

PAIR.

AYE

NO

Hon. J. Ewing

Hon. W. H. Kilson

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

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Will it be possible for members to secure a reprint of the Bill a few hours before it is again considered?

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: It will rest with the Chief Secretary as to whether this will be possible.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not intend to bring the Bill forward again until it has been thoroughly examined by the Parliamentary draftsman. I will see what can be done in the way of providing members with a clean print before it is again considered. Every effort will be made to do this before the third reading. I do not intend to rush the third reading through.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Reserves.
- 2, Industries Assistance Act Continuance.
Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

House adjourned at 11.3 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 1st December, 1925.

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

PETITION—BRITISH IMPERIAL OIL COMPANY LIMITED.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. A. McCallum) presented a petition from the British Imperial Oil Company Limited, praying for the introduction of a Bill to provide powers for the storage and supply of oil, liquid fuel, petroleum spirits, kerosene and petroleum products, and for other purposes.

Petition received, and the prayer of the petitioners granted.

BILL—BRITISH IMPERIAL OIL COMPANY, LIMITED (PRIVATE.)

Introduced by Minister for Works and read a first time.

Referred to Select Committee.

On motion by the Minister for Works, Bill referred to a Select Committee consisting of Messrs. Clydesdale, Chesson, J. H. Smith, Thomson and the mover, with power to call for persons and papers, to sit on days over which the House stands adjourned, and to report on the 3rd December.

BILL—DIVORCE AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILLS OF SALE ACT AMENDMENT BILL SELECT COMMITTEE.

Extension of Time.

On motion by Mr. Davy the time for bringing up the report of the select committee was extended to the 9th December.

BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Constitution Further Amendment.
- 2, Parliamentary Allowances Act Amendment. Introduced by the Premier.
- 3, Taxation (Motor Spirit Vendors). Introduced by the Minister for Works.
- 4, Coal Mines Regulation. Introduced by the Minister for Mines.

LOAN ESTIMATES, 1925-26.

Message from the Governor received and read, transmitting the Loan Estimates for the year 1925-26 and recommending appropriation.

In Committee of Supply.

The House resolved into Committee of Supply for the purpose of considering the Loan Estimates; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

Vote—Departmental, £117,937:

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.52]: The amount for which the Government ask authority to spend this year is larger than I had desired it should be, but the Government find themselves in a set of circumstances that to ask the Committee for any lesser amount could have the effect only of hampering the development and settlement of the State. In recent years the State has embarked upon an era of development that requires the expenditure of considerable sums of money if those who have undertaken the task of opening up the country are to have provided for them the necessary facilities and opportunities to carry out the work. It has also to be remembered that the cost of works generally has increased greatly as compared with that of some years ago. To do a given amount of work takes a very much larger sum of money to-day than was the case some few years ago. The State also has been faced during last year and this year with expenditure of a non-recurring kind; I refer to

the money necessary for a hills water supply, with which I shall deal more fully later on, and also for the improvement of some of our harbours, notably Bunbury, Geraldton and Fremantle. Generally speaking, we are faced with a situation that if the development of the country is to proceed and land settlement is to continue in the manner in which all sections of the community have endorsed, it is necessary that this comparatively heavy expenditure should be provided for this year. There is also the fact that in this State practically all public utilities, works both large and small, have to be carried out by the Government. None of our local governing bodies is entrusted with any public concerns or utilities, and very few companies carry on works of any magnitude within the State.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Western Australia is supplying the Eastern States with money to establish industries.

The PREMIER: Yes, but Western Australia has to borrow and provide money for public requirements that the Governments of some of the Eastern States do not provide at all. Whether the amounts be millions or only hundreds of pounds, the Government here have to find the money all the time. This is a factor that must be borne in mind when we draw comparisons between expenditure in this State and in some of the Eastern States, particularly on the basis of population. The development of agriculture is directly responsible for an amount of £2,250,300, and is indirectly responsible for a greater part of the balance of the amount asked for.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There would be no water supply for Perth but for the other items.

The PREMIER: If we take the £411,240 set down for new railways, £170,000 for additional rolling stock, and £128,000 for additions and improvements to opened railways we get an additional total of £709,000, all of which money is related to and might actually be classified as expenditure on the development of agriculture. Without new railways the State cannot expand, nor can the increasing quantity of produce from land be marketed without expenditure for additional rolling stock. A sum of £88,000 is provided for country roads exclusive of £150,000 provided for group roads and drainages. The greater part of the latter amount is for roads. To the £88,000 will

be added £88,000 from the Commonwealth road grant and £18,000 from the Commonwealth special grant. Country water supplies will receive £230,000. For some years there has been a grievous shortage of water in our agricultural areas, but under the Bill passed by Parliament this session, the Government intend to embark upon a fairly extensive and comprehensive policy of water supplies for agricultural districts. For this work £230,000 is provided. In every direction but one we show greatly increased activity in agricultural development. The exception is that soldier settlement shows a gradual shrinkage in expenditure. That is because a considerable number of soldier settlers have obtained the maximum amount that has been available for them. This must naturally be a reducing quantity each year. We received a considerable portion of these moneys this year at a very low rate of interest. We are not yet in a position to say exactly what amount of this total will be made available to us at the rate of 1 per cent. interest under the migration agreement, because the matter has not yet been finalised. We do know of certain items of expenditure that will definitely come under the new agreement, but with regard to railways, roads, drainage and other works, associated with group settlement, the matter has not yet been definitely finalised as to which of these works or what proportion of them will come under the new agreement. We do know that a considerable portion of this total will be obtained for 1 per cent. for five years, and one-third of the interest rate for the following five years. That is a factor which must be considered in making up the Estimates today, and, I think, the estimated loan expenditure during the currency of this agreement. It is a wise thing to take advantage of the opportunity to get cheap loan money for settlement, and, to a degree, for public works that are so necessary to the development of the country.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not too much for public works that are not immediately connected with new settlements.

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It would not pay to have all works and no settlement.

The PREMIER: No. There are certain public works that must go on. Members have been clamouring to me for Bills to authorise the construction of new railways,

and for the commencement of railways already authorised. No Government can do more than a reasonable thing in any one year, and so public works of that description will have to proceed at a reasonable rate from year to year.

Mr. North: Tramway extensions will not be included in the 1 per cent. money?

The PREMIER: No. If these were included there would be no limit to the nature of public works which we might not be able to include under the migration agreement. Some of the country railways, water supplies, drainage and road expenditure, should, and I think will, come within the bounds of the new agreement.

Mr. Sampson: Is the Brookton-Armadale railway receiving consideration?

The PREMIER: I do not know whether there is provision for that on the Estimate; I rather forget.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A convenient memory just now.

The PREMIER: My memory is not very good with regard to some of the items. There are two classes of advances under the agreement, one being for the establishment of farms, and the other for approved public works. We have drawn £750,000 as an advance under the agreement. It is calculated that we are entitled to draw now another £1,350,000 as it affects the settlers' side of the agreement, and £650,000 for works. From these two items will have to be deducted the amount already drawn, namely £750,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That leaves about a million and a quarter.

The PREMIER: Yes. Last year I forecasted an expenditure from loan of £4,413,606, including recoup to Loan Suspense Account of £238,563. The actual expenditure was £4,099,021. That is mostly in keeping with the practice for many years that we rarely spend the full amount of the estimate authorised by Parliament. Of this sum £2,259,276 went directly in the development of agriculture. Group settlement accounted for £1,103,972, soldier settlement £507,359, and the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board for £415,507. More than £2,100,000 went in assistance to individuals settled on the land. The expenditure on group settlement is altogether additional to what we might describe as the normal loan expenditure required by the State. About £1,100,000 has to be found for

groups, and £1,100,000 is the estimate this year. This may be said to be additional to the loan expenditure as it was carried out prior to three years ago. The Leader of the Opposition had considerable expenditure in his last year on groups, I think £700,000 odd in 1923-24. That is an item which will be increasing from year to year, for a year or two. Then perhaps when a number of those who were first settled leave the care of the Government others will go on at the other end.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: When is that anticipated?

The PREMIER: I have no definitive date in mind. I should say some of the earlier groups will be going off shortly. Some will take longer than others. The period occupied in clearing the land on some of the groups will be longer in some cases. Probably some of the settlers may run as long as five years, but it is expected that others will go on their own in three years.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Some have exceeded the five years, have they not?

The PREMIER: I should say not. The scheme has not been going for five years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A member of the Royal Commission ought to know that.

The PREMIER: The groups were started in 1921, but not much was done in that year.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Some are ready to go off now?

The PREMIER: When they go off it will relieve the expenditure. If we keep adding to them at one end and they do not go off at the other it will mean that the total expenditure will increase from year to year.

Mr. Mann: The first groups that were started consisted mostly of unemployed in Perth and Fremantle.

The PREMIER: I think not. The question of group finance has been a very difficult one owing to the changes in the agreement, and the question of what expenditure was allowable under the amended agreement. Mr. Bankes Amery, who is the Commissioner representing the British Government and has been in this State for many weeks, is in constant consultation with officers of the Lands Department and the Minister for Lands. We hope to have matters fairly well cleared up and finalised during the next week or two, before Mr. Bankes Amery's departure for the Eastern States. During the year the Public Works Department completed the Busselton-Margaret River, the Margaret River-Flinders

Bay and the Narembeen-Merredin railways, and handed them over to the Railway Department. The Esperance Northwards railway and the Piawanning Northwards line have also been handed over, and the Lake Grace-Newdegate line will shortly be completed. A commencement has been made with the Dwarda-Narrogin line, which should be completed before the end of the financial year. Last year £158,000 was spent in rolling stock, principally on locomotives. On additions and improvements to opened railways £89,000 has been spent, and country water supplies have received a considerable amount of attention. A number of extensions were also made from the goldfields water supply main. The construction of country roads was pushed on vigorously, and the full amount of the Commonwealth grant, as well as a like amount from our own funds, was expended at the end of year. Altogether there was an expenditure on roads last year of £315,740.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Including the Commonwealth grant?

The PREMIER: Yes. This was a substantial sum.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We spent their year's grant and most of the previous year's grant.

The PREMIER: Only a portion of the previous year's grant had been expended, I think £16,000, but last year we spent, in addition to the £96,000 that was made available to us, a sum of £41,000 of the previous year's amount. In other words we spent £137,000 altogether of the Commonwealth grant.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is so.

The PREMIER: There is still an amount owing to us from 1923-24.

Mr. Richardson: You have to find pound for pound.

The PREMIER: Yes. The agreement is that the Commonwealth provide £96,000, and we find pound for pound and other expenses, which mean that our expenditure runs into about £113,000 or £144,000 for the year. Last year we received from the Commonwealth £137,000, and the difference between that and £96,000 was the unexpended portion from the previous year. We have to find £137,000 equally with the Commonwealth. Altogether last year was a very active one in road construction, and if this policy should be maintained for a number of years, as I hope will be the case, the country roads, particularly the main roads should show very material improvement.

Last year on metropolitan water supply the Government expended £432,624, and on sewerage £106,358, a total of £539,482. That is a very large sum of money, and a large sum will have to be found this year. It is that expenditure which makes it difficult to finance during the present period on loan funds within anything like the bounds of previous years. Apart from the exceptional expenditure on group settlement, we have this quite unusual and entirely new expenditure on metropolitan water supply, of which we are not going to be rid for some years, although next year's expenditure will be considerably less.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course we are only agents in the expenditure of that money.

The PREMIER: That is so. Metropolitan ratepayers will have to bear the cost; that is, if another place will permit of a reasonable attitude being adopted. If we are to be denied the right to rate the people who are getting or will get the benefit of that expenditure, we shall have to consider whether we are justified in continuing the expenditure. When the present Leader of the Opposition announced the details of the metropolitan water supply scheme, it was clearly stated that year by year, as the work progressed and the money was expended, the rates would be increased.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No doubt was left on that point.

The PREMIER: Parliament endorsed that arrangement, and there was a solemn contract between Parliament, as representing the people of this country, on the one hand, and the residents of the metropolitan area on the other. If, as threatened in another place, the Government are not to be permitted to increase the rates, the whole situation will have to be reconsidered. If I may digress for a moment, I find that the same position arose in connection with the abattoirs. New money to an amount of £48,000 or £50,000 had to be found by the State, and when the Government attempted to fix rates which would cover working costs and interest, they were denied the right to impose them. I refer to the present regulations. I have gone into them carefully, and I say they are not excessive. Those regulations now await the axe in another place.

Mr. Mann: They did not make much reduction.

The PREMIER: They made such reduction as was justified, unless the taxpayer is

to be called upon to make up deficiencies, which would be unfair. If interested parties can so move things as to be able to prevent any Government, not only the present Government, from making adequate charges for services rendered, Governments will have to consider closely before embarking upon any expenditure whatever unless they are assured beforehand of the power to make such charges. The pipe line from the hills is now practically completed, and water will be delivered almost immediately. I suppose during the last day or two many citizens of Perth have been praying fervently for the fulfilment of that hope. Further dredging was done during the year at Fremantle, and the harbour now has a depth at low water of 36 feet. A considerable amount of reconstruction work was done, and additional plant was installed. There was also considerable work done at the outer harbours, notably Bunbury and Busselton. As I have already pointed out, agricultural development is responsible for the greater part of this year's Loan Estimates. Under Development of Agriculture there is an estimated expenditure of £2,205,300. For Group Settlement £1,250,000 is set down, and for Soldier Settlement £442,600. The Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board are allocated £395,000. These items give an approximate total of £2,100,000. The amount is almost the same as was expended last year. Group Settlement shows an increase of £150,000 and Soldier Settlement a reduction of about the same amount. Advances through the Agricultural Bank are set down at about the same figure as last year. In addition we are providing for the Agricultural College £12,000, for Abattoirs £22,700, Immigration £10,000, Assistance to Industries £30,000, Pine Planting £2,500, and Development of Agriculture generally £40,500. The amount asked for under the heading of Railways, Tramways, etc., is £887,651, being £284,226 above that of last year. The railway section represents £197,610, and the Tramways and Electricity Supply section £86,616. In respect of railways the expenditure is £149,655 above that of last year. Rolling stock represents £12,212, and Additions and Improvements to Railways £35,743. These amounts give the heavy total of £197,610. The whole of this expenditure is due to the opening of additional railways, and to rolling stock and improved facilities for country requirements. Provision has been made for the

completion of the Dwarda-Narrogin, the Lake Grace-Newdegate, and Piawaning lines, the reconditioning of the Jarnadup-Pemberton line, and the commencement of the Norseman-Salmon Gums section. Substantial amounts are required for rails and fastenings and water supplies. Last year £157,788 was spent, and this year £170,000 is wanted.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We are glad to have the need for this expenditure.

The PREMIER: Yes. That makes an expenditure of £330,000 for rolling stock in two years. If we go on building railways and handing them over to the Railway Department, we must make provision for the Commissioner to work them. Even if our mileage were not increasing—and it is increasing every year—the increasing volume of traffic on our lines causes these demands.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If we did not agree to this expenditure, we would have to cut down all other expenditure.

The PREMIER: Yes. At present there are under consideration in the Midland Workshops approximately 100 additional trucks. The amount I have set down this year, £170,000, is not nearly as much as the Commissioner of Railways desires or as he contends is necessary. However, it is all that I have been able to find, and it is a pretty considerable amount. It is really a fine thing that all parts of the country want money for essential work, but it gives one rather a headache if one has to tackle a total which is about £2,000,000 more than one is able to find. One has to worry it down. The Treasurer sometimes wishes that in some respects the needs of the country were not so pressing.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: We take it out of the trucks, though. We get money from them.

The PREMIER: That is so. So long as rolling stock is required and we can keep filling the trains and keep them moving, the Treasury will be all right.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If the trains are full and the cradles are full, we are all right.

The PREMIER: The large increase of £89,814 in the amount provided for Electricity Supply is due to the contract entered into for increased plant some little time back. Under that contract we have incurred an expenditure of £240,000. Last year £3,000 was spent on the plant, and this year £135,000 is required. The bal-

ance of £102,000 will be needed next year. Further, the Cottesloe Beach power supply accounts for £26,273, extensions for £8,464, ring main cable in the city for £7,771, and sundries for £14,678. These items total £60,186. The position of the power house is somewhat the same as that of the Railway Department, having reached a stage when increased expenditure is necessary for additional plant. The time has arrived when an increase of the output is essential. Increased facilities could not be delayed any longer. Harbours and Rivers show an increase of £81,527. The amount asked for is £251,795, as compared with £170,268 last year. This includes £48,710 for the dredge "Sir William Matthews," which the State purchased from the Commonwealth Government. Although the transaction was entered into last year, the expense comes into the current year, and it is a considerable item. The amount for Harbours and Rivers also covers the cost of increased work at Fremantle, Bunbury, and Geraldton. Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage shows a slight decrease, the figures being £539,482 for last year and £510,000 for this year. The total is very considerable. The slight decrease is due to completion of part of the new scheme, but the dams remain to be completed. The Churchman's Brook dam is in progress, and these Estimates provide for preliminary work at Wongong. The Subiaco outfall will be completed this year; and the septic tanks and certain reticulation works will be put in hand. All these works add materially to the capital cost of metropolitan water supply, which, on the 30th June last, stood at £3,313,031. Country water supplies show a largely increased vote, and I am glad to be able to find additional money for this purpose. Almost £50,000 additional has been provided for the Goldfields Water Supply to cover the cost of replacement of worn-out pipes, and of extension to agricultural areas.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And deviations too.

The PREMIER: Yes. That is an expenditure I rather begrudge. However, it means that a considerable number of pipes released can be reconditioned and used again in other parts of the main. Speaking from memory, the expenditure this year on the principal 30in. main was £30,000. Of course the main is beginning to show signs of wear, and when pipes are being taken out

for the purpose of reconditioning, very often the line is deviated to shorten the distance, which means the release of still further pipes. However, as I say, it is a costly business. An increase of £67,000 is required for water supplies, drainage, etc., in agricultural areas. Included in this is £28,000 for the Kondinin water supply.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is part of the Railway Department's supply.

The PREMIER: It is for town, railway and agriculture. It will provide a water supply for the town, for the Railway Department and for all the settlers who have occasion to cart in to the railway. It will be a very fine scheme and will obviate the necessity for the Railway Department having its own scheme. It is going to cost a considerable sum of money. The amount here is for this year alone. The completed estimate is, I think, £40,000. There are also under consideration agricultural water supply works where fine rock catchments exist. They will serve a big area of country. One work I have in mind is estimated to cost £250,000.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You will require to be careful before you spend so much. You have to get the rain, you know.

The PREMIER: Yes, but it is in the wheat belt, and so we ought to get the rain. The catchment is so thoroughly good as to warrant the scheme. It is admitted that these water supplies are very necessary in country districts. These two votes are, Goldfields Water Supply £105,000, and Water Supply and Drainage in Agricultural Districts £100,000—a total of £205,000. This does not include drainage in group areas, the cost of which is met from a special vote of £150,000 under Development of Agriculture, which covers the cost of roads and drainage. I have provided an additional amount of £21,000 for development of mining, making the total for this year £106,000. I have already dealt with the section covering Development of Agriculture. However, I should like members, when looking at Items 72 and 73, comprising £88,000 set down for roads, to pay attention to Item 69, provided under Development of Agriculture for group roads and drainage. That item adds considerably to the amount being spent by the Government on country roads. In this respect a few figures might be arresting as

showing the extent to which, during the last two years, we have spent money on country roads. In 1924-25 there was spent on country roads from State funds £167,315, and we estimate to spend this year £209,557. Also last year there was spent on country roads from Commonwealth funds £137,429, and this year it is estimated that £96,000 will be spent, with an additional special grant of £-8,000, making a total estimated expenditure this year on country roads of £369,879 as against an expenditure last year of £304,741. I hope our friends from the country will not think we have been unduly lavish in our expenditure on roads in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Mann: I was just thinking of that complaint.

The PREMIER: The total spent on metropolitan roads last year was £14,388, and the estimated expenditure for this year is £9,200. So long as we build roads in the country, the metropolitan area can get along all right.

Mr. Richardson: I do not know. These country people wear out our roads when they come down here with their cars.

The PREMIER: Those figures will be worth bearing in mind when members are criticising Bills dealing with taxation, the petrol tax, or the wheel tax, or other taxes of that description. At such times it will be as well to remember the large amounts spent on country roads. After all, if we are to spend money we must obtain it from some source or other.

Mr. Thomson: The only way to develop the country is by good roads.

The PREMIER: I have placed £98,172 on the Estimates for public buildings, as compared with £77,673 spent last year. I propose this year to make a start with the Perth Hospital nurses' quarters and the Point Heathcote Receiving Home. Both those buildings are long overdue. The nurses at the Perth Hospital have been denied some measure of improvement in their conditions because there has been no accommodation for them. Both those works will be started before the end of June. Works now in hand total £33,000, and £20,000 is set down for schools and additions. Also, the Public Works Department is carrying out the construction of the Soldiers' Mental Hospital at West Subiaco, the estimated cost of which is £45,000.

Mr. Mann: Have you considered the new reception home?

The PREMIER: Yes, that is the home at Point Heathcote. It will be started this year.

Mr. Mann: Then we shall get rid of that objectionable place in Wellington-street.

The PREMIER: The money set down for State ships, £145,500, is required in respect of the purchase of the two steamers recently ordered, both of which are now under construction. One, it is expected, will be completed about March next, and the other in next November. The contract price for the smaller one, that for the south coast, was £55,200, while that for the bigger ship, to trade on the North-West coast, was £186,000. There will probably be a few extras, adding to the cost of the boat for the North-West. Members speaking on the Revenue Estimates last week referred to the want of accommodation at State hotels. I regret that I have not been able to find all that was asked for, but a sum of £5,000 is here provided, mainly for additions to the Corrigin State Hotel, which I believe is the one most in need of increased accommodation.

Mr. Mann: Have you changed your mind about disposing of the State hotels?

The PREMIER: What opinion was it I had in regard to that? A sum of £7,500 was spent on an additional brick kiln last year, and I have provided on the Estimates £10,000 to replace some of the obsolete machinery at the State Implement Works. It was held by the management that if the old plant was not replaced it would be better to close down altogether on the construction of agricultural machinery.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is only a repair shop now; I mean it is not really a factory.

The PREMIER: It is doing useful work, and I am told we shall be able to provide the necessary plant for £10,000. We have lately engaged an expert manufacturer of agricultural implements, and so in future we should be able to do much better in this direction than we have been able to do in the past. Those are the principal items, as will be seen in the printed Estimates of Expenditure. Again I say that every pound set down is calculated to foster our growing industries and should assist very considerably in increased wealth production and increased trade generally to the people of the

State. It is impossible to contemplate the expenditure of any lesser sum, unless we are to check development in one or another direction. I should say it is the more particularly justified when a considerable portion of the money will be made available to us at 1 per cent. interest, as against the 5 per cent. and 6 per cent. that had to be paid in former years.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But that is largely in connection with the settlement of new lands.

The PREMIER: The cheap rate of interest will at least apply to what we might regard as the increase in loan expenditure over what was the normal expenditure of a few years ago. Before the group settlement scheme was started the annual expenditure used to be something over three millions and upon that, of course, the full rate of interest was paid. During the past two years the total has increased to over four millions, and this year it will be £4,748,000. The increase over the normal will be money at the low rate of interest. There can be no doubt about that. So we might well take advantage of the situation as we find it, and go on with courage in the expenditure of money in this direction. We must build railways, provide harbour improvements, and water supplies and drainage in country districts. We must drain some of the rich lands to-day lying under water, and we must make roads in country districts. All the expenditure involved in those enterprises must be returned to the State tenfold in the years to come. It is work that cannot be neglected, unless we are to give a check to the onward march of development that has been taking place in this State for some years past. I hope members will view it in that light and agree cheerfully to the passing of these Estimates.

Progress reported.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (2)—COMMITTEE REPORTS.

1, Roads Closure.

2, Eight Hours.

Adopted.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 26th November; Mr. Panton in the Chair, the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clause 4—Amendment of Section 5 (partly considered):

Mr. SAMPSON: It is proposed to substitute "council" for the title "board." I question whether the proposal will be an advantage, although the terms "board" and "council" are almost synonymous.

The Minister for Works: That question has already been decided in Clause 2.

The CHAIRMAN: It has been decided by the Committee that "council" shall take the place of "board," and the matter may not be discussed again.

Mr. SAMPSON: But the words occur in this clause. May we not alter them?

The CHAIRMAN: No, because the question has already been decided in Clause 2.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am of opinion that the alteration of the title of these bodies in addition to not being of any advantage will involve expense, and will cause confusion.

The CHAIRMAN: The question has already been decided, and the hon. member must not debate it on this clause. There are many other matters that he can discuss on the clause if he wishes to do so.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Is it possible to move to strike out paragraph (a) or even to strike out the whole clause?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member may do that, but I cannot accept an amendment that is contrary to what has already been decided by the Committee. The hon. member may vote against the clause if he desires.

Mr. SAMPSON: Paragraph (f) amends the definition of "road" by adding the following words, "And includes any land marked as a road upon the plan of any lands publicly exhibited in the public office of the department of Lands and Surveys." I move an amendment—

That the following words be added:—"Subject to the same having been duly gazetted in accordance with Section 149 of the Act."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not had time to look into the proposal. This particular Act is administered by the Lands Department and Section 149 referred to by the hon. member deals with

something to be done on the confirmation by the Governor of the resolution of a board to open a new road, or altering the line of an existing road. The object of the paragraph is to make it clear that a road is a road if shown on plans, even though it may not have been gazetted. What the Bill proposes is aimed at Crown lands only.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If it deals with Crown lands only, there should be no exception taken to the suggested amendment, but it does not say that it proposes to deal with Crown lands only.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Paragraph (g) will apply to private townships. I hope we will not get back to the old system of allowing people to cut up for townsite purposes, private land adjacent to railways. People purchasing blocks on such townsites find themselves in an invidious position later on because they cannot come to the Government for conveniences which are necessary. The private landowner takes the profits and is not left to incur the necessary expenditure. If the Government take the townsite and get the revenue, there is no objection to spending the money derived from the early sales in providing necessary conveniences. We should exercise the power already existing for resuming townsites on private holdings.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There are several provisions that give a board power over townsites, but they do not apply to private townsites, which are not townsites within the meaning of the Act. There are many disabilities arising from the practice of allowing private landowners to cut up townsites adjacent to railways, and the Government will not be a party to allowing any more of them. A number of these private townsites have been allowed in the past, resulting in the difficulties that the paragraph will provide the means of overcoming.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 5—Amendment of Section 9:

Mr. DAVY: Will the Minister explain the object in substituting "five" for "three"?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The object is to provide that road boards shall have an income of at least £500 a year. In 1911 the amount was £150; in 1915 it was increased to £200; to-day it stands at £300.

I think there are two road boards only that have an income of under £500 a year. It seems ridiculous to have road boards with all their paraphernalia and officers, and with an income of less than £500. The amendment will mean increasing boundaries or amalgamating road board districts.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: In some of the older settled districts, such as Wandering and Marradong, road boards have been established since the inception of the road board system, but they have not a large revenue. Despite that, the administration is carried on cheaply, efficiently and well. At Marradong there is a half-time secretary who is also the supervisor. Repeatedly the department have discussed the question of amalgamating the road boards in these two districts, but various Ministers have decided, because of the efficient administration of the two boards, not to agree to an amalgamation. If the two boards I refer to are not the ones the Minister has in mind, I am prepared to agree to the clause. Quindanning is another area similarly situated and I would be sorry to see any of the local governing facilities the district enjoys now, taken away from the people.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Augusta Road Board suffers disabilities regarding its revenue income. I understand it is competent for the Minister, under Section 241, to exempt any board from the provisions of the Act. I take it, therefore, that if the Minister is satisfied that it is in the interests of the ratepayers, a board may be allowed to continue notwithstanding that the income is less than £500 a year.

The Minister for Works: We have the discretion.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Has the Minister in mind the amalgamation of the Balingup and Greenbushes road boards? The districts have different interests, one being agricultural and the other mining. Earlier proposals for amalgamation led to the decision that as the interests were so divergent, it was better that the boards should retain their separate entities. I trust the Minister does not propose the amalgamation of those two boards.

The Minister for Works: I do not think any boards in that part are concerned.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 6—agreed to.

(Mr. Lutey took the Chair.)

Clause 7—Repeal of Division 3 of Part III. and substitution of new division:

Mr. SAMPSON: Division 3 of Part III. of the Act sets out the method by which members of road boards retire from office. Theoretically, it may be excellent for all members to retire at one time, but if the whole of the members retire and an entirely new set are elected, the effect will be that the secretary of the board will become the real governing authority in a road board district. I have heard road board members suggest that it will not be in the interests of a district if the whole personnel of a board be changed because there will be no continuity of policy.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Under the present system we have three representatives of a ward and it is generally arranged that the representative who, at the original election, receives the highest number of votes, shall remain in office longest. In other cases they decide to draw lots. If they cannot decide, the Minister has to determine the question. That is a most unsatisfactory procedure. Sometimes two or three members are returned unopposed. How is the question to be determined in such instances?

Mr. Sampson: The nomination paper sets out for which seat the candidate is standing.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That would not determine the question. The present position is unsatisfactory. The case in favour of dissolving the whole board is that in such circumstances any question of local policy may be determined by the ratepayers. It is impossible for them to do so now because they can elect only one-third of the members at a time; therefore two-thirds of the members may remain to continue a policy, no matter how much the ratepayers desired to alter it.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. DAVY: It is difficult to predict the effect of this innovation, but I cannot see that the Minister has justified the alteration, beyond complaining that it is hard to decide which of a certain number of members shall retire first of all. That, however, might be easily overcome. I suspect the result of this innovation for members of boards to retire in a body is likely to enhance the ease with which party politics may be introduced into local government. At present there are no party politics to speak of in local government. Occasionally, there

is a suggestion that a particular candidate represents a certain organisation, but in practice every member of a local governing body expresses his individual views. That is a good feature of local government. I do not say that party government is a bad thing in State or national politics. It has probably come to stay, but to extend it to local government would be bad. The alteration of the system is likely to make it easier for party politics can be introduced, and I should require to hear strong reasons for the change before I would agree to it.

Mr. SAMPSON: I do not appreciate the difficulty referred to by the Minister. A retiring member would vacate his position by effluxion of time and another candidate would be contesting an extraordinary vacancy. The nomination would determine the position of the candidate.

Mr. NORTH: When a new third is elected to a board, it generally results in a working majority being secured. If we retain a nucleus of two-thirds, it is easier for new members to become cognisant of the duties. It would be hard for the secretary to have to coach the whole of a local body. This supposition depends upon the extraordinary circumstances of the whole of the members being thrown out. Still, we would be wise to retain the existing system.

Mr. THOMSON: I hope the Minister will not insist upon this alteration. I have received a letter from a road board in my district stating that its members much prefer the present system. I am sure that will be the general feeling throughout the country. At times it is difficult to get men to stand for these positions, particularly for outside wards. I am informed that at one election in Katanning it was necessary to advertise three times before a man came forward to represent a certain ward. It is desirable to have a continuity of policy. I have not known of a board resigning in a body, apart from the recent experience at Wagin.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The Minister can dissolve a board if necessary.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so. The present system has worked well. Although all members of the Legislative Assembly retire every three years, members of the Legislative Council retire one-third at a time.

The Minister for Works: That is the worst recommendation you could give it.

Mr. THOMSON: In the Minister's eyes, that may be so. I oppose the clause.

Mr. BROWN: I, too, oppose the clause. As an old road board member, I know it will not be in the interests of local government to make such a change. If all the members of a board retired, matters would be left in the hands of the secretary for two or three weeks. There would be no gain by making the alteration. It would not be desirable to have an entirely new board. I recently read of a board that resigned in a body, and one of the officials of the department had to take control of affairs for some weeks. The present system is working well.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I support the clause. I cannot understand the opposition to it. Something is required to stir up the enthusiasm of people that they may take a greater interest in local government affairs.

Mr. Thomson: This will not do it.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have been a member of a local body for six or seven years and I know how heart-breaking it is to get candidates to stand. The boards should be given more power. This Bill gives the local authorities greater scope than they previously possessed, and the Committee should endorse its provisions. It is advisable that there should be a fresh election every three years, so that the candidates may place their policy before the ratepayers.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I am opposed to the clause, for the retention of which the Minister has advanced no sound reasons. It is not advisable to alter the present method and adopt a system of party politics in respect of local affairs.

Mr. LINDSAY: The clause will obviate the necessity for going to the trouble and expense of having annual road board elections. It should also lead to a greater display of interest in road board affairs. I should be sorry to see all the members of a board go out together, for that would affect the continuity of policy, but it is unlikely that this would occur often.

Mr. Sampson: The clause has nothing to recommend it beyond its novelty.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 8—Amendment of Section 33:

Mr. THOMSON: A man may have a property in each ward, and because of that he now has a vote in each ward. If the clause is passed, the principle of one vote, one ratepayer will be affirmed. The man who pays the piper should have the votes, be

cause the mere occupier of premises has no financial responsibility towards the district.

The Premier: Imagine the hundreds of thousands who voted a few weeks ago but had no financial responsibility. Many of them had no property whatever.

Mr. THOMSON: It is a well-known principle that the money collected in one ward should be spent in that ward. A man should be entitled to a vote in respect of each of his separate assessments.

Mr. DAVY: The arguments which led to the adoption of adult suffrage in Australia and other parts of the English-speaking world cannot apply to the case of a road board. A road board has limited functions—to build roads and other conveniences. That is where the functions of such boards have, so far, begun and ended. The owner who pays heavy rates should have more voice in road board affairs than the man who pays merely the minimum of 2s. 6d. annually. A man with one share in a company does not expect, nor does he get, as much voting power as the holder of 1,000 shares. The position is similar in regard to road boards. I oppose the clause.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I also oppose the clause. The man who pays is the man who should have the say. The specific purpose of road boards is to make and maintain roads, with a certain amount of assistance from the Government. Many road boards are doing pioneering work that ought to be done by the Government. In large road districts the boards are opening up many miles of new roads without any assistance whatever from the State. Road districts are divided into wards. Suppose a man has selected a block of land in each of the various wards, and is paying heavy rates; surely he ought to have the right to say who will represent him in each ward. The Minister would do well to withdraw the clause.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I have in mind the case of a prominent man in Merredin, who pays annually in rates £36 10s., being 292 times the minimum rate. Surely such a man should have a greater say in road board matters than the man who can pick up his hat and go to the next township.

Mr. NORTH: The Metropolitan Local Government Association, who represent the considered opinion of the metropolitan area, are opposed to this clause. But I find it hard to combat the argument that, I know, the Minister is going to put up, namely, that what

applies to many hundreds of thousands of pounds paid in taxation by the people generally, must also apply to money raised by the local authorities. We are one of the last countries in the world to adopt this one ratepayer one vote principle.

Mr. SAMPSON: I remember that Mr. W. D. Johnson, then Minister for Works, when opening a road board conference said it was his desire that this principle should be introduced. The suggestion was vigorously opposed by the conference delegates and that opposition, presumably, was recognised in the omission of the Minister to introduce the system. This one man one vote principle is the policy of a political party.

The Minister for Works: It is the policy of the world.

Mr. SAMPSON: In a company, voting strength is in accordance with share holdings.

The CHAIRMAN: This is a question of wards.

Mr. SAMPSON: And also of the system of voting in those wards. I hope the clause will not be passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am surprised to find that members opposite are practically unanimous in opposing reform and hanging on to privilege. We are the last country in the world to stick to plural voting for local government, the last to judge a man's mental capacity by the amount he pays in rates.

Mr. Sampson: But you would allow a vote in another road district?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, and I admit that even that is illogical. For our National Parliament each elector has one vote only; yet for a little local government body each ratepayer is to have votes according to the amount of rates he pays. The arguments of members opposite make me think I am living in the mediæval ages. I want to give the local authorities increased power, for our local government system is quite obsolete; but I am not inclined to give to any body increased power when that body is elected on a restricted franchise, and so cannot be said to represent the people.

Mr. J. H. Smith: They spend only their own money.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The men who in the Commonwealth Parliament spend the nation's money are elected on the one man one vote basis. Yet the expenditure of a few paltry pounds in a local dis-

trict can only be done satisfactorily by men elected on the basis of plural voting!

Mr. J. H. Smith: The two are quite different.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, the difference being that the one cannot bear examination. I wonder at members standing for the retention of privilege.

Mr. Davy: What do you mean by "privilege"?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The privilege that gives a man four times the votes another man has.

Mr. Davy: Yet that man contributes four times the revenue the other man does.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Is that your standard of judging him—by the rates he pays? Only cave men could subscribe to such a test. Over 20 years ago at a road board conference held in Bunbury, Senator Lynch moved that the system of adult franchise be applied to all local authorities.

Mr. Thomson: Was it carried?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Would you expect it to be carried by a body of men elected on a privilege franchise? Here to-day, over 20 years later, we still find men calling themselves democrats and wanting to give one man four times the votes that another has. It is unthinkable in a democrat, it is the very antithesis of democracy. I do not say that the one man one vote system is entirely equitable, for no two men are equal in intellect; but there is no other basis so closely approaching equity and justice. Our local government is the most obsolete, the weakest and the most ineffective in the world. We will never get people to take a live interest in governing bodies while the existing state of affairs continues. Where there is a restricted franchise we cannot expect a live interest to be taken. Listening to the arguments advanced by members opposite, one is taken back to the middle ages, almost to the days of cave men. What I have submitted here is in the interests of the country, and the proposal is fundamentally sound. The present basis is altogether wrong, and we who tolerate it are dragging at the rear of progress.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister proposes to take away from the people a privilege that they enjoy. He is not conferring on them any new privilege and he has not given one reason why the existing law should be altered. Why should we take from ratepayers who own property in four wards, the

right to exercise the franchise in those four wards? It is quite possible in some road board districts that the very wards which this particular clause would govern, if brought into existence, would be larger in area than other separate districts. The Minister has told us that the local governing system we have to-day is obsolete, but he has not given any reason why we should bring about the particular change he is now insisting upon. The Minister referred to me as a conservative Tory.

The Premier: Even that does not adequately describe you.

Mr. THOMSON: That is a matter of opinion. One of the planks of the movement to which the Minister belongs is "to hold that which you already possess." My vote is going in the direction of enabling the people to hold the privileges that they already possess, privileges that were given to them by an Act of Parliament. The Minister gave no logical reason why the Committee should support the excision of the present section. I shall certainly oppose the amendment.

Mr. SAMPSON: We have approximately 120 road boards each averaging three or four wards. We have between 30 and 40 municipal councils. In the present circumstances it would be possible for a vote to be cast by an owner or occupier in every one of those road boards. So that this is in direct conflict with the principle the Minister has submitted. I regret that no complete reply has been given to the statement of the member for Katanning. When we consider the huge extent of road board districts in the North West compared with those in the south we can see the difficulty the Minister is in, but such difficulties are inevitable when attempts are made to throw aside old principles.

Mr. C. P. WANSBROUGH: How does the Minister propose to overcome the position of a farmer and his sons where they jointly own a property? Will the sons be deprived of the vote, which will be given to the father?

The Minister for Works: Each will have a vote; that is provided for.

Mr. BROWN: I do not see any particular harm in the clause, because it is applied at the present time. What counts is what is behind it. Clause 9 is the crux of the Bill and in view of that clause, the Minister has had to insert the amendment now before the Committee; otherwise he would not be able

to give effect to Clause 9. When we deal with that we will give him something more democratic that he has given us to-night.

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

| | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|
| Ayes | .. | .. | .. | 20 |
| Noes | .. | .. | .. | 16 |

Majority for .. 4

AYES.

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Mr. Chesson | Mr. Marshall |
| Mr. Collier | Mr. McCallum |
| Mr. Coverley | Mr. Millington |
| Mr. Cunningham | Mr. Munster |
| Mr. Heron | Mr. Panton |
| Mr. Hughes | Mr. Sleeman |
| Mr. W. D. Johnson | Mr. Troy |
| Mr. Kennedy | Mr. A. Wansbrough |
| Mr. Lambert | Mr. Withers |
| Mr. Lamond | Mr. Wilson |

(Teller.)

NOES.

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Mr. Angelo | Mr. North |
| Mr. Brown | Mr. Sampson |
| Mr. Davy | Mr. J. H. Smith |
| Mr. Denton | Mr. J. M. Smith |
| Mr. Griffiths | Mr. Stubbs |
| Mr. E. B. Johnston | Mr. Thomson |
| Mr. Lindsay | Mr. C. P. Wansbrough |
| Mr. Mann | Mr. Richardson |

(Teller.)

PAIRS.

| AYES | NOES. |
|----------------|--------------|
| Mr. Angwin | Mr. Barnard |
| Mr. Corboy | Mr. Teesdale |
| Mr. Clydesdale | Mr. Maley |

Clause thus passed.

Clause 9—Substitution of new section for Section 34; each elector to have one vote:

Mr. DAVY: We have really been discussing this clause when dealing with Clause 3. I do not propose to carry the matter much further but the Minister was so indignant at what he called our conservative Toryism, and he talked about the middle ages.

Mr. Sampson: But you were not called a troglodyte!

Mr. DAVY: Yet the Minister preserves the principle of what he is pleased to call privilege! Despite that, he is not prepared to carry the thing to its logical conclusion.

The Minister for Works: I would if I could get the following.

Mr. DAVY: I do not believe the Minister would like to legislate so that every man and woman in a road board district could have a vote for the council.

The Minister for Works: Yes, I would.

Mr. DAVY: Despite what the Minister says I cannot think he would regard it as right, meet and just in connection with local government.

The Minister for Works: I tell you I do.

Mr. DAVY: Then I accept the Minister's word, although I find it difficult to understand his attitude. He does not make any attempt to give effect to that principle. On the other hand, he adheres to the principle of privilege that the man who contributes in a large way shall have a say beyond that of the individual who does not contribute so much. What he calls privilege seems to me merely ordinary common justice. If the Minister went into a partnership with me and he contributed three-quarters of the capital and I one-quarter, I am certain he would expect to have a little more voice in the affairs of the partnership than I would have. That is merely the principle that the Minister says is so objectionable. If the Minister desires to introduce into our form of local government a body that will have the same control over the lives and souls of the community as we have, he must introduce adult suffrage. The Minister does not propose that but intends that a road board shall continue as in the past building roads and bridges and spending the money collected from the ratepayers. While the road board does that, it is just that the man who contributes largely shall have more say than the man who contributes a little.

Mr. MARSHALL: The member for Swan referred to a conference and mentioned the Meekatharra Road Board. I have a letter from the secretary of that board which states, *inter alia*—

I have had an opportunity of perusing the Bill to amend the Road Districts Act and wish to lay before you a few points whereby I think improvements could be made. The proposed amendments indicate a liberal measure on very democratic lines, and the Minister can be complimented thereon.

The Premier: That is the sort of stuff.

Mr. MARSHALL: I have listened attentively to the debate, and whether I agree entirely with the Minister or not is another question. I have heard young members of learning, men who are students and men of character—

The Premier: And inexperience.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member for Murchison will speak to the clause.

Mr. MARSHALL: I have been surprised to hear young men of education and alleged

broad mind and outlook advocating the right of capital to rule the country. I have been surprised to hear them say that those who produced the wealth should have no say.

Mr. Lindsay: Do road boards rule the country?

Mr. MARSHALL: No.

Mr. Lindsay: That is what you are saying.

Mr. MARSHALL: Road boards have greater power than some hon. members are willing to admit. Sometimes they are health boards.

Mr. Sampson: They are nothing of the sort.

Mr. Davy: Of course not.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must speak to the clause. There is nothing in it about health boards.

Mr. MARSHALL: Those hon. members say that the proprietor of the Savoy Hotel who pays big rates—

Mr. Sampson: That is not in a road board district.

Mr. MARSHALL: Well, take the position at Sawyer's Valley. The hotelkeeper there pays heavy rates. Who is it that pays those rates? Who is it that produces the wealth and hands the money over to hotelkeeper, enabling him to pay? Have not the men who do the work as much right to a vote as the hotelkeeper?

Mr. Sampson: Well, give them all a vote and then we can discuss that principle.

Mr. Lindsay rose to speak.

Clause put and passed.

Mr. THOMSON: On a point of order, the member for Toodyay was on his feet before you put the clause.

The CHAIRMAN: The question before us is Clause 10.

Mr. THOMSON: But, Mr. Lutey—

The CHAIRMAN: I ask the hon. member to take his seat. I heard no one call.

Mr. THOMSON: I call attention to the fact that the member for Toodyay was on his feet.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must take his seat. He is out of order.

Mr. THOMSON: I must voice a protest.

The CHAIRMAN: No one called and I put the question.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member was on his feet and did call.

The Premier: He did not call.

Mr. THOMSON: He did call.

The Premier: He did not call loud enough to be heard over here.

Mr. THOMSON: Anyhow, he called.

The CHAIRMAN: He was not heard by me. The question before the Committee is Clause 10.

Mr. THOMSON: Mr. Lutey—

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member does not take his seat I shall take action. The question before us is Clause 10.

Mr. THOMSON: On a point of privilege I maintain—

The Premier: Privilege does not arise.

The CHAIRMAN: Do you wish to speak on Clause 10?

Mr. THOMSON: No.

The CHAIRMAN: Then you are distinctly out of order.

Mr. THOMSON: I call attention to the fact that the member for Toodyay was on his feet before you put the question.

The CHAIRMAN: I have given my decision.

Mr. THOMSON: Then it is unfair.

Clause 10—agreed to.

Clause 11—Amendment of Section 37

Mr. THOMSON: I should like to hear from the Minister the reason for the alteration proposed in this clause.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The words proposed to be deleted are superfluous because of the one-man one-vote decision.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 12—Amendment of Section 39:

Mr. THOMSON: Will the Minister explain the reason for this clause, or is he going to bludgeon it through?

The Minister for Works: Clauses 12 and 13 contain consequential amendments.

Mr. THOMSON: How can they be consequential? I cannot see any necessity for deleting the words suggested.

Mr. Davy: If a man does not get more than one vote it does not matter what rateable value is put on.

Mr. THOMSON: I doubt that. I regret that the Bill is being pushed through in this fashion.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 13 to 22—agreed to.

Clause 23—Repeal of Sections 123, 124, 125, 126 and 127 and substitution of new sections:

Mr. LINDSAY: I do not see why we should provide for a president and a vice-president. Later on provision is made for an acting-president. At present, if the chairman is absent, the board appoint a chairman for the time being. Provision is made for the president and vice-president to be justices of the peace. I fail to see the need for that innovation. A vice-president is not required.

Mr. DAVY: It appears that the vice-president would begin and cease to be a justice of the peace at various intervals. Does it mean that the vice-president shall be a justice when the president has fallen ill and he is appointed for a definite period? It is important that a person who is a justice of the peace should have definite limits to the time when he begins and ceases to be a justice. The best way would be not to give him privilege to the vice-president.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I shall agree to the position of justice being confined to the president. The department considers it essential to have a permanent position of vice-president. It has frequently been difficult to get anyone to act temporarily, and boards have on more than one occasion elected the secretary to act as chairman, which was most undesirable.

Mr. SAMPSON: It is conceivable that the president might be sick and the vice-president would take over the duties during his absence, and only during that period would he exercise the powers of a justice. If there is reason for the president to be a justice, there is equally good reason for the substitute member also having the power.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to Subsection 1 of the proposed new Section 123:—"This subsection shall not be affected by Subsection 1 of Section 142."

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The point has been raised that the chairman of a road board can now become a justice of the peace by virtue of his office and can take his seat on the bench, but is not sworn in. I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the proposed new section 123:—"(3) The provisions of Section 16 of the Justices Act, 1902-1920, shall apply to every person authorised to act as a justice by virtue of this section as if he were not an ex officio justice."

Mr. LINDSAY: Chairmen of road boards are rarely justices of the peace. It is right that they should be sworn in and take the oath. I would point out, however, that an acting president of a road district council will only be a justice while he is serving as president, although he will have been sworn in.

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

Clauses 24 to 27—agreed to.

Clause 28—Amendment of Section 147:

Mr. THOMSON: I do not like the clause. Very often a few people will apply for a new road when they would require to go only half a mile out of their way to be provided with a suitable road. The Bill vests in these local authorities the power to administer the Act, but a packed meeting may, under this clause, override the wishes of these bodies. I should like to know why the clause was inserted in the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This clause will be administered by the Lands Department. It has been toned down considerably from the original draft. I understand the power will be exercised only in isolated cases, where in the opinion of the Minister, after exhaustive inquiry, the weight of evidence is in favour of the opening or diverting of a road notwithstanding the board's objection. I insisted that a meeting of ratepayers should be called. After that has been held the matter comes before the Minister, who will make full inquiries before advising the Governor to do something in opposition to the board.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 29—Amendment of Section 148:

Mr. THOMSON: There is a good deal of trouble with regard to the resumption of land under the Roads Act. When a man has been farming his land for some time it may be decided that a road shall be run through it and portion of his land resumed. There may be a road on the south side of his block. If the Government resume portion of his land they should hand to him that portion which made up the other road, but that is not done. If he wants that other piece of land he has to buy it.

Mr. Davy: He is paid for what is resumed.

Mr. THOMSON: Only for the improvements, and not for the land.

Mr. MARSHALL: In this clause, which has so far worked well but which is being extended, I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be added:—
“The said Section 148 is further amended by adding to Subsection 2 thereof words as follows:—‘Provided further that in the case of roads which are motor tracks, and may not be lawfully used for other traffic, it shall suffice if the council, instead of erecting fencing or gates as aforesaid, provides, constructs and maintains cattle pits in manner prescribed by the by-laws of the council or by general by-laws made by the Governor.’”

Motor traffic has revolutionised conditions outback, and some road boards reserve certain roads for motor transport. In this connection cattle pits are provided. On one road in my district, of a length of some 30 miles, there are no fewer than 11 gates, involving great inconvenience.

Mr. Sampson: How is it possible to provide a sufficient check to prevent animals from straying over the motor track?

Mr. MARSHALL: As gates obstruct all traffic, it is desirable that the boards shall have power to substitute cattle pits for gates. At present motor traffic is greatly hampered by gates across roads. Between Meekatharra and Wiluna there are 37 gates. Boards now have no power to put down cattle-pits.

Mr. Sampson: Would the planks across the cattle pits be of sufficient width to provide for the varying widths of motor cars?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, and if the planks were not strong enough to carry motor traffic the board would be liable for damages.

Mr. BROWN: Is the idea feasible from an engineering point of view?

The Minister for Works: Yes. Strips are placed across the cattle pits.

Mr. BROWN: I would like to see an engineering plan illustrating the proposal. If a plank is placed across the pit, sheep will run across it.

The Minister for Works: Cattle pits are on the roads now.

Mr. BROWN: And they work well?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Mr. BROWN: Do they keep sheep back?

The Minister for Works: They do.

Mr. BROWN: If there is good grass on the other side, the sheep will get across.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Between Mingenew and Dongarra a cattle pit

has been in operation for three or four years and has represented a great convenience to motor traffic. With sufficient initiative sheep might possibly be able to get across, but in practice they never attempt to do so. The planks across the pit are about a foot wide, and are about the same distance apart as represents the standard gauge of a motor car. At three or four miles an hour transit over the planks is safe. Possibly road boards might object to the expense of providing cattle pits.

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

Clause 30—Amendment of Section 150:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That the words “a paragraph as follows” be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—“the words ‘and any person having an estate or interest in the land’ and of paragraphs as follows.”

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the clause:—“If the land fronting any part of the closed road is under the Transfer of Land Act, 1893, the Registrar of Titles shall, on the application of the owner and on the payment of the prescribed fee, cancel the relative certificate of title and issue a new one, in which he shall include the part of the closed road vested in such owner by virtue of this subsection. If any land comprised in a lease from the Crown or certificate of title and fronting any part of such a closed road is subject to a mortgage or encumbrance as regards any estate or interest therein, then such part of the closed road shall, on the making of such alterations or the issue of such a new certificate of title showing the vesting thereof as aforesaid, become subject to the mortgage or encumbrance as if it had been originally included therein by the owner of such estate or interest.”

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

Clause 31—agreed to.

Clause 32—Amendment of Section 152:

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That before “plan” in line 3 “in” be inserted.

This is to correct a misprint.

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

Clause 33—Amendment of Section 155:

Mr. DAVY: It has always seemed to me that it is asking a great deal of the Minister that he should act in a judicial capacity in disputes between a road board and its rate-payers. Now the Minister proposes to delegate his power of hearing appeals to any officer of the department.

The Minister for Works: It is not right that the Minister should hear appeals.

Mr. DAVY: I do not think it is. Still less is it right that some departmental officer should hear them. I ask the Minister to consider whether we ought not to use the courts we have for the settlement of all disputes between the subjects of this country. The proper place for the hearing of these appeals is the local court.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: On several occasions has the Minister been placed in a most invidious position in hearing these appeals. The present Minister for Lands has already had two cases from his own electorate. The first appeal to a Minister under the Municipalities Act must come to me, when I had to deal with an appeal from the City Council over a building license. I do not think Ministers should have to occupy such positions. Departmental officers have a grip of the business, and are usually impartial and dissociated from outside affairs. They should be as competent as anyone else to give a correct decision.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I am inclined to support the clause. The appeals can relate only to subdivisional plans, and the officers of the Lands Department look after subdivisions and are the right people to hear appeals. The only thing I suggest to the Minister is that he should provide that the appeal be held and determined by some officer of the department who is a licensed surveyor. I move an amendment—

That after "surveys" in line 4 of the proviso the words "who is a licensed surveyor" be inserted.

Mr. DAVY: Although a licensed surveyor of the Lands Department might be a very suitable person to hear a subdivisional appeal, yet in the case quoted by the Minister as having come to him from the City Council I cannot think of anybody who would have been better qualified to decide it than the Minister himself. However, as I say, the right place for such appeals is the local court.

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

Clause 34—agreed to.

Clause 35—Insertion of Sections 156 and 157:

Mr. SAMPSON: It is provided in Sub-clause (2) that plans for a proposed subdivision shall include details in respect of levels. Does that mean that any proposed subdivisions must be accompanied by all such details? I am afraid it would involve a big expenditure.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This clause has been included at the request of the member for Irwin (Mr. Maley). It is supported by the department. However, if it be desired I will have the clause postponed until the member for Irwin is present.

On motion by the Minister for Works, the clause postponed.

Clause 36—agreed to.

Clause 37—Amendment of Section 160:

Mr. SAMPSON: Power is here given for a board to acquire and maintain ferry or transport service by land or water. In the North transport by air is now an important phase of transportation. Possibly the omission of this means of transportation has escaped members representing the North.

Mr. THOMSON: I find here provision for the building and maintaining of hospitals. In my electorate the trouble was that we could subsidise a hospital already in existence, but could not erect any additional buildings. Are we now to be given power to levy a rate to meet the interest on the cost of such buildings? At Katanning, to overcome the difficulty we had to make the whole of the road board district a health area in order that we might have power to levy a rate throughout the district.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Power is here given for district councils to strike a special rate for the purpose of hospitals. A difficulty occurred in Katanning, where although the road board was really a health board, they had not the power to strike a rate. This will give them all the powers required for the running of a hospital.

[Mr. Panton took the Chair.]

Mr. SAMPSON: The object of paragraph (f) I suppose is to prevent the recurrence of anything like the atrocious and

wicked state of affairs to be found existing in the Belmont road district to-day. That local body has declared the Belmont-Maida Vale road, which is partly in its district, to be unsafe for traffic, and has caused it to be closed. Still the road is used every day, though legally speaking the public have no right to use it. The Minister is making provision in the Bill whereby it will not be possible for any road to remain closed for a period longer than 28 days unless the written permission of the Minister is first obtained. The Belmont board decided to prevent the road being used by the public, and erected a barrier at the city end and also at the point where it runs into the neighbouring road district, that of the Darling Range Board. At night there are warning lamps, and I understand it has cost 14s. a week to provide those lamps. This kind of thing has been going on for several months past. For a while motor vehicles were able to use the road by taking down the rails that had been put up by the board, but the board later erected a post in the roadway, the object being to make it come into contact with the chassis of any motor vehicle that passed over the road. A great deal of inconvenience has been caused by this highly improper action on the part of the board. The position was aggravated because it could never properly be argued that the road is in an unsafe condition for traffic. There are roads in the metropolitan area that are much more dangerous than this particular road. I regret that the Minister did not have the power to deal with the board. The board have been quite unmindful of their obligations as a local authority, and therefore I welcome the amendment in the Bill. I would not like to see any other board abuse its powers in the manner that has been done by the Belmont board, which has behaved unreasonably and improperly. Settlers have been caused a great deal of inconvenience and damage has been done to vehicles by the action of the board. Yet the board continues to function. I would have supported the action of the Minister if he had decided to step in and dissolve the board. A board that is so lost to its sense of public duty that it closes a road on the score of a danger that does not exist, is really deserving of the severest censure.

The Minister for Works: This clause will meet a case such as that.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: Paragraph (g) provides that councils may establish, conduct and carry on within the district cinematographic entertainments and exhibitions. Why should we give power to these bodies to enter into competition with private people in the conduct of entertainments, especially with ratepayers' money?

Mr. DAVY: I suggest that the available brains of the members of these local bodies will be fully occupied by the attention that will have to be devoted to roads and bridges, and such fundamental necessities of their jobs in the country. Assuming that they have the time available to carry on picture shows, why should they use the ratepayers' money for the purpose of entering into competition with private people.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Suppose it should prove profitable?

Mr. DAVY: Suppose the moon turns into green cheese. I have yet to learn that road boards or a Government for that matter can run anything as profitably as can private enterprise.

Mr. MARSHALL: If the member for West Perth has had no experience in regard to local government, he will appreciate the fact that local bodies understand the requirements of a community 600 miles inland better than anybody else away from there. In any event, how many road boards will conduct cinematograph shows even if they get permission to do so?

Mr. THOMSON: Everyone will.

Mr. MARSHALL: The hon. member knows that not one will take advantage of the authority.

Mr. THOMSON: Then why give it?

Mr. MARSHALL: If private enterprise will not come to light we should not prevent a local body from providing the entertainment. I move an amendment—

That the following words be added to paragraph (c): "And erect or acquire lighting plant and cooling chambers."

Within the last few years much inconvenience has been experienced by the local authorities in Meekatharra who had to comply with a lot of red tape before they could raise the necessary money on which they had to pay huge interest.

Mr. THOMSON: On a point of order: we have been discussing paragraph (g) and I submit that the hon. member cannot move to amend paragraph (c).

The CHAIRMAN: We are dealing with Clause 37, to which no amendment has been moved. The member for Murchison is therefore in order.

Mr. THOMSON: I will accept the ruling. If you, Mr. Chairman, say that we can go back and deal with things that have been passed, it is all right.

The CHAIRMAN: We are not going back at all. We are dealing with the clause as a whole. If paragraph (f) had been amended, I could not accept an amendment to paragraph (e). As it is, however, the member for Murchison is in order.

Mr. THOMSON: I merely wish to raise the point in order that we may have it on record in "Hansard" that you have ruled in that direction.

The CHAIRMAN: If any hon. member has an amendment to move prior to paragraph (e) he must move it now, otherwise I will not be able to accept it.

Mr. MARSHALL: If we had had the advantage of the amendment it would have saved us a lot of money in Meekatharra.

Mr. THOMSON: Clause 48 deals with lighting, and if we agree to the amendment we will merely be duplicating the provision.

The Minister for Works: That simply deals with rates.

Mr. SAMPSON: If the amendment be agreed to, the Darling Range board, for instance, may purchase electricity from the Government supply and then enter into competition with another Perth scheme already providing the lighting in certain areas. There is a possibility of difficulties being created. Again, it is possible that with this power local authorities may enter into a trading concern, such as ice works, and then compete with another concern that is already contributing towards the funds of the board. I suggest that the member for Murchison ask for the clause to be recommitted at a later stage, thus enabling him to review the position and ascertain whether or not the amendment will be ultra vires.

Mr. THOMSON: Subsection 8 of Section 160 of the Act provides power in respect of electrical plant so that there is no necessity for the first part of the amendment.

Mr. Marshall: But the procedure regarding the raising of funds is so slow.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of proposed new paragraph 25 after "exhibitions" the words "for charitable purposes" be inserted.

I commend this proposal to the Minister for Health in connection with his hospitals.

Mr. HUGHES: I cannot understand the objection to a road board supplying its community with amusements.

Mr. Thomson: We object to these trading concerns.

Mr. HUGHES: Surely it is better for a local authority to become the entertainer for the district rather than a strolling showman should come along and take the profits away from the district for expenditure elsewhere. Someone asked whether I would advocate the Kalgoorlie Road Board owning the Golden Mile. If the Golden Mile had been controlled and worked by the board, it would have been a good thing for the State and millions of pounds would not have gone elsewhere.

Mr. Davy: It would be lovely if the board could hop in when a good mine is proved.

Mr. HUGHES: As the ratepayers are liable for any losses sustained we can assume that they would properly handle such concerns. The local people would not carry on for any long period an undertaking that was unprofitable.

Mr. Davy: Governments in Western Australia have done that for a long time.

Mr. HUGHES: That is not so. The Leader of the Opposition has admitted that they have not cost the State anything, the only losses shown being in the nature of book entries.

The CHAIRMAN: I hope members will not indulge in a discussion on State trading at this stage.

Mr. HUGHES: No, but we cannot allow an erroneous statement such as that to go unchecked, even though it has already been contradicted in "Hansard" by the Leader of the Opposition. If the people of any district wish to run a picture show for their own entertainment, and are prepared to make good any loss, they should be at liberty to do so. Members opposite are prejudiced against any service being rendered unless private profit is attached to it, and their prejudice carries them so far as to maintain that if private enterprise will not supply such wants, the people themselves shall not do so.

Mr. DAVY: It would be absurd to get drawn into a debate on the merits or demerits of community trading, though I think such a discussion would be quite relevant under this clause. I do not suggest that people should be denied the right to run a cinematograph entertainment or anything else. If there are places where private enterprise has not started a picture show, there is nothing to prevent the ratepayers or the community from starting a co-operative show. The statutory functions exercised by a road board, however, are quite apart from anything of that kind.

The Minister for Works: If this is passed it will be statutory.

Mr. DAVY: Of course, and it will then come within the ambit of the great local-governing machine. To say that we approve of people combining to run their own cinematograph is quite different from empowering a statutory board to collect money forcibly and spend it perhaps in opposition to the people from whom it was collected. Most members on this side of the House consider it to be the function of government to do for the people what they cannot do for themselves.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This clause originated in a Bill introduced by the member for Wagin. The measure passed this Chamber but was rejected in another place. The idea was to give power of this kind to a particular local authority. More than one country hospital is financed from the proceeds of picture shows.

Mr. Mann: But the money is earmarked for a specific purpose.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We shall leave this for local authorities to earmark as they think fit.

Mr. DAVY: I should like to move for the deletion of Subclause 25.

Mr. HUGHES: The member for West Perth has no objection to members of the community forming a co-operative society, but he has a strong objection to a local governing body doing the job. What is the difference between the ratepayers running a show through their road board, or setting up another body to do it? They would still be doing it collectively, except that they would require two men to do one man's job. If we permit people to trade collectively as a co-operative society, we should allow them to do it as a road board.

Mr. Thomson: No, one is voluntary.

Mr. HUGHES: A majority of the people would have to agree to the running of a picture show.

Mr. Davy: I am not in favour of the majority ruling the minority in everything.

Mr. HUGHES: Then what sort of a system would the hon. member have?

Mr. Davy: Some of your trade union rules provide for more than a bare majority.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must confine his remarks to the clause.

Mr. HUGHES: I stand for majority rule. If the ratepayers disapproved of any act by the road board, the members could be turned out.

The CHAIRMAN: If the amendment suggested by the member for West Perth were carried, the member for Katanning would not have an opportunity to move his amendment. I suggest that the member for West Perth should move to delete all words down to "exhibitions." If his amendment is defeated, the member for Katanning can then move his amendment.

Mr. THOMSON: I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. DAVY: I move an amendment—

That all the words from "established" to "exhibitions" be struck out.

Mr. NORTH: If one of these enterprises returned a dividend, it would go to the citizens, and for that reason I favour the suggestion of the member for West Perth that the people should operate a concern apart from a road board.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. THOMSON: I move an amendment—

That after "exhibitions" the words "for charitable purposes" be inserted.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. DAVY: Subclause 27 proposes to give to road boards power to erect workers' homes. The Workers' Homes Board have operated quietly and efficiently.

The Minister for Works: Through it we shall be expending £50,000 this year.

Mr. DAVY: I am glad to hear that. The board took over from the War Service Homes Department and carried on work that was causing considerable stir and was being dealt with by a huge office of highly-named officials. I doubt whether it would be wise to duplicate the efforts of the

Workers' Homes Board. We might well allow the board to continue their good work, without permitting any stray road board to start in competition with them.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: This work should be left to the Workers' Homes Board, which is already administering the business in an efficient manner. We should not encourage local governing bodies to engage in the same class of business.

Mr. MANN: The Minister is not consistent. He did not give road boards power to construct their own roads.

The Minister for Works: More roads have been constructed by road boards since I have been in office than ever before.

Mr. MANN: He said the specifications put before local authorities frightened them.

The Minister for Works: They did not go as far as I wanted them to.

Mr. MANN: He, therefore, found it necessary to have the work done by the Public Works Department.

The Minister for Works: You are wrong.

Mr. MANN: Now he wants the local authorities to be in a position to compete with the Workers' Homes Board, which has been carrying on successfully for years. If the specifications of roads have frightened the road boards, they should not be given power to build houses. They would have to employ architects and builders if they indulged in an activity of this kind.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I merely said that the Commonwealth specifications were so stringent that they had frightened the local authorities, and that I could not get many of them to take on the work. Notwithstanding this, more roads have been constructed by them since I took office than ever before. A bigger percentage of these local authorities is now taking this year's work. I thought members opposite stood for competition amongst Government departments, but they do not want this kind of competition. More than one local authority has asked for this power. The Workers' Homes Board receive many applications, but they cannot comply with all the requests. In England it is the function of local authorities to attend to the housing of the people. I have inserted this clause as a start. Next year I hope to amend the Municipal Corporations Act to give greater powers to municipal councils. If a local authority is in a position to build homes, it should have the opportunity to

do so. Competition will be good for the Workers' Homes Board as well as the workers who want homes. The power should be there if it is wanted, though I doubt if it will be used for the present.

Mr. THOMSON: There is already competition for the construction of workers' homes, because tenders are called and various bids are made by different contractors.

The Minister for Works: This will not interfere with the operations of the board.

Mr. THOMSON: I do not think any of the road boards would be in a position to carry out this work. Such a provision is, therefore unnecessary. It would have been better to have added to the amount that is available for the Workers' Homes Board so that all work of this kind could be kept in their hands.

Mr. SAMPSON: The idea appeals to me, but I question whether it is reasonable to expect that a road board should have the knowledge requisite for the building of homes. If more homes are needed, the Workers' Homes Board should be placed in a position to supply them.

Mr. MANN: The Minister apparently intends to duplicate departments, though he complains of the Commonwealth doing so as regards public works.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: There would be 200 fresh departments.

Mr. MANN: Each department would employ an architect and supervisors and so forth. All that work could be done by the existing Workers' Homes Board.

Mr. MARSHALL: In some parts of the State there is no Workers' Homes Board.

Mr. Thomson: Do you think your Meekatharra Road Board will be able to build workers' homes?

Mr. MARSHALL: No. They would never compete with the Workers' Homes Board.

Mr. Thomson: Why do you not use your influence at the Treasury to get another thousand or two provided for workers' homes at Meekatharra?

The Premier: It is not the want of money that has precluded the building of workers' homes there.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 11.5 p.m.