

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 10th June, 1931.

	PAGE
Question: Esperance pine plantation	3326
Bills: Collie Recreation and Park Lands, &c., passed	3326
Special Lease (Esperance Pine Plantation) Act	
Amendment, Com., report	3326
Traffic Act Amendment, (No. 2) 2s.	3328
Hire-Purchase Agreements, 2s.	3334

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

QUESTION—ESPERANCE PINE PLANTATION.

Hon. H. STEWART asked the Minister for Country Water Supplies: In reference to the Esperance pine plantation special lease—1, (a) What assessments for land tax have been made by the Commissioner for Taxation; (b) What amounts have been paid in any financial year; (c) If no assessments have been made, why not? 2, Have the conditions of the special lease been fulfilled up to the end of the last financial year?

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY SUPPLIES replied: 1, (a), (b), and (c) The officers of the Taxation Department are bound to secrecy. Therefore, this information cannot be made available to the public. 2, The conditions of the lease to the end of last financial year have not been strictly complied with, but over £7,000 was spent by the company in a bona fide attempt to prove the holding suitable for the purposes of the lease, namely, the establishment of *Pinus pinaster*, *Pinus insignis*, and other soft woods.

BILL—COLLIE RECREATION AND PARK LANDS.

Read a third time and passed.

BILL—SPECIAL LEASE (ESPERANCE PINE PLANTATION) ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Hon. W. H. Kitson in the Chair, the Minister for Country Water Supplies in charge of the Bill.

Clause 3.—The terms of the special lease may be varied by Governor (partly considered).

Hon. H. STEWART: I am not opposing the clause, but I wish to draw attention to the position it brings about. Whereas this special lease was granted for the purpose of pine planting, if the Bill be passed there will be no liability on the part of the company to carry out pine planting. In February, 1929, expert advice assured the Minister for Lands that the company were proceeding on sound lines. In August, 1929, the company advised the Government that genuine efforts had been made to comply with the terms of the lease, but that experiments had proved that the native vegetation had to be destroyed before the land would be suitable for pine planting. The reports of the Conservator of Forests, however, the Minister said, showed that the problems in respect of the development of crops of pine were not insuperable. I am not adverse to the Government encouraging private enterprise to develop our lands, but I do not want to see any Government approve of a company being formed to develop an area in a given way and, after doing a small amount of experimental work, obtain the fee simple of a considerable area in an advantageous position close to existing facilities, and have that land alienated for 30 years. It is worthy of consideration whether, in giving the company the altered conditions for 25,000 acres, it would not be better for the balance of 20,000 acres to revert to the Crown.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Under the Bill it is incumbent on the lessees to see that the prescribed improvements are carried out, and no grant will issue until they are carried out. The Government are favoured in having a company that are going to improve that class of land down there and show what the land is capable of doing. It will mean probably the selection of hundreds of thousands of acres of what at present is useless country. The company, by making a success of their own 25,000 acres, will induce others to take up the remaining 20,000 acres and much more. Before the fee simple of 25,000 acres can be issued the company will have to spend £4,000. Under an ordinary lease, the company would only need to spend on that area £750, in which would be in-

cluded half the value of the necessary fencing. Under the proposed conditions the company will have to spend £4,000 on improvements, and, in addition, provide the whole cost of the fencing. It is quite certain the company will find some commercial value for that land, and in consequence the balance will be selected by others.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: It seems that this company was floated with the idea that it would be possessed of 45,000 acres. It would be difficult now to countenance the reduction of that area by 20,000 acres, even if we were inclined to do so.

Hon. J. M. DREW: I recall that about the year 1913 I visited this particular locality. The land is pure sandplain. One man was endeavouring to grow rye on a grazing lease but met with very little success. Had his endeavours been successful, no doubt a large area of that country would have long since been devoted to the growing of rye. I have seen millions of acres of land of similar quality that has not yet been taken up. Indeed, the company will be fortunate if they are able to dispose of their land in time to come. I would point out that all these experiments will be conducted without any Government assistance. I wish the enterprise every success.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: It is strange that the Esperance district has always had to fight for everything Parliament has given it. This particular sandplain is 17 miles wide. If it is settled in 100 years from now, it will be a blessing to the State. The sooner the company are allowed to do what they can with it, the better it will be.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What is the rainfall?

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: It goes up to 21 inches. There are millions of acres of similar country which would attract attention immediately the efforts of the company proved successful. There are no grounds for opposition to the Bill.

Hon. G. W. MILES: The State is to be congratulated in having a company of this nature willing to put their money into such an enterprise. I feel that these areas will be put to proper use as the result of the experiments now being conducted. No doubt a great deal of this country, where there is a good rainfall, will ultimately be turned to profitable use. If the company attain success in their efforts, it will con-

stitute an excellent advertisement for Western Australia.

Hon. H. STEWART: I am really glad that private enterprise is taking up this work of development. We are, however, entitled to look at the principles behind this Bill. I have not received satisfactory answers to the questions I asked. It seems to me the company should have a five years' exemption from taxation, as a means of assisting them in their operations. Although the company are willing to spend a good deal of money, we should see that they do not receive privileges to which they are not entitled. We should also know precisely where this land is, and whether or not it is in an important key position. I am certainly not opposed to the enterprise itself.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The land is situated about 18 miles from Esperance on the main road to Norseman. The average rainfall is from 18 inches to 21 inches.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—The Company may subdivide and dispose of the balance of the lands.

Hon. H. STEWART: The special lease provided certain conditions which have not been fulfilled by the company. It is now proposed to give them an opportunity to overcome that difficulty. The safeguards provided are pretty sound. If, after 10 years, they have fulfilled their obligations, they can dispose of their holdings. The principle contained in the Bill is not, however, a good one. We are transferring to a company for a consideration an area of Crown lands, and are enabling these people to dispose of that land as they think fit.

Hon. G. W. MILES: If we had private companies operating throughout the State and not only in the Esperance district, we should be very much better off. If private companies had been given the opportunity to develop the South-West, the State would have saved millions. This applies also not only to the South-West but to the whole State. It applies to the North, where concessions might have been given, and private capital raised for the development of the North-West. The Midland Railway Company have shown us what private enterprise can do. The concession granted to that company was the best thing that could have happened to the State. They are

running their railway at a profit and they have opened up a large territory without receiving any assistance whatever from the taxpayers.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 6-8, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. SIR EDWARD WITTENOOM (North) [5.6]: In supporting the second reading of the Bill I find myself in considerable difficulty with respect to Clause 4. To my mind a dead-end has developed between the trams, trains and buses. Owing to a mistaken policy of various Governments, excellent roads have been made parallel and close to the trams and trains, and gradually buses and taxi-cabs have taken advantage of this to establish well-organised, quick and comfortable travelling by means of those vehicles, so much so that the trains and trams have found the competition too much for them. My sympathy, of course, is with our railway and tramway systems, both of which are now run at a loss, especially the railways. Perhaps this House is somewhat to blame in agreeing to the construction of speculative railways that showed no chance of paying for years. The public, and especially the metropolitan public, have now accustomed themselves to the undoubted convenience of the buses and taxi-cabs, and the trains and trams are running comparatively empty. At this late hour the Government, under Clause 4, ask for absolute power to deal with buses, their routes and methods of working. It seems to me to be a question of either the trains or the buses. So long as the buses and cabs continue to ply as they are doing at present, the trains and trams cannot pay. If the Government, under the powers asked for under Clause 4, suppressed the buses and taxi-cabs, there would be such a public outcry that it could not be overlooked. It must be conceded that to city dwellers, the buses and taxi-cabs are a far more convenient method for reaching suburban homes than the trains or trams, and thousands that travel in this way

do not care whether the railways pay or not. It is a most perplexing and difficult question, and I am of opinion that only a Royal Commission of good business men could ascertain how the railways should be run to pay. The bus companies have submitted amendments to Clause 4 which should have our careful consideration in Committee.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [5.10]: In supporting the second reading of the Bill I find a difficulty with regard to Clause 4. Some parts of the Bill will commend themselves to the House because they are in the direction of assisting the primary producers, those associated with agriculture and mining. There is no doubt that Clause 4 has been introduced for the purpose of endeavouring to control the unfair competition between the motor vehicles and the railways and trams, and insofar as it will operate to control that unfair competition, I am entirely in favour of it. At the same time, we have to avoid imposing unfair penalties or endeavouring to check what is undoubtedly the rapid advance that has taken place in transportation methods during recent years. I should like to refer members to the very valuable report that has been framed by the Town Planning Commission. In that report this particular subject is exhaustively gone into, and certain comments are well worthy of our consideration. On page 29 reference is made to the tramway system, and I should like to read a short extract from the Commission's comment:—

Tramway systems form an integral part of traffic, transport and road systems, and therefore should receive the same consideration as to the future policy of development as is required for general town planning schemes. A definite policy should be adopted by the tramway authorities for their future extension. The routes should be laid down to a preconceived plan, which should fit in and co-ordinate with the town planning schemes of the local authorities, and should, in the opinion of the Commission, be approved by the town planning and traffic authorities, before they are adopted.

Anyone who examines our tramway system cannot but be impressed by the fact that in many cases extensions were made because of the demands of the time. When those extensions were made, motor transport had not reached the proportions we find it has assumed to-day. The result is that we have a number of lines which really do not pay, or which perhaps are just beginning to pay.

From that standpoint we should realise that we have imposed on the system expenses which were not warranted—the lines were built very frequently without regard to the traffic that would be offering when completed.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Some were political lines.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I do not suggest that, but many of the lines were built more with the idea of providing employment than from the standpoint of paying. In the Town Planning Commission's report reference is also made to the new system of trackless trams which is operating in many countries. These trams are not confined to a rail route but they have an arm connected with a trolley, and they are able to thread their way through the traffic. On the same page of the Commission's report there is a reference to Mr. S. A. Maddocks, now Commissioner of Transport in New South Wales, who made a world tour in 1920 specially to investigate transport questions for the New South Wales Government. He expresses the opinion, in his report, that there are undoubtedly places in our transport system where trackless trams may be suitably employed. He affirms that their time schedules are better than the electric tramways and are less liable to accidental stoppages than petrol vehicles, and that when operating costs are compared with the revenue per passenger a much better financial result is secured than from either the electric tramways or petrol bus. In another part of the report dealing with the competition between the tramway system and the railway system, the Town Planning Commission stressed the fact that the West Leederville railway returns were affected by the construction of the Wembley tram service. Quoting figures the Commission show that in 1925-26, before the opening of the Wembley tramway, in the months of December to May the total number of passengers carried to and from West Leederville was 314,814 and that in 1926-27, after the tramway had been opened, in the corresponding six months the number had fallen to 291,950, a decrease of no less than 22,864. Referring to the Subiaco district, the Commission point out that in 1925-26, for the same six months, the passengers carried totalled 196,056 and in 1926-27, again for the same period, the number carried was 179,842, or a decrease of 16,214. Reference is made lower down to the competition with

the railways between Perth and Mt. Lawley and Perth and Maylands. Here again the effect is a general decrease of the passenger traffic on the railways, due to the competition of the trams. Surely a Government so regardless of its own interests as to allow the tramway system to compete with the railway system should have very little to say with regard to the competition of motor buses. From that aspect I think we should consider the amendment of Clause 4 of the Bill. The Commission pointed out another important feature with regard to the competition and that is the time of the journey. By tram the time of the journey from the Perth Town Hall to Rokeby-road junction is 17 minutes, whereas it is possible to get to the same point by train from the Perth railway station in nine minutes. From Perth to the Claremont council chambers occupies 31 minutes by tram and 20 minutes by train; from Bridge-street to Mt. Lawley 12 minutes by tram and six by train; and from Bridge-street to Maylands 17 minutes by tram and nine minutes by train. Although the advantage in point of time is with the train, the Commission commented—

The foregoing seems to indicate that the travelling public are more concerned with the frequency of the service than the time of the journey. This contention is borne out by the following table which shows that in most cases the fares are the same.

Then follows a table giving the fares between the points I have mentioned. It is—

	Railway Fares.		Tramway
	1st class.	2nd class.	Fares.
	Single.	Single.	Single.
Mt. Lawley ..	4d.	3d.	3d.
Maylands ..	5d.	3d.	3d.
West Leederville	4d.	3d.	3d.
Subiaco	4d.	3d.	3d.

The Commission felt that the Government should give very serious consideration to the question of transferring the tramway system to a Perth and metropolitan tramways board. It appears that that is the course which offers the best solution of our very vexed transport problem in the metropolitan area. The time has arrived when we should seriously consider the establishment of a traffic trust which could not only take charge of the tramways and the suburban railway service, but could exercise some control over the motor bus competition and work the whole of the services in co-ordination. That is a scheme laid down by the

Commission, and I think it would be a very wise course to adopt. I should like to make a few comparisons regarding the capital costs of the tramways and the capital cost of motor transport. Analysing the capital cost of the tramways, the cost for tracks up to 1930 had been £10,191 per mile; overhead equipment had cost £1,461 per mile; and miscellaneous such as buildings and offices £1,809 per mile. That, by the way, included the flotation costs of the loan which provided the money for the system. The total cost less rolling stock is £13,461 per mile. Comparing that figure with the cost of constructing a first-class road in the metropolitan area, we find that if anything the tram tracks work out a little higher. The Canning-road cost something like £15,000 per mile and in that instance the cost was higher than the cost of a tram track. If we take the Suburban-road construction of about £10,000 per mile, I do not think we shall be far out. Possibly less has been spent on many roads on which the buses are running. For laying down routes for traffic, the cost to the State is less for the motor than for the tram. Turning to rolling stock the cost of trams is something like £2,200 each taking them all round. To put a good motor bus on the road may cost £1,200 to £2,000, so, as regards the cost of the vehicles, the outlay is much the same. Turning again to the report of the Town Planning Commission, it shows that the advantage of handling passengers is entirely with the tramway system. For the year ended June, 1930, the trams carried 35,565,867 passengers while the buses carried 7,889,000. The miles run by the trams totalled 3,604,827 while the buses covered 8,867,000. The route mileage for the trams was thus 54½, whereas for the buses it was 160. Those figures clearly indicate that there are two distinct fields open to the various methods of transport. The field open to the motor bus is that of pioneering. If we examine the motor bus routes we find that they have been laid down in districts that are being opened up and the buses have undertaken an important and valuable work in that they have carried passenger traffic which would not, under the capital figures I have given, justify the construction of tram tracks. It appears to me that if we had an authority who could use the buses to enable them to undertake this important function of pioneering, and when the district became established, to replace

the buses with trams, we should be approaching the subject in a sensible way and in an economic way. I stress those points because I think the report of the Town Planning Commission should be adopted and something in the nature of a traffic trust appointed. The competition of the buses with the railway system appears to be the real objection which is taken to Clause 4 of the Bill. The wording of the clause shows that it is designed to prohibit the travelling of any bus on a route parallel with a tramway or railway. Members no doubt have received copies of a letter from the Motor Transport Association, quoting certain instances of motors that run parallel to the railway system and yet cannot be regarded as in any way competing with it. On the other hand I could quote instances with which I am familiar of the motor service being established and working satisfactorily, solely because the Railway Department did not rise to the occasion and provide adequate transport facilities. I refer to the service between Armadale and Perth. Along that route we have very efficient bus services. One service runs from Perth to Armadale, another from Perth to Gosnells, another to Carlisle and another to Cannington.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: And there is a service to Jarraldale.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes. Those services are performing valuable work and are well patronised. They have attained success because the Railway Department did not appreciate their obligation to provide an adequate service in the suburban area. They ran trains at infrequent intervals with the result that the people did not patronise the trains. Although complaints were made to the department from time to time, they did not realise that their only chance of competing with the motor buses was by adopting similar methods—putting on light, quick-moving vehicles which could travel at frequent intervals and thus provide an adequate passenger service. The same remarks apply to a large extent to the Midland Junction-Fremantle section of the railway system. I consider the only chance the railways have of successfully competing against the bus traffic is by adopting similar methods—running vehicles at frequent intervals and arranging stopping places where required. Those methods would encourage the return of traffic to the railways. One has to be fair and recognise that the Railway Depart-

ment at present are being penalised by the fact that all the concessions and most of the school traffic apply to the railways. All the non-paying traffic is going to the railways; all the paying traffic is going to bus and other motor transport. That has been demonstrated by the Commission's report. The whole thing boils down to the need for approaching the problem from the standpoint of a traffic trust, which would grant the best facilities in the interests of the public. I understand that amendments are contemplated with a view to modifying the effect of Clause 4. While preserving the tramway system from unfair competition by motor buses, it is proposed that certain facilities shall be reserved for the public who patronise the best service to prevent their being unduly penalised. I support the Bill in the hope that Clause 4 will be amended in Committee.

HON. J. T. FRANKLIN (Metropolitan) [5.27]: I support the second reading of the Bill, but take exception to Clause 4. I have given notice of certain amendments to the clause, and in Committee shall take an opportunity to explain my views.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [5.28]: The views expressed by Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Seddon relate to the controversy that occurred in another place when the Bill was under consideration there. Clause 4 was the bone of contention there and, from the remarks of each of the speakers who have preceded me, it is obvious that that clause will be the bone of contention here. In the Traffic Act passed in 1929 a full measure of power was given to make regulations for various purposes; and full advantage was taken of this power by the traffic authorities, as no doubt they were justified in doing, since not only the traffic authorities, but we as citizens, are interested to see that utilities established at the public expense are maintained and, if possible, made prosperous. There is, however, another aspect to be taken into account—that when conveniences such as those provided by trains, trams, or motor buses are considered, we have to ask ourselves whether these methods of conveyance are provided for the convenience of the public or for the ulterior motive of actual profit. I take it that the main object underlying all these methods of conveyance is the

convenience of the public. If we take the view that regard should be paid only to the fact that a large sum of public money has been invested in our railways and tramways, we naturally feel that if anything can be done by governmental effort to destroy private enterprise, it would be justified. But I doubt whether that is a fair way of looking at the matter. Buses have been licensed, and their enterprise has met with a certain degree of success; otherwise they would not have progressed with the work as they have done. The fact that they have continued their efforts and gone into districts where there was no likelihood for years to come of tramway conveniences being established, entitled them to a measure of consideration which will not be given to them if we enact such a provision as Clause 4. Whilst I am fully alive to the necessity for doing something to assist our railways in particular, and to give all reasonable aid to our trams, still, those transit conveniences which are provided by private enterprise are also justly entitled to certain consideration. It must be realised that Clause 4 contains many unjust and unfair provisions. The outstanding one is with regard to the 150 yards as the point from which either setting down or taking up passengers may be carried out.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: That might well be reduced.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No doubt the matter will be fully discussed in Committee. I shall not enter into it now. In view of what has taken place here with respect to regulations, in view of the fact that a former member of this Chamber took a prominent part in voicing opposition to legislation by regulation, and having regard to what has occurred recently as to certain Federal regulations, one begins to think whether—

Hon. G. W. Miles: But you do not anticipate that to happen in this State.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I would not like to think so, but I do not know what might happen even in Western Australia. One is forced to the conclusion that government by regulation is not the wisest method. In that respect we have almost run to extremes. One need only look at the mass of powers given in the last Traffic Act, as well as in many other measures, powers authorising the Government to legislate by regulation.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It is quicker, and it is just.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Sometimes it is unjust. Of that we have a striking example in the Federal episode.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Does not all that depend on the point of view?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: One does not wish to comment on the attitude adopted in the Federal Parliament, but it is certain that if any Western Australian Government adopted a similar attitude, we should feel highly incensed.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Those people are in power; they are the Governor-in-Council.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Then the hon. member would suggest that the Government in power are the legislative authority, and that a House which is given power to reject or amend measures of that nature has its voice silenced by reason of the fact of a particular Government being in power.

Hon. C. B. Williams: This House is elected by a certain section only.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I understand that the hon. member is merely giving an illustration of what might happen.

Hon. C. B. Williams: That does not alter the fact that the Government for the time being are the voice of the people.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: It would be a new method of government to introduce, and one not in accordance with the principles of democracy. Bearing in mind that Parliament is composed of two distinct bodies, two Houses with certain rights and authorities vested in each House, it would be wrong to imagine that those rights should be abrogated by one House at the expense of the other. I hope this will never take place in Western Australia. The power which is sought in Clause 4, while it may be amended, is of such a wide character that we should consider whether the clause ought not to be negatived. However, that question can be dealt with in Committee. I shall no oppose he second reading; indeed, I shall support it; but I shall certainly have something further to say when Clause 4 comes before us in the Committee stage.

HON. H. STEWART (South-East) [5.40]: This House has at all times viewed with a jealous eye any attempt to legislate by regulation, and I think it has been amply demonstrated that in this State it is not possible to legislate by that means. There may be necessity for slight amendment of Clause 4; but although that clause gives wide

powers, I do not think any Minister would or could have regulations promulgated and kept in effect in the face of pronounced public opinion regarding any particular route or section of a route. The further power is necessary, and I have yet to learn that when this part of the Bill comes before us in Committee, sufficient argument can be put up to warrant any appreciable amendment of Clause 4. That clause is not prohibitive, except to the extent that it provides for the prevention of the picking up and setting down of passengers within certain distances of railways or tramways. A railway may run for a considerable distance parallel with a road without a station being available. I do not think any Minister would for a moment think of debarring the utilisation of buses on a section where the people had no other facilities available. When it comes to the terminal stations, however, I think the Government asset is entitled to some protection. Another aspect which we should take into account is that to-day, as in the past, people with plenty of money are prepared to pay twice as much for a bus ride as for a ride by tram or train over the same mileage. However, the time is coming when people will not regard so lightly the spending of 9d. on a bus fare over a route which they can travel for 4d. by tram. Then this question will not be of so much importance as it seems to-day. I know of routes where buses are plying and trams are also running, and there seem to be plenty of people prepared to pay twice as much for conveyance by bus as for the transit facilities furnished by the Government.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: They go practically from door to door.

Hon. H. STEWART: Hardly from door to door. The buses seem to travel more than half way along the route to the terminus, and the numerous people who travel by them cannot all be passengers from door to door. I am pleased to see that in this part of the Bill the Government, besides providing some relief for the primary producer, have shown greater liberality in wording the two paragraphs which deal with the prospector and the sandalwood getter. The liberality shown is greater than that which is extended to the agriculturist and the pastoralist. I congratulate those who represent the prospectors on securing such an amendment

to the Act so free from limitations. Prospecting may extend from Geraldton to Northampton, through the North-West, from Carrabin or Burracoppin through to the goldfields and other areas. There is no restriction that will compel the prospector to send his products to the nearest railway siding or station. That is as it should be. It must be remembered that we are not aware of the full mineral resources of the State. The concession to the prospectors will apply to prospecting of all descriptions. It will apply to prospecting for coal in the South-West, where, I am sure, further deposits will be found in the country extending from Collie through to Busseton and on to Fitzgerald River. I believe that in time it will be found that we have resources there that have not yet been discovered, but will be tapped when further supplies are required. I believe that prospecting will also extend to areas in the Great Southern district, where there should be likely places for investigations; and then there is the district out from Greenbushes.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You surely do not propose that they shall carry the coal by motor truck instead of by rail?

Hon. H. STEWART: No, of course not, but under the Bill they can carry anything they like. If the prospector is to be permitted to do so, I see no reason why the pastoralists should be limited to taking their goods to the nearest port or railway station.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: I have not noticed anything about the pastoralists.

Hon. H. STEWART: The first clause refers to agriculturists and graziers, and they are bound by the restrictions set out.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: A grazier is not a pastoralist.

Hon. H. STEWART: Apparently he is, according to the framers of the Bill.

HON. G. W. MILES (North) [5.50]: I support the Bill. I shall ask hon. members to agree to an amendment to Clause 2, to which Mr. Stewart referred, and the amendment will relate to the distance from a railway. References have been made to Clause 4, which provides power to make regulations regarding the competition between motor transport and the trams and railways. A number of tramway anomalies have been set up, and Mr. Seddon has

pointed out that the Government built one line that will compete with the railways. In South Perth another line was built to compete with the ferries. I contend those works were carried out for political purposes. Then, again, the Claremont tramway line should not have been built. The Government should consider the advisability of pulling up that line altogether, and permit the people to be served adequately by the buses. In fact, I think there should be a commission appointed to investigate our transport facilities.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: What, another commission?

Hon. G. Fraser: The Claremont line was constructed at the request of the local governing authorities and the public.

Hon. J. T. Franklin: And it does not pay axle grease.

Hon. G. W. MILES: When regulations are framed and tabled in this House, I hope if they are disallowed the will of the House will be treated with respect by the Government. The Government should reconsider their transport policy, and I am convinced it would not be a bad idea to appoint a commission to inquire into the whole position.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are becoming a hog on commissions.

Hon. H. Stewart: The previous Government thought government by commission was not a good scheme.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I hope that what is taking place in the Federal arena will never obtain here. If we are to have government by regulations to any degree, either House should have the right to disallow, and the Government of the day should recognise the authority of Parliament.

Hon. H. Stewart: The previous Government had many commissions.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I had in mind an honorary commission.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: But, even so, they cost a lot.

Hon. G. W. MILES: The trouble is that the Government cannot handle the job, and they require practical business men to handle it for them. We have had Ministers who, while they did not know how to run their own businesses, were expected to run the operations of the State. Practical business men should be in charge, and it is they who should decide the form of transportation that should be adopted.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.54]: I applaud the measure of redress granted to those who require motor transport facilities in country districts. On former occasions I have remarked upon the impositions thrust upon farmers regarding their motors. In many instances it is necessary for the agriculturist to use trucks because of the added convenience compared with the railway facilities. At the same time, we must recognise that an enormous sum of money leaves the State annually for the purchase of oil fuel, in order to provide for the motors in use. Frequently it is asserted that means must be adopted to prevent that outflow of money overseas and substitute supplies procurable within our own borders. The railways certainly use coal mined in the State and the trams come within the same category. I have read articles showing how other countries—France was mentioned particularly—have developed the use of producer gas for power purposes. That is one direction in which investigations could be carried out. Charcoal and its by-products could be utilised to greater advantage than is being done at present. I am sure that investigations along those lines would demonstrate that we could avoid sending such large sums of money out of the country for the purchase of oil fuel. Producer gas might be utilised instead of petrol for motor services not in competition with our trams and railways. I realise the great importance of adequate facilities being available for our people, and the great part that competition plays in improving those facilities. It is questionable how long we can continue sending our money overseas for the purchase of fuel.

Hon. J. Nicholson: What about the electrification of the suburban railways?

Hon. H. Stewart: Where will you get the money?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: We cannot afford such an undertaking at present.

Hon. H. Stewart: And we have not got the people in the State to warrant its being done.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I marvel that something along the lines of developing power from the use of producer gas has not been undertaken long ago. With our vast timber resources, we should be able to make progress in this State along those lines. We must conserve the interests of the utili-

ties we have provided for the people, but where they are not present, ample opportunity should be afforded for the establishment of adequate bus services.

On motion by Hon. G. Fraser, debate adjourned.

BILL—HIRE-PURCHASE AGREEMENTS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [5.58]: When I secured the adjournment of the debate, I had hoped that we would have secured the advice of Sir Charles Nathan, who has taken particular interest in the issues involved in the Bill. I wish to deal with one or two phases only. Hire purchase agreements under our existing legislation are merely agreements under which goods are hired or bought, and that method of purchase has been applied throughout the country to many articles in daily use. There have been some very hard cases under the system, and throughout the agricultural areas there is a strong feeling owing to the way in which the system has worked out. Many settlers, having to sell their wheat at a lower price, have found it difficult to meet their commitments under hire-purchase agreements, and in numerous instances after they have almost completed their instalments of purchase money they have been unable to complete their contracts. Then it is they discover that the contracts they have signed left it open to the vendors of the machinery to repossess the property, ignoring any equity of the purchaser who had been using the machine. Many settlers unable to complete their purchases have had the machines left on their farms, but only after certain parts had been removed. I have been told that when a settler is unable to complete his instalments the vendor, rather than go to the expense of taking the machine off the premises, will just remove some portion of the machine so that it cannot be used.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Has that been substantiated?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: In other instances the machines have been removed from the farms, leaving the settlers unable

to take off their harvests for want of the machines. So in various centres feeling is running very strong, and it is high time the Government, on behalf of the settlers, overhauled the hire-purchase system. My electors welcome the provisions of the Bill. I do not know whether the Bill goes far enough or goes too far; it remains to be seen what members think of it. It is felt by many in the community, particularly those who are trading in machinery, that the Bill if it became law would put an end to all chance of people acquiring machines on the hire-purchase system in future. That is a very serious position and needs the most careful inquiry. The development of this country involves a very heavy initial outlay in machinery, and it is well-nigh impossible to expect anyone to have the necessary cash in hand to pay for everything required before embarking upon farming operations. If new settlers have to wait until they can pay cash for every machine they require, it will put a stop to the enterprise of a great many people. If the measure is going to have that drastic effect, we shall have seriously to consider the position and inquire from the vendors of machines actually how far-reaching the Bill might be. Still we must recognise that those who in the past have bought machinery and paid large sums towards the cost, perhaps more than 75 per cent., have an equity in those machines which should be recognised. No doubt there have been faults on both sides. In some cases people have had machinery taken from them, and not without justification. At the same time in many instances, the selling agents have pressed a great deal of machinery on the farmers, and have been to a great extent responsible for loading machines on to farmers who did not really want them. There have been heaped on to farmers, not only the cost of the machine itself, but the additional price the result of the heavy tariff and the further taxation that has been imposed, principally by the Federal Government. It has meant a tremendous increase in the cost of equipping a farm. If the measure is likely to add still further to that cost, there should be serious inquiry by a select committee before we agree to it. For it must be recognised that all increased costs are passed on to the men requiring the machinery. The Bill clearly recognises the farmer's equity in the machines he will pur-

chase in future, and for which he will pay large sums of money; the Bill, I say, is perfectly clear as to the future, but the question is whether the provision should be made retrospective, at all events to cover existing hire-purchase agreements. If it be made retrospective, the Bill will help those settlers who now find themselves in difficulties in respect of transactions. When we consider the risks the farmer has to take in regard not only to the weather, but to overseas markets, and when we are reminded of his many other troubles and worries, we realise that if we can get in the Bill a measure which will help him without interfering too seriously with those merchants who have paid out large sums of money and are now carrying very heavy loads in the way of credit advanced to settlers, it is earnestly to be hoped that a measure satisfactory to both parties, the farmers and the machinery merchants, will be evolved. I understand the mercantile firms are not very well pleased with the Bill, and I think that possibly a careful inquiry might result in some satisfactory arrangement being reached. Meantime I will support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. Sir William Latblain, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 10th June, 1931.

	PAGE
Bills: Workers' Compensation, Com. ...	3335
Colle Recreation and Park Lands, returned ...	3363

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

BILL—WORKERS' COMPENSATION.

In Committee.

Resumed from the previous day. Mr. Richardson in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.