

Hon. G. FRASER: Even if they all insured themselves, the person meeting with the accident would not be protected.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Yes, if the person was insured against accident.

Hon. G. FRASER: Why should such people carry the burden of an accident policy? Why should they be forced to incur expenditure for the benefit of careless drivers?

Hon. V. Hamersley: It often happens that people meet with accidents through not looking. The fault is not necessarily that of the driver of the car every time. People do not get out of the way.

Hon. G. FRASER: I think hon. members will agree with me that the position is so serious as to call for some legislative action. The Government may be able to devise some means other than that of compulsory third party insurance. I am not particular as to what method is adopted, so long as something is done. I hope the House will give the motion serious consideration and carry it unanimously.

On motion by the Minister for Country Water Supplies, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL

THE MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.49]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, the 26th May.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 4.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 19th May, 1931.

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

QUESTION—LANDS—KODJ KODJIN SETTLERS.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Is he aware that Messrs. Turnbull Brothers and Graham, of Kodj Kodjin, North Kellerberrin, are so placed through the inability of the Agricultural Bank to assist them to carry on, that they have over a thousand bags of wheat still unharvested? 2, Will he have inquiry made to see whether any steps can be taken to save this wheat, and whether these deserving settlers can be assisted to remain on their blocks?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No. Only 30 acres not harvested. 2, See answer No. 1. 1,000 bags of wheat which remain to be carted is subject to creditors' lien, and no surplus is in prospect. The settlers have no fallowed land to support their application for super.

QUESTION—STATE GOVERNOR.

Mr. MARSHALL asked the Minister for Lands: 1, In view of the attack upon wages and conditions of civil and semi-civil servants, and Government employees generally, thus economising for the purpose of balancing the Budget, and having regard to the prospective retirement of the present Governor, will he refuse to make any further appointments or re-appointments in this direction with a view to effecting further economy? 2, Is he aware that the amount now absorbed in the maintenance of the Governor, his staff, and establishment an-

nually, is sufficient, at the rate of 7s. per head per week now paid by the Government in the way of sustenance to unemployed, to feed 22,603 persons for one week?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, The matter is under consideration. 2, Yes.

QUESTIONS (2)—POLICE.

Appeal Board.

Mr. H. W. MANN asked the Minister for Police: 1, Is it his intention to introduce a Bill this session to provide for a Police Appeal Board to hear appeals against dismissals, punishments, and transfers? 2, Will he give urgent consideration to the question of the re-introduction of the Appeal Board Bill, which was brought down by the previous Government in 1928?

The MINISTER FOR POLICE replied: 1, No. 2, The matter will receive consideration.

Benefit Fund.

Mr. H. W. MANN asked the Minister for Police: 1, Is he aware that a Select Committee of this House recommended in 1926 that the Police Benefit Fund be converted into a Police Pension Fund, owing to the unsatisfactory condition of the present gratuity system? 2, Will he give urgent consideration to the advisability of creating a police pension scheme in lieu of the present unsatisfactory Police Benefit Fund, or alternatively, will he bring down a Bill similar to the one drafted in November, 1923.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE replied: 1, Yes. 2, Consideration is being given to the matter, but the present financial position precludes any sum being provided by the Government for the purpose of conversion of the fund to a pension scheme.

QUESTION—RUSSIA'S EXPORTS TO ENGLAND.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Has he read the statement in Wednesday's "Daily News" that 600,000 cwts. of butter will shortly be unloaded on to the already glutted British market, that Soviet wheat headed the imports for the first four months of 1930, and

that Russia is preparing for big apple exports to Great Britain? 2, As these three primary products are of vital importance to Australia, will he endeavour to get the co-operation of the States interested to secure a united protest against Britain's policy which is inimical to the conduct of these industries in her overseas Dominions? 3, Could the Premier bring the matter to the forefront when in Melbourne and use his influence in the direction desired?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, Yes. 2, I understand that the Federal Government are fully alive to the position. 3, The Premier will do whatever is possible.

QUESTION—HOSPITAL, DENMARK.

Mr. WANSBROUGH asked the Minister for Health: 1, Is it a fact that the Denmark hospital is now operating under private control? 2, If so, were the Denmark people consulted prior to such arrangements being entered into? 3, Is it a fact that under the arrangements made a subsidy of £700 per annum was agreed upon? 4, Is it also a fact that during the past few months an additional subsidy of £150 has been paid? 5, Under the arrangements made, has the group settlement medical fund been protected? 6, Under the arrangements made, what is the position of an indigent person needing urgent medical attention? 7, What is the position of a doctor not connected with the arrangements made, who desires to attend his patient in such hospital? 8, Under the arrangements made, is such hospital existing purely as a maternity or general hospital? 9, What was the cost of clearing of the additional hospital grounds mentioned recently? 10, What was the cost of constructing a concrete cricket pitch on such grounds cleared recently? 11, By whom was such expense borne? 12, What was the cost of reconditioning and painting recently done, by whom was such expense borne, and were tenders called for such work? 13, If so, who was the successful tenderer. 14, For what period do such arrangements exist, and what is the date of termination?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: 1, Denmark Hospital is controlled by the Minister of Public Health, under Section 7 of "The Hospitals Act, 1927." The Minister has leased it to a medical practitioner under certain conditions usually applying to such

leases, and designed to safeguard the interests of the local people. 2, No. 3, Yes. 4, Yes; the subsidy was increased by £144 per annum to cover the estimated liability of the lessee to provide free treatment under Sections 11 and 12 of "The Hospital Fund Act, 1930." 5, Yes; the lessee took over the fund and its financial members. 6, An indigent person would receive free medical attention from the medical practitioner, and would also be entitled to free hospital care from the lessee. 7, Any medical practitioner, other than the lessee, is entitled to send patients into the hospital, and to receive all usual hospital facilities for such patients and himself. 8, For both general and maternity cases. 9 and 10, The Department paid nothing in either case. 11, Presumably by lessee or by local people. 12, Paint and calcomine, costing £15 10s., were provided by the Department. Oil, labour, etc., were provided by the lessee. Tenders were not called. 13, See 12. No contract. 14, Date of termination of present leasing arrangements is the 30th June, 1932. In addition to the work referred to in question No. 12, the following has been done during the currency of the lease:—Improvements to lighting of operating theatre, £17 14s. 3d. (work carried out by Public Works Department); installation of electric light, £29 (work done by Road Board); anaesthetic room, materials costing £18 5s. 11d. provided by Department (labour provided by lessee).

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: The Bill contains a few short amendments of the existing Traffic Act. Some members may think them of great importance. The principal reason for the introduction of the measure is the condition of things as they exist to-day, as a result of which people, particularly farmers and pastoralists, have got into difficulties because of the low prices they are now receiving for their products. Some of the clauses of the Bill are designed to reduce costs in certain directions as far as is practicable. The first amendment provides that the license fees

on motor trucks owned by farmers and graziers, and used solely in the carting of produce of farms or farming requisites, to and from the nearest railway siding or town, shall be reduced by 50 per cent. The word "grazier" is not contained in the Act, but the Bill provides for its inclusion. The next amendment of importance is that which allows for the fees on motor trucks owned and used by bona fide prospectors, approved by the Mines Department, also being reduced by 50 per cent.]

Hon. M. F. Troy: Why bring the Mines Department into the matter?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member has anything to say, let him say it after I have finished moving the second reading. Surely a Minister is permitted to say what a Bill contains without being interrupted. [The next amendment allows license fees to be paid in two half-yearly instalments, with an additional charge of 2s. 6d. on each instalment. This extra charge is imposed because of the increased cost of administration involved. The next amendment provides that if the owner of a motor vehicle hands in his license plates before the 15th day of July, or before the 15th day of January, he may then take out a license for the half year upon payment of the half year's fees. The next clause to which I refer is one which amends Section 42 of the principal Act. It provides for the making of regulations to prohibit the picking up or setting down of passengers along the route except at prescribed stopping places. Some months ago, a deputation waited upon me and the proceedings were reported in the Press. I did state that it was my intention, provided Cabinet agreed, to reduce the license fees paid by farmers and pastoralists on their motor trucks and also to allow the privilege of paying the fees half-yearly. I have received a remarkable number of communications since then, and in every instance those communicating with me sought further concessions. I received scores of letters from local governing authorities urging the extension of the concessions in some ways that I do not intend to agree to. I would like to point out that there is a road board association in Western Australia and I think that local governing authorities should, instead of writing to the Minister seeking concessions for their respective districts, communicate with

the association so that some uniform proposal might be advanced for the amendment of the Act. In order to secure the opinion of the road board association, I communicated, under date 23rd February last, with the chairman of the road board association at Goomalling. My letter was couched in the following terms:—

I have to inform you that I have received a number of applications from road boards for the reduction of license fees. As you are aware, the Traffic Act definitely prescribes these fees, and the Minister and the boards have no power to reduce same. The Government receive only a small percentage of the fees collected in the country districts, and the question is therefore of more vital importance to the local authorities. In Part 1 of the Third Schedule of the Traffic Act, provision is made that the fees shall be on a reduced scale for horse-drawn vehicles used only by farmers or pastoralists for the carriage of requisites to or from their own farms and stations, and I am at present rather inclined to the view that the fees on motor trucks used bona fide by farmers and pastoralists for carting produce from their own farms and stations to the nearest railway siding or town should be reduced. I am not, however, in favour of any reduction so far as motor cars are concerned. Parliament may meet before the end of the financial year, and it may be possible to have the Act amended on the above lines, but no alteration could be effected during the current licensing year. I should be pleased if you would bring the subject before your executive and favour me with their views at the earliest possible date.

The reply I received from the association was dated the 28th April last and was as follows:—

Re Traffic License Fees.—Referring to your communication to the chairman of the association, Mr. Royal, dated the 23rd February, I have been requested to inform you that the subject of license fees, particularly in relation to motor trucks and trailers used by farmers and pastoralists, received consideration at the meeting of the executive committee held on the 22nd April. After a lengthy discussion of the position, it was resolved to submit for your favourable consideration the request for a reduction of 50 per cent. on existing license fees for motor trucks and trailers used by farmers, pastoralists and others concerned in carting their own products. I trust the decision will be approved by you.

Mr. Marshall: Will that be in respect of cartage to a seaport, as well?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That phase is included in the Bill. The North-West and the North must be treated on a

different basis from the rest of the State, because up there there are no roads and no towns.

Mr. Marshall: Unless seaports are specifically mentioned, there may be trouble.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Let me explain the position. I have mentioned that in these particular districts, except Port Hedland, where there is a railway, the pastoralists will pay half fees when carting to the coast; that is mentioned in the Bill. The other point referred to half-yearly payments. In these times it is hard, particularly in respect of vehicles used for commercial purposes, for owners to pay the fee in a lump sum once a year. For that reason we have agreed that the fee may be paid in two half-yearly instalments. That decision is in accordance with the request made by the deputation that waited upon me. The amendments I have indicated are such, generally speaking, as will meet with the approval of members. I have already indicated that I have been asked to make further concessions, and those requests have come from various parts of the State. I have been asked to make the concession apply to motor cars; I do not think the Government should agree to do anything of the sort. With regard to motor trucks used by farmers and pastoralists, the fact that the 1925 Traffic Act made provision for the payment of one-fourth of the fees in respect of horse-drawn vehicles, indicated that the principle involved was recognised by Parliament in the past and Parliament will recognise that principle in the future. One reason for the concession was that farmers and pastoralists, particularly the wheat growers, use their motor trucks on an average for only two months in the year. As against that, a person engaged in the carrying business or in other occupations uses his truck practically all the year round. That fact was recognised in the 1925 Act. While I am not asking Parliament to go as far as the provisions of that Act went in allowing the farmers and pastoralists to pay one-fourth of the license fee, I shall ask Parliament to approve of the payment of one-half the fee. When dealing with that phase, I wish to refer to one feature of the amended legislation passed last year with reference to heavy motor traffic. It has caused the department and myself, as Minister, considerable worry. We are continually receiving requests for concessions be-

cause the Act permits the Minister to administer the Act sympathetically and to grant exemptions in cases of hardship. In every such instance, where the hardship has been proved, we have granted exemption. Some people want exemptions for certain industries in order to permit cartage of goods all the year round. Such requests have been refused. Some people have sought permission to be allowed to take loads of goods one way, and they have been allowed to do so. I have received a communication from a gentleman, known to all members of Parliament, who was at one time Leader of the Country Party in this House, and who is now secretary of the Katanning District Council of the Primary Producers' Association.

Hon. P. Collier: Who is that?

Mr. Marshall: Oh, Mr. Thomson, of course!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think it necessary to tell the Leader of the Opposition to whom I refer. That gentleman has asked, as others have asked, that all farmers should be allowed to cart their goods, used for their own purposes, without any extra fee. It might be a popular move if I were to agree to that, or even to ask the House to sanction such a request, but I think it would be most unjust for me to do so. One of the principal reasons prompting action in the past was that farmers and pastoralists were carting their wool by motor traction in competition with the railways. If I were to propose an amendment of the Act to permit of that request being given effect to, it would mean a reversion to the conditions that obtained when the farmers and pastoralists conveyed their wool to Perth in competition with our railways. The amending legislation I introduced last year did not prevent anyone carting goods but simply said, "If you do cart goods along prescribed routes which you use more than an ordinary individual, you shall pay something extra for the use of the roads concerned." I do not think the points I have dealt with so far can be regarded as controversial. I now come to one that, during the time I have had to administer the Traffic Act, has placed me in an unpopular light with certain sections of the community from time to time. When the 1925 Act was passed, power was granted to frame regulations dealing with the competition of motor traffic with the tramways and rail-

ways. Power was also given to the Government to set up an advisory board, the members of which, with the approval of the Minister, and the Governor, could cancel routes and prescribe others. We now find, however, that provisions of the Act have been declared ultra vires. If the department and the Minister then concerned or myself had not believed action taken under the Act was legal, many of the routes at present in operation would not have been prescribed. Some of those routes were agreed to on the understanding that the buses would not be allowed to pick up passengers along tramway routes. There have been instances in which the persons concerned have given honourable undertakings that they would not pick up passengers along the tram routes, but that undertaking has applied to individuals only. In one case, the ownership of the bus changed and therefore the agreement could not be enforced with regard to the new owner. It is still within the power of the Minister and his advisers to revoke all routes and to determine upon other routes that will not be competitive with respect to the existing transport system. The principle at issue is not one that should be a matter of policy for any particular Government or any particular party. I want to tell the House emphatically that the Bill is not a party measure. If members do not like it, they can vote against it. I want this matter decided by a vote of the House as a whole. I know that some members of my own party are not in favour of it, and even some of the Ministers are not favourably disposed towards it.

Mr. Marshall: That is a strong declaration.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is not a declaration. I have taken this action without consulting anyone.

Hon. P. Collier: Strong man!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think the Leader of the Opposition should sneer at me in that way.

Hon. P. Collier: It was not a sneer; the interjection was prompted by the way the Minister made his statement.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not discussed this matter with Cabinet.

Hon. P. Collier: Only a strong man could do that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the compliment. There is an advisory board ap-

pointed to consult with the Minister. The board advised me that regulations under the Act had been declared ultra vires, and that along tramway routes, where no trouble had been experienced in the past, taxis and buses were now picking up passengers and helping to make the tramways unprofitable.

Mr. Sampson: The tramways are rather out of date.

Mr. Marshall: In that respect, they somewhat resemble the member for Swan!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I suggest that these phases can be dealt with by hon. members when they participate in the second reading debate. I was dealing with the fact that buses are competing with the tramways where formerly no trouble had been experienced in that regard. That applies, for instance, to the Cambridge-st tramway line. The financial position of the tramways calls for serious consideration. For the year ended the 30th June, 1929, the tramways showed a profit of £11,376; at the end of the last financial year the profit was £3,277; to the end of April, 1931, the tramways showed a loss of £7,310.

Mr. Raphael: Bad management.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I find that certain bodies that have been most active in the past in urging the extension of the tramway service, are now equally active in promoting competition between the taxis and buses and the tramway service.

Mr. Raphael: Name them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will give the names as I proceed. Deputations waited upon me from the Claremont Municipal Council and the Claremont Road Board. I intend to bring this phase before the House, because I received three or four deputations from the Claremont Road Board on this particular subject. Formerly there was no tramway service from Broadway through Nedlands to Perth. The deputations were held in order to secure the consent of the Government to provide the tramway extension they desired. I have here a resume of what the gentleman concerned promised before the tramway was constructed. On the 18th January, 1926, a deputation from the Claremont Road Board said that if they could get an adequate tram service they would do their best to dispense with the bus and taxi service. Mr. North, M.L.A., who was a member of the deputation, also agreed that if they could get an adequate tram service they would cut out

the bus service. On the 4th July, 1923, this letter was addressed to the chairman of the Claremont Road Board by Mr. W. H. Taylor, the General Manager of the tramways:—

In reference to the evidence tendered before the Royal Commission on tramway extensions under date 17th July, 1922, question No. 586, page 28, of the report, it is stated that your board was prepared to guarantee £1,000 per annum for five years against any loss on the tramways if extended into your district. As you are aware, we have now the work in hand, and we should like to have as early as possible an assurance from your board that the undertaking given will be carried out.

That undertaking has never been carried out. A little time ago the department enforced Regulation No. 230 as far as it applied to picking up passengers along the Claremont tramway between Locke-street and Broadway. The result was a great improvement in the number of passengers carried on the tram. I do not intend to give the whole of the figures, but for the week ended 3rd January, 1931, after the buses had stopped picking up passengers, the trams carried 20,859 passengers. In the same week of the previous year, when the buses were competing with the trams, the number of passengers carried by the trams was 16,182. In the week ended the 10th January, 1931, under the new conditions the trams carried 23,661 passengers, as against 19,646 in the corresponding week of the previous year. During the week ended 17th January, 1931, the trams carried 25,930 passengers, whereas in the corresponding week of the previous year the number carried was only 20,497. So by the restriction imposed on the buses the tramways greatly increased the number of passengers they were carrying. But that is not the only point, for if we take the tramways as a whole we find that for the two months 15th November, 1930, to 7th January, 1931, during which time the bus and taxi regulations were partly effective, the general traffic was about 14 per cent. less over all lines, whereas the passengers carried on the Claremont line increased by 15 per cent. over those carried 12 months ago. The deputations that waited upon me before the regulation was put into operation asked that an efficient tramway service should be provided. They said they would then agree to the motor buses and taxis being cut out. The depart-

ment provided an efficient service by adding a considerable number of cars and by increasing the speed of the cars in order to allow people to get in to Perth in a more reasonable time. Curiously enough, the last deputation that waited upon me objected that it was now taking too little time to get into Perth. They complained that the speed of the cars was so great as to set up a serious risk of accident. Yet they had previously protested that the speed of the trams was altogether too slow. I have here certain figures from the tramway manager's report showing that the increased profits on that particular service due to the restriction on the buses amounts to 30 per cent. In order to let members see what the Act actually provides, I repeat that under it the Minister can revoke all bus routes and declare new routes. Also I repeat that if it had been thought for a moment that the regulation was not legal, many of the existing routes would not have been granted by the Advisory Board or by the Minister. The matter is now before the House, and members are asked to decide whether they will give the tramways an opportunity to carry on without a loss. Regulation No. 230 under the old Act is now Regulation 193, the regulations having been revised and reprinted. Paragraph (e) of Subsection 1 of Section 42 of the Act enables the Governor to prescribe stopping places and to prohibit the picking up and setting down of passengers elsewhere than at those prescribed stopping places; or within a prescribed distance of a junction or intersection of prescribed roads. This regulation 193 was framed to prescribe stopping places within 150 yards from the line of tramway at both ends of the portion thereof where the prescribed route takes the same course as or crosses a tramway. The regulation also prohibits on an inward journey to the terminus at either Perth or Fremantle the taking up of passengers, and on an outward journey from the terminus at either Perth or Fremantle, the setting down of passengers elsewhere than at those stopping places at any point between those stopping places, by the driver or conductor of an omnibus. As I say, the Full Court has ruled the old regulation No. 230 *ultra vires*. It will affect the interests of a large section of the people. Quite a number of people not directly interested, still wish to use both

trams and buses, and it is for the House to decide whether the Act should be amended to give us legal power to enforce the regulation that for five years we thought was legal. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—FARMERS' DEBTS ADJUSTMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [5.9] in moving the second reading said: This is a very short amendment, but it is necessary in order to improve the existing Act. It is not very often we have an amendment to an Act in the same session of Parliament as that in which the Act was passed. The position is that the Government are afraid that if this amendment be left until next session, in all probability it will be so delayed that we shall not be able to make the fullest and best use of it. The Act was passed in the earlier part of this session, and was assented to on the 30th December last. It came into operation on the 2nd January. Even then, it was found to be somewhat late for the relief of the difficulties of the farmers. Still, very great use was made of the Act and it has served an important purpose. It did not provide all that many farmers thought would be provided, for there was no appropriation under the Act, and therefore no new moneys were available. However, it did serve to make for a better understanding of the farmers' position and for the granting of a measure of relief. It is hoped that the amendment contained in the Bill will be acceptable to the House, and that in consequence of it greater services will be rendered to the farmers. Probably this is an opportune time at which to make a few comments as to what has been done by the Government through the Agricultural Bank towards assisting the farmers. Applications to the number of 3,002 for fertilisers and other necessities have been received.

Hon. P. Collier: That is the number of farmers applying.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Hon. P. Collier: Some are seeding reduced areas.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, I will give the figures later on. We have sent out 32,468 tons of fertiliser. Unfortunately 640 applications were refused, the ground of the refusals being that the applicants were clients of the associated banks and other financial institutions. Members are fully aware of the difficult financial position in which the Government find themselves. It was because of that position that, unfortunately, we were unable to provide the necessary finance to protect the securities of other financial institutions. Hence the number of applications that had to be refused. Between the 1st December, 1930, and the 17th May the railways carried 152,774 tons of fertilisers.

Hon. P. Collier: Has the hon. member the number of applications that were refused?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, 640. As I have said, many of the applicants were clients of the associated banks. During one period there was in the minds of many farmers the idea that fertilisers would be supplied free by the Government. Because of that, we had many applicants who in the ordinary course would have applied to their own financial institution. As against the 232,185 tons of fertiliser supplied last year, we have this year a deficiency of 79,441 tons. This is the first year since Western Australia has been producing wheat that there has been a falling off in the area under crop.

Hon. P. Collier: Have you worked out the area?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is roughly estimated that there will be 3,900,000 acres of wheat this year as against 4,600,000 acres last year. In many cases this will be offset by the fact that we have insisted upon fairly good farming methods before sending out the fertiliser. Most of it is for fallowed and new ground. Very little assistance has been rendered by the Agricultural Bank to farmers who did not have their land in pretty good order. As members know, the trustees of the Agricultural Bank are operating under statutory powers, quite free from ministerial control. They do take into consideration the policies of successive Governments, but the Government of the day cannot dictate to the trustees as to what clients they will accept or refuse. There is very often a misunder-

standing, members thinking that Ministers have a great deal more power over the bank than they really have.

Mr. Marshall: Not members of Parliament.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, some members. The Government have done all they can to relieve the situation. Incidentally I may say this State has done more for the farmers than has any other State of the Commonwealth, and has done it earlier. The Act of South Australia to render assistance to the farmers was assented to on the 2nd April, and there is now a Bill going through the Victorian Parliament the object of which is to render assistance to the farmers. Similar assistance was very belated in New South Wales. I am hoping, of course, that the assistance which has been rendered to our farmers will mean that we shall have a greater yield per acre than we have had in the past. The Chamber of Commerce and others approached the Government after a public meeting had been held in the Town Hall, and asked whether additional assistance could be provided for the farmers. The statement was made that many thousands of acres of fallowed land had been left uncropped. Investigations showed that the only fallowed land that was known to have been left uncropped was that land over which there had been a dispute between the creditors and the banks, or over which some difficulties had arisen amongst the creditors. I was asked to put up a suggestion to the Chamber of Commerce and others, and I did so. It was proposed that the Government should stand down in respect of any claims they had for interest, or instalments due, until the institutions supplying new money to put in the crop were able to obtain a return of the advances made. I think it was a very generous action on the part of the Government to stand down in favour of those who desired to render assistance. After the new money had been paid, we put up a scheme that there should be second preference in the disposal of the proceeds on the following basis: One year's Agricultural Bank interest, bank interest (second mortgage, if any), rates and taxes, land rents, land tax, hire of machinery under hire purchase agreement based on one-fourth of the original purchase price. It was provided that machinery should not include tractors, but we made provision for tractors. Tractors are not included in the

term "machinery." The board should arrange a reasonable hire rate for tractors instead of a quarter of the capital cost. The House should know that as much as possible has been done by the Government with the money available. Arrangements were made for the State to obtain an advance of £500,000 to assist the farmers, but by the time the harvest is ripe the farmers will again be in financial difficulties and further assistance will have to be rendered. It is proposed to assist approved clients of the Agricultural Bank in the matter of sustenance where we find they require it. I desire to say a few words about the Act. There were a total of 481 applications, distributed as follows:—In January, 115; February, 177; March, 154; and April, 35. As a result of the meetings to the 30th April, 303 debtors are being carried on under the Act, whilst debtors being carried on not under the Act number 34. The meetings that were adjourned for further investigation numbered 17 and the unsuccessful meetings 85, and applications withdrawn 30. The unsuccessful meetings were those at which we were not able to get the creditors to agree to carry on the farmers.

Mr. Kenneally: What was the number that were not able to carry on?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Eighty-five. The successful meetings represented: holdings aggregating 748,000 acres; clearing aggregating 414,000 acres, and cropping aggregating 185,350 acres. Estimated at 12 bushels per acre, this cropping promises a return of over 2,200,000 bushels of wheat. We have no desire to take any credit for this piece of legislation, but we do claim that it did make the way easier for the farmers who found themselves in difficulties. The creditors have met the director very generously. There has been a good feeling between the creditors and the director and the spirit of the Act has been observed by the Government and the creditors to the advantage of the farmer. Of last season's proceeds, £60,000 was again made available for cropping, and £4,500 represented the new advances by the Associated Banks. In many cases besides, there have been advances in kind, and under the provisions of the Act security is given. I do not know whether the House is aware of the system under which the Act operates. A stay order is issued. There are eight deputy directors in the city dealing with the business, four in

the country, and one travelling. The travelling director was able to proceed to Geraldton, and the member for Geraldton will appreciate the useful work that was done there at a cheaper rate than if the farmers had had to be brought to the city. The director held about 50 meetings at Geraldton and all were satisfactory. Of course there are bound to be some disappointed clients, but taking things generally, everything will be regarded as satisfactory. On the issue of a stay order, a receiver is appointed to take charge of the assets of the farmer. It was anticipated that the Act would cease to operate 21 days after the adjourned meeting. We found that it was possible to adjourn meetings until the next harvest, in February of the following year, and that enabled farmers to give better security whilst it also tended to more satisfactory arrangements being made to assist the farmers.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: They made their own laws.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know; it was just a question of how the Act was read. Provision was made that meetings could be adjourned from time to time and for 21 days after the last adjourned meeting. We limited the life of the Act to March, 1932, and I am hopeful, if it is necessary—though I have no wish to see this particular class of legislation continued—that we shall be able to re-enact it for another year. The number of farmers that came under the operations of the Act was limited, due to the fact that we were unable to get the legislation until the early part of the year, unfortunately for the farmers. If it had been possible to get the legislation earlier, a greater benefit would have been conferred on the farmers. The regulations provide for a charge of 30s. to be made for a stay order, £4 4s. for the deputy director's fees, and £3 3s. for the receiver's fee. It is proposed to make certain amendments to these charges for receivers because of the fact that the alterations to the farmers' business will be conducted over a period of 12 months. It is proposed to provide for a payment of £10 10s. and 3 per cent. of the proceeds of the farmer's crop. I desire to make a comparison between these charges and what proceedings under the bankruptcy laws would cost. Under the Bankruptcy Act it would cost a farmer £25 to make an application,

and then a trustees' meeting would cost £10 10s., the deeds £5, solicitors' costs £5 5s., and advertising £1 10s., a total of £47 5s. It will thus be seen that we do provide a comparatively cheap method for farmers to arrange with their creditors, in addition to which they avoid the opprobrium that is attached to proceedings under the Bankruptcy Act. The great trouble is that disputes have not always been between the creditors and the farmers, but amongst the creditors themselves, as they all wanted to get the lion's share of the proceeds. The amendments submitted are the result of experience gleaned in administering the Act, and to enable the director to overcome difficulties that he has encountered. For instance, the Act does not make provision for continuous receiverships. Hence the proposed amendment to Section 4. The receiver held estates for only 21 days after a meeting. Now he will have to hold them until after the next harvest. Again, the Act contains no bankers' protection clause, and the position concerning credit balances at banks between the issue of the stay order and the receipt by the bank manager of the appointment of a receiver, was awkward. Seeing that all other Acts of a similar nature contain a bankers' protection clause, this position had to be temporarily met pending the re-assembling of Parliament. The reference is the proposed addition of Subsection 5 to Section 5 of the Act. By the addition of a subsection to Section 6, it is proposed to give the director power to discharge the stay order and cancel the notice of meeting. This is advisable because suitable private arrangements may be made, or because the settler may not desire to carry on. Again, examination of the debtor's position, after an application by a creditor, may disclose that no good purpose would be served by a meeting and that the expenditure connected with the calling and holding of a meeting is not warranted.

Hon. P. Collier: Did the director have that power before?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. If it is found that a reasonable case is not submitted, the director will have power to refuse the issue of a stay order. Claims are sometimes put in, and it is doubtful whether those claims would stand in law. Whenever claims are made, the court's decision shall be final; the court shall decide whether the claims are just or not. If it is found that a

farmer owes an amount, that amount can be questioned whether it is legitimate or not.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: After you get a judgment summons, you do not take action.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, not under the Act. Another difficulty is that there is no appropriation under the Act. Once a stay order is issued, it puts an end to all business transactions with the farmer. It has been found necessary to make temporary advances to enable farmers to attend the place of meeting. They had no money and no liquid assets, and often were not able to provide even sustenance for themselves and their families. Hence we are asking the House to agree that, although an unregistered lien may have been taken over the crop, the director should have power to draw up to £30 for the farmer's travelling and incidental expenses. I do not know how we shall fare regarding the money already advanced. We have made a lot of advances to such farmers to enable them to attend meetings and provide food for themselves and their families.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Who has done that, the Government or the Agricultural Bank?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Agricultural Bank. There was no other way of doing it.

Hon. P. Collier: You have had to do it without security?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. The amendment to Section 11 is advisable in that, if settlers are to have effective protection under the Act, resolutions of creditors by value and number should be binding. Hence the proposed additional subsection, which includes the right to approach a judge for rescission of any resolution which may be manifestly unjust to any of the parties concerned. Sometimes a resolution has been carried at a meeting and subsequently it has been found impossible to give effect to the resolution. Now we are providing that application may be made to a judge in chambers to have the resolution set aside and a fresh meeting called. Provision is also made to set aside unregistered liens and wheat orders. Great trouble was experienced last year through farmers giving wheat orders to every creditor who came along and asked for them. To disentangle those wheat orders is a job for an expert, and satisfaction could not be given, no matter how carefully we went into the matter. Any farmer who comes under the Act, no matter if he has given a dozen wheat orders, as some of them

have done, will be able to get them set aside, so that we shall be able to deal with the assets on a fair and equitable basis. I hope members will assist to perfect any clauses of the Bill which they think require alteration. I shall have to move a few brief amendments which will be placed on the Notice Paper, and I hope any member who has an amendment to submit will also put it on the Notice Paper. The men on the land are having a very bad time. In the whole history of the State, I suppose there was never a period when the primary producer fell so badly into debt. Last season's was a record harvest. The farmers did their work properly; the land yielded well, and yet the farmers are in a shocking financial position. I am sure every member is anxious to do his utmost to help the farmer out of his difficulties. Though the Government have been adversely criticised, I am satisfied that the criticism has arisen from a lack of understanding of the Government's actions. Many farmers we would have liked to help, but we have not had the money with which to help them. So far as we can assist to keep them on the land, we are doing it, and I know that the Associated Banks and the merchants are doing likewise. I hope the Bill will receive the close attention of members. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier, debate adjourned.

BILL—HIRE-PURCHASE AGREEMENTS.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [5.35] in moving the second reading, said: This is a very comprehensive measure, dealing, as it does with almost every article sold under hire-purchase conditions.

Mr. Kenneally: It is a pity that land could not be brought under the measure.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: It covers any piece of household furniture, sewing machine, musical instrument, motor vehicle, bicycle, cash register, billiard table (including accessories), implement, machine, engine, vehicle, apparatus or appliance intended to be used in connection with the business of a farmer, pastoralist or grazier. Under the existing law a hire-purchase agreement is merely a letting and a hiring of a chattel,

so that between the time a chattel is ordered and the time the payment is completed, it is only hired to the individual using it. There has been a good deal of dissatisfaction in respect of all classes of business covered by hire-purchase agreements. It is not the desire of the Government unfairly to interfere with business people who legitimately provide machinery or chattels to people who wish to purchase under such conditions, but we do desire to remove the cause and effect of dissatisfaction associated with this system of purchasing. It is true that, if a person to whom a chattel is let continues to pay the rent for a specified time, the chattel becomes his, but until that time arrives, his payments are purely rent. If a person is in arrears with his rent at any period, the chattel may be repossessed. Under the present hire-purchase agreements there is no provision for any equity to revert to the individual. The equity becomes the property of the vendor. It is proposed, under this measure, that a valuation shall be made on the day the chattel is repossessed, certain debits shall be made against the hirer of the chattel, and the difference between the two shall be refunded to him. If a dispute arises as to the valuation, the local court shall be the deciding factor.

Mr. Griffiths: The vendor will not be the sole arbiter of the valuation placed upon the machine or chattel.

The **MINISTER FOR LANDS**: No; the vendor would render an account showing the value of the machine. If the purchaser were dissatisfied, he would appeal to the court, and the court would be the deciding factor. It is provided that if a vendor makes application to a higher court than a local court, costs shall be recoverable only on the scale allowed in the lower court. Consequently we shall not have merchants rushing into Supreme Court actions in the hope of bluffing the farmers against defending the case. At times instances come under notice of a person having made payments for a machine and having almost completed the payments, and yet he is harassed by the vendor. This measure ought to result in many of the objectionable provisions that now appear in hire-purchase agreements being eliminated. There can be no hire-purchase agreements in future, provided the measure becomes law, unless they embody the provisions of this legislation. Agents in travelling the country frequently make all sorts of claims for a machine and

its capabilities. Most hire-purchase agreements provide that the vendor accepts no responsibility for representations made by his agents. Under this measure the vendor will not be able to contract himself out of responsibility in that way.

Hon. M. F. Troy: What is that going to do?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Make the vendor responsible for the statements of the agents.

Hon. P. Collier: The statements made to the farmer when inducing him to buy?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. We know that extravagant statements are sometimes made by agents and it should be easy to substantiate them by evidence. When an agent finds his story effective with one farmer he repeats it to the next farmer.

Hon. M. F. Troy: There ought to be fool protection.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think the provision is fool-proof. Clause 4 provides that any statement contained in a hire-purchase agreement to the effect that the vendor is not responsible for any representations, promises or terms made or held out by any agent, representative or servant of the vendor shall be void and of no effect. I do not think there will be any great difficulty in obtaining evidence in such cases. The Bill provides that when repossession takes place, the vendor shall render an account crediting the purchaser with the value of the chattel at the place where and the time when seized, and shall debit the purchaser with any instalments of rent overdue and unpaid, plus interest thereon at the rate of 10 per cent. per annum calculated from the due date, and with 90 per cent. of the instalments of rent, the stipulated time for the payment whereof has not arrived, and with any additional sum necessary to be paid under the agreement in order to complete the purchase; also with the amount of any damages suffered by the vendor by reason of any breach of agreement on the part of the purchaser. The balance shown on the account shall be due by the vendor to the purchaser, or by the purchaser to the vendor, as the case may be. At times machines are badly damaged, which fact would have to be taken into consideration. Farmers are often to blame because they leave valuable machines exposed to the weather all the year round, and considerable deterioration occurs. The transaction will

thus be treated as if it were in form as well as in substance a sale on credit, and not a mere hiring, and the purchaser will consequently be credited in the account with the value of the chattel when seized, but will be debited with overdue payments with interest and 90 per cent. of future instalments.

Mr. Griffiths: And credited with the payments made?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. The allowance for damages is for such loss as the vendor may have suffered by any breach of agreement on the part of the purchaser which may not be reflected in the reduced value placed on the chattel in the account. Thus the purchaser generally covenants to keep his rent duly paid up, and the failure to do so may have necessitated the payment by the vendor of something to the landlord in order to prevent the chattel being seized under a distress for rent. Power is given to the purchaser to have the account reviewed by the local court, and the magistrate of such court will have power to review an agreement in favour of or against the purchaser, or either party, and decide all questions at issue. A very good clause has been put in from the South Australian Moneylenders Act. If the rate of interest is unreasonable, or the terms of the agreement are harsh or unconscionable, the magistrate may refuse or cancel any agreement, or make such alterations as he thinks necessary, or deprive the purchaser of the benefits he would have received under the conditions of the agreement.

Mr. Kenneally: Provision is made in the Bill for the charging of 10 per cent.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: All these agreements carry 10 per cent. interest. Owing to the deterioration that takes place in a machine, and to the value depreciating very rapidly, it cannot be regarded as an ordinary investment at 5 per cent. That is the reason why a higher rate is charged. I would not object to a reduction, but would point out that the magistrate will have the right to determine whether over 10 per cent. is a fair rate of interest to charge. Under the measure the rate is limited to 10 per cent.

Mr. Kenneally: Each case will come up for review, I take it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The rate cannot be reduced below 10 per cent. Every purchaser cannot be treated alike. There are purchasers who will take great care of

their machinery, in which case its deterioration is slow. Another man may knock more out of a machine in 12 months than his neighbour will in five years, because he leaves it out in the field, or is careless in the handling of it. Clause 6 must appeal to members because it provides for protection against excessive or unreasonable charges or against an agreement being harsh or unconscionable, or containing provisions intended to deprive the purchaser of the benefits that it is the purpose of the Bill to confer upon him. The powers of the court are wide and sweeping, and the fullest protection will be given to the purchaser. The jurisdiction for carrying out the law will come within the hands of the lower court, where the costs will not be high. There has been a demand for this legislation for a long time. Many people would like to have it much harsher than it is, but we have to take into consideration the useful purpose served by people who sell machinery on hire purchase agreement or time payment, for it can be claimed that at least 70 per cent. of the farmers purchase their machinery requirements on that basis. The Government have no desire to deprive them of the opportunity to buy their machinery in that way. It is provided that the Bill shall not interfere with existing agreements. The Leader of the Opposition will remember that when I was a young member of this House I objected to retrospective legislation. I could not, therefore, make this Bill apply to agreements already in existence. There is a clause to that effect.

Mr. Corboy: Do all hire purchase agreements now in existence stand?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They could not be interfered with.

Mr. Corboy: I think they could.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know the hon. member would like to do so, but I am sure that with the responsibility cast upon him he would not really desire to bring in legislation that would interfere with agreements.

Mr. Corboy: Would I not?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The great trouble is that many people will sign agreements and do not know what they are signing.

Mr. Corboy: Quite!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They do not even read the documents. If they did so they would probably appreciate the

responsibility they were taking on when buying machinery. I am afraid I have bought a few machines myself without first reading the agreements, but I have always dealt with respectable firms and they have treated me well.

Mr. Corboy: I do not know of any respectable machinery firm.

Mr. Marshall: It is much the same with insurance policies. People would not sign them if they read them first.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: This Bill will standardise agreements, in that they must contain what we set up by this legislation. It also affords fair protection to those who desire to acquire machinery. It is a comprehensive measure and deals with almost everything that is sold under hire purchase agreement. There is a pressing demand for it and a great necessity for it.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Is there any existing legislation of the kind?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. I think this comes more under the Bills of Sale Act.

Hon. P. Collier: But it is an amending Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It only amends the law relating to hire purchase agreements.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Is it similar to the Canadian law?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Some of it has been taken from the Canadian Act, some from the South Australian Act, and some from the Swedish law, the last named being apparently the best. Most of the Bill, in fact, is based on the Swedish law. I know the member for Geraldton gave a good deal of thought to this question when he was Minister for Justice, for I have seen many of his notes on the file. No doubt at one time he was inclined to bring down a Bill such as this, but it was apparently too late in the session for him to do so.

Mr. Griffiths: Will you promise to deal with spare parts?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, if they come under hire purchase agreements, but not otherwise. The Bill deals only with such things as come under those documents. In the Canadian Act there is provision for the vendors of machines to submit a price list to the Minister in control, showing each year what prices they are charging. It might have been a wise thing to embody such a provision in this Bill, so that no two

prices could be charged for the one piece of machinery. But we have not done so.

Mr. Corboy: It is rather a pity.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not say the Bill is perfect, nor do I say we are not prepared to accept such amendments to it as will improve it. We have, however, to be very careful to do anything that will prevent people from giving credit to farmers.

Mr. Corboy: You need not be afraid of the merchant. He can only live if he keeps the other fellow going.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Finance is very shy. It is the shyest thing I know of. One has only to clap one's hands for money to disappear.

Hon. P. Collier: There is no flapper finance now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Those days have gone.

Mr. Corboy: I thought you were to have no difficulty about getting plenty of finance.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member may put that up as a jocular interjection, but he knows I have never made that remark. I do not trade upon it, anyway.

Mr. Corboy: Then you disown it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not trade upon it.

Mr. Corboy: So you disown your leader.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What does the hon. member mean?

Hon. M. F. Troy: We will accept your apology.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not apologising to anyone. I have done nothing wrong and will not apologise. I hope members will give consideration to the difficulty of finance, and remember that we have to render every possible assistance to those engaged in industry to enable them to get all the monetary assistance they can so that they can carry on. This State depends largely upon those who are engaged in primary production, and whatever help the House can give to them, I hope it will give. For the benefit of those engaged in primary industries, I shall be prepared to accept such amendments as will improve the measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. P. Collier, debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—LOAN COUNCIL.

Consideration of Premier's Report.

Debate resumed from the 14th May on motion by the Premier—

That the statement made to the House on the 12th May be received.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Lindsay—Mt. Marshall) [5.55]: If the member for Mt. Magnet (Hon. M. F. Troy) continues to insult me as he has been doing to-night—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Works must not say that. If he objects to any statement that has been made by a member, and calls my attention to it, I will give him the protection due to him.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday evening, the Leader of the Opposition, when dealing with the Premier's statement, made some remarks to which I desire to reply. The most important of these was republished by the "West Australian" as correct, namely, that the 10 per cent. reduction in the wages granted under the awards given by the Federal Arbitration Court amounted to £42,000,000.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: There is the reduction in the basic wage, too.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Leader of the Opposition said that the reduction of 10 per cent. made by the Federal Arbitration Court amounted in wages to £42,000,000. That statement was republished in a leading article that appeared in the "West Australian." The figures were accepted as correct. I am rather surprised at the newspaper publishing such a statement without attempting to ascertain whether it was right or wrong. If £42,000,000 represents a 10 per cent. reduction, it must mean that under Federal arbitration awards the wage earners must have been receiving £420,000,000 a year. When the Leader of the Opposition was speaking there were a few interjections, and he turned to the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) to ask if he were correct, and the hon. member replied, "Yes, £42,000,000." The Leader of the Opposition is recognised throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia as a very fair and sane man. When he makes a statement the public believe it. My object is to show the incorrectness of the statement. We all know the

ability of the hon. member. He is one of the strong men of Parliament. Once he makes a statement, it is accepted by the public and the "West Australian" as correct. If a 10 per cent. reduction amounts to £42,000,000, it means that the wages of those who come under Federal awards amount to £420,000,000. When we analyse the position we find that not more than 50 per cent. of the wage earners in Australia are working under Federal awards. That means that the wage-earners of Australia are receiving £840,000,000 annually in wages. I shall leave out of the question whether the wage-earners under the Federal Arbitration Court are employed or not. I shall also leave out of the question the fact that the ruling of the court was not a general one, but applied only in the case of employers who had asked for the reduction. The effect of the statement to which I refer is that £840,000,000 has to be provided annually for wage-earners. But what is the actual position? All of us have received copies of a book called "The Crisis in Australian Finance." The book quotes the award of the court, and the reasons for it. It is stated that according to figures supplied by the Commonwealth Statistician the national income of Australia since 1925 has been £675,000,000 annually. The book also states that according to other figures of the Commonwealth Statistician the national income has been reduced by £125,000,000. Thus Australia has now a national income of £550,000,000 annually. Yet, if the figures of the Leader of the Opposition are correct, Australia is paying a wage income of £840,000,000 out of a national income of £550,000,000.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: You are building up a case in order to knock it down.

Hon. P. Collier: Do not you know the difference between a wage income and a national income?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course I do.

Hon. P. Collier: You do not appear to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In connection with the very same matter the Commonwealth Statistician supplied the court with a statement to the effect that the aggregate income of the wage-earners of Australia is 55 per cent. of the total income of Australia. Of the remainder of the income, 19 per cent. is received by farmers and others who are on somewhat the same footing as the recipients of the basic wage.

Hon. P. Collier: The wage payment has nothing to do with the national income.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of the rest, 25 per cent. is paid to persons who have incomes or salaries above the ordinary wage. Then there is one per cent. not yet allocated.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Who prepared those figures for you?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The official who prepared figures for my predecessor. However, let us come a little nearer home to Western Australia, and see how the 10 per cent. reduction has affected the people of this State. I have not been able to collect figures for the whole of Western Australia, but last year the Government of this State paid £3,400,000 in wages, and the reduction effected in that amount by the reduction in the Federal basic wage is £12,212, equivalent to a reduction of 0.3 per cent.

Hon. P. Collier: The Minister knows that very few of the employees of this State are working under Federal awards.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I did not say they were. I know that a greater percentage of them work under State awards. However, that does not get away from my statement.

Hon. P. Collier: What does it prove?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It proves that if, as the Leader of the Opposition says, the wage-earners have lost £42,000,000 by the decision of the Federal Arbitration Court, at least 50 per cent. of the wage-earners of Australia must be working under Federal awards.

Hon. P. Collier: In this State there are very few of them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have heard that. I think I have made that position very clear.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: As clear as mud.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I fully understand that I can never make it clear to members opposite, now that their Leader has spoken. The figures I have quoted show that if all the 740,000 workers under the Federal Arbitration Court were in full employment, the total sum they would sacrifice would be £15,000,000 odd. But as we know that at least 25 per cent. of them are unemployed, we see that the total sacrifice of the section mentioned by the Leader of

the Opposition is not much more than £11,000,000. I agree that they have made that sacrifice. I am speaking to-night because I do not think it right that the statement of the Leader of the Opposition, quoted in a leading article of the "West Australian," should go out to the public as correct.

Mr. Kenneally: Apparently the Minister claims that the unemployed are making no sacrifice.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We are not dealing with the unemployed question now. How can a man make a sacrifice in wages if he is getting no wages whatever?

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Look at "Hansard" and see what the Leader of the Opposition did say.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Before I go any further, I will say that I am now about to refer to statements appearing on page 2962.

Mr. Marshall: Of what session?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This session; but I shall not read from "Hansard." The member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum), replying to an interjection by the Premier, said—

You got £190,000. You had over £200,000, because there was the special road grant. The Leader of the Opposition later emphasised that statement by saying—

I believe the grant was made while we were in office, but the money did not come to hand until after our defeat.

I have on a previous occasion explained in this House the whole position as to the £192,000. That explanation, which was based on the records of my department, should have been accepted by all hon. members as a statement of fact. Indeed, I have given the explanation twice already. Nevertheless we still find hon. members opposite coming back with their old contentions. In order that the House may be seized of the facts, I have prepared another statement dealing with the £192,000. I have previously said here that this amount is not an unemployed grant, but a payment under the Main Roads Act. The member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) will maintain that it is an unemployed grant.

Hon. A. McCallum: Why quibble?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I hope hon. members will understand the quibble when I have finished. In December, 1929, at a Federal Aid Roads Board Conference held at Canberra, presided over by the

Prime Minister, and at which this State was represented by the Hon. J. Cunningham, the Commonwealth Treasurer (Mr. Theodore) explained that there was an accumulation of funds in the Federal Aid Roads Trust Account, and he proposed that £1,000,000 of this should be taken and used as a fund for such relief. This was eventually agreed to on condition that the distribution to the States should be on the same basis as the £2,000,000 per annum under the Federal Aid Roads Agreement. Up to this point the member for South Fremantle is right. The member for Kalgoorlie (Hon. J. Cunningham) was at the conference. As, however, this £1,000,000 was Federal aid road money, it was thought necessary to keep within the conditions of the agreement; and as the States, or some of them, were unable to contribute their 15s. quota, it was agreed that past expenditure by the States on similar classes of roads as are comprehended by the Federal aid roads agreement should be recognised as fulfilling the condition of the 15s. State quota. This State's share of the £1,000,000 was £192,000, and a schedule of roads on which there had been expenditure up to £144,000, representing our 15s. quota, was prepared, and approved of by the Commonwealth. The impression gained at the conference was that this £192,000 was to be provided in addition to the £384,000, and in that financial year. Subsequent events have shown, however, that the Commonwealth decided to provide this £192,000 by an extension of the agreement for six months after the 10 years provided for, making it 10½ years instead of 10 years. Consequently in no year since the inception of the agreement has the Commonwealth been prepared to pay, nor has it paid, the State more than £384,000. The £192,000 so-called grant for unemployment was therefore merely portion of our annual quota for that particular year. I have said two or three times in this House that we did not receive £192,000 for unemployment.

Hon. P. Collier: I will show you where you received £300,000.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have only received the £384,000 to which we were entitled under the Federal aid roads agreement.

Hon. P. Collier: The most miserable quibble I have ever heard in my life.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Now I come to the interesting part. At the end

of April, 1930—the month in which the present Government took office—the expenditure under the so-called unemployment grant was £116,000. Those are the facts of the case. The Leader of the Opposition has agreed that the matter was discussed in his Government's time, but that the money was not received in their time. These are official statements. The amount spent out of the £192,000 up to the end of April was £116,000. The present Government have had the benefit of the remainder, and that remainder has been expended; but this year the Government have received only the same amount as the previous Government received, £384,000.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Before the tea adjournment I was dealing with the remarks of both the Leader of the Opposition and the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) as to how the £192,000 granted to the State for unemployment purposes was spent. Notwithstanding the statement I made, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, by interjection, still says my statement is not correct. There is only one way that I know of to get correct information, and that is to secure it from the department concerned. I have here a minute addressed to me as Minister and signed by the Commissioner for Main Roads. Naturally it follows that the statement made by such an officer must be taken as authentic, and I again repeat what I said earlier, that before the end of April, 1930, £116,000 of the so-called unemployment grant had already been spent. Hon. members will remember that about that time there was a change of Government. I think it was about the 22nd April when I became Minister for Public Works. It follows that I had nothing to do with the expenditure of State funds up to that time. Prior to then, of course, there had been an election, and I intend to give the House some figures regarding the men employed on the construction of main roads, seeing that my statement has been doubted. Those figures will show the increased number of men employed on main road work round about that time.

Hon. A. McCallum: Tell us how many are employed now.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Soon after the change of Government took place and the present Ministry assumed office, the

member for South Fremantle wrote letters to the Press continually about the number of men that had been employed.

Hon. A. McCallum: I did not write letters to the Press continually.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: No matter what statement was made by the Premier at the outset and later by myself as Minister for Works, we were never right, according to the member for South Fremantle, but were always wrong.

Hon. A. McCallum: Of course the statements were wrong.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: In order to prove what I said, I instructed the Main Roads Board to prepare a graph showing the number of men employed each month from the inception of the board, and that graph has been laid on the Table of the House.

Hon. A. McCallum: You describe men as employed if you give them a few hours' work.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not troubling about the number of men I employed, but about the number employed by the hon. member when he was in charge of the work. If he employed some of them for an hour or two only, it is his affair, not mine. I repeat, the graph shows the number of men employed monthly from the inception of the Main Roads Agreement and it bears out the statement I made. It was only because of the continued propaganda against the Main Roads Board and the present Government that I caused the graph to be prepared in order to protect myself. I would not have laid that document on the Table had it not been for the attitude of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I heard the Leader of the Opposition say, "This is burying the hatchet! This is a nice sort of thing to do!" I was forced into the position. Why should the truth hurt? The graph shows what the Main Road funds were used for. I will give the House a few of the figures disclosed by the graph. The member for Kalgoorlie (Hon. J. Cunningham) attended a conference at Canberra on the 18th December, 1929, at which it was decided that the grant to the State in connection with main roads should be £192,000, not £190,000. Immediately the Minister returned to Western Australia, great determination was displayed to get on with main road work. As if there were no other works prepared within the State, they set out to find new roads to construct. I

happened to be at Yallingup spending my Christmas holidays, and while I was there, I met two surveyors who told me they were working through the holidays. I asked them why they were doing that, and they told me that they had received urgent telegrams while they were in Adelaide instructing them to return to Western Australia in order to prepare for further work. The only holiday they had during the year-end was Christmas Day itself. Why was there that desperate effort to get men employed?

Mr. Kenneally: I wish there were a hurry to get them employed now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will tell hon. members why it was. During December, 1929, there were 1,880 men employed on main road work. That is disclosed in the graph. At the end of January, 1930, there were 3,000 men employed.

Mr. Kenneally: They are looking for employment now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I want to emphasise the fact that at that time, 3,000 men were employed on main road work. It will be remembered that an election was held in March of that year.

Mr. Hegney: I wish another election was to be held.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The reason why the surveyors were brought back was that work could be prepared and men sent to certain electorates to engage in road construction. The elections were held in March, and at the end of that month the number employed had fallen from 3,000 to 2,360. By the end of April, when I took over my present Ministerial position, the number of men employed had dropped to 2,100.

Mr. Hegney: What is the number down to now?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It will be observed that, the elections being over, there was no necessity for so many men to be in certain electorates, yet by the end of June, 1930, the number of men employed was 3,840.

Mr. Richardson: The number went up again!

Mr. Kenneally: How many men are employed now?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have indicated the position to the House. The member for South Fremantle told the people, through the Press, that we made no attempt to provide men with work. I have

shown the result of the attempt that we made.

Hon. A. McCallum: Why are you talking about things that happened a year ago or more?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We increased the number of men employed from 2,100 in April to 3,840 in June. I am prepared to admit that to-day there are very few men employed on the roads; I could not hope to maintain the record we set up at the outset.

Hon. A. McCallum: What has this to do with the Premier's financial statement?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It has much to do with the financial statement. The hon. member does not like it.

Hon. P. Collier: Your statement was put up for you by your satellite; the man you created the job for.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I think that is a most uncalled for statement.

Hon. P. Collier: It is a fact, and you will know more about it before the session is over.

Hon. A. McCallum: He is the man who recommended where the work should be carried out.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course he did.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes. The man who gave the jobs to his friends and pals.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: For the hon. member to make such statements is, to say the least of it, most undignified. Why does not the hon. member be as big as he can be instead of as small as he can be?

Hon. A. McCallum: As big as the Minister, for instance?

Hon. P. Collier: As small as the Minister—a mosquito!

Mr. Withers: This is solving the financial problem!

Mr. Hegney: This is finding work!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for South Fremantle cannot reply: I have silenced him.

Hon. A. McCallum: Silenced me!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have a statement dealing with the finances in connection with main roads.

Hon. P. Collier: Who is the head of the main road operations now?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Leader of the Opposition is not.

Hon. P. Collier: I know that, but who is the official head now?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will give the House an explanation of the present position.

Hon. P. Collier: You are a well-matched pair, you and the boss of the main roads!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: These remarks are very nice, but they will not put me off my subject.

Hon. P. Collier: No, but you will hear more about it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The financial position regarding main roads is likely to be more serious. As hon. members may remember, there was an agreement between the State Government and the Federal Government covering a 10-year period, and providing that this State was to receive £384,000 per annum from the Federal Government. That was our portion of the £2,000,000 provided by the Federal Government for distribution between the States, and that money was taken from a tax on petrol. In order to receive the benefits of that agreement, Western Australia was to provide 15s. for every £1 made available by the Federal Government. That agreement operated until February, 1930, when a new agreement was signed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Scullin, and Sir James Mitchell, as Premier of Western Australia, under the provisions of which the State was to receive £384,000 a year for the next five years, and six months afterwards, the latter period making up the £192,000. Just recently the matter was discussed at a Premiers' Conference, and I understand it was decided that in future instead of receiving £384,000 per annum, we were to receive 2½d. per gallon on petrol imported into Australia, which represented, approximately an aggregate amount of £1,000,000. The effect of that is that in future the State Government will receive, for the purpose of maintaining and constructing roads within the State, approximately £170,000 per annum, instead of £672,000 per annum available at the commencement of the scheme. I wish to make that statement to the House for more reasons than one. My predecessor in office agreed that each local governing authority should receive an average of £2,000 per annum. I found myself in the unfortunate position of knowing that the 15s. to be provided by the State was not available, and I then informed the local governing authorities that they would receive £1,000, thinking that I

would have £384,000 per annum to spend. Now that amount has dwindled to £170,000 per annum. The Premier says that we have an agreement ratified by Parliament and that it cannot be revoked except by Parliament. I do not agree with him on that point. If the money is not forthcoming from the Federal Government, it will not be possible for me in future to provide money for the local governing authorities or for the construction of roads throughout the State to anything like the same extent as in the past. My view is that it was wrong in the first place to expend the millions of pounds we have spent in making main roads parallel to existing railway facilities. That has been done, and it now becomes my duty as Minister to endeavour to protect the State's assets, represented by the roads constructed out of the money so spent. My first duty will be to get sufficient money to maintain the roads already constructed. My next duty will be to provide local governing authorities who require bridges, for instance, that cannot be constructed from loan funds, with money to enable those bridges to be built. My third duty will be to provide funds for the construction of roads to sidings and stations in the outback areas of the State. I have brought this matter before the House so that hon. members who are continually pressing me for money for various works, will realise that, at least for the future, I shall have about a fourth of the money to spend that was available in the past.

Hon. P. Collier: Loud applause!

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

PAPERS—FREMANTLE RAILWAY BRIDGE.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [7.48]: I move—

That all correspondence that has passed between the Government and firms desirous of building the Fremantle railway bridge on a system of payment in bonds, be laid on the Table of the House.

I move this because I find there is much speculation amongst the public as to whether the Government would be well advised to go on with the work if there really are firms prepared to build the bridge on a system of payment in bonds. I have no reason to doubt that there has been correspondence between the Government and various firms over the building of this most important work. The member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) has told the House that there have been proposals by certain firms who have offered to build the bridge on a system of payment in bonds. If that be correct, I think we should seriously consider the advisability of going on with the project. It is a large national work of very great importance to the country, and the present, with so many thousands of unemployed in our midst, is a very proper time at which to proceed with the job. It is a very necessary work. Notwithstanding that the railway bridge has been to some extent strengthened by partial rebuilding following on the washaway by flood waters, the traffic bridge is in a most deplorable state and can no longer be regarded as safe. From time to time we have had various reports to the effect that the bridge is starting to crumble. One has only to be under it when a vehicle is crossing it to realise that it is in a most unsafe condition. All laymen who have had any experience of the bridge will bear out the opinion that it is not safe by any means. If a new bridge is to be built, it will not be a single bridge, either traffic or railway, but will combine both bridges, railway and traffic together. So although my motion mentions only the railway bridge, it is generally believed that both bridges across the Swan will be combined in order to replace the two separate structures we have down there at present. I do not know whether the Government intend to treat this motion as a formal one. Had I gone to the Minister, probably I could have seen the correspondence for myself, but in that event it would have been treated as confidential and could not have been made public. The right course is to lay the correspondence on the Table, so that all members can see it for themselves and the public will be able to consider whether the Government would be right or wrong in going on with the proposal. The least the structure would cost would be well over £1,000,000. If it be at all possible to

bring such a sum of money into use at the present time, so as to relieve unemployment while getting on with a most important work, the Government will be criminally negligent if they do not accept the proposal.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

MOTION—MIGRANTS, REPATRIATION.

MR. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [7.52]: I move—

That the Government be requested to make arrangements immediately to repatriate all migrants who are unable to obtain work here, hundreds of whom are going hungry and practically naked, and that they use all their influence to get the Federal Parliament to issue the necessary passports, and the Imperial Government to agree to those people being returned Home.

Mr. Marshall: What about their home here?

Mr. SLEEMAN: They have not much of a home here, at least, many of them have not. I understand that the migration conditions and policy in relation to British migrants lie entirely with the State, while those in relation to foreign migrants, I understand are the function of the Federal Government. For some time past I have advocated that migrants should not be brought here unless there is a reasonable prospect of their obtaining work. On several occasions in the House I have spoken against migration. Thousands of people have been brought to this country, misled by the pictures painted to them at Home, pictures that represented Australia as a land flowing with milk and honey. Prospective migrants have been told that they had only to land in Western Australia and all would be well with them. I have met migrants who were told at Home that on reaching Western Australia they could get jobs by the score, and that if they did not wish to work for wages they had only to apply for farms and they would be granted them. But I find they have been sadly misled. I have had as much experience amongst unemployed migrants in this State as has the next man. I am continually in touch with them, and hearing the sorrowful stories they have to tell as to how they were brought out here, away from friends and relatives and familiar scenes,

only to be stranded in a new land. At the present time they are living mostly in semi-starvation. They are being allowed 7s. per week for portion of a family, with a maximum of £2 9s. per week for the whole family. Quite a number of those people have large families, notwithstanding which they are asked to live upon £2 9s. a week, irrespective of the number in the family. Even if a man has 10 or 12 children, he has to live on that miserable pittance. I admit that if every member of a large family were to receive 7s. a week, it might be in the aggregate sufficient to support them. Some members of the House have often urged people in other lands to come to this country. On the other hand I have frequently urged the Government of the State to stop all immigration. Two years ago certain members of this House were going round the world inviting people to come out here. On the 23rd August, 1928, when speaking to the Address-in-reply, I had this to say in the House—

We should tackle the problem and see whether we cannot prevent people coming here, unless there is a prospect of their securing work. Moreover we should see that the people who are brought here secure work at the ruling rates of wages, so that they will maintain our Australian standard. Many of them leave good positions in Great Britain and sell their homes in order to migrate to Western Australia. When they come here, they find themselves without any prospect of securing work. I am continually meeting men who have sold good homes in the Old Country, having been encouraged to do so by the pictures that have been painted of the conditions obtaining here. Frequently they secure jobs at the outset that last for six weeks or a month, and then they find they are out of work. They are forced to return to the city to swell the ranks of our unemployed.

The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson), when on his famous world trip, encouraged all sorts of migrants, including Maltese, to come here in their hundreds.

Mr. Sampson: No attempt of the sort was made outside the British Isles.

Mr. Marshall: How long ago was that?

Mr. SLEEMAN: At the beginning of 1928. The hon. member told the Maltese to come out here with their families, and declared that the bigger the family the better. In an interview he gave to a newspaper in Malta, he said this—

In Western Australia specially, large families, such as I hear you have here, would be very welcome. The old idea of making

money and coming back to Malta is no good for settlers who want to achieve something big. Let Maltese go out in great numbers and settle permanently in Australia. They will be eminently welcome, as they are eminently the right type of settler.

He also told them there was no unemployment in Australia. This is what he said—

Australian conditions admit of no permanent unemployment, except for the unemployed who will not work, or those who do not go about matters in the right way. Western Australia alone is capable of absorbing the entire population of Malta.

Mr. Marshall: Including the volcano?

Mr. SLEEMAN: I suppose so. We had a Labour Government in power in 1928, and so we find the words that the member for Swan used in Malta were vastly different from the words he used before he left Western Australia. During that debate in 1928 I said definitely that the migration policy of this State should stop. Sir James Mitchell remarked that there would be plenty of work for all as soon as there was a change of Government, that there would then be room for all immigrants that we could get out here, including the Maltese that the member for Swan wanted to bring here. The time has come when we should seriously consider repatriating the unemployed migrants in our midst, and I hope members of the House will say that we are not entitled to keep them here in semi-starvation and garbed practically in rags. As a business proposition it is far better to send Home those people who wish to go rather than keep them here. The humane point of view should also be considered. Unless we can stand up to our promises to find them work, or give them food—more than the 7s. a week now given for a maximum of five in the family—and see that they are clothed, we have no right to keep them here. From my experience in working amongst those people, I know that four out of every five have worn out the clothes they brought from the Homeland and are practically in rags. Every day we are making appeals at Fremantle to get clothing for those people. We have filled the Migrants' Home with single men, and the wives and families of married men are practically without clothes. Last week a young fellow asked for rations, and he was told that as he did not live outside the boundary he would have to accept meals. He then asked, "What about my brother? How

will you cater for him?" We said that it would be necessary for the brother to come in and get meals. He replied, "He has no pants to wear." He went on to say that the only time he could come to town was when he was able to borrow his brother's pants. He in his turn had to stay home when his brother wished to come to town.

Mr. Sampson: He should wear kilts.

Mr. SLEEMAN: That is not an isolated case. The same thing applies to footwear. Often we are told that a brother cannot come in because there is only one pair of boots between the two of them. Women-folk cannot come to the town to do their shopping because they have no shoes to wear. It is not right that such a state of affairs should prevail. The people whom we brought out under a promise of finding work for them should not be allowed to go hungry and unclothed.

Hon. P. Collier: That does not apply to migrants alone. To where are we going to deport the Australians who are in need?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Australians are also in a bad way, but not as bad as the migrants. Most of the Australians have relatives and friends, and it is better to be down and out and cold and hungry amongst relatives than amongst strangers.

Hon. P. Collier: All Australians have not got relatives.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The greater proportion of them have friends, and, at any rate, they are in their own country and are our national responsibility. I do not say that Australians should be left in the same position. Britishers should not be treated in this way. I do not think the Leader of the Opposition would stand for the treatment that is being meted out to those people at present. I think he will agree that if we cannot provide work, or failing work provide food and clothing, the best thing we can do is to return them to the Homeland, if they so desire. From a business point of view it would be cheaper to let them go Home than to keep them here. During the past week or two I have been inundated with letters on the subject. If the House desires, I can produce a lot more.

Mr. Parker: You will get a lot more tomorrow morning.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I hope they will be sent to the relief committees. I have a

letter from a man aged 41 who has been classed totally unfit to work out his sustenance.

Mr. H. W. Mann: He would not be capable of working in any event.

Mr. SLEEMAN: He is in the category of men who should never have been brought to Australia, even if there were plenty of work. This unfortunate man is suffering from war wounds, and has heart disease and chronic bronchitis. The doctors certify that he cannot do the ordinary sustenance work. His wife is suffering from epilepsy and fits, and cannot be left alone because of the risk of falling on to the stove or spilling a saucepan of water over herself. Her age is 36. The family came here in 1921.

Hon. P. Collier: Assisted?

Mr. SLEEMAN: As migrants for group settlement. They have three sons and three daughters. One girl aged 14 was born in Britain, the other two aged seven years and three years respectively, were born in Australia.

The Minister for Lands: The parents are not defective in every way.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The three boys are aged respectively 10 years, four years and 10 months, and all were born in Australia. That class of migrant should never have been brought here. I asked the man how the doctors ever came to pass him as fit to become a group settler. He replied, "The doctor stood in one corner, and when the wife and I entered the room, he said that we were just the right sort for Australia. We paid him 26s. and got a passage."

Member: The man was a party to the fraud.

Mr. SLEEMAN: He may not have been a party to the fraud. No matter how plentiful work might have been, such a man should never have been brought here. Let me recall another case—the mother and children who were so sick of being starved and under-clothed here that they stowed away. They got as far as Colombo and were then brought back to Fremantle. Then the husband tried stowing away, and he was successful in getting to England. The wife has written asking that she should be sent Home.

Mr. Parker: What is she doing?

Mr. SLEEMAN: She wants to go Home and join her husband. I think we must admire the pluck of the woman in stowing

away to escape from the dreadful conditions prevailing here. The husband has been promised work in England.

Mr. Parker: Cannot he pay for her passage home?

Mr. SLEEMAN: How can he pay? He has served a term of seven or fourteen days imprisonment for stowing away. If the hon. member suggests that a man, on coming out of prison, is in a position to pay boat fares for his wife and family to return to England, he should be Treasurer of the State.

Mr. Parker: Can he not start work?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Another party anxious to be sent Home consists of a man, his wife and five children. A lot of similar cases, all genuine, could be cited. I have a book compiled by a member of the relief committee at Fremantle containing the names and addresses of people anxious to return to England. There are 40 names in the book, and that refers to only one portion of Fremantle, Palmyra. Dealing with Fremantle proper, I have a list of single men numbering 47 who are dependent on the meals doled out to them and who are practically in rags. They are nice young fellows, but are dreadfully short of clothes. It is quite a common experience to see a man huddled up in an old coat seeking a shirt or a flannel from the committee. If any member desires to see how bad things really are, the committee will be prepared to show him through the home. Another list contains 65 names, all married people who are being cared for by the relief committees in Fremantle. The Hon. E. H. Gray, M.L.C., is doing valuable work as secretary of the committee.

Mr. Marshall: Have all of them signified their willingness to return to England?

Mr. SLEEMAN: Yes. I have discussed the matter with many of those people and have asked them whether they would be better off at Home than they are here. I have pointed out that information goes to show that things are worse in the Old Country than in Australia, but without exception they say they would be better off in the Old Country. They can see no prospect of things improving here during the next 12 months or two years. I agree there is very little hope of doing anything for them during the next 12 months at any rate. I have from another committee a list of people who are anxious and willing to return to England.

People outside Fremantle, having heard that I intended to move this motion, are sending in lists. I have one from Mt. Hawthorn. The list does not contain many names, but if anything comes of the motion, there will be ten times as many names from that district.

Mr. Parker: Why not give some of our own unemployed a trip?

Mr. SLEEMAN: From the birthplace, Bunbury, I have received a letter containing a list of people anxious to return to the Old Country. It was forwarded by the town clerk of Bunbury, and coming from that source I think it may be regarded as authentic. It contains 62 names.

Mr. Withers: That is true.

Mr. SLEEMAN: The matter is urgent. We have no right to keep those people here unless we can do something for them. If we cannot find work for them, we should find the food necessary reasonably to keep body and soul together, and not expect families with eight or ten children to subsist on the sustenance for five. It has been said that Australians are in a similar plight. I admit it, but I am hoping, perhaps against hope, that something will turn up. If a few hundred migrants, who are anxious to return to the Old Country, were sent away, there would be more for those who are left. A few are still prepared to remain and try their luck here, but we have no right to keep here migrants who desire to return to England. I hope something will be done. I thought things in the Old Country were as bad as they are here, but a paper sent to me contains, with a portrait of the Minister for Labour, Miss Margaret Bondfield, an optimistic statement about the trade revival:—

"Many Trades are Beating the Big Slump," "Orders Coming in and Unemployment Dwindling," "Motor Sales Soar under Vigorous Leadership." The Prime Minister's expert advisers believe that the reduction of unemployment by more than 110,000 in the last fortnight indicates a general improvement in trade which will now continue. "A Dozen Industries Reviving." I am informed by the Ministry of Labour that in the past few weeks there has been an improvement and a reduction in the number of unemployed in the following industries:—Iron and steel, pottery, silk and art, silk, cotton, wool, linen, boot and shoe, clothing, building, public works contracting, cement manufacture, lace. "Demand for Coal and Steel," the L.N.E.R. has placed orders for 40,000 tons of British steel rails with Dor-

man, Long & Coy., Ltd., and the Cargo Fleet Iron Coy., Ltd., of Middlesbrough, Pease and Partners, Ltd., Saltburn-by-the-Sea, S. Fox & Co., Ltd., Sheffield, Colvilles, Ltd., Glasgow, and the Steel Co. of Scotland. With the re-opening of the River St. Lawrence, Canada, after the winter frost, the busiest coal export period of the year has begun at Swansea. Canadian bookings are heavier than usual.

That conveys the information that things are improving in Great Britain. Perhaps the migrants who desire to go back would be better off if they did so. Some people say it is impossible to send them home because they have been brought out under contract. Others say that the Federal Government control migration. That is not so in the case of these people. The State Government controls these British migrants. On the 23rd April the newspaper published a paragraph headed "Unwanted Britons; Repatriation from Dominions," reading—

In the House of Commons to-day (April 21st) the President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Graham) informed Mr. Somerville (Conservative) that the shipping companies' voluntary returns showed that last year Canada repatriated 2,534 Britons, and Australian and New Zealand authorities repatriated 218.

If they can be repatriated from Canada, they can be sent home from Western Australia.

Mr. Hegney: Canada is much closer to England than Australia is.

Mr. SLEEMAN: Distance does not count in an argument of this kind.

Mr. Marshall: What if the Federal Government refused to issue the necessary passports?

The Minister for Lands: You know they are already doing it.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I do not know that.

Mr. Marshall: There was a case quite recently.

Mr. SLEEMAN: There have been one or two cases in which trouble occurred over securing the necessary passports. If the House decides that those who wish to go Home may do so, I do not think the Federal Government would stand up against it. I do not think if there was a move like this emanating from the Western Australian Parliament, the Federal Government could stand up against it. I hope the House will treat this matter seriously and will vote for this motion. It is a most important and

urgent question. I will not cease to agitate for something to be done for these people until I find that Parliament is prepared to vote with me in the matter.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.20 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 20th May, 1931.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—FARMERS' DEBTS.

Royal Commission.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Lands: Seeing that the scope of the proposed Royal Commission on Agriculture is stated to be confined to the relationship between the farmer and his creditors, will the Government at a later date extend the Commission's operations to an inquiry into the larger question regarding costs of production and how the wheatgrower can be kept upon the land on a business footing?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: The terms of the Commission will be made public very shortly, and should, I think, prove satisfactory.