. People always desire a free hand in the matter of back-loading. Therefore although the Transport Board, to an extent as the result of the agitation and desires of the various associations, have dealt fairly with them, they still maintain that it is desirable they should have control. Not that they propose

to deal harshly with people. In fact, there is no harshness. Most of the difficulties experienced in past years have been overcome. The people themselves admit this. I view the question in this light: now that we have established control over our roads, it would be a retrograde step to lose that control, which we had such great difficulty in securing. I agree that industries must be treated considerately, and especially the primary industries; but there is no need for what the Bill proposes. It is not a question of facilitating the transport of honey, but of giving a free hand. At present apiarists have to apply for a license, and then proper means of regulation are set up.

Mr. Sampson: They must pay for the license.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What do they pay?

Mr. Sampson: Fees on a certain prescribed scale.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Trifling amounts. If that is the difficulty, it can be overcome. It is not the fee that we want, but the control.

Mr. Sampson: The fee is insisted upon.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I shall advise that the control we have be retained. There is no need to penalise any primary industry or anyone producing a primary product; but at the same time it is essential that we should retain the control we have established in the matter of transport. I am positive that every primary producer who has a genuine case will receive proper and due consideration at the hands of the board. There will be no difficulty in that respect, whatever may have been the experience to the contrary in times that are gone. The board have been in close consultation with the beekeepers themselves, and in every instance have satisfied them. In the case of the big beekeeper at York permission was granted to bring the finished product to Perth. There has never been any difficulty in that respect, and there is none now. In the main, the beekeepers themselves are satisfied. I oppose the Bill because I consider it to be still essential that the board retain control. It is just as essential as that they should administer the Act. I do not propose to give way in the matter, because before we know where we are our control will be lost. People at Kojonup will put up an argument, and people in other centres will do the same. It is essential to maintain the

discipline which has been established over road transport. I do not wish to labour the question. I have given the reasons why we must retain our present powers. I do not favour breaking down in any way the control established by the Transport Board.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan—in reply) [8.30]: I am disappointed to find the Minister taking such a serious view of what is a fair and reasonable request. The Minister says that the Transport Board must maintain their powers, that they must not whittle away their powers by permitting honey to be transported as proposed in the Bill.

The Minister for Works: And goods transported back. We do not trouble about the twopenny-halfpenny honey.

Mr. SAMPSON: The goods to be transported back are petrol and other requirements in the production of honey. Nothing beyond those personal requirements. These people do not ask to be permitted to carry goods for reward, or for other people.

The Minister for Works: They do that now. They get that concession now.

Mr. SAMPSON: They do not get it now unless they pay for it specially. It may be that in view of this variation from the actual position the Minister will reconsider the viewpoint he has expressed. I hold in my hand the same license that I submitted to the House when moving the second reading of the Bill. It shows that a charge has to be made for the conveyance of honey. I regret having to refer to this again, but unfortunately the fact is that the point has been overlooked by the Minister. The fees payable in connection with the issue of a license for a goods vehicle are £1 5s. for the license and 4s. plate fee, a total of £1 9s. That amount was paid, and it provides for operation within a radius of 40 miles from Manjimup or Toodyay, and between Manjimup and Toodyay. The license provides—this is highly important—that not more than 44 gallons of petrol shall be carried on the public vehicle at any one time. As we know, the commercial apiarist to-day is a travelling beekeeper. He follows the nectar. He cannot retain his bees in the one place and be successful. When the nectar is to be had from the karri of the South-West, the beekeeper proceeds there with his hives. This license provides for the removal of the livestock to which the Minister also made reference, and for the transport of motor spirit, which is essential for the

operation of motor trucks. Here is another proviso—

This license shall not authorise the transport of refined honey on the public vehicle.

It is quite clear that the beekeepers are being treated unfairly. They are doing a great service. They are assisting the whole of the State from the standpoint of fruitgrowing, and I do think the Minister should permit the same consideration to be extended to them as is extended to other primary producers. The oft-repeated argument that honey is a non-perishable has been proved to be other than the fact, because there is no food that is imperishable. All foods are perishable. Last session I read a statement from "The English Beekeeper" that the only evidence given by storekeepers showed honey to be a perishable food. I need not go over that again. The fees charged, as the Minister says, are low; but £1 9s. is not a small amount for an apiarist to pay, as his is a small industry. To pay £1 9s. in addition to the usual traffic fees is excessive. I regret that the Minister should have taken any other view even for one instant. The case is one calling for the utmost consideration. The industry does a tremendous amount of good, and far more good to others than to the apiarists themselves. The apiarist is an industrious type of worker. He is a philosophical, kindly type, different from most other people in the world. It is remarkable that the handling of bees and the gathering of nectar does develop a philosophy that is difficult to find in any other type of worker. Without being in any way personal, I suggest that the Minister might take up the development of an apiary, because I am sure it would provide a very happy relief from the strenuous and arduous work associated with his office as a Minister of the Crown.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think the hon. member is introducing new matter.

Mr. SAMPSON: I do not intend to pursue the matter further—not this session. I shall continue to bring forward this proposal until I secure redress. I am sorry the Minister has not agreed to my proposal. I hope that an eleventh-hour repentance may prompt his approval and that if there is a sufficient number of voices calling "aye" when the question is put, he will not call for a division.

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

Ayes	16
Noes	18

Majority against	2
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AYES.

Mr. Doyle	Mr. Patrick
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Doust	Mr. Seward
Mr. Hill	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Mann	Mr. Thoru
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Watts
Mr. North	Mr. Doney

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Coverley	Mr. Needham
Mr. Fox	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Hagger	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Styants
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Troy
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Millington	Mr. Withers
Mr. Munroe	Mr. Cross

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Latham	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Stubbs	Mr. Wise

Question thus negatived; Bill defeated.

MOTION—AGRICULTURE, LIGHT LANDS.

To inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 1st September on the following motion by Hon. C. G. Latham:—

That, in order to promote the maximum occupation of, and maximum production from, the light lands and poison-infested lands of this State, and in order to ensure a more equitable relationship between the present charged price of such lands (by the Government or by any company or persons disposing of such lands whether alienated or unalienated) and the present cost of profitably working such lands, a select committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the terms, conditions, prices, and methods of disposal of such lands, together with the question of what encouragement is given to promote their use, and, further, to make such recommendations as is thought proper for the purpose of achieving the object of this resolution.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [8.40]: I do not propose to offer any definite opposition to the motion although I am inclined to think that most of the information required has already been collated. If members consider that a select committee would secure additional information of value,

I do not propose to take any great exception to that course being adopted. With respect to light lands, these were reported upon by Mr. Bostock, when an officer of the Lands Department, in 1925. That officer investigated 4,000,000 acres of light land country within 12½ miles of existing railways, and all that land is available for selection. I refer to so much of it as has not been taken up over the years since 1925. The value of that land is being determined year by year, as a result of the experiments farmers are carrying out. During the time when wheat commanded very good prices, ranging from 4s. to 5s. a bushel on the average over a number of years, much of this class of country was taken up, and quite a lot of farming was done with it. Much of it was put under cultivation, and during that time a number of farmers secured profitable results. When the price of wheat fell, much of that land went out of cultivation and was abandoned.

Mr. Patrick: It is overgrown again.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, and I think that is a great pity. I have never suggested in this House, either when wheat commanded high prices or at any other time, that light land was a profitable form of investment for the farmer. It may be made profitable by a farmer of exceptional capacity, provided he has a sufficient acreage. When I speak of light land, I do not refer to light land with a clay subsoil. I have seen light lands in this country with clay subsoil made into very good and profitable farms, but that type of land does not exist generally throughout the State. Nevertheless there is a fair proportion of it. I think if I were looking for land and there was an area with a clay subsoil relatively close to the surface I would attempt to farm it even to-day because the cost of production, that is, the cost of bringing the farm into production would be very low. But with the greater part of this light country its value is in conjunction with heavy timber land. When light lands are associated with heavy timber lands I regard them as a profitable farming proposition provided the rainfall is satisfactory. In fact, if I were entering on a farming proposition again I should prefer to have an area of heavy country and with it an area of light land. In order to carry on my farming operations, because I am convinced that over an average number of years I would get better results

than if the whole of the land were first-class. We have had the experience in the last few years of low rainfall, and from the light lands farmers have produced the best results. From our experience we can calculate that in every ten years in Western Australia there are three years of light rainfall so that it is wise for farmers to have associated with heavy land in connection with their farming operations, an area of light land. This light land provides additional grazing facilities. It is true that some light lands grow poison, but much of the light land does not grow poison, and these lands particularly have been able to provide good grazing for sheep and cattle and especially for sheep. The Government have given every inducement to settlers to take up this land. Millions of acres are available to-day at a cost of 1s. per acre exclusive of survey fees, and that is chargeable over 30 years. So that it might be said that the land is practically given away. We have millions of acres of this country still available. A lot of it has not been taken up, but I cannot conceive of any suggestion in this House being made by any committee that that class of land could be made available at a cheaper rate. Years ago members on this side of the House had amendments made to the Land Act providing for a reduction in the price of these lands from 3s. 9d. to 1s. per acre. When the land was reduced in price there was a rush of applicants to take it up. Thousands of acres were taken up. The areas were held for five years because the occupiers had no rent to pay during that time. Then the land was surrendered or forfeited to the Crown, because the holders neither paid any rent nor went on with the improvements they were required to make. Some months ago it was decided that the land might be made available at a cheaper rate. It was provided that any settler may lease these lands for 5s. a thousand acres. It was provided that a man could obtain a lease for ten years if he utilised the land and made the necessary improvements. At the end of ten years a continuation of the lease could be granted or the man compensated for the improvements made. I am glad to say that some settlers have taken advantage of that opportunity, but despite what the department did, it is remarkable how much land there is still in the hands of the Crown. Whatever may be the purpose behind the motion moved by

the Leader of the Opposition, I think it will be agreed by members that the State is making every effort to have the light lands utilised, and is offering the land for sale at a minimum and under the best possible conditions. When the hon. members opposite have relieved me of the position I now occupy I shall take up some more of this land with which I am now experimenting. People might suggest that I was utilising my position for my own personal advantage if I took it up to-day. But adjoining my holding there are hundreds of thousands of acres of this country, and when I am relieved of my present responsibilities, and if my health permits, I shall try to show what can be done with it. To-day I utilise a fair proportion of that type of country, growing oats and lupins upon it, and I think the member for Greenough (Mr. Patrick) is doing the same.

Mr. Patrick: It is a pretty expensive proposition to get it netted.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, it is expensive. But I have discovered with regard to this country that whereas before it is cleared and cultivated I cannot get any water, after a number of years of cultivation water makes its appearance. I have soaked in some of this country and water makes its appearance the whole year round, not of very good quality but a satisfactory supply, as a result of cultivation. I have grown crops of oats and barley and have fed it off to the stock and I am doing some good with that country. If the light land is used in that way and not exploited too much it will prove payable after the roughage and roots have been got out of it and it has been put under crop once in five years and top-dressed in the other years. Certainly it is profitable in conjunction with other country.

Mr. Patrick: If I had it, I would crop it and feed it off.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, I did that, and next year I got another crop and fed that off. I do not profess for a moment that in this class of country I could make a productive holding, but I do entertain the opinion that, associated with good land, it is a reasonable investment. I saw a lot of this land at Meckering some years ago, and I found that country which had been sandplain country—better sandplain than I speak of up North—utilised and developed, and in every paddock water

had risen to the surface. At Mr. Watts's place in that country I saw a dozen paddocks, and in every paddock there was water. They had their own grasses and fruit. But that was a better class of sandplain, because it had a clay subsoil.

Mr. Patrick: In my country you can dig down pretty deep in the sand.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Department of Agriculture has experimented with that sandplain country at Wongan Hills, and has had very good results. I do not know whether farming it would be a payable proposition. I should say not, because it is an experiment farm; but I think the average wheat production at the Wongan Hills sandplain farm has been near to, if not higher than, the average wheat production in any other experiment farm in Western Australia. It has averaged about 15 bushels over the years. It is quite possible that the expenditure on superphosphate and fertiliser has been much heavier than it has been on any other experiment farm in the State. Still, a very good test has been made there. In my opinion, the country has improved under cultivation, and of course the sheep grown at the Wongan State farm have fattened very well in that country and have brought good prices in the market. So whereas the Wongan Hills experiment farm may not be commercially profitable, it has made a very good test of the country and has shown what can be done on light land, and that this land can be utilised with advantage if used in association with timber country. The Government have done that. So when the matter is inquired into it will be found that the Government have not only provided expenditure and shown whether it might be done, but they have also provided these lands at the least possible cost to the settler. I do not want to have members get the idea that all this land is priced at 1s. per acre payable over 30 years. It all depends on the quality of the sandplain. The Merredin sandplain is very much more valuable than that. I have seen really good crops on that, and when one looks at the country and sees the clay subsoil one can appreciate the quality of that country, and so the land must be priced higher. It is land that gives consistently good yields in most seasons. A farmer at Dalwallinu told me the other day that whereas at Dalwallinu he has not enjoyed one good season in five years, he has never failed on this class of country at Merredin. He says that as a result of that his

farming operations have been successful during the last five years. So it is surprising to me that not more settlers utilise that land, because there is plenty yet to be taken up. I think if prices continue to improve, or even remain as they are, those lands will not be long vacant. The hon. member who moved the motion spoke of wodgil country. Wodgil country is priced at 1s. an acre in the main, and I cannot conceive of any select committee recommending that any class of country shall be sold at a lesser figure, having regard to the fact that the 1s. per acre is payable over 30 years and the settler enjoys the first five years free of instalments. I do not think that wodgil country—let me put it this way: I am sure that wodgil country is superior to sandplain country. It was disappointing when first taken up, because the soil would not produce payable wheat crops. But I have never seen wodgil country that would not produce a splendid oat crop.

Mr. Doney: From the beginning of the cultivation?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. I have experienced it. I have had a failure of wheat from wodgil country, but I have always had excellent oat crops on that country; and after a number of years it comes into very good grassland, and one can then grow occasional good crops of wheat.

The Minister for Works: You would want a wet year.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I have never failed to get a good crop of oats and, as members know, oats require more rain than does wheat. That country which I regarded 20 years ago as valueless—and for which I paid 10s. an acre—I now regard as reasonable grazing country, and with top-dressing I can get very good results from it. Still, I am glad to say that I have not too much of it. I can tell the House that there is no need to quarrel about land values in Western Australia. I do not know all the countries in the world, but I make bold to say there are few countries where land values are lower than they are in this country. If one goes to the Eastern States on a visit and looks at the land for sale there, he will regard the prices asked for it as astounding. During last February, by the courtesy of the Victorian Government, I visited the mallee areas, where there were 2,000 abandoned farms. To my

surprise, the Government were asking from 10s. to £1 per acre for that land, and they expect to get it. They have got it because there is no other land offering. That land has not produced a payable crop for years. I believe that the average over many years has been about four bushels. Even Ouyen I found was not regarded as payable farming country. Further north around Mildura and further west where the Victorian Government had settled thousands of farmers in the last 20 years and where many of the holdings are now abandoned, the Government are still asking 10s. to 20s. per acre. I obtained that information from the Closer Settlement Commission. We in this State have no problem comparable with the problem of that part of Victoria. When those mallee lands are cleared, the wind blows the soil into sandhills and sandhills that are here to-day will be a hundred yards away to-morrow.

Mr. Boyle: Yes, overnight.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: When the country is broken up and the timber that held the country together in the beginning is removed and the soil is fallowed, the soil moves. Even if it did not move, moisture cannot be conserved because 6 ins. down there is a limestone base that will not hold the moisture. The member for Avon saw that for himself. So, without prejudice, I came away with the conviction that wherever we have embarked on land settlement we are not confronted by conditions so bad as those existing in that part of Victoria. Yet people are staying on a lot of that light land. The Victorian Government have retained some of the land in 1,000 and 1,500-acre blocks, but much of it has been combined and converted into grazing leases of 3,000 or 4,000 acres. A settler who takes up one of those grazing leases has to pay his rent in advance, and has to pay for the water in advance. When I saw what had happened in the Eastern States I came back to Western Australia feeling that we have no problem such as theirs. In South Australia I had an opportunity, by courtesy of the Government, to see some of the country for a few days. I found that the greater portion of the South Australian wheatbelt over 20 years had not averaged six bushels to the acre. Judge Payne, chairman of the Debt Adjustment Board, gave me a map, which is now in the Lands Depart-

ment, showing the wheat lands, and I was surprised to find that the greater portion of the wheat country had not averaged six bushels over 20 years. That is something of which I was not aware before.

Mr. Patrick: Did you read Professor Perkins's report?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, but I had a chat with Judge Payne and the Minister. So again I say we have no problem in this State such as exists in South Australia. In my opinion the South Australian farmer must be a man apart. He must be a remarkable farmer to subsist under such conditions. He is an object lesson to us; his farming operations are an object lesson to the rest of Australia. The neat farms and the manner in which the most is made of everything, as well as the manner in which farm economy is exercised, result from the fact that only the good farmer has pulled through. He is the man who has cultivated the qualities that have enabled him to hang on and make a home. I say, then, that land in this State is not dear. When I returned to Melbourne from Canberra in July last the Premier arranged for me to visit the western districts. I expected to find very good country, and I did, extraordinarily good country such as we do not possess in such large areas. Nevertheless, we have advantages that settlers there do not possess. I found that the land was valued up to £26 per acre. I was taken by the Victorian Agricultural Adviser to the farm of a gentleman who he assured me was the best farmer in the western districts. He must have been a very good farmer because he was producing more on 1,000 acres of land than his neighbours were producing on 3,000 acres. I was told that he carried 3,000 sheep and had sold 1,000 lambs that year. When I asked him how he got such results he said, "I came here and invested all my capital here, and I would have gone broke had not I adopted the programme that I have put into force in the last few years." I remarked that we in Western Australia could not do what he had done, and he replied that we could. I asked him what he knew about Western Australia, and he answered, "I was over there for 12 months. I travelled through the Midland areas and the Great Southern, and inspected Kojoonup particularly, and all that I do here can be done there. If I could induce my wife to leave Victoria I would not be here 10 minutes. I could sell this land and get land in Western Australia at £5 an acre and do as well with it." I was im-

pressed with his statement. That was the testimony of a man who had been here, who knew the conditions, and who understood how to farm the country. One must appreciate therefore that our land is very cheap, and that there are opportunities here for settlement that exist nowhere else in Australia. In my opinion those opportunities will not long continue, because I find when I go to the Eastern States that people there are thinking of Western Australia. Unfortunately most of them have not much capital left after their experiences of the last few years. The land is the community's asset and we are not entitled to give it away. We are selling it at prices to which nobody can raise any objection. During the last three years the lands under conditional purchase conditions have been repriced and written down by £98,000. Every day in the Lands Department land is being repriced and written down. I think land values are about half what they were 15 years ago. That cannot go on indefinitely. The process is still continuing in the poison lands and other parts of Western Australia. I find on the average that land is being sold in this State at about 8s. per acre. That amount is payable over 30 years, the first five years being free. If anyone in this country can complain about land values being too high, he is a most difficult man to please. In the outer areas the Bank and the Lands Department are carrying out a policy of reconstruction. I refer to the Bullfinch and Southern Cross areas where farming has not been successful during the last two or three years, largely owing to the drought conditions. In those areas land has been written down to an average of 4s. per acre. I never regarded Bullfinch as a sound farming area. I think the Leader of the Opposition said I was responsible for the Bullfinch settlement as well as that of Southern Cross. He is not quite accurate there. Both areas were settled long before I came into office. The Bank was advancing to Bullfinch and Southern Cross settlers in 1922, when Sir James Mitchell was Premier, and before the Collier Government came into office in 1923. When I came into office I stopped all surveying and land settlement east and north of Southern Cross. I instructed the Surveyor General that no further land was to be surveyed there, and that no person was to be encouraged to go out there. I am not in any sense responsible for the settlement at Bull-

finch nor that at Southern Cross, except the miners' settlement south of Southern Cross. The miners' settlement was established there for obvious reasons; it could not be put anywhere else. It was suggested and arranged that the miners' settlement should be at McPherson Rock, somewhere between Dowak and Norseman. I am glad to say it was not established there.

The Minister for Works: They were pretty lucky not to be put out there.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There was no other land available in those days. If the miners' settlement were started tomorrow it could not be put into the wet South-West. You could not put miners who had contracted diseases in mines into that part of the State. They would have to go into a dry area. If we started a miners' settlement to-day it would have to be in areas to which I have referred. The Bank is now retreating from Southern Cross and Bullfinch. I do not wonder at the Bank retreating from Bullfinch. The lands there are too heavy for successful farming in that particular rainfall area. It is a different proposition at Southern Cross and south of Southern Cross. Moorine Rock, not far away, is again a different proposition, because the country is of a totally different type and more suitable for the rainfall. Members will be surprised to know that the settlers there have made good. I, too, was surprised at the interest they are paying when one has regard for the seasons we have experienced in the last few years. It is singular that not one settler will leave that district, even though the Bank has offered to transfer them to safer parts and pay the cost of transfer. Not one settler has accepted the proposals of the Bank.

Mr. Seward: At Southern Cross?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am referring to the miners' settlement. There has not been a solitary application for removal. I am told that the settlers at Bullfinch do not desire to be removed, so we have reduced the price of the land to 4s. per acre. There is now before the House a Bill to increase the area to which one settler is entitled under the Land Act, from 1,000 to 2,000 acres. A larger area will therefore be available for farming operations and for carrying stock. In addition, the settler will be given an opportunity to lease abandoned farms at a low rental, so that he may carry more stock.

Mr. Lambert: What do you call a low rental?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will tell the hon. member. The Bank has advanced large sums of money, I think £83,000, in that area, and is advancing large sums for improvements. The improvement value has now been reduced to £300 or £400. All that the person who leases these lands is asked to do is to pay 3 per cent. on the reduced capital value of the improvements, namely, about £9 or £12 a year. If that is not an inducement to exploit that country, no other can be thought of. Quite a number have taken advantage of the opportunity. They have come to the department and said, "We do not want more help. Give us the land; we are prepared to go on with it." The Bank in its wisdom or otherwise has decided to retreat from that area. I am convinced that in the years to come there will be a successful settlement around and south of Southern Cross. It may not be a settlement by settlers who depend upon the Government for assistance, but by settlers who have the initiative, courage and enterprise to invest their own capital, and will thus be careful of the expenditure to see that they get the best results from it. I am sure that a settlement by men of that character at Southern Cross will be a success. I do not look upon the area as having been abandoned. I regard it as passing through an interim period in which those settlers who now have new conditions will make good, and will constitute an advertisement to induce other settlers to come in later on. Could land be offered cheaper than that land has been offered? I am sure hon. members on the other side of the House will agree with me, because though my suggestion throws the settler upon his own responsibility and initiative, if a settler can make something from those lands and can prove the possibilities of the area, the next settlement which takes place will be a sound and permanent one, and all for the good of the State. When the Agricultural Bank makes advances to settlers in any area, it makes advances to any type of settler. The bank has not the opportunity of selecting settlers. It knows nothing about a settler's capacity or make-up. When a settler takes up land, he comes along to the bank and the bank makes advances to him. So the fact that in difficult areas the bank is required to start men who may have no great farming capa-

city at all and finance them year after year is not a good thing for the settler, or for the country either. In my opinion it is better to give those men the opportunity they are now getting. Give them land cheap under the best conditions, and the best type of men will make good; and the best type of farmer under those conditions is the best we can have in this country, and the best advertisement for it. I am sure that Southern Cross is a better proposition than a lot of the land that is farmed in Victoria and South Australia. It enjoys a better rainfall; it has better soils; and it has other advantages which are not enjoyed by settlers in the remoter areas of the two States I have mentioned. In the South-West, which enjoys an excellent rainfall, the settlers have good chances also. An analysis of leases of over 500 acres in districts other than Bridgetown and Bunbury shows the number of leases held at varying prices, including survey fees, to be as follows:—

At 4s. and under—	846 leases.
Over 4s. and up to 5s.—	781 leases.
Over 5s. and up to 6s.—	1,002 leases.
Over 6s. and up to 7s.—	994 leases.
Over 7s. and up to 8s.—	888 leases.
Over 8s. and up to 9s.—	748 leases.
Over 9s. and up to 10s.—	806 leases.
Total	6,065 leases.

This leaves only 1,432 leases priced at over 10s. per acre; 6,065 leases are priced at less than 10s. per acre. There may be complaints regarding land values here, but they must be complaints made in ignorance of the real position. They cannot be well-founded complaints. All this country is sandplain country, which has been referred to so often. A 1,000-acre block can be purchased at 1s. per acre. It can be held five years free. After the first five years the rent, which represents purchase price, is only £4 7s. 6d. per annum. If land is not able to meet that rent payment, it is not worth taking up under any conditions. If 1,000 acres of land is not able to carry a yearly rental of £4 7s. 6d., then nobody has any right to bother with it. As I have already said, there is no reason to complain about land values in Western Australia. There may be cause for complaint in years to come. With the development which is taking place in the South-West and in the rest of the State, the great advantage resulting from top-dressing, the tremendous increase in the carrying capacity of the land, and the advertisement this country

will get, it only requires a few years of good seasons and good prices, and there will be no land available in Western Australia. As I told the conference yesterday, there is only a limited area of land here. Western Australia comprises one-third of the continent, but the area of agricultural land within a reasonable rainfall is only in the South-West, the extreme South-West of this State. From north of Geraldton to Albany is all there is of it. A great proportion is timber country, and must remain timber country because it is more valuable as timber country. To speak of great schemes of land settlement in Western Australia is futile. There are vacant farms to-day in the South-West, but they will not be there always. Those of us who spent our youth in the agricultural districts of Eastern Australia saw vacant farms too. I have seen dozens of vacant farms, all in country with an 18-inch rainfall. I saw a dozen unoccupied farms all together. But that has not happened for 30 years. Therefore, in my opinion, the people who enjoy the land in Western Australia to-day, enjoy something that will not be here 20 years hence. It will not be enjoyed by the newcomers then. The people who can get in during the next ten years will get in under conditions which will not be there after the next ten years. That is, unless there is an overwhelming calamity which entirely changes conditions in Western Australia. I do not object to the appointment of a select committee. Its members may be able to discover something to assist land settlement. But I am convinced that no reasonable member of this Chamber will complain of land values as they exist now, or of the opportunities in Western Australia for people desirous of going on the land to take it up.

On motion by Mr. Patrick, debate adjourned.

MOTION—IMPRISONMENT OF FRANK EVANS.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed on the 8th September on the following motion by Mr. Lambert (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) as amended on motion by Mr. Watts (Katanning):—

That a select committee be appointed to investigate and report upon the case of Frank Evans, deceased, and whether an amendment

of the law dealing with such cases under which Evans was detained is advisable and, if so, to recommend such an amendment.

MR. LAMBERT (Yilgarn-Coolgardie—in reply) [9.35]: I do not know that I need occupy much of the time of the House in replying to the debate. The facts have all been fairly well set out, and the speeches of members have made out a very good case for the appointment of a select committee to satisfy those who have interested themselves in the unfortunate man, Evans. The member for Avon, who had all the facts at his disposal, certainly made a most useful contribution to the debate. To such an extent was this so that I feel there is very little left for me to say, other than to express the wish that a select committee will be appointed and that as a result, if any blame is attachable to anyone, the findings of the committee will be such as to enable a direction to be given to those responsible so that we may prevent a recurrence of such an unfortunate incident.

Question put and passed.

Select Committee Appointed.

Ballot taken and a committee appointed consisting of Messrs. Lambert, Boyle, Styants, North and Coverley, with power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, and to report on the 20th October.

BILL—GROWERS CHARGE.

Second Reading.

MR. BOYLE (Avon) [9.43] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is an attempt to give the farmer a protective interest in his own crop. To-day everyone is protected against the farmer by a system of liens and charges. This idea is not a new one. I would hesitate to bring before this House anything which custom has not already approved or in respect of which a law is not already in force in some other section of the Commonwealth or in some other part of the world. That being so, I have no hesitation in appealing to the conservative members on the other side of the House for their support. The basis of the legislation which I propose to introduce is contained in the New South Wales Farmers' Relief Act. That Act is of course limited to those farmers who are under the Act. But an amendment

to Sections 28 and 29 was brought down by the Stevens Government in 1934, and the object was to give to the farmer some protective right in the fruits of his own labour in respect of his crops and proceeds. In the New South Wales Act it is proposed that disbursements shall be made as follows:—

(a) Firstly, in payment of the expenses of harvesting, shearing, or other gathering and marketing of the produce of the farm incurred after the date of the stay order, and in payment of premiums of fire and/or hail insurance, effected with the approval of the board and moneys advanced for any such purposes after the date of the stay order, together with interest on such advances at the rate of 4 per cent. per annum; (b) secondly, in payment to the farmer for the purpose of clothing and paying the medical expenses of himself and family, and otherwise for his personal use and benefit an amount equal to 10 per cent. of so much of the gross proceeds of the marketing of the produce of the farm grown in the season, or other income of the farmer as does not exceed £500, 5 per cent. of so much of such proceeds or income as exceeds £500, but does not exceed £1,000, and $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the balance of such proceeds or income.

That percentage charge is only applicable to the special conditions under which the farmer is working in New South Wales under this particular Act, because the whole of his proceeds must go through the board; therefore the board can without trouble arrange for 10 per cent. on the first £500 and 5 per cent. on the graduated scale. The difficulty I had in drafting a Bill applicable to the farmers in Western Australia, with the exception of one class of farmer, was the fact that it is customary here in the wheatbelt, to which this Act would particularly apply, for the farmer to sell his wheat or produce through pools and merchants. Having that in view I evolved a plan which I think will meet the position quite comfortably. I will quote the relevant clauses of the Bill that I have brought down. Instead of the 10 per cent. allowed under the New South Wales Act and the graduated scale, I propose that the farmer shall have, after the requirements for the particular season are met—I place of course the first lien to the merchant; that must be charged—a lien on his own property. As I explained to hon. members at the beginning of my remarks, the farmer is the only man in the present scheme of things who has no protection at all in the matter of the produce of his farm. I propose to give him, after the first charge on his seasonal re-

quirements has been made, 3s. per acre in respect of so much of the area sown with such crops as does not exceed 500 acres, and 1s. per acre on so much of such area as exceeds 500 acres, or alternatively at the option to be exercised in the prescribed manner of the grower of such crops, 4d. from every bushel of grain marketed therefrom. Hon. members will see that I thus attempt to reward the farmer who has been a good farmer or who has good land or other fortuitous circumstances, by allowing him to effect his own form of self bonus, and that will consist of allowing him 4d. a bushel on the amount of his crop marketed after his lien obligations have been met. The main object underlying my Bill is this: From time to time we are met with the statement that the farmer in this State is more or less destitute. When I explain to the House that at the present time there are between 2,000 and 3,000 wheatgrowers on sustenance in Western Australia, or 35 per cent. of the whole, it will be seen what a sad and gloomy picture I have to paint. It will be remembered that recently the British Medical Association were complaining that no provision is made for the payment of the accounts of medical practitioners in the wheatbelt of Western Australia or in the country areas. The reason for that is not any disinclination of the farmer to pay the doctor or anyone else, but that he has not the wherewithal to do it. All his proceeds are confiscated. The lienees reach out their hands and take whatever proceeds are available unless the farmer has a particularly good year, when there is a little over. To show the deplorable conditions under which the wheatgrowers in Western Australia are working, I will quote the discoveries made by the Royal Commission which investigated the bank balances of wheatgrowers in Australia generally. The Commission selected 2,100 growers as typical of the districts in which they were located, and the Commission, which furnished its report in 1935, showed that 44 per cent. of the wheatgrowers in Australia had no credit balances at the bank. Five per cent. had under £10; 20 per cent. had under £50; 11 per cent. under £100; and only 20 per cent. had balances of £100 and over, and that includes the rich districts of Victoria of which the Minister for Lands has been telling us tonight, and the rich districts of New South Wales. Of the 55,000 wheatgrowers who operate in the

Commonwealth only 20 per cent. had £100 or more to their credit, and 44 per cent. had no credit balances whatever. The conditions are worse in Western Australia. I would like to bet, but I must not bet and I must not even suggest betting—so I will assert, that of the wheatgrowers in Western Australia I doubt whether there would be 5 per cent. with anything like credit balances at all. There is one classic instance: One of our wheatgrowers said "When I went on the land in Western Australia I had nothing; now I have an overdraft of £2,000." That, I think, is typical of most of our wheatgrowers.

Mr. Sleeman: He must have been well respected.

Mr. BOYLE: Yes, and he was proud of it. He is not losing caste amongst his fellows. If he were able to boast that he had anything, he would be in no class whatever. My object with this Bill is to give the farmer something to protect. He will not be placing himself in the hands of the law if he does that. Of course I could not interfere with the statutory charges under the Agricultural Bank Act. They are laid down in my Bill as being prior charges, and nothing contained in the Bill can alter that. I can assure you, Sir, it was not my fault. I had in view a recent ruling that you, Sir, delivered in that regard, and I did not want my Bill to expire at birth. So I am sure the Minister for Lands will take it from me that it is not any gesture of good will towards the Agricultural Bank, but simply because I could do nothing else. The Agricultural Bank clients will to an extent benefit under my Bill, because after certain charges are met before anything can be done to meet those outside charges, those people will have opportunity to come in under this measure. And there are other farmers whom the Bill will materially help. The Associated Banks have 1,500 wheatgrowers in this State under stock and station mortgages. This Bill will certainly come before the dragnet provisions of the stock and station mortgages. The Associated Banks have 517 bills of sale registered in addition; so there are 2,017 wheatgrowers in Western Australia either under stock and station mortgages or liens to the banks. Those people will benefit by my Bill. Out of the 9,086 wheatgrowers in Western Australia there are only 15 per cent. free from any of these lien entanglements; in other words, there are 15 per cent. who can call their souls their own.

The number of registered liens against the farmers equal 85 per cent. of the total number of the men engaged in wheatgrowing in this State. There are 3,559 registered liens against the farmers with the merchants. The number of wheatgrowers cropping from 350 acres to 400 acres equal 6,200, or 65 per cent., with an area of 2,000,000 acres cropped in the 1936-37 season. Those cropping 200 acres and under number 2,524, or 20 per cent., equal to 175,000 acres. The wheat price average over the 14 years 1922 to 1937 was 4s. per bushel, and upon that this Bill is based. The average State production for the last 10 years has been 11.4 bushels per acre, and I base my calculations on 10 bushels to the acre. Of course if it were 12 bushels to the acre the figures would be higher. I am sure that the abandonment of marginal areas will tend to increase, not the actual average, but the book average in Western Australia in the better classes of country.

The Minister for Lands: And it may increase the actual average in a good season.

Mr. BOYLE: Yes. I saw at Moorine Rock in that bountiful year, 1930-1, a stack of 750,000 bushels of wheat. But also I saw Moorine Rock when almost literally one could have put the entire stack in one's eye. And the number of good years in that area would be about one in four or five. And those areas the Minister for Lands said are not going to be abandoned, but I think there will have to be a different type of farmer who will take them on. And if those men care to lose their money, well, it will be their own look-out. The Agricultural Bank allows for priority of seasonal liens for outside creditors. They will be met first. The first lien will be that over the current crop. The allowances I have made as follows:—Superphosphate and railage, £64; cornsacks for bulk handling, £5.

Mr. Sleeman: How many sacks are you going to allow for that?

Mr. BOYLE: Half a bale. That will be sufficient. Many farmers use super bags which they clean, but I am not referring to those. Pickling and grading seed wheat, £5; various types of insurance, £25; machinery and truck spare parts, £25; labour (wages and sustenance), £20; fuel, oil and grease, cartage, etc., £27; sundries, licenses and so forth, £20. I have allowed as sustenance for a family of four, £96, which is considerably more than the Agricultural Bank allows.

And for interest on his particular liens I allow £10. That gives a total of £307. At 10 bushels to the acre I am basing my calculations on 3,500 bushels, or 380 acres harvested at 3s. per acre. This will give the farmer £57. The area harvested for a 10-bushel average, stripped for grain 350 acres, will yield 3,500 bushels, and 30 acres stripped for seed will give 300 bushels, or a total of 3,800 bushels. As to the value of the produce, there will be 3,500 bushels at 4s. per bushel, equalling £700; for seed wheat I retain 300 bushels which, at 4s., represents £60. Where hay is required there will be 30 tons at 50s. a ton, equalling £75, or a total of £835. My point is that £307 plus the £57 will still leave an ample margin for debts against the farmer. That is on a 10-bushel average. I made inquiries in the city from a firm of merchants and I found that they had no objection to the provisions of the Bill. Indeed, they went further and I have embodied their suggestion in the Bill. It will be necessary to arrange for some collecting agency. The Bill lays down that subject to regulation, after the first lien charges are made by the merchant, he will collect on behalf of the farmer's lien in the same manner as he collected to satisfy his own lien for one-eighth of a penny per bushel commission or one per cent. on the acreage basis. The farmer would then get that money without having to resort to any devious ways. Under the bounty arrangement with the Federal Government the cheque went through the Agricultural Bank direct to the farmer, and I do not see any difficulty in arranging for the merchant to work in the same way. I have made drastic prohibition against contracting outside the measure. My experience—and I am sure it is that of many other members—is that to the helpless very little help is given. The first proposition that would be put up would be that a farmer must contract himself outside this measure and must not take advantage of it. I have laid down serious penalties for anything of that kind. It would be useless for me to place legislation like this before the House unless I also protected the man whom I wish to benefit against being exploited by unscrupulous financial people. I am making no charge against merchants or financial people when I say they are unscrupulous. They are unscrupulous because of the competition. What we term unscrupulousness is regarded as good business amongst many sections of the

community. One of the main objects I have in view is the protection of the wife and children of the farmer in the way of medical and holiday arrangements. I know many children in the wheat belt who have never seen the sea and have never seen a beach. In saying that I am not exaggerating the position at all. My object is to protect the women and children of the wheat belt so that they may at least participate in the ordinary pleasures that are afforded to 90 or I might even say 100 per cent. of the children living in the coastal and metropolitan areas. The Royal Commission to which I have referred mentioned this matter in its report. That Royal Commission was one of the finest bodies of its kind that ever sat in Australia. I have heard repeated charges against the Federal Government for having incurred a cost of £40,000 for the Commission, but the benefits arising from the findings of the Commission have been incalculable. One can turn to the report at any time. I treat it as a Bible or a text book; the findings are sound and well based.

The Minister for Lands: The report has not been adopted.

Mr. BOYLE: The Minister says that no one has adopted it. Yet he is boasting in this House every time he gets a chance how wonderful is the Rural Relief Fund Act under which money is being received to satisfy creditors and to help to rehabilitate the farmer. That is Federal money.

The Minister for Lands: We amended our Agricultural Bank Act to enable us to write down before the Federal Government did anything at all.

Mr. BOYLE: And the contribution that the Government have made is to find administration charges amounting to £11,000, whereas if the 3,000 farmers who have applied to come under the Act paid five guineas each, the Government would make a profit on the deal.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is getting away from the Bill now.

Mr. BOYLE: Yes, the Minister will insist upon leading me off the track.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member apparently does not need much leading.

Mr. BOYLE: The Royal Commission on page 23 stated:—

Reference has been made under 5 (b) (iii) to the wives and women folk of the farmers.

In evidence many farmers spoke of the courageous support which has been afforded to them in their fight with adversity by their wives and daughters, and the Commission feels that special reference should be made to the part women are playing in maintaining the industry during this time of depression. On the average their work is harder than that of their sisters in the city, and the activities of various organisations such as the Country Women's Association in the different States should have wider support in order that the home life of the wheat farmer can be improved.

It is almost a truism that the conditions in the home make a great contribution towards the determination and courage with which men face their economic difficulties.

The climate of the wheat districts varies, but during the summer it makes conditions of work arduous. This applies particularly to the women folk who are usually unable to enjoy many comforts and conveniences available in the city. There is a good case for suggesting that every farmer and his family are entitled to a short holiday each year.

I ask members where is the farmer going to get money with which to send his wife and family for a holiday? He can get it only by some such means as are proposed in the Bill and I wish to protect him to the extent of the limited amount suggested. The Royal Commission, in its peregrinations throughout Australia, saw conditions in the wheat areas as I saw them, but they had the power and authority to recommend a remedy. Now I am endeavouring to give effect to recommendations made by the Commission. Even if the Federal Government do not carry them out, I am prepared to do my little bit to help, and I am sure that members on the Government side will not attempt to destroy my effort. The whole object is to place the farmer in a position of having an inalienable right to portion of the fruits of his labour. Support for this Bill in the city came from quarters I would not have expected. I did not draft the Bill without making thorough inquiry, and right through my inquiries I met with far greater sympathy than one would have expected from such quarters. I have outlined the provisions of the Bill. The salient feature is the automatic lien registered in favour of the farmer. I am doing an extraordinary thing by putting the average farmer on the same footing as the Agricultural Bank occupies, only in another way! After the farmer's seasonable requirements have been met he is to have a statutory lien on his own crop! Wonderful, is it not? I ask the House to protect the farmer against the

predatory onslaughts made upon his proceeds as soon as they are available. He has no protection otherwise, and though the protection I propose is not as great as I should like to have made it, it will at least give the farmer some hope. We hear about the morale of the farmer. He must have had a wonderful spirit to have been able to battle through as he did during the past six or seven years. In my travels around the country I have thought how pitiful it was to see the efforts of the farmer to secure medical attention for members of his family. I was reminded only recently of a sad case by seeing a tombstone in the Merredin cemetery. This was erected by teammates of a cricket club to which a young man belonged. I refer to a young man of 22 who lived on a farm with his father 22 miles north of Merredin. The lad was injured by a plough. His father wanted to send for a doctor but the boy begged him not to do so. He said to his father, "We cannot afford it, Dad." It would have cost £2 2s., at the rate of 1s. a mile, to get a doctor out to the farm, apart altogether from the fee. The boy appealed to his father not to incur that expense. Twenty-four hours later it was too late to get help, and to-day the tombstone in the cemetery is a monument to the spirit of the lad and a warning to us all. It certainly made a silent appeal to me. I knew the boy well. We should endeavour to give these people something of the fruits of their labour, so that they will be independent even to a limited extent. I saw it stated in a report of the Bank the other day that no money was available for medical attention for any of the clients of the Bank that are in the position to which I have referred. They were told they could get that attention by way of a refund of interest already paid, but how long would it take to get such a refund? As the Bank has stated, it has no authority to provide such funds. It is a hard and fast institution. The Bill has all the virtues of simplicity. There is nothing difficult about it and it contains no traps or tragedies. The Bills of Sale Act, a Commonwealth measure, gives all these powers. I have not entered into a dissertation on that subject. There are no fewer than nine types of bills of sale and mortgages by which the farmer can be enmeshed. We will add one more to the number, making the total ten,

but we will give the tenth to the farmer. I commend this Bill to the House with all confidence. I hope and believe it will be dealt with in a sympathetic manner. I am sure I have a reasonable chance of support from this side of the House, but surely I can also look to members opposite to help the under-dog. We are all here to help those on the lower rungs of the ladder. Some are more vociferous than others about doing this. The under-dog in the agricultural districts is the wheatgrower. In the days when he was supposed to have plenty of money, he is said to have been extravagant. We were told by the Royal Commission on farmers' disabilities, which made an investigation in 1931, that the farmers owed £32,200,000. This was mainly incurred in development work. I would point out that 50 per cent. of our wheat farmers went on the land after 1922. I heard the Minister for Lands say that it took ten years to establish a farm on the land to which he was referring. Does that not apply to existing farmers?

The Minister for Lands: Farming is a lifetime job.

Mr. BOYLE: It really takes three generations to make a farm. We do not want to shorten the lives of those engaged in this industry by giving them a mass of worry and trouble because of their family affairs. I suppose any probable increase in a farmer's family would have to be delayed until the Agricultural Bank found it possible to make a refund of interest already paid. This Bill will make things a little better for the farmer. I hope it will be the beginning of something big. In this country we seem to be afraid to pay an acknowledgment to those who are making this country. We hear a lot of what is being done for the farmer. In 1932-33 the farmers, by freights on produce, accounted for 60 per cent. of the goods receipts of our railway system. This was in the worst year of the depression. In that year £2,100,000 was received by the railways for the carriage of goods, and of this, agriculturists provided £1,204,000, though they made only losses in return. Wheat that year was sold at 2s. 2d. a bushel, which would be considerably less than the cost of production. The railways collected from the farmers 60 per cent. of their entire revenue for that year. It is time the House gave them a little more consideration. It is with

confidence I leave the measure to the attention of members. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.22 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 30th September, 1937.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAYS.

Carriage of Bulk Wheat.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, How many railway wagons were constructed specially for the transport of wheat in bulk? 2, What was the cost, and who paid such cost? 3, Were other wagons marked as needing repairs brought into use for transport of bulk wheat? 4, If so, how many of these wagons have been used? 5, Who suggested that these wagons be used? 6, How were they made usable? 7, If provided with special equipment, who conceived the idea and demonstrated its practicability? 8, Who paid for the equipment? 9, Did it increase the bulk wheat carrying capacity of these wagons? 10, What is the estimated cost of equipment per truck? 11, Is it essential to remove this equipment at the port, and forward it back to the country to be again used on other such wagons? 12, Who pays for the transport of such equipment from port