

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 24th September, 1929.

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

MENTAL DEFICIENCY BILL— SELECT COMMITTEE.

Request for Council member's attendance.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. S. W. Munsie—Hannans) [4.35]: I move—

That a message be transmitted to the Legislative Council requesting it to give leave to the Hon. A. J. H. Saw, M.L.C., to give evidence, if he thinks fit, before the Select Committee on the Mental Deficiency Bill.

Question put and passed.

QUESTION—ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER CABLES.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What amounts were spent in extensions of electric light and power cables, within the portion of the metropolitan area supplied by the Government with electricity, during the years from 1924 to 1929? 2, What were the lengths of new cables for the same years (duplications being included but specified)? 3, What amounts were spent during the same years in extension of current to districts largely devoted to fruit and vegetable growing? 4, What are the names of such districts? 5, What were the lengths of new cables laid during the same years, and what districts have been benefited?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, 1924-25, £10,758; 1925-26, £11,232; 1926-27, £10,310; 1927-28, £10,800; 1928-29, £8,623. 2, High tension, 20,000 volts, 18 miles; high tension, 6,000 volts, 3 miles; low tension distributing mains, 440 volts, 45¼ miles. Lengths of new cables erected

in the various districts are not recorded separately for each year. 3, 1924-25, £8,835; 1925-26, £7,022; 1926-27, £3,073; 1927-28, £5,213; 1928-29, £4,829. 4, Middle Swan, Greenmount, Kalamunda, Queen's Park-Cannington, Kenwick-Gosnells, Kelmscott, Armadale, Caversham. 5, Middle Swan and Caversham, 25 miles; Greenmount, 4 miles; Kalamunda, 3¾ miles; Queen's Park-Cannington, 7¼ miles; Kenwick-Gosnells, 5 miles. Lengths of new cables erected in the various districts are not recorded separately for each year.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1, Easter.

Passed.

2, Fair Rents.

3, Royal Agricultural Society Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1929-30.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 17th September on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [4.42]: These Estimates have perhaps a little more importance than Estimates have on ordinary occasions. I hope the Premier will, before the session closes, introduce the legislation necessary to reserve certain spots of interest, in commemoration of the centenary. I trust also that the Premier will permit some discussion to take place here with special reference to the year through which we are now passing. Probably in that connection a short Bill of a few lines might be passed, and a record of our centenary might be kept in that way instead of being lost in the archives. I merely mention the matter, hoping that the suggestion may find favour with the Premier. Just now we are in the midst of the Federal elections, which during

the next week or two will probably disturb us somewhat. I had intended to attack these Estimates lock, stock and barrel; but I shall not be given so much space in the Press, since the Federal elections are occupying the attention of the public and particularly of the newspapers at present. It might be a good idea for us to adjourn until after the election campaign. It is unfortunate that our centenary celebration time should also be Federal election time. I am aware that hon. members are engaged pretty actively on the Federal campaign, and that consequently they give little attention or thought to the proposals submitted by the Premier in his Budget. It is important that Ministers should look at the Budget and raise some objections to its proposals. I do not know whether they have seen those proposals. I daresay they have seen some of them. In these times we are not content with an expenditure of six millions, but must have ten millions. Doubtless the Honorary Minister and all other Ministers hope to have a pull at the Treasury. It is important that each Minister should see that his own department is not starved. The Treasurer promised the House that we should say what was to be done with the amounts of interest and sinking fund which are no longer to be paid to the trustees in London. That amount is about £360,000, really; but we call it £350,000, and I shall refer to it all through the discussion as an amount of £350,000. I shall show how the accumulations to date are to be dealt with. It will be remembered that the Premier set aside £350,000 annually from December 1926 until June 1929, and I shall indicate how those accumulations are to be dealt with. I entirely approve of the way in which the money is going, but it is another matter when we come to deal with the £350,000 per annum from now onwards. I want to know if the House agrees with the proposal of the Premier that from now on this £350,000 is to benefit revenue. That is what the Premier proposes. I do not agree with it. I do not think the Premier's is the correct way to deal with this amount. In my view the taxpayer of the State should be relieved by reduced taxation. He is heavily taxed now, and he will be taxed for the next 58 years to repay some portion of the loans that have been borrowed. All that we do is to extend the time of repayment. The

Federal taxation is being increased against the people to meet the cost to the Federal Government of the Financial Agreement. When we dealt with this matter, I said it was merely an agreement to suit the Governments. It suited the Federal Government because they wanted to get control of our finances, and it suited our State Government at the time because under it the Federal Government are to pay out a fixed sum for 58 years. We thought at one time that the per capita payment would be abolished altogether and the amount received for 1925-26 would be voted annually—

The Premier: Do you not think they were in danger, having regard to the deficit?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, I think that probably they would have gone out. But it does not matter a jot to the man in the street, or to the Premier or me as individuals, whether taxation is paid to the Federal or to the State Government. The people could get no advantage from the Federal Government except at their own cost. The money the Federal Government spend here is taken from here, and a bit more. So, of course, while the Financial Agreement benefits the Governments, it does not benefit the people. That is made obvious when we remember that the Federal Government last year paid £99,000 towards our sinking fund. The man in the street is apt to say that is a gift from the Federal Government. He thinks the Federal Government pull down this money from the heavens; he does not realise that they take money from his pocket, just as we take money from his pocket. The position of the Federal Government to-day is due to the fact that the Federal Government are making these payments towards the sinking funds of all the States, a very considerable sum, and, of course, are providing the amount by additional taxation, increased Customs duties and increased amusements tax. If they had left us alone and had not asked us to enter into this agreement, probably they would not have had to increase taxation. So really the people of Western Australia are paying £100,000 more than they would have had to pay had we not entered into that bond. However, Western Australia could not have stood out, because the amendment of the Constitution was carried by a majority of the people of Australia and of the States of Australia. Whether or not we

could have made a better agreement I do not know, but I know jolly well that the agreement is a bad one for us and that through it we have lost our financial freedom, the right to borrow money as we require it. But the point is that the people have to pay, whether they pay to us or to the Federal Government. The Federal Government have given £2,000,000 per year to the people by way of a road grant, but they are collecting by a special petrol tax £2,300,000 per year. Anything that the Federal Government give us has to come out of the pockets of our own people. The Financial Agreement has altered the methods of bookkeeping, and this is causing confusion. I daresay even the Premier will admit it causes confusion when we endeavour to make comparison with the past or even to get behind things. They say that in the saving of interest on loans we have already received a benefit of £46,000. The Federal Government have redeemed £47,000 worth of loans, which means a reduced interest Bill. Under the Financial Agreement it is provided that the Federal Government should repay a fixed amount and also the interest on the value of the transferred properties. So they keep £511,000 with which to pay £511,000 for us, and that, of course, does not go through our books. I do not think that is right. For that reason I have increased the Premier's estimates for the purposes of comparison, because the Federal fixed payment of £511,000 is no longer taken into State accounts, and £511,000 of our interest bill is also excluded from our statements. The Premier's revenue is shown at £10,019,598. To this I have added the Federal payment of £511,000, making a total of £10,530,598. I have increased the Premier's estimates of expenditure by a like amount, which brings his expenditure up to £10,425,183, still showing the estimated surplus of £105,415 on the year, a surplus achieved only by taking into account the £350,000 we are not paying to London. I again call attention to the position in regard to production, and the total taxation paid to the Government by the people. The revenue has increased by £582,647, largely because of our railways. But the people, one way or another, are paying £582,647 more than last year to the Government. The financial position must be admitted to be highly unsatisfactory. There is the Federal Gov-

ernment's gift in cash by virtue of which we have discontinued the payment of sinking fund to the London trustees. Then there is the cancellation of £8,000,000 worth of securities in London and, of course, the abatement of interest, and there are greatly increased collections from other cash advantages under the Financial Agreement. Yet all are of no avail. As against my last year, when the deficit was £229,158, the deficit for the year just ended was £275,968, or an increase of £46,000. Let us dwell for a moment upon the advantages for the current year. The Federal Government grants and the sinking fund payments, due but unpaid to the London trustees, amounted to £759,097. This is all due, of course, to the Financial Agreement and to the direct gift of the Federal Government, or because of this work of theirs in making the agreement. And the saving in interest under the Migration Agreement amounts to £184,560, the two items making a total of £943,657, which is the amount by which the State will benefit during the coming year. It is an enormous sum as you, Sir, will see, when I refer to the clear revenue received. Then the Federal road grant available this year amounts to £382,000, and in addition the Minister has said that £550,000 on the same account will be available this year, or a total of £932,000 to come from the Federal Government. We must see that with these great sums we should not only have squared the ledger comfortably, but have provided a substantial credit balance. Let us look at the thing in another way: The Premier explained what is meant by the term "clear revenue," so I will quote the figures: In 1923-24, which was my last year, the clear revenue received amounted to £2,316,763, and the free services to £1,147,178, leaving for other purposes £1,169,585. This year's clear revenue amounted to £3,107,750, and the free services to £1,424,142, leaving for other services £1,683,608. There we have an increase of £790,987 in clear revenue. I wish members would agree with me that it is important to keep in mind what free services are and also to keep in mind the nature of clear revenue. The services to which I have referred bring no cash at all to the Treasury, and this clear revenue is something for which we give no direct return. There is much other money paid into the Treasury for services rendered, services that very

often cost more than the revenue received, but all included in our gross revenue. These amounts to which I refer, of course, are subject to no reduction of that sort. I think we must take some account of it, and I hope members will attend to it. For the past five years our average revenue has been greater than that for the previous five years by £2,412,617, and our average loan expenditure has been greater by £1,263,681; making from those two sources, revenue received and loan money expended, £3,676,298 for each year. If we add to that the £382,000 that has been made available by the Federal Government on account of roads, it will be seen that we have been getting an increase of £4,000,000 per annum, and have spent £18,381,594 more in loan and revenue than I did in five years, and have increased the deficit over that of 1924 by £46,000. I do not for a moment pretend that this revenue is clear revenue; I have shown that over £500,000 of it is made up of increased earnings from the railways and other public utilities, all subject to the cost of operating. I hope that the public, and particularly those who have been wanting work so badly, will realise that the present Government, in the last five years, have spent £18,381,594 more of loan and revenue money than was spent by me in the previous five years. The deficit, too, increased over that of my last year of office by £46,000. A great deal of that money is borrowed money and £12,000,000 of it is increased revenue. We should have done very much better than we have done; there should have been no unemployment, no stagnation of trade, no trouble at all under those headings, but all the time we have had the trouble. I ask members to consider for a moment our position in London, particularly as it is affected by our having entered into the Financial Agreement with the Federal Government. Our credit in London was always good. We could always raise in London the money we needed, and we could get it to-day if we were permitted to go on the London market as a State Government having the right to sign securities. But we cannot offer security. We cannot approach the money market in London. The banks in London were quite satisfied. The Premier has told us that we were able to borrow very large sums of money from the London and Westminster Bank. Our over-draft at that bank was £1,295,000

on the 30th June, and I suppose it is nearly £2,000,000 to-day. It is a great advantage to be able to work on an overdraft because we can carry out our works and, having completed them, can borrow the money necessary. That is better than our having to do as we did in the old days, borrow the money first and then carry out the work, drawing upon the money already in hand. When we first got the over-draft from the London and Westminster Bank—it was arranged when I was in London in 1922—the interest rate was 3 per cent. It then rose to 4 per cent. and the Premier says it is now $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., but it may be reduced at any time. After 1922, and until the last three years the advantage of using the over-draft in London was worth about £30,000 a year to the State. Well, we have thrown all that away by entering into the Financial Agreement. To-day we are told that of the amount that can be borrowed for all the States of Australia we can have only about £3,000,000. We must borrow in London because there we have an interest bill to pay. Of the £28,000,000 to be raised by the Federal Government at least £25,000,000 of it will have to be raised in London. It is impossible as yet to raise the money in Australia to meet the requirements of Australian development. I shall refer later to the interest paid in Australia, but at this stage Australia cannot provide the money that the Governments of Australia would like to have. In the past we could always borrow in London and we could still do it but for the Financial Agreement. Our sinking fund there totalled £12,431,300. Western Australia was the only State in the Commonwealth that ever paid off a considerable loan when we paid the £2,500,000 in 1927. That, too, did us a considerable amount of good. It stands to our credit not only in London but in Australia. We have redeemed loans totalling £11,465,795. No other State in Australia has done anything of the sort. Other States have renewed loans but have not redeemed them to that extent. The Premier knows that when the Financial Agreement was signed, Western Australia was the only State having any considerable amount of bonds held by sinking fund trustees that could be cancelled. I do not know what the position in the other States was, but it would be very interesting to learn what they have done and how much of their loans has been cancelled. When we remember how re-

cently the money was borrowed by us, that was a very fair reduction to make and I daresay it is a far greater reduction than will be made in the next few years. We have remaining in our sinking fund now £969,545, money held principally by the Imperial Government. Of the redemptions, £8,000,000 was cancelled before maturity, made possible by the Financial Agreement. While the people who lent us that £8,000,000 have had it, we cancelled the securities, but we had pledged ourselves to maintain the sinking fund. In our contract with the lenders we had really agreed to pay to a sinking fund, a fixed amount each year, to invest that money and its accumulations for the benefit of those from whom we had borrowed. This Parliament agreed to the cancellation of that agreement, with the result I have already mentioned. It is, of course, useless to cry over spilt milk, but we must all realise the value that London has been to us, as well as the value of our freedom to borrow money. It must be very painful for the Premier to be told by the Premiers of the other States, plus the Commonwealth Treasurer, just how much money he can have each year. Instead of saying, as he had right to say previously, "I intend to spend £4,600,000 this year and to borrow it in London," he can only present to Parliament Loan Estimates on the basis of the agreement into which he has entered with the other Treasurers.

[Mr. Lambert took the Chair.]

The Premier: It is difficult.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It will be more difficult as the time goes on. If it were not for the fact that our interest bill is largely due to London moneylenders, it would be utterly impossible this year to raise the money in London. But as Australia has to pay London £25,000,000 in interest, it is not difficult to get an equal amount. We are going to suffer because of the cancellation of the sinking fund. Let me show how this has operated. In 1923-24, by a payment in cash and interest earned by the millions held in London, the sinking fund accretions totalled £660,000. The deficit was £229,000, leaving a gain to the taxpayers of £431,000. Last year our sinking fund, apart from the Federal contribution of £99,000, increased by £227,000, and the State deficit was £275,000 show-

ing a loss of £18,000. If members examine those figures they will realise that, so far as sinking fund is concerned, there was a difference of £479,000. Of course, we have paid into a trust fund £350,000, but even so there is a considerable writing down. Now let me deal with the accumulated amount of £850,000, which sum accumulated because we held the money in trust here instead of paying it to the trustees in London. The Premier told us he would ask us to appropriate that sum. He asked us to say that £231,731 shall be devoted towards wiping out the deficit of last year. To that extent he proposes to pay the money into revenue. The other £618,269 is the sum set aside to cover group settlement losses, again, as I shall explain, a very proper thing to do. Those two sums are lost to the trust fund. Group settlement losses will be very considerable. Already we anticipate a loss on 327 blocks of over £750,000. Under the Migration Agreement we have borrowed £4,489,812 at 1 per cent. So far as I know, and we have the Auditor-General's report to guide us to the end of the previous financial year, group settlement and public works have been charged with the full rate of interest and the difference has been credited to revenue. This means an advantage, not for one year, but for the years that have gone since we started to draw on migration money, of £600,000. It was absolutely wrong of course, to take the £600,000 into revenue. The Premier is right now in restoring the amount, but the result to the Treasurer is that he has had almost the full benefit of the £850,000 which, in the ordinary course, should have gone to the trustees in London. He has benefited and he will get the credit for having set aside £600,000 to pay group settlement losses. As a matter of fact, the benefit from the money borrowed under the Migration Agreement at 1 per cent. is just about a like sum and that benefit has wrongly been given to revenue. The migration money is a matter of considerable interest because it has meant so much to the State since the present Government took office. We have spent on railways, £1,197,500. Fancy building railways with money that costs us for the first five years 1 per cent. and for the next five years one-third of the ordinary rate of interest! We have spent on water supplies in the wheat belt £407,142, water

supplies that could not have been built had the cheap money not been available. The Migration Commission's report shows the amount spent on each work, the Barbalin scheme, the McPherson Rock scheme and the Narembeen scheme. Now that the Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies is manifesting some interest in my remarks, may I ask him what amount of interest he is charging the people of Narembeen on the cost of the works constructed there, seeing that on the money borrowed for those works he is paying only 1 per cent interest? I understand he has charged them 8 per cent. We had better ask the Minister for Justice to bring down another Bill to prevent him from charging excessive rates of interest on water supply undertakings. Group settlements including roads and drainage, have had £2,439,000 of this money. The 3,500 farms scheme has had already £220,000 from this fund. For this £4,263,000 we are paying £44,237 per annum, and the saving to the State for this year is £184,000 per annum. That is not a small amount. For the first time in the history of the State we have had this cheap money to use. It should help us in our revenue finances. I hope from now on that the annual return to revenue will be such as to pay the interest. If for this money the Premier will only pay £44,000 extra, anything beyond the £44,000 should be credited to a trust account to cover losses. On the money already expended I have shown that to date the saving of interest has been £600,000. The total saving of interest for the 10 years will be £1,743,750, all of which and more will be needed to cover group settlement losses. We have the right to spend up to £10,000,000 under this agreement. If we do spend it in ten years, the benefit we shall receive will be £3,875,000. That is an enormous sum to have given to us by the Federal and Imperial Governments. It makes finance easy, and makes work possible which would not be possible if we were paying full rates. The Valuation Board on group settlement have written off £732,422 from the charges set up against 327 holdings. Under this average loss per block it would be impossible to settle the South-West, but I propose to show that the loss is due to the dragging on, and to want of promptness in dealing with the scheme. I will show this by a few simple words taken from the speeches de-

livered by members opposite. Another contributing cause is that the department has seemed never to be able to make up its mind. In August, 1924, as will be seen from page 472 of "Hansard," Mr. Angwin said:—

The question has been raised in respect of cost. I told the hon. members the other night that the Advisory Committee had considered the position carefully, and had taken item by item in connection with the preparation of the farms. The figures were then placed before me, and I read them to the House. They were based on the estimated future averages. I pointed out that the first blocks started had cost a little more because there had not been any experience gained, and the figures, on that account, were based on the averages that might be expected in the future. The average estimated by the department, works out at £1,700, while on the light land the amount is £1,600. Hon. members must be aware that the Advisory Committee have been dealing with Group Settlement almost from the inception, and to show that their statement can be borne out I have had a return prepared which on a previous occasion I did not present to the House. As a matter of fact I did not worry about it much. The statement was prepared by the accountant in charge of the financial position in respect of the groups, and it sets out what has been the actual cost on some of the groups that have been cleared to the full extent. I said to him, "Give me a few, and do not take the highest right through." For the information of hon. members I will read that statement:—

To the Minister for Lands,—I am appending hereunder a statement showing the cost on the various group blocks, as far as my books show, at the 30-6-24. In the monthly statement I show the direct cost against each block, that is to say, the amount paid out on account of sustenance, tractor charges, etc., but outside these direct charges there are various items which, on termination of the group will require to be apportioned to the blocks. Therefore, to give you a good idea of the cost of the blocks, I have apportioned, as far as possible at this stage, indirect charges which are as under:—

Temporary camps, fodder, freight, general wages, horse hire, plant, harness, sundries, supervision, tools and equipment, interest and insurance.

Group No. 1, Loc. 9029, 25 acres cleared, house erected—£1,881.

Group No. 7, Loc. 1642, 25 acres cleared, house erected—£1,278.

Group No. 5, Loc. 9045, 25 acres cleared, house erected—£1,271.

Group No. 8, Loc. 7944, 30 acres cleared, house erected—£1,117.

Group No. 2, Loc. 8184, 28 acres cleared, house erected—£1,320.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They are not migrants.

The Minister for Lands: Yes they are. I was down there the other day. I would like to explain that group 32 is the first group that was completed. It is on light land.

Group No. 32, Loc. 2010, 25 acres cleared, house erected—£621.

Group No. 16, Loc. 1764, 27¼ acres cleared, house erected—£838.

Group No. 15, Loc. 1811, 25 acres cleared, house erected—£1,308.

Group No. 14, Loc. 1792, 25 acres cleared, house erected—£1,012.

Charges have still to come in for the total amounts of seed and wire used on these locations, therefore these charges will be increased. I have not taken into consideration the individual requirements of each settler such as horse, cows, spring cart, harness, etc.

If members will work out the average, they will find that, including £277 which is the estimated cost of plant, horses, cows, etc., the equipment necessary on a farm, these blocks might have been disbanded at £1,450, plus the cost of wire, which is not much, and seed used. Dealing with these blocks again on the 30th June, 1924, Mr. Angwin said that on Group No. 1 he worked out the cost of a block at £1,881. On the 13th August, 1928 the present Minister for Lands said the block had cost £3,071. The Group Settlement Valuation Board on the 30th July, 1929, put down the cost at £3,539, and said that the amount to be written against the block was £1,136. On a block on Group No. 8 Mr. Angwin said the cost had been £1,117. The Minister for Lands on the 30th August, 1928, said the cost had been £3,117, which is £2,000 up in four years, and the Group Settlement Valuation Board said that the cost had been £3,422, and that the block had been written down to £1,207. In June, 1924, on a block on Group 4 Mr. Angwin said the cost was £1,272, the Minister for Lands said, in August last, that it was £2,887; the Valuations Board said it was £3,193, and they wrote it back to £1,100. It will be seen that Mr. Angwin in June, 1924, said these blocks were complete except for the payment for wire and seed. Speaking on the 13th September, 1928, the present Minister for Lands said that the expenditure figures were on reclaimed holdings only as at the 30th April, 1928. On Group 29 the Minister for Lands said that the cost was £3,688, less £277 for stock, leaving £3,411. There was a mistake of a good many hundreds of pounds. The Group Settlement

Board reported on the 30th July, 1929, 15 months later, when there had been 15 months' interest on the £3,000 and other expenditure, that the total amount expended was £3,001, which is many hundreds less than the Minister's figures show.

The Minister for Lands: The Group Settlement Board did not say anything about the cost.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am referring to the Valuations Board.

The Minister for Lands: The Valuations Board did not include interest.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, it did. Does the Minister say that the report of the Valuations Board is not their report?

The Minister for Lands: No, the report is theirs, but the other papers are from the department.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister produced their report.

The Minister for Lands: The Valuation Board gave no figures regarding the expenditure.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Valuations Board showed what had been expended. They had all the costs before them.

The Minister for Lands: The Valuations Board made no report about the actual expenditure. Their report was entirely a valuation report. The department gave information regarding the expenditure for the use of the House.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I suppose the figures were taken from the books.

The Minister for Lands: The department gave the figures, and the board only the valuations.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: With regard to Group 30, again, the Minister for Lands said the expenditure was £2,889, less £277 for stock and plant, leaving £2,612. Some 15 months later the Group Settlement Board made the expenditure on this group total £2,335, which is a very serious discrepancy. This is what the report I refer to told us:—

Group 1; nine holdings valued; total acreage, 929; average acreage, 103; expenditure, except interest, £25,226; average expenditure, £2,803; interest, £6,626; average interest, £736; total expenditure, £31,852; total assessment, £10,225; average total expenditure, £3,539; average assessment, £1,136; groups started 28th March, 1921.

At any rate this information accompanies a report of the Valuations Board, and naturally I concluded it came from the board. The fact is that it came from the Department.

The Minister for Lands: I told the House that that information was supplied for the information of hon. members.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: At any rate, the information is accurate and sets out the position exactly as I stated it. Interest is included.

The Minister for Lands: That information was supplied by the accountant of the Lands Department.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And it accompanies the report of the Valuations Board.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, for the information of the House.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister does not deny that the information is accurate?

The Minister for Lands: I take it the information is accurate.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister said interest was not included; I have read the report showing that interest was included.

The Minister for Lands: We separated the interest and the other charges.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I do not think any good purpose will be served by this constant comment.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It was information supplied by the Minister himself for hon. members. I am convinced every member would expect such figures to be accurate in respect of this particular work.

The Minister for Lands: I would not suggest that the accountant's figures were inaccurate.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. I am suggesting that the Minister's figures in connection with the groups were much higher than the figures supplied now. They were higher by hundreds of pounds, as I shall show, thus making the position worse.

The Minister for Lands: I do not think that is right.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I would ask hon. members to turn to page 2705 of "Hansard" of 15th December,

1925. They will there find that the then Minister for Lands, said—

We have at present 2,273 group settlers and 2,334 group holdings, and there are 61 vacancies, to fill which people are on the water. Immediately the Bill is passed we shall be able to place 54 groups under the Agricultural Bank. The work is progressing, and consequently it is necessary that these people shall be placed upon their own responsibility, and to enable that to be done, the Bill is introduced.

At that time Mr. Angwin was introducing a Bill to enable the debits to be charged up against each block. According to his remarks, 54 groups were to be placed under the Agricultural Bank immediately the Bill was passed. Nearly four years have been completed since those words were uttered, but those 54 blocks are still controlled by the Lands Department.

The Minister for Lands: You remember that we had to recondition 1,000 head of cattle that were starving on the blocks. The hopes expressed then were all right, but they were not realised. The position was that it was utterly impossible to put them on the land.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The position was nothing of the sort. It was possible and everyone knows that it was.

The Minister for Lands: We had to recondition 1,000 head of stock.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And in one instance 200 cattle were auctioned at Bridgetown and on the same day 100 head were bought.

The Minister for Lands: That is quite possible; it can easily be explained.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have no objection to the Minister explaining. Anything can be explained; there is an excuse for everything.

The Minister for Lands: I am not making any excuse.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am merely reading, if the Minister will allow me, statements made by Ministers themselves. I next refer hon. members to the statement made by Mr. Hickey in the Legislative Council. That gentleman was an Honorary Minister in the Government, and if hon. members turn to page 2913 of "Hansard" of the 18th December, 1925, they will find that Mr. Hickey said—

To the 25th November, 1925, the expenditure on the group settlement amounted to £2,557,280. Members will be fully acquainted

with the position. A number of the groups are ready for dissolution, and the settlers will thus be enabled to work upon their own blocks. The Bill is designed to bring the settlers under the Agricultural Bank, and to put into operation machinery that will allow them to work on their own and be more independent.

It will be noticed that Mr. Hickey said that the expenditure to that time had amounted to £2,557,280. The total expenditure to the 30th June, 1929, was £6,199,659. A Minister informed the House that more than half the blocks were ready to be handed over to the Agricultural Bank. Since then £3,642,379 more has been expended and the blocks are still held by the department! Not a single block has been handed over to the Agricultural Bank. Why has it not been done? Am I not justified in saying that this result is due to the dragging on and want of decision regarding this work?

The Minister for Lands: You can be told why it was not done.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: On the 54 groups there were roughly 1,080 settlers. As to the balance of the groups, there were 1,193 holdings, much improved in most instances. This was in December, 1925. I am reading for the information of the Committee statements made by Ministers themselves, in order that the public may know the position on the word of Mr. Angwin, a truthful, honourable man. From such statements I have shown what the expenditure was on the blocks that have been completed and I have shown the expenditure that has been incurred since. That expenditure is enormous. The amount of £1,117 has become, according to the Valuations Board when they dealt with that phase, no less than £3,422 apart from stock. That money has been spent in the interim. I think that raises a point in respect of which hon. members will desire to know something more. I hope they will look at the reports in "Hansard" and inform themselves regarding the position. At that time, in 1925, Mr. McLarty was in charge of group settlement matters and he was certainly the best man in the State for the job, far better than any board could be.

The Minister for Lands: And Mr. McLarty had no doubt about the position when I came in. It was not as you have stated it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Mr. McLarty was in charge in 1925, and the Minister was a Minister in those days.

The Minister for Lands: I was not in charge of the Lands Department, nor of group settlement matters.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister was in charge of the Mines Department.

The Minister for Lands: I had nothing to do with group settlement matters then.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The trouble with Ministers to-day is that they should take responsibility for what happened. The Minister, for instance, is good at juggling figures.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Although the Minister was in charge of the Mines Department in those days, he was still a Minister of the Crown and no doubt must have been interested in every one of the other departments. At any rate, Mr. McLarty was in charge of group settlement matters at that time, and he was a far better man for the job than any board could be, because management by a single man is always more effective than management by a board. That is a matter of history. The management under Mr. McLarty was good and efficient, and that is shown by the expenditure.

The Minister for Lands: And Mr. McLarty was very glad to be relieved of group settlement control. In his report to the Government he indicates what he thought of it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In the course of my remarks, I have deliberately refrained from doing much more than read from the speeches of Ministers, so that the public may be correctly informed. I now come to a masterpiece by the Premier himself this time. He told us that the public debt had increased by £922,317 and that the expenditure from Loan funds and from the Treasurer's Advance had amounted to £4,372,269. What the Premier did not do, of course not intentionally, was to explain that the public debt was one thing and the debt of the State another thing. Government book-keeping is so utterly different from any other system that we get anomalies from time to time. The public debt as such, and as is recorded in the books at the Treasury, no doubt increased by £922,317, but during that

period we spent £4,372,269. Of course we have the overdraft at London.

The Premier: We usually do.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And it is right to use the London overdraft if it is cheaper. Then we had a considerable amount of money in the trust fund, which we also used, in addition to which the Premier received temporary advances from the Federal Government. In other ways, too, the Premier managed to finance the State during the past year.

The Premier: This year we show an increase as a result of the expenditure last year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And that, of course, is confusing to the people. The debt in London to the Westminster Bank is the same thing as the debt to an individual member of the public.

The Premier: In my speech I referred to our overdraft.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, but the impression left was that our public debt had increased by a small sum. Every penny of loan expenditure last year has to be added to our loan indebtedness, but, as the Premier has indicated, will not be shown as indebtedness for last year but for the next year. The truth is that we spent much more than the amount indicated by the Premier. For instance, we borrowed £400,000 from the Federal Government as a temporary loan. Then there were the Trust Funds upon which the Premier was able to draw and also money from other directions. I am wondering whether the Premier will have to refund the £3,600,000. If he has to do so, he will find great difficulty in carrying on. At any rate, I hope that the overdraft in London will be available this year for the Premier, because otherwise it will be a serious matter if he has to refund such a vast amount. A drop in loan expenditure to the extent of £1,000,000 would be bad enough in one year, but if we are to pay back considerable sums that were spent last year, the position will be so much more difficult.

The Premier: But then we go on with a further overdraft! That has been the usual course.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am just wondering whether the Premier will be able to continue that course, and whether the Federal Government will again make a temporary advance.

The Premier: I am afraid we shall have to use Treasury bills.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But only as part of the £3,600,000. The Premier raised money in London on Treasury bills, but I do not know what rate of interest was paid. During the last three months he has taken money over the counter to the extent of about £300,000 on which, I think, we pay more than $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.

The Premier: No, $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: In the course of his remarks the Premier said:—

Whilst we are experiencing a steady increase of revenue, gratifying from the fact that it is not due to increased taxation, expenditure increases in like proportion are entirely owing to causes quite beyond our control.

So far as increased salaries and wages are concerned, I suppose that is perfectly true, but the Minister for Railways has derived increased revenue from various sources, including the leasing of a refreshment room at Northam. That may be unsatisfactory to the public, but to an extent it may be said that the Treasurer got more revenue for the railways than he expected. The Premier also pointed out that the cost of services had increased. That is admitted. In the last five years they have increased by only £276,964. But as against that we have a clear revenue increase of £790,987. Thus we were over £500,000 to the good. I repeat that there is much room for improvement in the finances, and I am afraid that the Premier has not been supported by Ministers to the extent that should have been the case in the way of reduction of expenses. It is no use saying that the control of expenditure is outside the control of the Government. A great deal of it is, of course, entirely in the hands of the boards. The Minister for Justice referred to the increases in salaries and wages. I have had a table prepared showing the increases from 1919 onwards. In 1919, when I assumed office, the maximum for males was £204 and in 1924 it was £264, the increase being £60. The maximum is now £288. So that since the present Government came into office the figure has increased by £24—£60 in my time and £24 since the present Government took office. In respect of females, the figures show that they have been sadly neglected by the present Government. Their maximum in 1919 was £156

and five years later it had been increased to £204. Last year it was still £204. Under secretaries have had their salaries increased considerably. In my time they were advanced from £650 to £804 and now the Under Secretary for Works receives £1,020 and the other under secretaries £960. In the Railway Department in 1919 salaries were increased from £202 to £289 in five years and four years later to £303. Thus in my time there was an increase of £79 and in the subsequent period of only £14. The wages staff had their salaries increased between 1919 and 1924 from £164 to £222 and in 1928 the increase was to £242. The first period showed an increase of £57 and the second period £19 16s. In each case of course, the increase was granted by the court. Still, it is interesting to know just what the increases were. During my time there were 6,510 wages men whose increased wages totalled £376,278. The salaried men numbered 1,223 and the increased amount received by them was £97,106. Between them they received increases amounting to £473,384. In 1928 the number of wages men increased to 7,565 and the increased amount paid them was £149,787. The salaried men numbered 1,411 and the increases paid to them totalled £20,600, a total of £170,387 as against £473,384 during my term of office. I think there has been a small increase since the recent award was issued. It would amount to another £5 all round.

The Minister for Railways: And we have not put up the freights.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister had his sinking fund reduced considerably and he has had increases in revenue. I advise the Minister to take a keener interest in the railways. In one of the returns he will find a set of figures covering all public utilities. The fullest possible information is always supplied with the Budget. The Premier has explained how the deficit accrued. A little time ago he accused me of setting up a deficit of £2,400,000, as if no one else had ever had a deficit.

The Premier: At the time I mentioned your figures I also mentioned mine.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You did, but you did not mention it in the way that gave the public a right idea of the position.

The Minister for Mines: Your total was over £4,000,000.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I will come to the figures in a few minutes and will explain how much better they were than they are ever likely to be under present conditions. The Minister for Mines likes to make misstatements. The Premier told him and I have told him the correct amounts and yet he adds a million and a half to them. It is something like the statement he made, or for which he got full credit, regarding the 400 or 500 men who were put into my electorate.

The Minister for Mines: I was referring to the National Government, not necessarily to your Government. You were not the only National Premier.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I might ask the Minister for Mines why he has not spent the whole of the £165,000 Federal money. He has £50,000 odd left in a trust account.

The Minister for Mines: I am not going to throw it away; I have pledged myself to let a company in this State have it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Which company?

The Minister for Mines: The Sons of Gwalia.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope that money will do some good.

The Minister for Mines: It has kept employed 300 men who otherwise would have been out of work.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: All Britishers?

The Minister for Mines: You will not allow me to employ all Britishers. I tried to employ more of them the other day, and you upset it. You ought not to interject like that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Foreigners have been employed by the Government at times, and in large numbers. I do not object to the employment of those foreigners who have been here for 20 years or more.

The Premier: Some of them are naturalised.

The Minister for Mines: It does not apply to all of them.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister wants to be applauded for his wonderful work in connection with mining. When Mr. Scaddan was Minister for Mines and the gold yield was declining, he was very often attacked. Assistance has been given with the money that has been furnished by the Federal Government, and we

have also helped in many other ways. While on the subject of mining, another matter I would like to ask the Minister is why he found it necessary to grant special mining leases of 2,000 to 8,000 square miles in the Kimberleys.

The Minister for Mines: I have done nothing of the kind; I have not granted any mining leases over 48 acres in extent.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Is it a license? It may be perfectly right; I am only asking for an explanation. I mentioned this at the time a statement appeared in the Press declaring that these areas had been granted in some shape to individuals.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister is not going to enter into an explanation at this stage.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, Mr. Chairman, I am aware of that. I shall expect him to make an explanation at the right time. We do not know what has been done. Of course it may have been the right thing to do and it may lead to some important discoveries, but whether what he did was right or wrong, it would be well for the Minister to explain. I have no intention to do as others who have sat here have done before, that is, to make charges against Ministers. It may have been of advantage to the State to let those areas, and to see that the right, in whatever form it has been granted, is continued. If there is anything to be won from the Kimberleys, anything that will help the advancement of the State, we must assist the Minister to the fullest extent in the direction of granting the necessary facilities. But I do not know that it is good that monopolies should be established over large areas. All I ask is that the Minister should explain. We shall listen to him, and we shall believe what he says. We shall expect him to justify his action. The Minister has had to face the Third Schedule risk of workers' compensation insurance, and we would like to know whether he is still carrying that risk.

The Minister for Mines: Up to the 30th September.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: When we were on the other side of the Chamber we endeavoured to help mining to the fullest extent. We reduced the cost of water to the mines, and we tried to reduce the cost of mining generally. The Minister has done the same thing, but the Committee should be made aware of the assistance which has

been given, of the payments which the mines have been relieved from making. I do not object to anything that is done to bring about a revival of mining.

The Minister for Mines: Third Schedule payments were slightly over £34,000 for last year.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Does the Minister mean the cost to the Government, or the contributions to the fund?

The Minister for Mines: The cost to the Government.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Let us, if we can, help the industry to produce more wealth and employ more men. Coal, which is the special concern of the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson), is still being won in his electorate and is being sold in ever-increasing quantities. I am glad to see this. Collie coal has for years been used exclusively on our railways. Now I wish to say a few words about the State Savings Bank. Deposits have increased by £2,000,000, due to the fact that a higher rate of interest is being paid. Hon. members will agree that the real savings of the people, the small savings, should carry as high a rate of interest as practicable; but I feel sure also that every member sitting on the cross-benches will agree that we ought not to pay the man who deposits other than savings 4 per cent. on his daily balance. The wretched part of it is that a man may have twenty accounts in the State Savings Bank. I understand that a depositor in our Savings Bank can have practically any number of accounts, and that in respect of each account up to £500 he can get 4 per cent. on his daily balance. I urge the Premier to endeavour to arrange with the Commonwealth Savings Bank to pay 4 per cent. only on the small savings of the people, the real savings. I do not think it is good business to pay 4 per cent. on their daily balances to people who have considerable sums. I will say why. No country in the world can, without considerable economic harm, pay much on daily balances. It really means that the interest rate charged against enterprises is made unduly high because of the high rate paid to unenterprising people. It should be always the rule to compel people to invest their own money. Why should this State do more than become responsible for savings that rightly go to the Savings Bank? Why should a man who will not use his

own money be made perfectly safe by receiving 4 per cent. at the State Savings Bank? If he put the money into a bank on fixed deposit, he could get that rate of interest; but he would not receive that rate on his daily balance. Thus the State Savings Bank is making money fairly dear. If we have twenty millions of money loaned from the public, we are adding considerably to the interest bill, and this to the hurt of trade, enterprise and employment. It is these things that count and have a far-reaching, bad effect. Though it is convenient to have the two millions in the State Savings Bank, it would have been cheaper to borrow the money at $5\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. The State Savings Bank has to hold a considerable reserve, and involves heavy working expenses. Under present conditions State Savings Bank deposits do not mean cheap money to the Government, but really an inconvenient way of borrowing. The money is, in effect, at call, and the Government, not being a banking institution, have not reserves available. The money really costs $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in the State Savings Bank, because the rate of interest was increased by $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the whole of the deposits to gain the additional £600,000. I advise the Premier to pay well for small savings, and let people with considerable sums find other means of investment. What the Commonwealth Savings Bank does the State Savings Bank has to do, and therefore I urge that representations be made to the Commonwealth Bank. In connection with the Soldier Settlement Scheme there have been losses, though not nearly so great as Judge Pike said. I presume the scheme has been debited with interest on these amounts. If that is so, then in the general squaring-up interest should be added to the £796,000 as from 1925, when the amount was given to us, and also on the amount standing to the credit of the trust account in our books. It is right that interest should be credited on this sum if interest is charged to the bank. We discussed the railways some time ago. There have been increased earnings of £600,000, while working expenses have increased by £770,000. The result for the year is £310,000 worse. Much high-class traffic is being carried by road. We are building roads adjacent to and parallel with our railway lines. Thus the motor trucks compete with the railways.

That is a hurt to the State, and I am sure the Minister for Works is fully aware of it, firstly by the motor trucks, secondly by the petrol, and thirdly because it is a convenience to the people to use the road rather than the railway. Further, it hurts the State to have to pay oversea for importations. I do not know how the difficulty is to be overcome. If the farmer gets cheap rates on fertiliser and on wheat, he ought as far as possible to use the railways when conveying high-class traffic. On public utilities generally, revenue has increased by one million pounds. May I ask the Government to inform the Committee how it is that the loss on public utilities has increased by £72,000? Apparently, the more the public utilities earn the more they lose, at all events during the last few years. We have had a wonderful time. I have drawn attention to the enormous increase in the rate of spending by the Government—18 millions sterling for the last five years and the previous five years. The local banks have advanced money more freely than ever before. Fully £5,000,000 of new money has been advanced during the past five years. Hon. members will find the exact figures on turning up the quarterly "Statistical Abstract." In 1924 overdrafts totalled £11,600,000; now they total £18,300,000. During the last six months the banks have advanced £2,600,000 more than they had advanced before. The £5,700,000 represents an enormous additional advance. It has been said that banks send their money out of Western Australia, but since greater advances have been made the deposits have increased by only £700,000. Advances have increased by £5,000,000 more than deposits during the five years. The local authorities, too, have borrowed freely. All this money has been available for employment within the State. I have shown that the Government have spent their revenue right royally, that the banks have advanced freely, and that local authorities have spent a good deal of money; but, on top of that, our national income has increased by about £5,000,000 annually, giving employment to the people and creating savings. I warn the Chamber and the country that this will not continue. Firstly, the Government are not going to have the money in future that they spent during the last five years. Secondly, on account of the

fall in the price of wool we shall not have an increasing national income. Thirdly, it is hardly expected that the banks, unless their deposits increase substantially, will continue to loan money as freely as they have done during the past five years. In fact, we know that their opportunities will be curtailed by the unfortunate position in the Eastern States, where crops are not promising. Wool prices are not promising, either. Between those two factors we shall probably experience a considerable falling-off in the amount of money available.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have not very much more to say. I am glad to see that land settlement is progressing and that the land is being taken up as vigorously as ever. The price of wheat, of course, has helped to secure a greater crop and since the introduction of tractors it has become profitable to use our light lands. This undoubtedly has added many hundreds of thousands of acres to our wheat crop which would not have been added had we been compelled to use horses. The price of wheat is good, but I am hopeful it will be fairly high this year and that in the future something like 5s. will be accepted as a basis on which the price will be fixed. In this country it is a fact that our costs of production have been going up and up. This has been brought about by increased taxation since 1913, principally Customs taxes, but also other substantial taxation. The result has been that this increased taxation, Federal, State and local authority, has added at least 1s. per bushel to the cost of wheat production. We have to do something to cheapen that cost of production. We have no control over the world's prices, nor have we any control over the means of handling cost of production. Indirect taxation, of course, means a great deal more than the actual payment of the tax. It means that the cost of everything manufactured in Australia is put up by at least the amount of the tax, to say nothing of the cost of freight from overseas. This ought to be unnecessary. I want to see manufactured in Australia everything that possibly can be manufactured here, but I do not want to see production made difficult. In this State we have a splendid rainfall for wheat-growing. Quite lately when I

was going through the wheat belt it occurred to me that the crops were looking particularly well. I had never seen them looking better. We have had a good deal of rain over much of the wheat area, and I hope that before it is too late we may get the rain that we are told is coming down from the North. So I trust we shall be able to realise our estimate for the coming harvest. Much of the existing prosperity is due to the use of fertiliser and the planting of clover. We know that in the old days the clover seed came into this country accidentally, probably through the long dresses that the ladies wore and which, evidently, my friend the member for Collie knows something about. Now that it is no longer necessary that a farmer's wife should import clover seed on the hem of her skirts, the ladies' dresses have been considerably shortened and so the world has become a more pleasurable place for the member for Collie. We have bought seed and fertiliser, and we have used them. Let us hope that in consequence we shall not much longer have to buy butter from the Eastern States. Both fertiliser and clover are very good investments. A ton of fertiliser in the wheat-belt is worth a good deal to the farmer. Yet the Minister for Railways declares it does not pay him to carry fertiliser cheaply. In my view it would pay to carry it free of all cost. I notice that the State potato expert, Mr. G. N. Lowe, who has done marvellous work in this country, remarked the other day that our average potato crop has become better than the average for Australia. I know our potatoes have been improving for the last five years, and I remember a time when we could not produce our own requirements in that commodity. There is no doubt about the value of the South-West. Probably it is the finest country of the sort in the world. Nor is there any doubt about the ultimate results of the work being done down there. We have sent to the Eastern States for foodstuffs the £60,000,000 we have sent during the last 30 years. By far the greater part of those foodstuffs might well have been produced from our own land. It is the duty of every country to produce its own food, and I hope we shall persevere with the development of the South-West until we get all our own food produced in this State. Before tea I was referring to the deficits that had accu-

mulated in the past. The Premier, I said, was entitled to his opinion, but if I cared to I could turn up his own statement, made in this House, referring to the period when I was in control as Treasurer. During that period I reduced the annual deficit which in 1918 was £650,000 to £229,000 in 1921. The Premier said it was no small achievement. It was no small achievement. I venture to say that if the Premier gets the deficit up to the amount that seems likely, judging by the figures for the first two months of this year, he will never bring it back again. It is not true to say or to lead the public to believe that I was responsible for all the deficits of the past since 1911. It would be quite true to say that I had broken down very largely this long line of deficits. In 1911-12 we had a deficit of £134,409; in 1912-13 it was £190,404. Then came the war, and the deficit for that year stood at £135,411. In the next year it was £565,817, and in 1915-16 it was back to £348,223. In that year I remember cattle in the North were bought on bills by the Government, sold for cash and the cash paid into revenue, by which means the deficit allegedly was reduced. There we have in those five years an accumulated deficit of £1,347,000. It is true that the sinking fund increased by £2,000,000 for that period, making £700,000 more on the sinking fund credit side than on the debit side. It is true that I inherited a deficit of £652,000. In my first year it was £668,225, in the next year £686,725, and in the following year £732,135. Then we began to get the results of the work done in the development of the country, the soldier settlement and other settlements in the wheatbelt, and so the deficit fell from £732,135 to £405,364, and in the following year, my last year, to £229,158. It is not true to say that that was the only deficit we ever had. We are expected to be perfectly frank when we are discussing public matters with the public, to avoid all stiffness and to make ourselves perfectly well understood. That being so, let the Premier, the next time he addresses the public, tell them that while the deficit did accumulate during my time, the sinking fund was added to by £3,440,000. My job was to get rid of the deficit created before my time, and this I say I succeeded in doing. By a strange working of fate, the Premier is now able to balance his led-

ger by use of the £3,440,000 amongst other amounts, that was added to the sinking fund during the time that I was Treasurer. He is wiping out the deficit by taking £360,000 a year that should be paid to sinking fund. So the next time my friend, the Minister for Mines, has anything to say about it he will understand the position a little better.

Mr. Sampson: And we did clean up unemployment.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course we did. The Minister for Justice, too, has been trying to reduce the cost of living by bringing down a Bill that will have the effect of increasing rent. Still, in his opinion that Bill might do some good. But we know that that has been tried time and again; all these expedients have been tried time and again and all have failed. There is only one way of decreasing the cost of living, and that is by increasing production. But how can that be done when taxation is ever on the increase? In 1913 the Australian production of wealth was £221,000,000, and taxation represented £23,000,000, or 10.4 per cent. of the wealth produced. That 10.4 per cent. was really a deduction from the value of the wealth produced. In 1928-£450,000,000 of wealth was produced, but the taxation had leaped to £88,000,000, nearly four times as high as in 1913. This meant 19.6 per cent. of the total value of wealth produced. It is an impossible task to ask the people to pay to the Government 20 per cent. of the total value of the wealth produced. Of course this 19.6 per cent. is largely made up of indirect taxation, which hits the producer, whether miner or farmer, fairly hard and imposes a burden on him that will inevitably result in reduced production. Our light lands will not produce wheat at 4s. per bushel with those costs attached. The costs ought to be reduced, and I hope the Federal Government and the State Government also will take the matter in hand. Actually, Mr. Bruce used those figures in his speech at the Premiers' Conference. He then went on to tell the Premiers that under the Financial Agreement they would have to increase taxation. However, it has now got to breaking point, for 20 per cent. of the total value of the wealth produced is equal to 50 per cent. on the net profit on the wealth produced. Who is going to proceed with the work of producing anything if he is going to lose 50 per

cent. of the net profit? Then, of course, there are the land tax and vermin tax, taxation by the local authorities and other burdens that the producer cannot escape. Our job is to ensure that production is not retarded. It is absolutely necessary that we should have far more production. Every member must realise that this is a serious question and treat it as such. He must realise that we are facing an entirely new set of conditions for two reasons, one because of the position created by the Financial Agreement which limits our freedom of action and the other the change in the economic conditions of the world. Both ills can be cured in our country by the increase of the national income. Very fortunately for us our wealth depends largely upon primary production and of course on the rapidity of the disposal of our products. We must have money and we cannot afford to wait for it. Can we not face this question of increasing the production in sufficient volume to meet our needs? There is no doubt that the wealth available to us in return for work is unlimited. There is no doubt that in the present circumstances the London market is to an extent closed to Australia, and there is no doubt that Australia cannot borrow elsewhere. Then what is to be done? The people of Australia cannot have money to lend the Government if the exports do not exceed the imports, and there does not seem to me much chance of that except by a very great increase of production on the part of the people. Our national income must be increased tremendously if we are going to carry on our present rate of expenditure. The year before last the Premier was able to tell us that exports and imports just about balanced, leaving the interest bill to be made good by borrowing in London. For the year just ended the position has changed for the worse. The balance of trade was against us to the extent of £3,000,000. We have gone up £2,000,000 in our imports and have gone down £1,000,000 in our exports. That is a very serious situation. To make good that £3,000,000 will be the concern of the Premier, and the Federal Government in their loan flotations in the near future. Not only is there the £3,000,000 to cover our purchases from abroad, but we have an interest bill of £3,000,000 to meet, so we are left this year with £6,000,000 to pay as against the £3,000,000 we paid last year.

The Premier: If we cannot get the money where are we?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Suspended in mid air somewhere. Of course the Premier will have to meet the interest bill in London by borrowing there. I venture to say if it were not so, the Loan Council would have cut Western Australia below £3,600,000 this year. It is absolutely certain that we shall get the £3,000,000 because we must pay our interest bill in London.

The Premier: Three and a half millions.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If there be trouble in securing the £3,600,000 we ought to endeavour to set aside the agreement that has been made and improve upon it somewhat. There is no question that given freedom we could finance the State quite easily. It is perfectly plain that for years to come we shall be controlled by the Loan Council and sometimes at the whim of the Federal Treasurer. We have deliberately put our head into the noose and will have to get out of it deliberately unless the position can be improved. This State is practically undeveloped. After all what has been done? If we take the 10,000,000 acres under cultivation as compared with the 100,000,000 acres in the South-West, it will be realised that there is great work to be done. The country has to be opened up. Large expenditure has to be faced if the land is to be turned to account. We can do that work only by borrowing. Of course we may increase production and get money by those means. Certainly we must have development, and production must follow the work and can be achieved only by the expenditure of borrowed money. Our past indebtedness has been very well covered by sound assets. Go to Bruce Rock, Kununoppin, Wyalcatchem and other towns of the wheat belt and the growth of those places is almost as great as was the growth of goldfield towns. There we find electric light services and well-made streets—

Member: And picture shows.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, theatres, lawyers and doctors. One can get married and buried in any of those towns just as well as in Perth. The progress of those towns has been marvellous. There are the many thousands of acres of cleared land and people living in great

comfort as a result of a very few years of work. I know from my own knowledge that many country towns settled for 60 years did not have the conveniences or the amount of development that many of the country towns of to-day have achieved in 20 years.

The Premier: We have not electric light at Donnybrook after 60 or 70 years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier told us that £11,000,000 was owing to the Government under the Agricultural Bank, Industries Assistance Board, and Soldier Settlement Scheme. Look at the asset created by that expenditure in the country! Of course further development means further expenditure, and unless the people are content to economise in their purchases abroad, I do not know what can happen.

The Premier: People will be compelled to do so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope so, but it would not be necessary if we all worked in the right direction. Just imagine an adverse trade balance of £3,000,000 against the State! I am sorry that the finances are not in a much better condition. The Premier has been mighty fortunate in having obtained the grants from the Federal Government and reaped the benefit of the Financial Agreement. The States might be unfortunate in having made the Financial Agreement except in so far as it fixed the payment at £474,000 a year for 58 years. For the rest, it is of no good to us. For the people there is nothing in the Financial Agreement—not a farthing. For the Federal Government there is the gratifying of an ambition to get a little further control of the affairs of Australia, and on the other hand there is a slight relief in a tight situation. That is about all that can be said for the Financial Agreement. When I rose I suggested that the Premier might give some consideration to the fact that this is Centenary year. I shall not be here to-morrow, but I understand that it is intended to adjourn Parliament for a fortnight for the celebrations. When we assemble again, I should like the Premier to tell us that an opportunity will be given to discuss the matter.

Progress reported.

MENTAL DEFICIENCY BILL SELECT COMMITTEE.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that leave had been granted the Hon. A. J. H. Saw, M.L.C., to give evidence before the select committee on the Mental Deficiency Bill.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 12th September. Mr. Angelo in the Chair, the Minister for Agricultural Water Supplies in charge of the Bill.

Clause 40—Amendment of Section 243.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Toodyay indicated his intention to move for the deletion of this clause. There is no amendment before the Chair. The hon. member, of course, may not move to strike out the clause; he may vote against it.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: I am opposed to the suggestion that this clause should be voted out. A taxpayer already has his remedy under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act. He may, within 42 days after service by post of notice of assessment, send to the Commissioner of Taxation an objection, in writing, against the assessment. That right is sufficient redress for any taxpayer, and it is unnecessary to provide for an additional appeal court under this Bill.

Mr. LATHAM: A taxpayer may not have received his notice, and may not know the value that has been placed upon his land by the Commissioner. Under the Land Act he is exempt from taxation for five years, and would therefore not receive any notice during that time. If this Bill does not give him the right to appeal he will have no right left. The Minister should give some consideration to taxpayers in this matter.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: For two years after selection the property is not rateable if it is conditional purchase land. During the remaining three years it is in the developmental stage, and there is little reason to believe that the valuation fixed would be excessive.

Mr. LINDSAY: Every person who is being taxed upon his property should have

the right of appeal against the valuations. Under the Road Districts Act this right is given. The procedure is simple, and involves the lodging of an appeal before a revision court sitting in the district. When the appeal has been heard, the officials of the Taxation Department and the road board go over the land and very often reduce the valuation. Even after that, if the taxpayer thinks he has been unjustly treated, he can appeal to the local court. That right should be preserved in this Bill. Under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act, a taxpayer can only get his appeal heard after the Commissioner has turned down his request for a revision of the valuation. That may take months to get through and prove very expensive to the individual concerned. If people are deprived of the more simple method, very few will take the risk of having their cases heard before a court in Perth. It would be an injustice to withhold from the taxpayers the right of appeal that is now given to them.

Mr. FERGUSON: The Minister should agree to vote against this clause. It would cause a great deal of hardship and confusion in the country. Parliament should not deprive taxpayers of this right of appeal. An appeal against the valuation of the Commissioner is lengthy and costly. Many residents of country districts would decline to adopt the more expensive procedure, which is altogether different from appealing against a valuation imposed by the local governing body. When officers of the Taxation Department make a valuation in a country district, the system adopted tends to create certain anomalies. They do not go on to every holding for the purpose of valuing it. They take the holdings en bloc, more or less, and in such circumstances mistakes and anomalies are bound to arise. If a farmer considers he is harshly treated in respect of his valuation, we should give him every opportunity to appeal against the valuation in an economical and simple manner. I suggest to the Minister that he delete the clause: it will not interfere with the efficacy of the measure.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I hope the Minister will delete the clause. Under the existing legislation, revision courts are held to review the rates that have been struck and the local authorities sit as an appeal board. If the ratepayer is not satisfied, he can take his appeal to the local court. The Commissioner

of Taxation usually adopts the road board valuation as his assessment.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Then there should be no argument.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: But under the existing conditions a ratepayer can have his appeal dealt with conveniently and without much expense. The Minister would be wise to listen to the advice of the members who have a thorough grasp of the work of local government.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: It is true that the Commissioner of Taxation consults local authorities when making valuations in a district, and in some instances the local authorities' valuations are accepted.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I should say 90 per cent. are accepted.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: In my opinion the clause is a proper one. Hon. members will not deny the fact that in many instances the valuations fixed by local authorities are ridiculously low.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: Although those local authorities realise that as the result of low valuations they deprive themselves of revenue, they approach the Government for subsidies and grants for various works! The clause is right and equitable.

Mr. Latham: But you challenge the honesty of the courts.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: The method outlined represents the only right and proper way of arriving at valuations. It is remarkable that certain people are prepared to accept the valuations of the Commissioner of Taxation under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act, and yet want the clause deleted.

Mr. Ferguson: Because of the cost of exercising the right of appeal.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: Naturally, it costs something to exercise that right. I think the clause should stand.

Mr. LINDSAY: The more I read the clause, the more complicated it appears to be. I agree with the Minister that in some instances local governing authorities have fixed valuations at altogether too low a figure. On the other hand, the clause gives the Minister power to say to any local govern-

ing body that he will arrive at the necessary valuations and will give the right of appeal to the local court, but at the same time he prohibits the local court from reducing any such valuation if the Minister's valuation does not exceed that of the Commissioner of Taxation. The procedure under the Road Districts Act at present is simple and effective, and it is only fair to allow ratepayers the right of appeal to the local court in the district rather than force them to follow the costly and inconvenient procedure outlined under the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	19
Noes	..	..	..	..	12
Majority for					7

AYES.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Lamond
Mr. Clydesdale	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Collier	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Munzie
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Steeman
Mr. Cowan	Mr. Troy
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. A. Wansbrough
Miss Holman	Mr. Withers
Mr. Kennedy	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Lambert	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Barnard	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Latham	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Maley	Mr. North
	(Teller.)

Clause thus passed.

Clause 41—Amendment of Section 249:

Mr. LATHAM: I move an amendment—

That the following subclause be added:—

(2) The said section two hundred and forty-nine is further amended by the addition of a subsection as follows:—(2) If any land, which is held on conditional purchase lease or under any Crown lease, and on which any rates are due to a district council, is forfeited, determined or resumed under the Land Act or under the terms of the lease, then such charge as aforesaid shall, subject to any claim for rent, fines or other moneys due to the Crown, continue to attach to the improvements on the said land and shall extend to any money representing the value of such improvements which may come to the hands of the Minister for Lands or any other person by virtue of the said Act, and the said Minister or such other person is hereby required, subject as

aforesaid, to give effect to such charge. For the purposes of this subsection any deprivation of the use of land shall be deemed a resumption, and the expiry of any such lease by effluxion of time shall be deemed a determination thereof, and the expression "Land Act" means the Land Act, 1898, and any amendment thereof.

Land at times reverts to the Crown and frequently there are accumulations of rates owing on the property. If the owner were allowed to forfeit his property, he could re-select it, and in the process, all rates owing would be wiped out automatically. In fairness to the roads board, if any equity should remain after indebtedness to the Crown has been liquidated, the local authorities should be paid their rates.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: The Lands Department object to the amendment. It will have the effect of making that department a collecting agent. Very often where lands become forfeited there is a considerable writing-down by the Agricultural Department before land is again re-selected. Thus complications would be likely to arise. To load up a property with arrears of rates would, in my opinion, hamper the Lands Department in connection with the re-selection of land. It is only right, in some instances at any rate, that selectors should be called upon to pay rates rather than enjoy additional exemption for two years.

Mr. LATHAM: At the present time the Lands Department act as collecting agents, and let me inform the Minister that the Lands Department are not going to control one section of this Act immediately the proclamation of the Town Planning Act is made. Local bodies have never harassed men in the hope of eventually compelling them to pay. The Lands Department forces people to pay by threatening forfeiture. If a property is forfeited, it is sold again with considerable improvements, and therefore it is not asking too much that before the quota due to the previous holder is paid over, the road boards should receive the amount owing to them. The same thing is done in respect of water boards.

The Minister for Water Supplies: In nearly every instance water rates are written off.

Mr. LATHAM: They are written off only when they cannot be collected.

Mr. LINDSAY: I know of one property that was actually taken up on three occasions. It had been selected from the Crown

eight years before the road board collected any rates at all. It does seem right that if there is any balance after the sale, the road boards should get what is their due. The Road Boards Association attempted to force the Agricultural Bank to pay these rates. When a property is mortgaged to the Agricultural Bank and is transferred to someone, if there is any surplus, at least the back rates due to road boards should be paid from the surplus.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for York is not correct when he says that a person may forfeit land and take it up again so as to get rid of the liability in respect of rates. That cannot happen because the person who forfeits his land does not get it again. It is unwise to ask the Lands Department to collect rates on behalf of the road board; the road board has full authority to collect their own rates, and there is no need to provide additional power.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 42—agreed to.

Clause 43—Amendment of Section 260:

Mr. LATHAM: It is proposed to give power to the local authority to write off health and vermin rates. I do not see how they can interfere with those rates over which they have no authority. A health board is not always the same body as a road board, and a vermin board is sometimes different from a road board. How is it proposed to amend two other Acts by means of this Bill? The proper thing to do is to amend the Vermin Act and the Health Act by direct means.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: The hon. member is right when he says that there is difficulty under the Vermin and Health Acts in the writing off of rates. In nearly all country centres road boards are both the vermin and the health boards. This clause has been inserted to simplify the writing off of rates which cannot be recovered.

Mr. LINDSAY: If a road board is also a health board and a vermin board, business in the three matters has to be kept entirely separate. If the Minister wants to give a vermin board power to write off their rates, he should do so in a constitutional manner. I fail to see how, under this Bill, he can

give any power that affects the Vermin and Health Acts.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: It will be given if the Committee passes this clause. It has been inserted to meet the wishes of the road districts conference. It was desired that the Act should be amended in this direction.

Mr. LATHAM: Did the legal advisers of the Government say there was power to do this? If so, they have gone down in my estimation. The Minister proposes to say to the Health Department and to the Vermin Department, over neither of which he has any control, "By my authority such-and-such a road board is going to write off rates under Acts controlled by you." If the Minister wants to put on the statute-book blundering and stupid legislation of this sort, he will allow this clause to pass. We are trying to amend too many Acts by altering others. The Minister has no right to dictate to another Minister.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: This clause was inserted at the request of the local authorities and embodied in the Bill by the Parliamentary Draftsman. If it is passed by Parliament it will have effect.

Mr. FERGUSON: The conference did not want this clause put through, but left the matter in the hands of the legal advisers of the Government to see that the principle was carried out in a constitutional manner. Many road boards are not constituted as health boards. It would be no use giving the Moora Road Board power to write off health rates because it is not also a health board. What the Minister should do is to have amendments brought down to the other Acts in question.

Point of Order.

The Chairman: Has the Minister considered the point raised by the member for Moore (Mr. Ferguson)?

The Minister for Water Supplies: I do not know that it comes within your province, Mr. Chairman, to ask me whether or not I have considered the point. I have submitted a Bill to Parliament and it is now being dealt with by the Committee of this Chamber.

The Chairman: In order to test the legality of the position, I rule that the Committee cannot, in this Bill, pass a clause to amend the Vermin Act and the Health Act.

The matter can now be referred to the Speaker for his ruling, if the Minister disagrees with mine.

Dissent from Chairman's ruling.

The Minister for Water Supplies: If that is so, I move—

That the Committee dissents from the Chairman's ruling.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Chairman reported the dissent.

The Minister for Water Supplies: I disagreed with the Chairman's ruling that this clause constitutes an amendment of the Vermin Act and the Health Act. It constitutes an amendment of the Road Districts Act by giving to road boards, which, under the Bill are to be known as district councils, authority to write off vermin rates and health rates.

Mr. Latham: Under the Road Districts Act there is no power to road boards to strike either health rates or vermin rates. How, then, is it possible to give road boards, or district councils, power to write off such rates?

Mr. Speaker: I have to decide whether this Bill to amend the Road Districts Act covers amendments to the Vermin Act and the Health Act. It is clear that provision has not been made in the Title or in the Order of Leave to deal with Acts extraneous to or outside of the Road Districts Act, which this Bill proposes to amend. Therefore I have to uphold the Chairman's ruling. The clause purporting to deal with arrears of rates under the Vermin Act and the Health Act is not covered by the Title of the Bill or the Order of Leave.

Committee resumed.

Clause put and negatived.

Clauses 44 to 52—agreed to.

Clause 53—Insertion of new section between Sections 316 and 317; Election of auditor may be dispensed with:

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: I move an amendment—

That after the word "year," in line 7, there be inserted: "and extend the period for which an auditor is elected until the next triennial election of councillors.

If that amendment is not made, district councils may be put to the expense of electing auditors annually. Seeing that the principle of triennial elections for members of district councils has been agreed to, that provision should also apply to the election of auditors.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. LATHAM: Road boards have no power to dispense with the services of an auditor even though not doing his job efficiently. Probably there will be some difficulty under this clause if the board or local council desire to remove the ratepayers' auditor.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: The Board have power to dispense with an auditor's services, subject to the consent of the Minister.

Mr. Latham: But the auditor is elected for three years now.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: His services could be dispensed with only if he was found not to be carrying out his work.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 54 to 57—agreed to.

New Clause:

Mr. NORTH: On behalf of the member for Swan I move—

That the following be inserted, to stand as Clause 31:—"Section 196 of the principal Act is amended by the insertion of the following paragraph, to stand as (41a):—To require that where any land which adjoins or abuts upon any road or way within any prescribed area or townsite in any district council is overgrown with underwood or bushes, the council may from time to time, by writing under the hand of the president or secretary, order such land to be cleared."

The amendment is perfectly reasonable, and I hope it will be carried.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: I draw the hon. member's attention to paragraph 47 of Section 196 of the Act. That section deals with by-laws and regulations, and paragraph 47 enables a road board to compel owners of vacant lots in town sites to clear such land of trees, scrub and undergrowth. The member for Swan evidently overlooked that provision and the amendment is unnecessary.

Mr. LATHAM: The paragraph referred to by the Minister deals only with town sites. The member for Swan evidently referred to

land outside a townsite. For instance, in many places trees that are inside the boundary fence, lean dangerously over the roadway. The Act contains no power to compel the owner to remove the trees.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: I suggest that the amendment be not pressed. Since it was placed on the Notice Paper, I discussed it with the member for Swan and I understood from him it was not his intention to go on with it.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause:

Mr. NORTH: I move an amendment—

That the following new clause, to stand as Clause 46, be inserted:—Section 285 of the principal Act is amended by deleting the words "at any time" in the first line of the proviso, and inserting the words "not less than 14 days" in lieu.

Section 285 deals with power to demand a vote of owners and the amendment will provide that should an owner decide to withdraw from the list of objectors, he will have to do so within not less than 14 days of the poll instead of doing so at any time.

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: I accept the amendment.

New Clause put and passed.

New Clause:

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: I move—

That the following new clause, to stand as Clause 7b, be inserted:—7b. Section sixty-one of the principal Act is repealed, and a new section is inserted in place thereof as follows—General Elections.—61. A general election of councillors shall be held in a district on any day appointed by this Act for the general retirement of councillors therein.

The amendment has been found necessary as the result of the previous decision dealing with election of councillors every third year.

New clause put and passed.

New clause:

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: I move an amendment—

That the following new clause, to stand as Clause 29, be inserted:—

29. There is hereby inserted in the principal Act, after Section 190, a section as follows:—

190a. Whenever the council constructs or repairs a crossing place over any footway or over any unmade portion of a road, for the

traffic of vehicles across the footway or the unmade portion of a road to or from any private property, one-half of the cost thereof shall be paid to the council by the owner of the land thereby served; and the council may recover in any court of competent jurisdiction such one-half of the cost of the construction and repair of such crossing place, both over the footway and the previously unmade portion of the road, as a debt due from the owner for the time being of the land thereby served.

New Clause put and passed.

New Clause:

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES: I move an amendment—

That the following new clause, to stand as Clause 41, be inserted:—

Amendment of Section 246. 41. Subsection two hundred and forty-six of the principal Act is amended by omitting all the words after the word "secretary" to the end of the subsection, and by inserting in place thereof the words "and such further evidence as may be adduced before the Court."

The provision regarding evidence was regarded as rather circumscribed, and the amendment will increase the scope of the evidence that may be tendered.

New clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 9.25 p.m.