

the earnings of the employee at the time of his death. That should appeal to the Minister. With the leave of the Committee I will amend my amendment by leaving in the words "but is wholly."

Amendment, by leave, amended accordingly.

Mr. KENNEALLY: My amendment which I now move will read—

That after the word "wholly" the words "or in part" be inserted.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot agree to the amendment. In the case of death I think the words "wholly or in part" should go in, but we are now dealing with the First Schedule. The 1930 Commonwealth Act says, "In respect of each child totally or mainly dependent." All I want is to provide for that. We should not pay the father this allowance unless he is wholly or mainly supporting the children. Surely there must be sound reason for the appearance of the words in all the other Acts. The amendment should be rejected.

Amendment put and negatived.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I move an amendment—

That in Clause 1, paragraph (b), of the schedule, after the word "wholly," line 8, there be inserted "or mainly."

Amendment put and passed.

Progress reported.

#### **BILL—COLLIE RECREATION AND PARK LANDS.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

*House adjourned at 11.4 p.m.*

## **Legislative Council,**

*Thursday, 11th June, 1931.*

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Bills: Special Lease (Esperance Pine Plantation) Act      | 3353 |
| Amendment, 3R., passed                                    | 2362 |
| Hire-Purchase Agreements, 2R.                             | 3353 |
| Motion: Stock Regulations, to inquire by Royal Commission | 3353 |

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

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

Read a third time and *passed*.

#### **MOTION—STOCK REGULATIONS, KIMBERLEY CATTLE.**

*To inquire by Royal Commission.*

Debate resumed from the 3rd June on the following motion by Hon. G. W. Miles—

That an Honorary Royal Commission be appointed to investigate the administration and application of the regulations under the Stock Diseases Act, 1895, as gazetted on the 11th October, 1929, particularly as they relate to the restriction of the movement of cattle from the Kimberley district.

#### **THE MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES** (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [4.36]:

One can appreciate the motives actuating Mr. Miles in fighting the battles of the Kimberley pioneers. They deserve all the assistance they possibly can get. However, after inquiry at the Department of Agriculture, I am satisfied that he has been grossly misled regarding the attitude of the department in connection with the administration of the Stock Diseases Act as applied to the control of pleuro pneumonia, and I am convinced, if the action now being taken is not continued and perhaps more rigidly exercised, the State may be faced, not with the problem of confining the ravages of pleuro pneumonia to the cattle stations in the North, but with a wild-fire spread of the dread disease to the length and breadth of the State. To date the officers of the department have done remarkably well in restricting the spread of the disease, and I am surprised that the leniency that is being shown to the northern growers in the disposal of their cattle in the southern markets has not resulted in serious devastating consequences to the herds in the southern districts of the State. The position is that the Kimberleys, both East and West, are affected with pleuro-

pneumonia, whilst the southern part of the State is free of the disease. That serious situation demanded earnest attention, and in dealing with it the department was compelled to impose certain restrictions on the movements of cattle. In some interested quarters those restrictions are considered to be irksome, but they are designed to keep the southern part of the State free of pleuro pneumonia: and although that aspect is arguable when viewed from the standpoint of southern growers, I consider the so-called restrictions are being administered at the present time with just the same discrimination as at any previous time, even though the conditions in the Kimberleys are now quite different, as far as pleuro pneumonia is concerned, from those which obtained three years ago, and that is an important consideration in the attitude of the department. In explanation, I have been told by the competent officers of the department that, prior to 1927 no case of pleuro pneumonia had been reported from West Kimberley, but in that year the Java veterinary authorities reported an outbreak of the disease amongst a shipment of cattle sent by a West Kimberley station to that island. Later, in 1928, cases were found amongst cattle which arrived at the Midland Junction abattoirs, indicating that another station was affected. Since then other cases have been reported until now, unfortunately, it has been found in cattle from eleven West Kimberley stations, and this season already twenty-nine animals have been found affected with pleuro pneumonia when slaughtered in the metropolitan area. That is not the whole story for, as is well known, the holdings in the Kimberleys are unfenced and, in consequence, there is a considerable intermingling of cattle, and because of the freedom in grazing it is now unsafe to assume that any station in the West Kimberley is entirely free from the disease.

It may be thought that a strict inspection by qualified men would disclose the presence of the disease. That view the authorities claim is entirely erroneous. There are two forms of pleuro pneumonia, the acute and the chronic. A trained veterinarian or skilled stock inspector can determine an animal affected with the former type of the disease. Animals affected with the chronic form of the disease sometimes recover, and when that happens the source of infection

becomes enclosed in a capsule which, for the time being, prevents further infection by contact. But unfortunately the animal is a serious source of danger, as the capsule may become ruptured at any time, particularly under stress, in which case the disease lights up, and the animal is then a menace to other animals with which it may come in contact, and is, in fact, a dangerous spreader of the disease. Therefore the difficulties of controlling the disease are tremendously increased, and the only way to ensure that it shall not be carried into clean areas is to prevent the movement of cattle spreaders amongst them, because as a result of the movement of cattle spreaders pleuro pneumonia is carried from one district to another. That conclusion, the officers state, is borne out by the fact that the disease has spread from East to West Kimberley along the line of movement of stock towards the port. In a similar way the movement of cattle, if unrestricted, will convey the disease from West Kimberley to the North-West pastoral areas and to the agricultural areas of the State. In support of that experience the pleuro statistics of New South Wales show that over ten years the number of outbreaks of pleuro in New South Wales have been in almost direct relation to the number of cattle admitted to the State from Queensland, where pleuro is prevalent and cannot be controlled as effectively as in the smaller areas of New South Wales. If, as stated by Mr. Holmes in a speech on another subject, there has been pleuro in the West Kimberleys for the last 30 years, then veterinarians are not aware of its existence. To me, even though I am content with the views of the experts, the wisdom of that damaging statement by the hon. member is not apparent.

Thousands of cattle from West Kimberley have been killed at Fremantle during the last 30 years but pleuro pneumonia, in spite of thorough meat inspection, was only discovered amongst West Kimberley cattle during 1928. From that fact it can be assumed that it has appeared in the cattle only during the last few years. In support of that contention the number of infected animals since 1928 has increased; also the number of infected stations. Some doubt has been raised as to whether the disease is pleuro pneumonia. It is regrettable that such a canard should be spread in connection with the trouble and a false sense of security created. When the first case was

discovered in the local abattoirs the owners at some cost obtained the services of an expert from the Eastern States and it is now well known that he confirmed the diagnosis made by the officers of the State Government. Pleuro pneumonia is distinct from the colds and other complaints referred to by Mr. Holmes, and it cannot be developed unless the specific germ which causes it is present. There are thousands of cattle in the South-West, and in other parts of the State which are subject to heat, cold, frost and starvation, but they do not suffer from pleuro pneumonia owing to the absence of the causal germ. Unfortunately, the department has evidence that pleuro pneumonia has developed in the southern part of the State. In the past there have been outbreaks at Pinjarra, and several affected animals have been found at Yandanooka and at Maida Vale. The outbreaks at Pinjarra and Yandanooka originated from East Kimberley, and the Maida Vale case from West Kimberley sources. Those outbreaks furnish proof that, when the causal germ is present, conditions in the South-West are not unfavourable to the development of the disease, as has been suggested. It is admitted that the seal on trucked cattle could be broken when affected cattle are being railed, but so could a lock or a bolt. As it is a serious offence to break a Government seal, possibly the sealing of trucks is just as effective as locking them.

The officers of the department realise that risk is incurred in permitting the movement of affected cattle in sealed trucks, but that method has been resorted to in place of unreasonable restrictions upon the movement of cattle. That considerate attitude should be evidence that the responsible Minister is not desirous of unduly hampering the shifting of Kimberley cattle. It is not true to say that live cattle can only be transported to and slaughtered at three places.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What chance have the Kalgoolie people of getting cheap meat from the places you speak of?

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: The killing of animals at these places does not affect the price of meat.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Doesn't it?

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: Reasonable quarantine restrictions are maintained at the three places referred to, and if they are applied at other slaughter houses authority to kill

at those houses will be given by the responsible Minister. Mr. Miles claimed that graziers in the south purchased Kimberley stores and fattened them for the summer meat supply of the people in the metropolitan area. In that statement he disclosed the fact that he has been misinformed concerning the number of Kimberley cattle availed of in satisfying the summer demand. If he will make personal inquiries he will ascertain that the metropolitan market absorbs about 700 cattle per week and that possibly drafts from the northern districts meet metropolitan needs for not more than four or five weeks. In that respect the department's figures show that last year 1,700 stores were shipped to Fremantle for agistment as stores for fattening purposes, and that 1,000 stores were overlanded—a total of 2,700 cattle—or, as previously stated, a four to five weeks' meat supply for the metropolitan market. Moreover, in the unrestricted years of 1928 and 1929, 3,259 cattle were overlanded and shipped as stores, or approximately a five weeks' supply for the market. The number of cattle affected is, therefore, by no means as large as some people maintain. Though it is regretted that the cattle cannot now be overlanded, it cannot be said that that fact has a seriously detrimental effect upon the summer supply of beef for the metropolitan market.

Regarding the Canning Stock Route, the southern boundary of the East Kimberley District is in lat. 19.30. Stations south of that line are outside the restricted area, and therefore cattle from them can be overlanded. But the expenditure on re-conditioning the route is quite a distinct matter, and it is useless arguing that it justifies the favoured treatment of stock utilising it. Mr. Miles stated that the Kimberley growers desire that the conditions to obtain in marketing their cattle should be those that operated in previous years. Unfortunately, that is impossible, as the conditions in West Kimberley regarding the presence of disease are not the same as in previous years.

Hon. C. B. Williams: It is a wonder any cattle at all are left there.

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: The rapid progress of pleuro pneumonia in West Kimberley has changed the outlook in dealing with the position. Whereas formerly the stations were clean and there was no risk in overlanded cattle southward, at present no one

is able to say that any station is clean, owing to the intermingling of cattle between affected and non-affected stations. In agreement with the view expressed by Mr. Miles, that cattle from stations known to be free from cattle disease should be allowed to be sold to country butchers, the officers concerned state that cattle known to be free from the disease can be sold to country butchers. Unfortunately, in the Kimberleys, it is impossible for the most skilled veterinarian to say what stations are not affected, and further, what cattle are free from the disease in its latent form.

The Department's officers have always been anxious to do everything possible to meet the position. In furtherance of that desire, and consistent with their present attitude in the matter, they again declare that no restrictions will be placed on Kimberley cattle if suitable guarantees can be obtained from purchasers of the stock that it will be kept in satisfactory quarantine until killed. That has been the policy since the inception of the trouble. In the absence of the guarantees the department is reluctantly compelled to continue the restrictions imposed.

Mr. Miles expresses the opinion that if country butchers and graziers, who buy cattle for fattening, are eliminated, there will be left few buyers who can fix their own prices, and he maintained that that has been the position this winter. Instead of a few buyers, there are some 20 buyers for Kimberley cattle, and prices have not been fixed by arrangement between them; but it is admitted that the prices this year, as in all other industries, are lower than last year. In some cases there has been a 54 per cent. decline in prices. That decline applies equally to the relative prices obtained this year and last year for unrestricted cattle south of the Kimberleys and restricted cattle from the Kimberleys, thus indicating that the cause of the lower prices is not the necessary restrictions which have been imposed, but a general decline in the purchasing power of the public, in keeping with the collapse of prices of all products, and because of the over-supply of mutton and beef. Kimberley cattle have maintained good prices in past years, but such prices cannot be expected to remain firm whilst mutton prices are at bedrock. Last season cattle from infected stations in West Kimberley were sold under exactly the

same restrictions as now apply to all West Kimberley cattle. In the circumstances the cattle from the non-infected stations might, therefore, be expected to show a bigger percentage reduction in price compared with that obtaining last year, but as a matter of fact the percentage reduction was practically identical for infected and non-infected stations.

Referring to the Broome district, Mr. Miles said he understood that one station was suspect, but even in that area there has been no case of pleuro for over two years. The fact that no case has been detected is no guarantee that pleuro pneumonia does not exist at the station. A case in point occurred last year when several cattle on arrival at Fremantle were found to be affected with both acute and latent forms of pleuro pneumonia, though no case had previously been found on the station in question for 30 years—not two as stated by Mr. Miles. He spoke of importations of cattle from the Eastern States during the administration of the Lands Department by the Hon. M. F. Troy, when he said that pleuro was supposed to be rampant in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. Since then he claimed the embargo had been lifted, and for some time the authorities had been purchasing cattle from Victoria and placing them in the South-West. In reply to that criticism, the departmental officer points out that at the present time stud cattle only are allowed in from the Eastern States, and they must be accompanied by certificates stating that they are only from areas which have been known to be free from pleuro pneumonia for at least twelve months.

With regard to the importations of dairy cattle from New South Wales and Victoria, the regulations provided that they should come from areas which had been free from pleuro pneumonia during the preceding two years; also quarantine was provided for, and a veterinary officer from the Department of Agriculture supervised the buying and endorsed the certificates required by this State. In connection with Victoria, it is important to point out that since the first cattle were imported from New South Wales pleuro pneumonia has been eradicated from the Victorian dairy herds as the result of very drastic steps taken by the Department of Agriculture in that State, which required that all cattle on any holding on which an animal affected with pleuro

had been found should be destroyed. The work of eradication involved an expenditure of, it is believed, £180,000 which was collected as the result of a levy on all cattle sold in that State. No dairy cattle have been brought from South Australia.

Evidently there is some confusion in the minds of the Kimberley growers otherwise Mr. Miles would not put forward the suggestion that the conditions which apply to growers in the Eastern States, in respect to drafts to Western Australia, should also apply to Kimberley growers. If the Kimberley growers sincerely believe that more favourable conditions apply to shipments from the Eastern States, then it can be claimed, without contradiction, that they are unaware of the more rigorous conditions which apply to importations from the Eastern States. If Mr. Miles will look into the suggestion he will find that the restrictions which apply to the Kimberley growers are less drastic than those which apply to cattle from the Eastern States. Cattle from holdings in the Kimberleys known to be affected with pleuro pneumonia are allowed to be introduced for slaughter to the southern portion of the State, whereas cattle from the Eastern States known to be affected are not allowed into the State, even for slaughter.

There is no weight in Mr. Miles' view that while the embargo lasts against West Kimberley cattle stock required for summer supplies will have to be imported from the Eastern States; because, as already pointed out, the number of Kimberley cattle sent previously for fattening has been sufficient only for four weeks' supply, and could not, therefore, materially affect the summer supplies of the State. The hon. member repeated some figures from Mr. Holmes' speech in regard to prices. Admittedly they are unsatisfactory, but an unprofitable price for cattle is likely to occur at any time when the market is over-supplied, and when stagnant conditions prevail in all industries and while so many people are workless.

Referring to the animal discovered in Mr. Frank Wittenoom's consignment of 20 head placed at Maida Vale, and the opinion of Mr. Miles that the beast was not suffering from pleuro, the officers of the department state definitely that the animal was affected with the disease. With all due respect to Mr. Miles, I ask how is he in a position to express an opinion? Did he see the cattle

and, if he did, has he had veterinary training to enable him to determine whether the animal was affected or not? Will he place his opinion in opposition to that of a qualified veterinary pathologist? Surely the hon. member—a layman—is unduly venturesome in pitting his view against that of an expert.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What about the other 19 head?

The **MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES**: It is true the other 19 head were destroyed, and that no sign of pleuro pneumonia was found in any of the beasts, but Mr. Miles has evidently overlooked the fact that the incubation period of the disease is up to six weeks, and therefore the cattle were rightly destroyed before the disease had time to make its presence felt and become a greater menace than it already was.

Going on, the hon. member said that the force of the position was that those cattle had never been in the North-West, but were Holsteins bred at Corrigin. The fact that the cattle came from Corrigin is not denied by the department, but it is claimed by the department, and very emphatically too, that though the animals came from Corrigin the infection did not take place there. Unfortunately, in opposition to the information possessed by the hon. member, the department has evidence to show that the infection from pleuro in the instance referred to was due to contact with West Kimberley cattle. The action taken in respect to the cattle did not savour of the panicky as suggested by Mr. Miles. As a matter of fact the reverse was the case. A common sense view of the situation was taken, and the matter discussed with the owner, who was advised to have the contact animals slaughtered, as some of them would surely become affected with the disease and a total loss on their carcasses would have ensued. Reasonable methods were adopted with the animals in the surrounding paddocks, as they were suspect contacts. The methods adopted were the commonsense methods of trained veterinarians throughout Australia, and it is utter nonsense to maintain otherwise.

That some of the best cattle country is in the De Grey, Roy Hill, and Ethel Creek districts is not disputed, and it is with the object of preventing cattle on those runs and similar stations, also non-infected, in the great North-West and Murchison pas-

toral areas from becoming infected with pleuro pneumonia, that the regulations regarding overlanding are being enforced.

Mr. Miles contended that the effect of Regulation No. 1 is that butchers outside those areas cannot buy the cattle which have to be slaughtered at Midland Junction or Fremantle. As already pointed out the butchers, if they can provide satisfactory quarantine conditions can buy the cattle, but even though they do not buy the live cattle they are able to buy the carcase meat, and officers of the department say that they are taking the carcase meat rather than provide the facilities which are necessary for proper quarantine. The hon. member said that cattle from clean stations are not permitted to travel overland and that an absolute embargo existed. In the first statement the hon. member is quite wrong because cattle from clean stations are permitted to travel overland, but unfortunately, the position in the Kimberleys is such that, because of the intermingling of cattle between the stations in the Kimberleys, and the number of stations from which infected cattle have been sent to Fremantle, no one, however skilled, can say that any of the stations north of the 19th parallel are clean. Mr. Miles is afraid that if the regulations are strictly enforced there will be a grave shortage of beef next summer. That is likely to occur apart from any consideration of drafts from the North. At the most there are five stations which are interested in this, namely, those which overland store cattle for fattening purposes. As Mr. Miles has pointed out the number of cattle affected is small, and as the number overlanded last year, prior to the restrictions being enforced, was only sufficient to supply the metropolitan market for four weeks. As previously disclosed, the number of cattle overlanded and shipped as stores, during the unrestricted years of 1928 and 1929, totalled 3,259, which is approximately five weeks' supply.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What about the other years when the stock route was all right?

The MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: In his criticism of the nature of the disease, the hon. member stated that the Dutch veterinary officers reported that a few cattle shipped to Java were found to be suffering from a lung complaint and he asked why they reported the disease as lung complaint and

not as pleuro. In reply let me quote the cablegram; it read—

Among shipment cattle Minderoo several cases lung plague, therefore will be proposed temporarily prohibit import cattle from Western Australia.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But what was the complaint?

THE MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES: If the hon. member will be patient I will tell him all about it. It will be seen that the Java authorities, who are skilled veterinarians, referred to the trouble as "lung plague" which, as explained in veterinary textbooks, is a synonym for pleuro pneumonia contagiosa. In his inability to quote the advice of the skilled veterinarians that the unwelcome disease is not pleuro pneumonia Mr. Miles said that drovers who have had experience of the real pleuro laugh at the few instances of this lung complaint being called pleuro, and that if it were the real thing heavy infection and mortality would be experienced. The hon. member knows full well that drovers are not authorities upon this subject, and that if they were they would know that the conditions which obtain in the Kimberleys, particularly the wide range which the cattle have, are such as to prevent the disease becoming epidemic. Unfortunately, there is no doubt whatever that the disease is the real pleuro and satisfactory and concrete evidence can be furnished on this point to any qualified man. The disease is pleuro pneumonia, which is sometimes known as "lung plague."

Returning to the importations of dairy cattle from Victoria from districts that have been free of pleuro for two years, Mr. Miles asked why are not cattle from clean districts in this State treated in the same way? In Victoria, owing to the closely settled districts, and the consequent control by the veterinary staff, it is known which districts are clean and which are infected. Unfortunately, the position in the Kimberleys is entirely different, as, owing to the absence of fencing, and the large areas, the disease cannot be controlled, and hence, if the other part of the State is to be protected, the whole of the Kimberleys must be looked upon as an infected area. Quoting from a letter received from the Chief Inspector of Stock in Queensland, the hon. member said that "cattle travelling to New South Wales must be certified to as not

having been in contact with animals suffering from pleuro pneumonia contagiosa for the previous three months."

In the opinion of our Department of Agriculture that restriction is not sufficient to prevent the introduction of pleuro pneumonia from outside sources, and that is shown by the fact that the Chief Veterinary Officer of New South Wales has reported that the number of outbreaks of pleuro pneumonia increases with the number of cattle imported from Queensland. Furthermore, the countries into which Queensland cattle are permitted to enter are themselves not as clean as is the southern portion of this State. The only State in the Commonwealth which is as free from pleuro pneumonia as is that part of the State south of the Kimberleys, is Tasmania.

Passing to the buffalo fly menace, Mr. Miles, in referring to the departmental attitude on the disposal of manure from the cattle boats at Fremantle said, "here is another instance of apparent panic on the part of the departmental officials." The instance referred to by Mr. Miles is a proof that the department was not panicky, because, whilst it has insisted upon the manure likely to be infected with buffalo fly eggs or larvae being dumped into the sea, it has permitted the manure from those boats on which the buffalo fly could not be found to be landed and made available for the use of the vegetable growers in the locality. Further, in order to obviate the risk of introducing the buffalo fly into the southern part of the State, steps were taken to spray the cattle at the port of embarkation to prevent the flies going on board with the cattle. That practice has also rendered it possible for more manure to be made available to the settlers concerned. It is important to emphasise the danger of the buffalo fly, and hon. members can form their opinion how serious it is from the Press reports which indicate the fears which the stockowners of Queensland and New South Wales have regarding its spread from the Northern Territory downwards, and the emphasis which is being laid upon the necessity, despite the great expense, of establishing the buffer area between the region where the fly now is and that to which it is rapidly travelling. Furthermore, it is reported that the fly is now as far south in this State as Wallal, and if it continues to proceed southwards in the mobs of travelling cattle, then further

steps may be necessary to protect the southern pastoral areas from the pest. It is unfortunate that the Kimberleys are affected with pleuro pneumonia and the buffalo fly, but the Department of Agriculture should not be blamed in that connection. Knowing the serious natures of the disease and of the pest and knowing that both are in the Kimberleys, the officers of the department would be lacking in duty if they did not recommend the steps necessary to retard the progress of the disease and pest into other parts of the State now free of them.

Summed up: the case put up by Mr. Miles would be a good one were it not based on erroneous premises. For instance, the hon. member stated that the disease referred to is not real pleuro but some form of lung trouble. That statement is based upon the cable received from Java which, however, specifically stated that the disease was lung plague, a synonym for pleuro pneumonia, and unfortunately the disease is pleuro pneumonia. The hon. member pointed out that the Dutch veterinary officers reported that a few Kimberley cattle shipped to Java were found to be suffering from a lung complaint. Those officers are recognised in scientific circles as experts. It will thus be seen that the Java experts supported the diagnosis of the officers of our own Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Miles expressed the opinion that the outbreak at Maida Vale was not pleuro because none of the contacts showed signs of it. He overlooked the fact of the incubation period. The hon. member claimed that the stations in the Kimberleys were clean of the diseases. That is not so. Only this week a station which hitherto had no infected cattle reported from it sent down a consignment, and an acute case was found on arrival in the metropolitan area.

It is considered by Mr. Miles that the restrictions upon the overlanding and shipping of stores will deprive the metropolitan market of summer supplies. Even if that were so the restrictions would be justified, but the figures quoted by the hon. member show that the number of cattle likely to be transported south would only be sufficient for four weeks' supply.

The hon. member is of the opinion that the restrictions regarding the movement of Kimberley cattle to the southern part of the State are more drastic than those which obtain in connection with the importation

of cattle from the Eastern States. That is erroneous; the restrictions on the Kimberley cattle are less rigid. Mr. Miles also stated that the reduced prices obtained for Kimberley cattle are due to the restrictions, but the prices secured for cattle from other pastoral areas, compared with prices obtained for similar cattle last year, indicate that there has been a general collapse of the prices amounting to 54 per cent., and that applies not only to Kimberley cattle but to other cattle as well. The whole question is a highly technical professional matter, and the House would be well advised to leave it in the hands of our own competent experts. They have not failed us in the past and we should continue to have faith in their experience, knowledge and advice. It is not clear how an honorary Royal Commission could decide what precautions are necessary to protect the southern part of the State, and I am sure that if the evidence of southern cattle owners is sought in that connection overwhelming requests will be put forward for the total prohibition of the shipment of pleuro cattle from the Kimberleys.

Hon. G. W. Miles: No one wants pleuro cattle brought down here.

The **MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES**: We cannot get away from the fact that pleuro cattle are there and the people in the South would enter strong protests if those cattle were brought down. Presumably, in the absence of fees, the members of the proposed Commission would be laymen. If so and if the motion be approved, then we may as well dispense with the services of all our experts, even in all branches of agricultural industry, if their views are to be over-riden in the way set forth in the motion.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is it necessary to have all laymen on the Commission? You could have one expert.

The **MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES**: The hon. member has asked for the appointment of an honorary commission. Would he get an expert to sit on it in an honorary capacity? Certainly, with the evidence it has of the complaint, the State cannot afford to waste the costs involved in the services of experts from elsewhere, and even an honorary Royal Commission would expend money that can be ill-afforded at the present time. In the circumstances I think the motion should be determined in the negative, but let me make

it clear to hon. members that the department are not seeking to burke inquiry in the matter which, of course, is a question for the decision of the House. I consider that the appointment of a Royal Commission would be a fatal mistake for various reasons.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That was your opinion when I moved for a Royal Commission on the Collie coal industry.

The **MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES**: I did not oppose the appointment of a commission on the coal industry; the Government had previously decided to have an inquiry into the industry. The hon. member's present proposal is fraught with great danger to the Kimberley cattle men themselves, and I oppose the motion.

**HON. C. B. WILLIAMS** (South) [5.17]: It is a strange thing in politics, but nevertheless a fact, that no matter whether there be a Labour Government a Nationalist Government, or a Country Party Government in office, they all agree on a question of this kind. When Mr. Millington held the position now occupied by the Minister for Country Water Supplies, he made a statement on this subject almost word for word with that to which we have just listened. I wish to speak from the standpoint of the consumer of beef on the goldfields. As Mr. Miles has indicated, the answer given by the Leader of the House is ridiculous. It almost makes me cry.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Why do you apply the word "ridiculous" to the departmental officers?

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I maintain that we have had a ridiculous answer from the experts submitted to us by the Leader of the House. In effect, it is that cattle may be transported from the Kimberleys, taken down into South Australia, brought back to the West and sold in Kalgoorlie. Most of the beef consumed in Kalgoorlie throughout the year is brought from the Eastern States. Thus the wealth of this State, which should be returned to the North of this State, is going to the Eastern States. That this condition of affairs should exist is altogether too stupid for words. As to the experts, well, the State is in a bad way financially and there is an opportunity to economise. Out with them! Here is the position as I see it: There is a prohibition against too



much of the beef that is being brought to Fremantle. If pleuro pneumonia and other diseases which the Minister has enumerated are prevalent amongst cattle in the North, how is it that the cattle exist there? It is a wonder they have not all died out long ago. That is a common-sense reply to the Minister. If those diseases exist to any extent, the herds would have been exterminated. But they have not been exterminated. I am not blaming the present Government any more than I blame the previous Government whom I supported. They are all in the same boat. There is the same hand controlling the transport of meat from the North to the South. The Minister has given as the reply of the experts that it would be dangerous to permit of the cattle being brought in. Let me tell him what happens in Kalgoorlie. We have cattle coming from the East. The present Government will not—and the previous would not—allow the cattle to be detained at Parkeston and driven across to the abattoirs. They have to be taken out of a Federal truck and put into a State truck, and then hauled over a private line at an exorbitant cost, a six-mile joy ride for the cattle. Kalgoorlie is the centre of a large number of dairy cattle, which walk up to the abattoirs fence and eat the grass immediately outside the enclosure where the imported cattle are quarantined. Dairy cattle that supply the people of Kalgoorlie with milk are allowed to feed around the abattoirs while there are quarantined cattle inside. The two lots sniff noses. I am informed that cattle have to sniff noses in order to contract the disease. It is the height of stupidity for the Minister to attempt to put such a joke over the House as he has done. Beef was sold very cheaply in Perth a few weeks ago, but the poor butchers of Kalgoorlie could not get it in order that the people of the goldfields might be supplied with cheap meat. There was no competition in the market. One firm, Fritz Lang's, killed the cattle here and sent the beef up by train, but every butcher was not in a position to do that. What a loss to the State it is that the people of the goldfields have to buy Eastern States beef, probably beef that was originally raised in the Kimberleys! The position is too ridiculous for words, and the sooner Ministers put their two feet on those civil servants who are running them, the better it will be and the sooner the State

will recover from its poverty. We want sane Government and we want economy, and this is one of the best opportunities for economy that ever presented itself. The present position is a scandal and a shame, as it always has been. The people of Western Australia should be allowed to buy and eat Western Australian cattle. We export the best of our beef to Europe and get practically nothing for it, while we live on the skeletons that come from the South-West. Yet the Government sit back and will not listen to the truth. Fancy spending money on a stock route like the Canning stock route and then not permitting the cattle to travel over it! As I said before, if so many diseases exist amongst the cattle in the North, it is a damned wonder that any of the cattle have survived there at all.

**HON. SIR EDWARD WITTENOOM** (North) [5.23]: I have been very much impressed by the remarks that have fallen from the Leader of the House. The thanks of members are due to him for having placed such a statement before us and for having explained the position so clearly. In fact, I might almost say that he has convinced me to his way of thinking. Another thing that has carried weight with me was the publication in the Press of protests from the Royal Agricultural Society. In them, attention was directed to the great danger of bringing into the southern part of the State stock that might be affected by pleuro, because of the risk of infecting the dairy herds of the South-West. The unwisdom of risking infection of the stock in the South-West for the sake of a few hundred head of Kimberley cattle was well shown. I think the society were quite right in entering the protest. Although I am a member for that part of the State—the Kimberleys—I would not for one moment ask for anything to be done which might permit of pleuro being spread to the southern part of the State, and I know Mr. Miles would not do so, either. He knows the value of healthy stock just as well as I do. Regarding the veterinary surgeons, I have had experience of one of them, a most capable man. The others I do not know. Whatever he said about an animal, however, I should accept it as the truth. At the same time, we must remember the great disappointment, amounting almost to despair, suffered by the Kimberley settlers when they find

their market is limited to the Wyndham Meat Works. We know that the price offering at the meat works would never pay them for breeding the cattle. If the pleuro develops to such an extent that steps must be taken to prevent stock being sent down from the Kimberleys, or sent only in such limited numbers as to be unpayable, those settlers are in a bad and hopeless way. I think we can trust the Government and the department to do the best they can to facilitate getting down as many head of stock as are clean, and doing their utmost to assist the settlers in that part of the State, while preventing any risk of infecting the clean herds in the south. If Mr. Miles in his reply can show good reasons why an honorary Royal Commission should be appointed, I shall be glad to support him, but I am afraid that unless he has some very strong evidence to present, after the excellent address of the Minister, it will be difficult to follow him.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

### **BILL—HIRE-PURCHASE AGREEMENTS.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

**HON. SIR CHARLES NATHAN** (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.27]: It is unfortunate for me that I was not present to hear the remarks of the Leader of the House when he moved the second reading of this Bill; nor have I had an opportunity to listen to other speakers on the subject. I do not desire to detain the House at any length, but I feel it necessary to make a few observations after having perused the Bill and having gone into matters affected by the Bill. The hire-purchase system has been in vogue for a great number of years, and has probably reached an extent that was hardly considered possible at the time it first became an accepted method of trade. It is a method that has grown to such an extent that, without the slightest doubt, around it has grown abuse also. I agree with the Government in bringing down a Bill of this kind; it is high time the matter was reviewed. As to the methods by which it is proposed to review it, there must be some difference of opinion. I am frankly of opinion that those responsible for the measure have not

given the matter the consideration it deserves. In endeavouring to overcome certain disabilities that undoubtedly have existed, we shall be carried into far greater difficulties than those now prevailing. I think it can be said that the method of securing assets and chattels by hire-purchase has been of considerable convenience to a great section of the community. On the other hand, I admit a great many people believe that the credit facilities established by this and other methods have made it just a little too easy to acquire apparatus, machinery and other things which, had people to find the cash for them, would not have been so readily absorbed. But, after all is said and done, is not that the position in which we find ourselves generally in trade to-day? Have not credit facilities generally been much too easy? Have we not almost without exception been prepared to take too great an advantage of the readiness of people to supply us with either finance or goods? What concerns me is that the Bill as it stands seems to be an attempt to legislate so as to enable some of us to ease up obligations which we have already assumed. I was interested to read the descriptions of various articles in Clause 2. It refers to chattels such as household furniture, sewing machines, musical instruments, motor vehicles or bicycles, billiard tables and typewriters. But the part of Clause 2 which one takes mainly into consideration—subparagraph (5)—refers to implements, machines, engines, vehicles, apparatus or appliances intended to be used in connection with the business of a farmer, pastoralist or grazier. I observe that the Minister has on the Notice Paper a proposed amendment to strike out the words "farmer, pastoralist or grazier," so as to make the Bill apply generally to all implements acquired under hire-purchase agreement. Probably, however, subparagraph (5) of Clause 2 gives the motive for the Bill, showing that those who drafted the measure had in mind its application mainly to implements and machines used in connection with the business of a farmer, pastoralist or grazier. Consequently I think that in view of the financial position of the farming industry, we are entitled to inquire whether the main object of the Bill is to protect farmers, pastoralists and graziers, or to overcome certain practices which have grown up in a

business that has assumed huge proportions. That the hire-purchase business has assumed great proportions in this State is shown by the fact that at present there are about £2,000,000 worth of chattels and merchandise generally which have been distributed amongst the community through this medium. In a trade which has grown to such an enormous extent, and in any trade which is largely unrestricted, there must be many instances where abuses of the system have taken place—abuses on both sides. We all know that there are able, zealous salesmen desirous of promoting the trade of their companies who, in doing so, are not as careful as they should be, or perhaps not as scrupulous as they might be, in representing their wares to the people to whom they propose to sell them. I have not the slightest doubt that in many instances people have been induced to buy goods under hire-purchase agreement which have not been correctly represented to them, and with which, upon completion of the hire-purchase agreement, they have found themselves landed entirely through misrepresentation. I quite believe that the time is more than ripe when a review of those conditions should be made to ensure at least that those who supply the goods act up to their obligations. There are, however, obligations on the other side which should be equally well fulfilled, and which should be protected. As far as I understand, the object of the hire-purchase system is to enable people who have not the ready money, to acquire materials or goods which they require in the conduct of their businesses or in their homes. But in acquiring such goods or materials, those people take on an obligations which they have a right to fulfil; and that obligation is to pay for the goods or materials just so far as they are able. The protection of the supplier is that in the event of purchasers not being able to pay in full, they can return the goods or materials, whereupon the hiring agreement ceases. There is an attempt in the Bill to overcome a difficulty or an injustice that undoubtedly occurs. In many instances people find, by reason of the financial position being strenuous, that they are unable to pay instalments as they arise. In many cases, unfortunately, the vendor has gone in and repossessed, and those who have paid the instalments agreed

upon have lost entirely their equity in the goods, an equity that unquestionably exists and unquestionably also should be protected. Clause 5 of the Bill attempts to protect that equity. But in the attempt to protect it a position is set up which, to my mind, leaves an opening not only for fraud or dishonest practices, but for litigation which might easily assume very large proportions indeed. Clause 5 endeavours to provide a method by which the value of a repossessed article can be assessed; that is to say, assuming that the purchaser is dissatisfied with the value placed upon the article by the person who repossesses it. If we trace one of these ordinary transactions, we find that an article sold under hire-purchase agreement is repossessed only if the purchaser fails in his payments; and presumably a man fails in his payments only because of financial stringency. The vendor enters into possession, and thereupon renders an account to the hirer of the goods. That is what the Bill suggests. The Bill further suggests that in the event of the hirer being dissatisfied with the value placed on the goods, he shall have the right to appeal to a magistrate, whereupon the magistrate shall assess the value, and that value shall then form portion of the account between the parties. But the Bill also provides that the vendor, in framing the account, shall debit the hirer with 90 per cent. of the hire instalments that have not accrued. That, I think, is distinctly unfair to the hirer, because under the present hire-purchase agreement a purchaser who returns the chattel is freed from all responsibility in so far as future hire is concerned, being only debited with the hire that has accrued and is past due. The Bill provides a clumsy method of stating the purchaser's liability by debiting him with 90 per cent. of the unaccrued hire. I could quote numerous instances where, in such circumstances, the hirer, after having parted with the possession of the goods to the vendor, is left with a greater liability than would be the case under the existing arrangement. To ask a magistrate to assess the value of repossessed machinery is to ask him to undertake a highly responsible task. More than that, in assessing the value of a machine of that description he is distinctly at a disadvantage. At the present time a purchaser only gives up possession of a machine when he finds that he is not able to pay for it. Under the condi-

tions set forth in the Bill, there is a distinct premium to the man who has hired a machine to return it in the hope of being able to get a residual value. For example, a man may have had a machine for four years. There are many instances where men have two or three machines. The machines in the course of time become obsolete. A purchaser may make up his mind that he does not want his machine or machines any more, but would sooner have a machine of a modern type. Under the Bill, if it becomes law, such a man will be able to return an obsolete machine with an assurance that there will be a residual value. Although that residual value may not represent anything like as much as the machine was originally worth, still, it is a residual value, and by passing in one or two old machines the purchaser will get something that will help him to acquire a more modern machine. It has been suggested that the method of assessing values proposed by the Bill is one that would absolutely break down of its own weight, and that it is absolutely unfair to all parties concerned. In this connection a suggestion has been made in a circular which I suppose most members have received from the Hire-Purchase Traders' Association. The circular suggests that failing an agreement the chattels seized shall be submitted to public auction, either party to the hire-purchase agreement being entitled to bid, at a place close to the place where the contract was made, or such place as may be mutually agreed upon, and that the value so realised shall be taken to be the value of the chattel for the purposes of this measure. On the face of it, that would seem to be a reasonable way of ascertaining the value; but I am afraid that if we were to follow the suggestion of these gentlemen of the Hire-Purchase Traders' Association we should only be going from the frying pan into the fire, because the proposition is most inequitable. Assume that a purchaser has had his machine repossessed, and that it is offered at auction. Then in the event of there not being a bid, is that to be assessed as the value of the chattel? The method would be as distinctly unfair as the method proposed in the Bill.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Where would the contract be made? Probably in the city, and the implement may be two or three hundred miles away.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: The Bill proposes that the assessment value of the machine shall be fixed by the nearest magistrate to the point at which the machine has been seized in the country.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Would not a very clever magistrate be required to value such articles?

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: He would require to be more than very clever.

Hon. E. Rose: What experience would such a man have in valuing machinery?

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: Exactly. On the other hand, the proposal advanced by the Hire Purchase Traders Association is equally unfair because they suggest that there shall be an auction and that the bids at the auction shall be the assessed value of the machine that has been repossessed. Who is there to bid for such machinery in country centres? What opportunities are there for the disposal of machines at reasonable prices in such circumstances? Consequently, I say that both methods suggested, that by the Bill and the alternative advanced by the Hire Purchase Traders' Association, are equally unfair to the parties concerned. I believe that all reputable merchant traders who have invested large sums in their businesses, require merely a fair deal. They realise that if a fair method of assessing the equity in respect of a repossessed machine can be arrived at, it is but right that that end shall be gained. What they are afraid of is that the Bill will serve as a premium to dishonest people to evade their obligations by endeavouring to return machines that may be in good order and condition, but obsolete, in order to secure such equity as will enable them to buy more modern machines. It would be difficult indeed to effect alterations necessary in the Bill by moving amendments during the Committee stage so that a workable measure could be evolved. I am sure we all desire to assist the Government to produce a workable measure, and for that reason I hope that hon. members may decide at a later stage to refer the Bill to a select committee. By that means it may be possible to suggest amendments that will make the Bill more just to all parties. There is one other aspect that requires attention. I do not know whether I am at liberty to refer to action taken in another place, but the original Bill introduced in the Legislative Assembly embodied a clause setting out *inter alia* that

the measure should not have retrospective application. That portion of the clause is not embodied in the Bill before us now and consequently we must assume, rightly or wrongly, that it may have retrospective effect.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That part of the clause was struck out in another place.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member will discuss the Bill as it is before him.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: In my opinion, certain clauses will have retrospective effect. I understand that a legal opinion has been obtained in which a contrary view was expressed, but, in my view, should the Bill become law, any action taken, subsequent to the Bill becoming operative, for the enforcement of any hire-purchase agreement already in existence, must be subject to the provisions of the Bill. To that extent I claim the Bill will have retrospective application.

The Minister for Country Water Supplies: I cannot find anything of a retrospective nature in the Bill.

Hon. Sir CHARLES NATHAN: If the Bill reaches the Committee stage, I shall test the feeling of hon. members with a view to making it certain that there shall be no possibility of its provisions having retrospective effect. If I know the feelings of the House sufficiently well, I believe the general opinion is against legislation of a retrospective character. Consequently if there is any doubt on the matter, the Minister will have an opportunity to clear it up in due course. If there should be any doubt, I hope hon. members will maintain the attitude they have adopted regarding other legislation and will see to it that the Bill is not made retrospective. I have not attempted to deal with the various clauses in detail because that can be done during the Committee stage, should hon. members agree to the Bill proceeding that far. I hope I have made out a sufficient case to convince hon. members that the better course to be adopted would be to refer the Bill to a select committee. Perhaps some hon. member may feel inclined to move in that direction and the Bill, if referred to a select committee, can be considered in all its aspects. Then, perhaps, a measure would be returned that would be more equitable in its application and in a form more likely to be effective. At the moment I am not

advocating the extension of the hire-purchase system, nor yet am I expressing any opinion as to whether that represents a satisfactory method of transacting business. On the other hand, I feel confident that should the Bill become law, business under the hire-purchase method will cease. It will be easier for merchants to dispose of their wares outright under bills of sale, and so overcome the difficulties provided for in the Bill. I shall not detain hon. members by speaking at any greater length. I support the second reading of the Bill, although I hope it will be referred to a select committee for further consideration.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [5.53]: The thorough manner in which Sir Charles Nathan has placed before us his views regarding certain portions of the Bill, must carry great weight in support of his suggestion that the measure should be referred to a select committee. In the course of his exposition, he demonstrated that there are many difficulties confronting us that will be awkward to deal with in Committee without expending much, perhaps, unnecessary time on some of the clauses. When Sir Charles was speaking, the thought impressed upon my mind was that the Bill represented a fine example of the type of legislation which, it was suggested some time ago, should be referred to a special committee appointed to review measures and make recommendations to the House, and so expedite the handling of Bills presented from time to time. A measure dealt with in that way could be disposed of more quickly and more efficiently than is possible under our present method when Bills are dealt with by the Committee of the whole House. The members of such a committee would be able to collaborate in securing information enabling them to recast, if necessary, various clauses in Bills that could not be dealt with so effectively on the floor of the House. By that means the work could be done better than is possible even by referring such measures to select committees for inquiry and report. As it is, our Standing Orders do not provide for the reference of Bills to a special committee such as I have indicated.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: What sort of committee does the hon. member refer to?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: One to which Bills could be referred for consideration, in order to enable further information to be obtained.

Hon. H. Stewart: You mean a standing committee comprising some members of the House.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Yes.

Hon. H. Stewart: The matter was considered, and at the time it was thought that select committees were preferable.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: If we had a standing committee, some of the more controversial Bills could be referred to that body and it would make for more expeditious and effective handling than would be possible merely by referring them to select committees.

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Does not the hon. member know that our Standing Orders provide that a Bill may be sent to a select committee only after the principle has been approved by the House?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There may be something to be said from that standpoint, but I maintain that measures are presented to us at times which could be beneficially referred to such a standing committee.

Hon. G. Fraser: Did we not debate that question last session, and defeat a motion in favour of such a standing committee?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think the matter was discussed.

The Minister for Country Water Supplies: Then you advocate Parliament by standing committees?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No.

The Minister for Country Water Supplies: That is what it means.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I would not suggest that course, but I maintain that certain Bills would be better sent to a standing committee than to a select committee. I admit there is room for argument, and that our Standing Orders provide for the reference of a Bill to a select committee—

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT: After the affirmation by the House of the principles embodied in such a Bill?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Precisely. In this instance, the proposal for the reference of the Bill to a select committee has been supported by Sir Charles Nathan, who has drawn attention to important feature of the Bill. The method to be adopted in dealing with the sale of chattels that have been seized, or re-possessioned, is set out in Clause 5. The hire-purchase system has increased

in popular favour within the last few years, and there is no doubt it provides a method for ready acquisition.

Hon. G. Fraser: Too ready in many instances.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Perhaps so, but it has provided a ready method for acquiring machinery, implements and even articles of household furniture.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And player pianos. We should abolish the lot.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: As a result, many people have been induced because of the small deposits required, and the simple methods of re-payments, to acquire property under hire-purchase agreements that they would not otherwise have purchased. I should like to point out that whilst the system has had its evils, it has also had its benefits, for there are many farmers and others who without it would never have been able to acquire the machinery necessary to their operations. It has provided a ready method whereby farmers could acquire the machines essential to them. But because of the malpractices of many hire-purchase vendors, it has been found necessary to introduce legislation with a view to safeguarding the unfortunate purchasers. The methods provided in Clause 5 will not carry those purchasers into a very happy position; indeed, in a majority of instances instead of their finding they have surpluses they will find they have considerable deficits. The concluding part of Subclause 2 of Clause 5 reads as follows:—

The balance shown on such account shall be a debt due by the vendor to the purchaser, or the purchaser to the vendor as the case may be.

The Bill sets out a certain method, which has been elaborated upon by Sir Charles Nathan, who has referred also to what has been suggested in a letter received by all hon. members from the Hire-Purchase Traders' Protection Association. I am disposed to agree with the comment made by Sir Charles, that the method suggested in that letter of auctioning the goods seized by the vendor at a place close to the place where the contract was made, or such place as may be mutually agreed upon, would not be wise. Such a method would be prejudicial to the interests of the hire-purchaser. I think we have to find some other method, which can only be discovered by the making of a close investigation into the whole

position. We can sometimes pass legislation that will destroy methods which have been in vogue, whether beneficial or inimical; for whilst the hire-purchase system may have resulted in malpractice on the part of some vendors—I do not say of all, for some have given fair and reasonable consideration to the purchasers—we must not forget that the hire-purchase system has been responsible for innumerable sales, thereby creating an increased circulation of capital, providing work and considerably augmenting the aggregate wages paid. So when we have one set of conditions on one side and another on the other side, we have to weigh those two and consider whether if the benefits which have been derived from hire-purchase were entirely eliminated, it would not be a loss to the community at large, despite the admitted defects of the system. I have heard of many instances that do not reflect credit on the vendors, and so I have sometimes thought we might pass a law that would remove hire-purchase dealings entirely. We could quite easily do that by the passing of a simple one-clause Bill making it unlawful for any person to sell or dispose of or hire goods under the hire-purchase system. But what would be the result? That in place of having the hire-purchase system, we would get the system which the Minister pointed out used to be in vogue before the hire-purchase system came into general use. That was that a man would purchase certain machinery required for his farm, would become the eventual purchaser of it. The vendor of that machinery would give the purchaser time for payment, in the same way as is provided by the hire-purchase system. But the vendor would say, "I will sell it to you and give you time for payment, but you must give me a bill of sale over it." The purchaser would become the nominal owner of the article, but a bill of sale would be created and he would be subject to the terms of that bill of sale. That, probably, would be the result of the passing of this Bill. So I think it would be worth while to make a close investigation into the position that would be created if the Bill were to pass, and at the same time consider whether the community would be benefited or prejudiced by the passing of such a measure. I am not extending any sympathy whatever towards any hire-purchase firm who have acted unfairly towards a hire-purchaser: on the contrary, I should like to

see them wiped off the slate altogether if that were possible: for the man or firm actuated by wrong motives is not worthy of much consideration. But I am regarding it from the standpoint of the interests of the general community, and I think a select committee would do a great deal towards clearing the atmosphere. I impress upon members that the passing of the Bill will not eliminate the existing evil in its entirety, for in all probability it will mean a reversion to the system of purchase under a bill of sale. As we know, to-day if a man purchases a house property, usually it is done by means of a deposit and deferred payment of the balance. Should the selling price of the house be £500, the purchaser may pay a deposit of £50 and give a mortgage for the remaining £450. We are all familiar with the power of a mortgagee. The holder of a bill of sale has exactly the same power, namely the right to seize and sell if the debt is not paid. There is the position. There are many considerations which would arise in an investigation such as I propose. I support the second reading, and I shall be pleased to hear whether Sir Charles Nathan at the proper time will move to send the Bill to a select committee.

On motion by Hon. J. M. Drew, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Thursday, 11th June, 1931.*

|  | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Questions: Aborigines and half-castes  | 3363 |
| Forestry and Agriculture—1, Release of land; 2, Relative value of production | 3368 |
| Farming Industry, primage duty   | 3368 |
| Wooroloo Sanatorium  | 3369 |
| Leave of absence   | 3369 |
| Bills: Workers' Compensation, Com.   | 3369 |
| Special Lease (Esperance Pine Plantation) Act Amendment, returned            | 3409 |

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