

be secured. Clause 32 amends Section 58. Under the Act if it is averred by the prosecution that a person is unlicensed the burden of proving that he was licensed is thrown upon him. That principle is not altered by the proposed amendment, but the owner of a vehicle is included in the provisions and in a case before a court in which any person is averred to have used a vehicle on a road, he is deemed to have done so until the contrary is proved. That in no way alters the principle contained in the Act. Clause 33 will extend to any person acting on behalf of the Minister in the administration of the Act the same protection as is now enjoyed by the Minister himself, so long as he acts in good faith. Clause 34 gives a necessary interpretation of vehicles not included in the principal Act. Clause 35 gives power to a licensing authority to allow a rebate of license fees in certain circumstances set forth in the clause. Clause 36 is consequential on the new clause dealing with motor buses. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

House adjourned at 10.5 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 7th October, 1926.

| | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Assent to Bills ... | 1288 |
| Questions: Railways—1, Kalkalling-Bullfinch; 2, Trucking yard, Carrabin ... | 1288 |
| Bills: Land Tax and Income Tax, 2R., Com. Report ... | 1288 |
| Wire and Wire Netting, 2R. ... | 1299 |
| Road Districts Act Amendment, 2R. ... | 1301 |
| Stamp Act Amendment, 2R., Com. Report ... | 1311 |
| Annual Estimates: General debate ... | 1311 |
| Papers: Bencubbin-Kalkalling Railway Extension... | 1317 |

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the undermentioned Bills:—

- 1, Federal Aid Roads Agreement.
- 2, Herdsman's Lake Drainage Act Repeal.

3, Kalgoorlie and Boulder Racing Club Act Amendment.

4, Plant Diseases Act Amendment.

5, Vermin Act Amendment.

QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAYS.

Kalkalling-Bullfinch.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Premier: Why is a Bill to authorise a Kalkalling-Bullfinch railway being introduced before the promised review of the Railway Advisory Board's report and the result made known? 2, Have the Railway Advisory Board considered the question of the provision of railway facilities for the country east of Lake Mollerin and into Bullfinch? 3, Has the Premier overlooked the protests of the deputation from various railway leagues that met him recently?

The PREMIER replied: 1, 2, and 3, The question of railway communication for the district is being handled in the manner which seems best to the Government.

Trucking Yard, Carrabin.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Do the department still consider that there is no urgent necessity to provide a trucking yard, or the fencing in of the station yard, at Carrabin? 2, Is he aware that during the wheat carting season the wheat stack has to be fenced around each night with wire and netting to protect it from straying stock?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, (a) Provision is being made on the Loan Estimates for additional trucking yards at various sidings, but a definite decision as to which sidings has not yet been reached. (b) The station yard will be fenced within the next few weeks. 2, No.

BILL—LAND TAX AND INCOME TAX

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th October.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [4.37]: In introducing the Bill the Premier told the House that it was practically the same measure as introduced two years ago. That is true, subject to an altered date in one clause. A provision of the Bill which will be appreciated by tax

ayers is that which reduces the taxable income this year by one-third. The tax remains as in the Bill of two years ago, with the exception of the disappearance of the super tax, but there is a provision that one-third of the total amount shall be taken off the tax. We have voiced our complaints against the treatment received from the Federal Government, but nevertheless it is satisfactory to know that the special grant of £200,000 for five years is to be used to reduce taxation. In so employing the grant the Premier is acting wisely, because high taxation, as compared with the income taxes of the larger States of the Commonwealth, has retarded progress in Western Australia. Our income tax under this Bill, whilst higher than that of New South Wales and that of Victoria, will be lower than the income taxes of the other three States. I hope the public realise that the difficulty of high taxation, which has stood in the way of the establishment of considerable industries here, though not meaning so much to smaller manufacturers, is now removed. Our great claim upon the Federal Government for the special grant was based, and rightly based, upon the rate of income tax we have been compelled to charge our people in order that the functions of government may be carried on. We have suffered under that disadvantage for many years, and in the aggregate our people have paid huge sums of money by way of taxation on that account. I am sorry that the Royal Commission's recommendation of a grant of £450,000 has not been adopted by the Federal Government. With regard to tax generally, we have to realise that money cannot be spent twice. Money for taxation, money taken from almost every section of the people, must mean retarded development. Certainly such taxation tends to stifle trade activities. I doubt whether the pound taken by way of taxation from the individual and paid into the coffers of the State can possibly do as much for the country as the pound spent wisely by the individual himself. Therefore I am delighted at the tax reduction proposed. For the last two years the Treasurer has not been able to make reductions.

The Minister for Lands: Why do you say that. The super tax has been knocked off.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier did not see his way to knock it off. It was knocked off for him.

The Premier: I agreed to that. I need not have accepted the amendment of another place.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You never get credit, you only get blame.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Let us give the Premier the whole credit for the reduction.

The Premier: I think the hon. member is not justified in saying that that was done for me and that I did not want it. I accepted the amendment.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No member who was present when the matter was discussed fails to understand the position. Last year there was an increased deficit.

The Premier: But a deficit very much lower than that of three years ago, although I was £80,000 short of the super tax which the hon. member had during his term of office.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The super tax meant something; otherwise it would not have been imposed.

The Premier: It meant £100,000 in two years.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not wish in the slightest to hurt the Premier's feelings. I remember how my old friends stood by me when I had to insist on the super tax remaining. However, we view things somewhat differently according to our location in the House. Undoubtedly that is so in the case of the Premier.

The Premier: It is so in your case now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have explained how the position changed and how the deficit was reduced because of increasing revenue. There has, however, been some additional taxation, although the Premier will say it is not so. The assessment measure provides that land shall pay tax without exemption. When we get the Taxation Commissioner's report we shall know how many additional payers of land tax there will be. We know how many there ought to be. The exemption of agricultural land has been abolished, and the farmer pays both land tax and income tax. That fact must make a considerable difference in the amount collected. Previously, if a farmer had an income tax of £5 against him and a land tax of £5 against him, he paid only one £5. Now, owing to legislation introduced by the Premier, the farmer is to pay both taxes. Thus there is some compensation for the loss of the super tax. I wish to bring under the

Treasurer's notice an injustice which has existed for years, though it has not been noticed before. Many people are dealing in sheep, and particularly are farmers doing so. When sheep are bought, the position of the farmer, under our system of taxing, is a little different from the position of an ordinary trader. This is the position: If a farmer buys sheep in the wool in June, the fleece is practically grown, and the value of the fleece is added to the value of the sheep. That fleece sold on the sheep pays tax; it is included in the return of the man who sold the sheep. But when the man who has bought the sheep takes the fleece off it and sells the fleece separately, he has to pay tax on the fleece for the second time. Of course, he then carries the sheep on, and when it grows another fleece he rightly pays tax on the second fleece. But he may have paid 5s. for the original fleece already grown, and when he sells it at 7s. 6d. he has to pay income tax on that 7s. 6d., and so that fleece pays tax twice over. It is a fairly serious matter, because it interferes with the average value of the whole of the sheep the farmer has. If he owns 100 sheep valued at £1, and buys another hundred in the wool at 30s., the average value of his flock becomes 25s., which suggests that he is making a profit that he really does not make. Nobody wants him to pay tax on the fleece twice over.

The Minister for Agriculture: He has a set-off when he sells.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No he has not.

The Premier: I see the point, but it would be difficult to assess the increased price the sheep brings because of the wool.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It would require careful thought, but I think it could easily be arranged. Any farmer who kills a sheep on his farm knows that when he sells the pelt in December he gets very little for it, whereas if he sells it in June he gets a considerable amount for it. I mention the matter because there are a great many dealings in sheep now. Some of our districts are splendid fattening districts, whereas others are not. My own district is a noted fattening district, and so too will be the South-West in a few years' time. On the other hand, the Murchison will always produce many store sheep for sale. Professor Lowrie once told me that in New Zealand the farmers buy sheep from the pastoralists,

breed one lamb from each, and then sell the lamb and the ewe. In this way they get a better lamb for export, because the sheep bought from the squatters are good big merinos. Under that system, both the squatter and the farmer are well served. If the Murchison and Gascoyne get a few good years, there will be quite a number of sheep to be sold from those districts, and our farmers will want them. Our winter-carrying capacity in the Eastern districts is very high, but the summer-carrying capacity is relatively low. So to make the best use of our grasses and to improve our land we must have a considerable number of sheep during the winter. Again, where we are practising the two-years' system of fallow we must have sheep to eat off the grass before fallowing and to keep the ground clean. So we benefit by selling the stock, and the land benefits too. We require to encourage that method of handling stock. The dealings in stock under such a method will assume very big proportions. We used to get very many sheep from the Gascoyne and the Murchison into the farming districts, and they were handled in the way I have described. During the last few years we have not had many, because the seasons have not been very good, but next year I think it will be a big business again. In the back country the other day I found farmers erecting fences that will keep out, not only the dingo but, I suppose, the fox also. I saw miles and miles of such fencing. The Minister for Lands has had some hand in getting from the Commonwealth Government a considerable quantity of wire, which has been used for the purpose. We want to encourage our farmers to take sheep in the largest possible numbers. It will mean considerably added profit to the farmer and also to the Treasury. But I think we ought not to expect that income tax shall be paid on the one fleece twice in the one year. It ought to be possible to introduce a simple amendment into the Taxation Assessment Act this year. Of course, no Premier cares to bring that Act before Parliament; but if the Premier will bring down that one amendment, I promise to help him through with it and to leave the rest of the Act untouched.

The Minister for Works: Many other members would like to alter, each one section of that Act.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But this is the most important one at the moment. We

cannot get back to the payment of only one ax by the farmer. The Premier will not have that. But if he be willing to give the country the advantage of the amendment I desire, members here would be very foolish not to accept it on the condition that no attempt is made to introduce other amendments into the Act. There is in that Act room for several desirable amendments, but the Premier knows how much business he can do this session, and he has already indicated that there will not be time to deal with that Act. However, where a glaring injustice is being imposed—an injustice for which the Premier is not responsible, for it has existed since the original Assessment Act was passed—we ought to rectify that injustice at the earliest possible moment. I do not intend to offer any opposition to the passing of the Bill. The Premier has provided an additional clause, which will give the reduction of 33½ per cent. this year. If the Federal Government fail to continue the grant, it will be a very simple matter to restore the tax, if necessary. However, I do not like to see that condition imposed; it looks suspicious. I would much prefer to see the method of arriving at the tax dealt with in the usual way. I hope the Federal Government will continue the grant for 25 years, certainly for five years. And I trust that when we have finished the discussion about the £150,000 that it is proposed to give us in return for the transfer of the North-West, the Federal Government will see that, in justice, they ought to give us the £450,000 recommended by their own Commission. If they did that, we could do better than we have done. But for the moment the Premier has done everything that anybody could expect him to do. I congratulate him on having got £212,000 from the Federal Government this year, which has helped him to make this reduction in tax.

MR. LATHAM (York) [4.58]: I am sorry the Premier still insists on the land tax of 2d., particularly in view of the fact that we are anxious to get rid of a lot of our light land. This tax of 2d. is hindering the people from taking up those lands.

The Minister for Lands: Nonsense! We are disposing of them rapidly.

MR. LATHAM: Immediately the settler takes up light land he has to pay 2d. on it.

The Premier: It is only a bagatelle.

MR. LATHAM: It is a fairly considerable amount when every penny is required for developmental work. Our greatest trouble is to get men with money to take up that land. Of course the Minister is able to get rid of a good deal of such land.

The Premier: Its value is low and, consequently, the tax is low.

MR. LATHAM: The settler has to pay the two-penny tax immediately he takes 2,500 acres of sandplain country, but if he takes 1,000 acres of good land he has only a penny tax to pay. If he takes up 1,000 acres of good land he is exempt for five years.

The Premier: This is the lowest land tax in Australia.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL: Is not a rebate allowed?

MR. LATHAM: There is no rebate to a man taking up 2,500 acres of light land. The man who takes up 1,000 acres of good land does receive a rebate in that he does not pay for five years. But the man who takes up the light land has to pay the tax immediately. Both those men should be put on the same footing.

The Minister for Lands: The best crops this year are coming from the light land.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL: No.

MR. LATHAM: The Minister knows that is not true.

The Minister for Lands: I will show you some of them.

MR. LATHAM: I will show the Minister some on the heavy country. The best crops this season are undoubtedly coming from the heavy country. I am anxious to help; I want to see all our light land taken up, but I do not want people who take it up to complain of unfair taxation in comparison with the people who select first class land. I hope consideration will be given to this question; it is one of the points I wish to raise if the Assessment Act is amended. I should like also to see some exemption made with regard to wire netting, as is done by the Commonwealth. It is essential that farmers should net their holdings. The Minister for Lands realises that. I was hopeful that the Assessment Act would be considered this session, so that we might amend our law and bring it into line with the Federal Act. Under this measure we cannot do anything like that, but we should be able to reduce taxation in the direction I have indicated.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [5.2]: Although the object of the measure is to re-pose a tax, there is one clause that I cannot understand. We have been told on more than one occasion that there has been no increase in taxation, particularly of land taxation. The fact remains, however, that people who have to pay land tax are paying considerably more to-day than they were paying two or three years ago. To illustrate the point: I used to pay £1 1s. 5d. by way of land tax, whereas on the same land I am now paying £9 15s.

The Premier: That is on account of increased values.

MR. LINDSAY: It is not altogether a question of increased values. That would not make up the difference between the two amounts I have mentioned. The difference arises in the first place through the exemption of £250 having been cut out, and also because in the past we paid only one tax. I am not altogether opposed to a land tax, but I think it is an injustice to ask men who earn a living from the land to pay two taxes, and that is what is occurring today. At one time we received a rebate of the whole of the land tax, whereas to-day we receive a rebate of 50 per cent. only. That is why the revenue from land taxation has increased so greatly, namely, from £32,000 in 1918-19 to £155,000 estimated during the present financial year. The question raised by the Leader of the Opposition regarding sheep is a serious one. It surely was never intended by Parliament to tax people on their income twice in the one year. If I buy a number of sheep during the year I might pay a big price for them because of their having the wool on. When my own sheep are assessed at the end of the year their value for assessment purposes is increased by the high price paid for the new lot. When I take the wool off the sheep and sell it, although I have paid for it on the sheep's back, I am assessed for it under income tax. Thus, if a man buys sheep at a high price he increases the average value of his stock on hand.

The Minister for Lands: That naturally follows.

MR. LINDSAY: I might sell my sheep off shears at £1 per head and I have to show that in my income tax return. Later in the year, say in April, May or June, I might buy a mob of sheep and because they have grown 10s. or 15s. worth of wool in the meantime they appear in my accounts as,

say, 200 head at £2 per head, together with the 300 I had at 15s. per head. The two lots are put together and an average is struck, and thus the value of my sheep at the end of the year has automatically increased. When I shear my sheep the proceeds are shown in my income tax returns, and, allowing for the increased value, I really have to pay the tax twice. The sum involved may not be considerable for a small man, but for a big man it is a serious injustice.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It does not affect the breeder.

MR. LINDSAY: But it does affect people who buy and sell. The point raised by the member for York (Mr. Latham) should receive consideration. A man who selects 1,000 acres of first class land pays 15s. for it, and a man who selects 3,000 acres of light land pays 5s. for it. It is recognised that the first class land is of greater value, and yet the man selecting it gets a five-years exemption, whereas the man who takes up the light land gets no exemption. The present system brings the man who takes up light land into taxation much more quickly than the man who takes up good land. It is an anomaly that has crept into the Act. I do not think Parliament realised the effect at the time, nor do I think members wish to continue it. Clause 6 of the Bill provides for the abolition of the half-yearly payments of taxation. In the past it was possible to pay income tax in two moieties.

MR. LATHAM: That has been cut out for some time.

MR. LINDSAY: It prevailed in 1924, at any rate. I am not sure of the reason for discontinuing the concession, but perhaps the Minister can explain it.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson) [5.8]: I would feel inclined to oppose the imposition of a land tax and an income tax—

The Minister for Agriculture: Entirely?

MR. J. H. SMITH: Yes.

Hon. G. Taylor: And get on without them?

MR. J. H. SMITH: The Minister for Agriculture will agree that the man on the land is taxed in every way. I feel inclined to oppose especially land taxation on the unimproved value. A tax should be imposed upon the man who does not improve his property. It is customary for our friends on the Government side to express a desire not to tax a man's energy; rather they prefer to

the productivity of land alienated from the Crown. I want to ask the Premier how it arrives at the unimproved value of land. What is the unimproved value?

The Premier: The value of land without improvements on it.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: If the Premier would say that down definitely and advise the Commissioner of Taxation to adopt it, I could agree with him.

The Premier: The unimproved value is valued the prairie value.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: That shows the inconsistency of Parliament—I shall not say to the Government.

Mr. Latham: We do not determine the values.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It is laid down in the Road Districts Act that the unimproved value is the selling value of land. I have had experience of the selling value of land being £30 or £35 an acre, though it had no improvements whatever upon it, while the land adjoining, also unimproved, was assessed at £1 per acre. Would it be possible to arrive at the unimproved value of that land? I cannot say what it is, and neither can anyone else. Why do not the Government bring a Bill to determine it? Land should not be taxed according to the improvements. To-day the Government sell land to the people and say, in effect, "We do not care whether you produce from it or not. You are taxed even though you do produce, while the man alongside who is not improving his holding is taxed on the unimproved value." That applies throughout the State. We have not arrived at the value of our land. To-day we are taxing a man's energy, his ambition to progress. We are basing the whole of the unimproved values on improvements. It is not fair. A man's energy should not be taxed one iota. The more a man improves his holding, the greater is his value to the country, and therefore he should receive consideration. But to-day he receives no consideration. It is possible to tax a man until he begins to think that instead of improving his holding by growing grain or fruit, it would be better to run sheep on it. We shall never encourage development by taxation. Therefore I do not think the land tax is of any value; neither do I think the income tax is of any value. I would feel inclined to oppose both taxes, but I know how necessary it is to have revenue. I want the Premier to modify the measure and to take notice of the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition regarding sheep. As one peruses the Land

and Income Tax Act, he can find anomalies. Taxation was never of any good to any country in the world. A country cannot be benefited by taxation. It is a false kind of finance, and I should like to see the Government drop both of these taxes for good. I feel rather inclined to move an amendment to the effect that there should be a tax on the unimproved land. If we could drop the one tax and put it on to land which is not being utilised along existing railways, we should be doing some good. We would force that land into production, and by other avenues would be getting back our revenue. I am surprised that the Premier, who is the Leader of the Labour Party, who has advocated this for years, has not introduced a Bill of this kind.

The Premier: Who advocated that?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have heard the Premier advocate it from the platform.

The Premier: The hon. member is dreaming.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I think it is one of the planks of the platform of the party, but I see no mention of it in this Bill. I am surprised that the Premier has not done something in this direction. We expected it of him. He knows there is land along our railways that is not improved. Is he going to introduce a Closer Settlement Bill, one that will apply to land that is locked up? Why does he not do it now?

The Premier: This Bill taxes such land.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: How will he overcome the difficulty of assessing land that has been held for 40 or 50 years?

The Premier: The owners will all pay taxes under this Bill.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: How will the Premier arrive at a tax? There may be land worth £35 an acre within a small circle, that was selected 50 years ago, whereas the land around it on the unimproved basis may be worth only £1 or £2 an acre. The selling value of the land within the circle is £35 an acre. How does the Premier propose to arrive at its unimproved value.

The Premier: I do not assess it. That is done by the Taxation Department.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Premier leaves it to the Federal Government. The Commonwealth authorities give the cue in this matter. They say, "There are so many jarrah trees growing on the land. The Forests Department assesses the jarrah at so much per load; therefore, the unimproved value of the land is so much per acre." That is not a

fair way of arriving at the unimproved value of the land.

Mr. Griffiths: It takes £4 or £5 an acre to clear it.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: But the State Government accept this valuation. A man may have cut all the timber off his block, leaving only the stumps in, but the unimproved value is recorded, and stands against it, although it is no longer worth that sum. How are people going to pay on that value? The trees are removed, but the value remains for all time.

The Premier: It is the unimproved value, whether the timber is on it or not.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It is the value of the land itself without the timber that counts. How will this value be assessed? It cannot be assessed unless the value of the land that has been sold in the vicinity at so much per acre is taken as a guide. I should like Mr. Speaker to give a definition of unimproved value.

Hon. G. Taylor: The Standing Orders do not provide for that.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: We are faced with a problem in this matter. It is not one to make a joke about. The tax ought to be based on the unimproved value of the land. What is the Premier going to do with land that has remained unimproved along existing railways for over 50 years?

The Premier: Confiscate it!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Bill does not provide for that. One man may have improved his holding, and another may have left it as it was. The former landowner may find his land assessed at £4 or £5 an acre, whereas the unimproved value of the land belonging to the latter is 7s. or 10s. an acre. It is not fair that a man's energies should be taxed all the way through. What does the Premier propose to do about it? Does he intend to ignore the Commonwealth assessors? Some of the assessments in my district have gone up 400 per cent.

The Premier: But yours is a rich district.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: And the land is not nearly as good as that which has been assessed at £2 an acre, but it is valued at £8 an acre because it once had timber on it. The owners cannot pay on such a high unimproved value. The State Government have not given full consideration to this matter. If the Premier would introduce a tax on unimproved land along our railways, force owners to cut up their large estates, which are not at present producing any-

thing, and from which the railways and local authorities are not getting as much as they should, we might be inclined to agree with him. I am by no means with him on the taxation of land on the Commonwealth system.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [5.23]: I have listened with interest to the remarks of hon. members this afternoon. It was, I think, in 1922 or 1923 that a Federal Royal Commission considered the question of the valuation of land, after sitting for over 12 months. They found that in no State in the Commonwealth was there an Act to provide for the taxation of land other than by the very people who set out what taxation should be paid. I have received some information from New Zealand on this point. The Valuation of Lands Act of New Zealand provides that the valuations of land should be administered by a Valuer General.

The Minister for Lands: We introduced legislation to provide for that, but it was defeated.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: This officer is appointed permanently, and has security of office subject to the Public Service Act. I was not aware that any attempt had been made in this direction in Western Australia.

The Minister for Lands: It was made.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I accept the Minister's assurance.

The Minister for Lands: Look up some of the red covered volumes, and you will find it.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Let us take 1,000 acre block of land, of which the maximum price is 15s. an acre. We find that there is a land tax of 1d. in the pound, running up to £2 2s. 6d., the capital value of the land being £750. The Vermin Act provides for a payment of 1d. in the pound on the unimproved value, which is imposed on every agriculturist holding more than 400 acres. This runs out at £2 2s. 6d. The road boards charge 2½d. in the pound and vermin rates for the destruction of rabbits amount to ½d. in the pound, running into £7 16s. 3d. There is a minimum wheel tax for horse-drawn vehicles, which costs the small farmer £5, the petrol tax accounts for £3, making a total of £17 1s. 3d. In some cases there are agricultural water rates, not more than 1s. an acre with a maximum of £50, and the same thing applies to places where there are drainage schemes. All

these taxes have to be paid, whether the season is good or bad. The system of valuing land is altogether wrong. If a man objects to the rate imposed on his land he has to appeal to the authority, who is both judge and advocate, and who decides everything. It is like appealing from Cæsar to Cæsar. A Valuer-General has existed in New Zealand for many years, and the Act has been in operation with scarcely an amendment. We might well have legislation of that kind in Western Australia. It would remove many of the objections held by members, particularly with regard to land in the South. I have five road boards in my district. It is the practice of these authorities to take the line of least resistance in the matter of land values. They are compelled to re-value and they adopt the cheapest means of doing so. They do it by accepting the Federal values, which have been made in different parts of the State. That would be all right if the system was a fair and equitable one. The method of valuing land by one man does not work out equitably for the owners. The best legislation I know of is that which is in operation in New Zealand. The Act was passed in 1908, and has been maintained practically without amendment. Under that Act the Valuer-General has security of tenure, and has appointed under him district valuers who make the valuations in the different districts. Owners can appeal through an independent authority against the valuations if they think those valuations are too high or too low. Other machinery exists for the appointment of independent boards so that the interests of all concerned are secured, and that the valuations embodied in the roll may be equitable both from the point of view of the Valuer-General and the land owner. The Commonwealth system of valuing, places the appellant owner in the position of defendant, and the man who hears the appeal is in the position of being both judge and advocate. This principle is foreign to all sense of justice or equity. It is no good appealing to the Commonwealth authorities. The only thing to do is to go to the High Court, but the average man is not in a position to do that. In the Valuation of Land Act of New Zealand the method adopted to secure equity is that in all questions of appeal that depend purely on the interpretation of the Act, the appeal is to the Supreme Court, but in questions

of appeal as to the valuation it is to an unbiassed board. The Board of Appeal consists of the magistrate of the district, a representative of the local authority of the district concerned, who shall not be a member of the local authority, and a representative appointed by the Government. The board hears appeals against the valuations, and, except on points of law, there is no appeal to the Supreme Court. There is this provision, however, that indicates where the fundamental soundness of the method comes in, securing equity and justice to both the taxpayer and the valuing authority. That is indicated in the provision that if the valuation fixed by the Board of Appeal is, in the opinion of the owner, too high, he can call upon the Valuer-General to reduce the valuation to his figure, or to purchase the land at the lower valuation. If the Valuer-General will not purchase at that valuation within 30 days, or if the parties agree upon a valuation, then that valuation must be lowered to the figure at which the owner offered to sell. If the Valuer General thinks the valuation is too low, he can call upon the owner to accept the higher valuation and, should the latter fail to do so, he can, within a certain time, purchase the property at the increased valuation. If he is not prepared to purchase at that increased valuation, then the lower valuation, as fixed by the Appeal Board, must stand, unless an intermediate valuation is mutually agreed upon.

Mr. Mann: Where is the money found in New Zealand with which the purchases are made?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The hon. member can depend upon it that the Government there would not overload themselves with too many properties. The scheme, which has worked well in New Zealand, might well be considered by our Government in the future. I do not suppose that anything could be done in the near future, but the question could receive consideration later on. The present system of valuing is absolutely wrong.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [5.33]: With others, I regret the need for taxation, but I realise that it is necessary to make provision along those lines. The increase in the amount produced by land taxation is surprisingly high. Not only was the tax increased some time ago, but the valuations

are increased each year. Naturally, valuations become higher as development increases, but it is interesting to note the amount that has been produced as the result of increased values. During the financial year 1923-24 the tax collected amounted to £71,449. Exemptions that were previously allowed, including £250 for agricultural land, and £50 on unimproved land values, were struck out. The rate of tax was previously one penny in the pound, plus 15 per cent. super tax, on the unimproved values. The rate has since been increased to 2d. in the pound, showing an increase of 73.9 per cent. I have already given the amount of tax collected for the year 1923-24. Hon. members will be interested to know that in the following year the collections had increased from £71,449 to £113,867 and, last year, to £145,830.

The Minister for Lands: I am sorry for you people who own a lot of land, because the values have gone up too much to suit you!

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, for everyone.

The Minister for Lands: You would like the value to stay at 10s. an acre, as it was in the past.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Minister for Lands knows that in addition to the land tax, there is the income tax and it is a questionably sound principle whether there should be imposed a tax upon land the use of which is required in order to produce the income. However, the fact is that within two years the amount produced from land tax has increased by 104 per cent.

The Minister for Lands: And I guarantee that over half of it came from the City of Perth and the metropolitan area.

Mr. SAMPSON: Irrespective of whether the tax was collected in the metropolitan area or in the country districts, I do not know that the principle is affected. A certain area of land is required for a factory where a secondary industry may be carried on, and a certain area of land is also required for a farm or an orchard in order to produce the owner's income.

The Minister for Lands: And if that factory belonged to me I would be clear of land tax.

Mr. SAMPSON: No, the Minister would add it to the rent.

The Minister for Lands: No, if I were you, I would stick it on the rent and keep the land tax in my pocket.

Mr. SAMPSON: Naturally the tax payable is a variable amount and is determined

by the value of the land. I do not desire to say any more beyond to point out the heavy increase in the taxation and in the amount produced, which has shown an increase of 104 per cent. in two years.

MR. BROWN (Pingelly) [5.36]: I realise that the Government require money and if the land tax is necessary, then the House will support the Government in the imposition of it. I realise that taxation is necessary for the welfare of the country and that in order to make men owning large holdings develop their properties, it is necessary to impose such a levy. In this instance, however, I fail to understand how the Government arrive at the tax of 2d. in the pound. That is where difficulties will occur. We know that land sold by the Lands Department is valued at anything from 2s. 9d. to 15s. per acre.

The Minister for Lands: The price ranges from 1s. upwards.

Mr. BROWN: That is so. I understand that in these days virgin country is not priced above 15s. An individual can take steps to determine the value of his land, but there is nothing in the Act to show how the rate of taxation is arrived at.

The Premier: There is nothing about that in this Bill. The discussion is all out of order. The Bill fixes the rate; it does not affect the values of land, which are dealt with in the Assessment Act.

Mr. BROWN: A tax of 2d. in the pound will fall harshly on the small man rather than on the large man, because there are certain exemptions that are allowed upon incomes beyond a certain amount. The man possessing a large income is in a better position to pay towards the upkeep of the country than is the small man. In many instances farmers have taken up second-class land and after much effort have improved the holding considerably. Later on an inspector classifies it as high-class land, because of the improvements he finds. That is not altogether right. In my opinion there will be experienced considerable difficulty in ascertaining what is the value of land at the present time.

The Minister for Lands: If the Government charged £2 an acre, it would be nearer the value of the land than 15s. an acre.

Mr. BROWN: Possibly, seeing that the farmers have improved their holdings very considerably, whereas they went on to what was practically virgin country at the outset. I agree that land in the vicinity of a railway

should be taxed on a higher basis if the land is first class. It is impossible to apply the zone system in Western Australia because our land is so patchy. Therefore it is impossible to apply the one tax right through.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not everywhere is the land patchy.

Mr. BROWN: If £1 or 30s. an acre were fixed, there would be a wide margin of variation, because there is a tremendous difference in land values in many districts. We have no exemption at the present time. The exemption of £250 was cut out and if a tax of 2d. in the pound is levied, it will prove a very heavy burden to many people who are at the struggling stage.

The Minister for Lands: Yes, £2 a year will break them!

Mr. BROWN: I admit that the tax does not represent a very large figure, but I am in favour of putting that tax on to income. If a man secures a large income, he can pay his taxation, whereas in a young country like Western Australia, even that small sum may prove a hardship to men who are passing through the developmental stages.

The Minister for Lands: I am sorry to hear you depreciating the value of our land. You say it is taxed too high. You say the values are too high. On the other hand, you get your land for nearly 100 per cent. less than elsewhere in Australia.

Mr. BROWN: I do not know what is happening in other parts of Australia.

The Minister for Lands: You say the land is no good?

Mr. BROWN: I know the land is good in Western Australia and that there is a big future ahead of us, but most of the men who select land are poor men.

The Minister for Lands: They do not remain poor long when a man can sell out after five years for £20,000. I can give you a few instances.

Mr. BROWN: I have no objection to the Bill, but some indication should be given to us as to how the valuations are to be arrived at. If the tax is to be 2d. in the pound all round, it will fall heavily upon some people. Most of those who select land look forward to the day when they will secure it as freehold. It may be that with the imposition of such a tax, the task of those men will be made more difficult. Most of those who take up land find it difficult to raise 6d. per acre during the early stages of their development.

If they are forced to pay another 6d. in the pound the position will be most difficult and it will be tantamount of levying a tax in perpetuity.

Mr. Clydesdale: According to your arguments, it is useless for men to go on the land.

Mr. BROWN: I know that men who take up land are exempt from taxation for a number of years and that their land rents are suspended for a period as well. That is only right. That enables them to get a start.

Mr. Clydesdale: When will he be obliged to pay?

Mr. BROWN: Just when the settler requires the assistance most. I can say from my own experience that after an interval of five years on the land, I required assistance during that critical period more than I did at the start. However, I do not raise any serious objection to the Bill, but I hope some indication will be given to us as to how land values are to be determined.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [5.42]: I regret to hear the remarks by some hon. members, particularly at a time when attempts are being made to boom our land values in the Eastern States.

Mr. Lambert: Boom them!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, there is no necessity to boom them.

Mr. Lindsay: The land booms itself.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yet to-day we have hon. members saying that the land has been over-valued.

Mr. Latham: I did not say that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I did not say all hon. members are doing that.

The Premier: Our land is poor and over-valued according to them!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I can give dozens of instances of farmers having sold their properties at profits running into thousands of pounds.

Mr. Latham: Land here is very cheap.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There are some who placed a value of 10s. an acre on their land the other day, and yet to-day they value it at £2 or £3 an acre.

Mr. George: Unimproved land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: A great proportion of the holdings are unimproved. If hon. members will look through the "West Australian" on Saturdays they will see a number of farms advertised at from £5 to £6 an acre. Yet we have all this bother

about ½d. in the pound. That is all hon. members are kicking up a shindy about.

Mr. Sampson: I think the objection is to the tax in addition to the income tax.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Subsection 1 of Section 9 of the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act reads as follows:—

Every owner of improved land shall, in respect of such land, be entitled to a rebate of one-half of the tax levied on the unimproved value thereof as assessed under the provisions of this Act.

Mr. George: Then it is a penny, not a halfpenny!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It has been a halfpenny all the time, since the land tax was imposed.

Mr. George: There was an allowance off the income tax.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I remind members that persons outside the metropolitan area who are getting revenue from the so-called bad land are receiving the rebate, and that a great proportion of the increase which is coming in from the land tax is being derived from city properties and not from country properties. It is surprising to find the farmers uttering detrimental words in regard to land values. If hon. members had been in my office to-day they would have seen the place packed with people, all endeavouring to secure land. Those applicants would jump at any blocks that might be thrown up. If the values are not what some members think they are, then let those who hold the blocks get out. There will be plenty of others eager enough to take them up. The amount paid by farmers by way of taxation is not worth bothering about. Members talk in this House about what they have to pay by way of rates and traffic fees, and all the rest of it. All that, however, is going to the road boards and not to the Treasury, and a good deal of what is being collected is going in the direction of reducing railway rates.

Mr. Latham: How much do those reductions benefit the farmers?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The rates and fees paid by farmers do not help the Treasury in any way. All that money goes back to the people. If farmers do not want roads, they can refuse to pay their rates; if they do not want to own motor cars, let them again refuse to pay.

Mr. Latham: I admit that the Treasury does not receive that revenue.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is all bombast, and members are talking rubbish.

Mr. George: Don't get angry.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is enough to make anyone angry when we hear members trying to depreciate the value of the land of the State.

The Premier: And the tax is the lowest in Australia.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The arguments of hon. members are simply ridiculous. If it were only known throughout the world that we were disposing of land at 4s. an acre, immigrant ships would be overcrowded and there would be a rush to secure it. And they would be moneyed people, too, who would take it up.

Mr. Latham: You still have a lot of Crown land left.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but there are no railways to those lands. There are available several million acres.

Mr. Lindsay: The light land is going off faster now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no doubt about it that the light land of this country is worth far more than the State has been charging for it. That fact has been proved. It is light land with a good subsoil and it is turning out as much wheat as the heavier land, year by year.

Mr. Latham: Now, now!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Last year the light lands did better than the heavier lands. This year the light lands are doing very well. It is surprising to me that members should try to depreciate the State in which they earn their bread and butter. Some of them have made thousands out of their properties. Let me quote an instance that came under my notice a few days ago: the case of a man who in 1915 left the land in a penniless condition. A little later on he was able with very little capital to take up another block of land, and he called on me a week or so ago to tell me that he had sold out for £20,000 and was about to enjoy a holiday to the other States before again taking up another area.

Mr. Latham: Many others have gone to the wall, and they were just as good farmers.

The Premier: Don't depreciate the value of our lands in that way.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Every week I am being told of somewhat similar instances, where farmers who started with nothing have made a competency.

Mr. Latham: What about those who walk off their holdings?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In that event, the land is not responsible; it is entirely a matter of the personal equation.

Mr. Lindsay: In the particular instance to which the Minister referred I know that the man did actually go off his holding penniless in 1915.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Everything points to the fact that our lands are much cheaper than the lands of the Eastern States and are every bit as good. People from the Eastern States are flocking to Western Australia every day in search of areas to take up. The position is becoming such in the department that I shall have to consider the advisableness of increasing the staff to cope with the work.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—WIRE AND WIRE NETTING.

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation in connection with the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [6.0] in moving the second reading said: The Bill provides for wire netting supplies for the future, and also deals with the wire netting already supplied. During last session many members stressed the necessity for the Government purchasing wire netting to distribute amongst the farmers outback, those farmers who were not in a position to secure it for themselves. It was pointed out at that time that there had been considerable destruction of crops. The matter was also discussed in the Federal Parliament, with the result that the Commonwealth Government put forward a scheme to assist the States in the supply of wire netting. They have proposed to set aside a sum of £3,000,000 distributed over a period of six years to enable the States to furnish settlers with

wire netting on reasonable terms. Of the total of £3,000,000 allocated, Western Australia's share each year is to be £606,945. Negotiations for an agreement between this State and the Commonwealth were pending for a considerable time, and eventually that particular agreement was approved. It provides that settlers shall be supplied with netting and shall pay seven per cent. annually for 25 years to cover interest, sinking fund, and administration cost. The maximum rate chargeable for interest is four per cent; sinking fund will be at the rate of two per cent; and one per cent. is to be placed in a trust fund for the supply of additional netting if needed. The agreement as made, however, did not provide for administration cost; and the Commonwealth Government have now consented to the State Government making a charge of £1 per mile for administration. This is the same charge as obtains under the Act of 1923. The agreement is not yet signed, for the reason that the Commonwealth Government wish to allow the States of New South Wales, South Australia, and Tasmania further time for consideration of the matter. However, Western Australia could not wait longer: it was necessary that wire netting should be supplied to our settlers. Accordingly the State Government entered into a contract for the purchase of 2,000 miles of wire netting at £45 13s. 9d. per mile, representing a total of £91,375. Just after making that contract we were informed by the Commonwealth Government that there was available in their Treasury a sum of £50,000 which had not been applied for by other States under the 1923 Act. That Act provides for the supply of wire netting free of interest over a period of 20 years, though the settler has to pay sinking fund. We thought it advisable to get as much as possible of the netting represented by the £50,000, and by every mail we forwarded applications to Melbourne. I am pleased to be able to state that Western Australia has secured £29,917 out of the £50,000 available. Having ordered 2,000 miles of netting, we immediately proceeded to supply settlers out of that quantity. Further, £8,651 having come in by way of repayments from settlers already supplied, we were able to allocate that sum towards the 2,000 miles ordered. The extra money received from the Commonwealth, together with the repayments from settlers, enabled us to supply immediately wire netting that would be free of interest

for 20 years. The total value of wire netting which has been supplied free of interest to settlers under the 1923 Act is £90,576. Settlers lucky enough to obtain that netting are in a very different position from other settlers. The money for supplying netting free of interest became exhausted on the 30th June last, and in future settlers will have to pay interest on any netting they obtain. It is impossible for this State to supply netting at the value placed on it by the Commonwealth, because the money costs Western Australia considerably more than the Commonwealth are charging settlers in respect of the netting. Accordingly this Government decided that farmers desiring to obtain wire netting from the State would have to pay £8 ls. 2d. per cent. over a period of 25 years, that amount to include interest, sinking fund, and administration costs. A fair number of farmers have been supplied on those terms, and the mortgage provides that when the Commonwealth agreement has been finalised the Commonwealth charges will be reverted to.

Mr. Sampson: Is the cost wiped out in 25 years?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. Up to date the Government have actually supplied 2,007 miles, and there are on hand about 200 applications which have been approved. We are, however, waiting for the papers to come back, so that the matter can be finalised. In this way we have been able to overcome some of the difficulties which existed 12 months ago. We have made it a condition that the districts which suffer worst from rabbits shall have first claim on the netting. The agreement with the Commonwealth provides for the supply of not only wire netting, but also barb wire and other wire mentioned in the Bill. I want hon. members to note that the agreement with the Commonwealth is not yet finalised, though both parties concur in it so far as Western Australia is concerned. We are now waiting for the other States.

Mr. Latham: The agreement has not yet been made law by the Commonwealth Parliament?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, and I do not care whether it is made law or not so long as we get the money.

Hon. G. Taylor: Will the attitude of the other States interfere with our position?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They have not yet signed the agreement, and that might affect our arrangement. On reading the definitions in the Bill hon. members will see the purposes for which the wire netting to be supplied may be used. The measure also gives this Government power to enter into agreements to buy wire netting.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I hope the other States keep out; we will get all the more.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If the other States keep out, the Commonwealth might not supply netting at all. The Bill provides that the cost of netting shall be paid in the form of interest, sinking fund, and administration charges. Further, it provides that the cost of transportation shall be borne by the settler. Then there is a clause which I consider it necessary to include having regard to the Agricultural Bank and the Industries Assistance Board. As regards private banks, a mortgage for netting gives the Government priority. The Agricultural Bank has not the same prerogative; and seeing that both the bank and the board are Government institutions, they should rank equally with one another. The Bill makes provision accordingly in the case of the Agricultural Bank. Netting has been supplied, as I have stated, during the past year; and I feel confident that many farmers will experience a great benefit from it during next harvest.

Mr. Teesdale: Will this measure apply to soldier settlers in the North?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will apply throughout the State. No wire has yet been supplied in the North.

Mr. Teesdale: But settlers there can apply for it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not until the Bill has been finalised. I thought it desirable that the Bill should empower the Government to finalise the agreement when the Commonwealth is in a position to do so, in order that the scheme may proceed. Unless that is done this session, we shall have to wait another 12 months, and then the Federal Government might raise the question whether the scheme can be approved unless the other States ratify it. I want hon. members to realise clearly what the Commonwealth scheme is. That scheme is to supply wire netting at 4 per cent. maximum for interest, at 2 per cent. for sinking fund, and at 1 per cent. to be paid into a trust fund, or at a total cost of 7 per cent. In

addition there is the allowance for administration.

Mr. Latham: Will repayments by settlers be made available for further advances?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not in the case of the Commonwealth. When a settler wishes to pay off his debit for netting, a difficulty may arise. That difficulty consists in the circumstances that the sinking fund charge is to be paid to the Commonwealth and will be invested by the Commonwealth, so that the State Government will not be in a position to know exactly what amount is placed to the credit of the individual settler's account for sinking fund. In the case of all netting supplied up to this date, the sinking fund is being retained by the State. However, the farmers are paying £1 1s. 2d. per cent. more for that netting than for Commonwealth netting. The Lands Department already have lithos dealing with whole districts, and where four or five farms adjoin and fencing in common is likely to prove more beneficial, the department are trying to induce the farmers to put up a boundary fence around all the properties instead of fencing separately. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th October.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [7.30]: The Bill is something in the nature of an old friend, and like some old friends it possesses certain undesirable qualities although, on the other hand, displaying some novel features. The term "road board" is to be changed to "district council," the object being to make the name more appropriate in view of the added work and extended usefulness of such a body. Again, "chairman" is to be altered to "president" and "member" to "councillor." The board, instead of being of continuous life is to come to an end every third year, when the whole of the members will submit to re-election. The road board conference has approved of the alterations, but personally I cannot see that any great advantage will accrue from them. Possibly the whole of the members going out at one

time may have the effect of increasing public interest in the work of the board. The Minister remarked that the time may come when road board members will be paid.

Mr. Heron: You are not looking for a job against the time you leave here, are you?

Mr. SAMPSON: It will be some time before the road boards are in a position to pay their members. Some years ago a resolution affirming the desirability of paying road board members was carried. The Minister now proposes to increase the scope of the boards. The Bill provides also for an alteration in the method of voting. For this there has been no request, either from the road board conference or from the Road Boards Association. The Minister said it was not a matter upon which the desires of the road boards should be consulted, that it was in accordance with the policy of the party with which he is associated. Still I think that upon this point the wishes of the local authorities should be consulted and, as I say, there has been no request for an alteration in the method of voting.

Mr. Marshall: What authority have you for saying that? What entitles you to speak for all the road boards?

Mr. SAMPSON: Had the hon. member continued his attendance at road board meetings and conferences he would be in touch with the wishes of the boards. I can assure him again that there has been no request for this alteration. The Bill provides that when any person desires to open up a road or way he shall submit to the local authority a plan showing the levels and width of the proposed road or way. In some instances it would be very difficult to comply with this requirement. Most road boards, before approving a road or endorsing a subdivision go out and make an inspection of the proposed work, but even in new townships we do not often find any system under which levels are taken. Of course, as a township advances in importance it is highly desirable that levels should be available for building purposes. However, I am afraid that if we agree to that provision we shall be acting prematurely. Under the Bill, before any owner or his agent can remove or demolish a house or other building he must give to the local authority notice in writing of his intention to do so. On the goldfields there may be justification for this, but not so in other districts. If this provision be agreed to it will cause many ratepayers, perhaps unwittingly, to offend.

Mr. Lutey: On the goldfields to-day it is necessary to notify the local authority before shifting a house.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, because there it is perhaps the only means by which the local authority can assure itself that the rates will be paid. There are in the Bill new provisions extending the powers of road boards. For instance, the local authority may hold and conduct agricultural shows, establish ferry or passenger transport services, and establish hospitals. The Act of 1919 gives power to the local authorities to subsidise hospitals, but I doubt if it would be reasonable to allow a local authority to establish a hospital. To do that would be to infringe upon what is the function of the Government. In municipalities we have, in most instances, Government hospitals provided by funds supplied by the whole of the community. Hospitals in country districts also should be a charge on Consolidated Revenue rather than on the restricted resources of the local authority. I do not see how the district council could meet the heavy obligations imposed upon it in respect of motor traffic, the incidence of which is causing road board members the gravest possible anxiety. Yet notwithstanding that heavy responsibility it is suggested that the local authorities should establish hospitals. Again they are to have the right to open and develop quarries and gravel pits. I do not know whether this is with a view to carrying on trade, or merely for the supplying of the requirements of the local authority alone.* At all events, I do not know that I shall offer any objection to the provision, for after all, quarries are opened and worked for local authority purposes, and since the machinery and equipment are there, it may be possible to economically supply neighbouring boards with material. Again, power is given for the provision of lighting plant and cooling chambers. Another remarkable suggestion is that the local authority should have the right to conduct cinematograph shows. In addition, the district council is to be given the right to establish yards for the sale of stock and, most remarkable of all, the right to erect workers' homes.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Why not?

Mr. SAMPSON: I question whether it is within the capacity, from the standpoint of time, of board members to carry out all these suggested works. In the establishment

of a hospital alone there is sufficient to occupy the spare time of board members.

Mr. Marshall: The Bill does not compel a board to establish a hospital, but merely empowers it to do so.

Mr. SAMPSON: But if a board were to establish a hospital it would be incumbent upon the subsequent members of that board to maintain the hospital. Again, why should all this work be imposed upon a local authority?

Mr. Marshall: It is not imposed upon the local authority.

Mr. SAMPSON: But it will be, for if one board establishes a hospital it will become an obligation upon all subsequent boards to carry on the work.

Mr. Heron: It is done by the Leonora Road Board.

Mr. SAMPSON: But the carrying on of the Leonora hospital gives the local authority a very great deal of work. If in addition they had to undertake the work of the lighting of the town and the looking after of stockyards—

Mr. Heron: They do it all now.

Mr. SAMPSON: If they had also to build homes for the workers and run a cinematograph show—

Mr. Heron: They do that now.

Mr. SAMPSON: Then certainly they must be very busy people. I question whether members of a board living at a great distance from the seat of local government would have the time to devote to it. With the work limited largely to the care of roads, as it is to-day, it is difficult to find men to undertake this work. It is sometimes a thankless task, and if in addition to the road work the responsibility of providing workers' homes is to be imposed upon boards, I fail to see how it can be satisfactorily carried out. Why should we duplicate this service? The Workers' Homes Board is already established. There is at least one officer—there are probably more—whose duty it is to supervise this work, but it is suggested that a number of men, capable men in many ways but untrained in the financial and building knowledge requisite for this duty, should undertake the responsibility.

Mr. Lutey: The board would not do it unless they were competent to carry it out.

Mr. SAMPSON: One board might, in an excess of zeal, decide to undertake the building of workers' homes. The principle having been adopted, it would remain the duty

of the board to continue the work for some years.

Mr. Marshall: Nothing of the kind.

Mr. SAMPSON: It would be ridiculous if the board agreed to erect three or six workers' homes and then, when a new board took office three years later, for them to say they would have nothing more to do with it. What would happen to those homes? Once embarked upon, the scheme must be carried through. Again, the conducting of a cinematograph show might have the attraction of novelty and newness—

Mr. Lutey: It is quite an old idea.

Mr. SAMPSON: It would be a mistake to interfere with the work of the Workers' Homes Board and the War Service Homes Board. Let Parliament provide the funds for the Workers' Homes Board, and this duty will be carried out to the satisfaction of the people who require homes and to the satisfaction of the taxpayers as a whole. Power is sought to enable local authorities to call upon owners to contribute towards the cost of drainage. I do not know to what extent this power is to be given, but some limitation should be fixed. I congratulate the Minister upon having decided to give road boards the power to regulate and control hoardings. I think it was the Chief Justice who recently said that those people who disfigured the landscape should pay for it. The municipal councils have power to control hoardings, and I am glad that similar power is to be given to the road boards.

Mr. Mann: Will they control the Railway Department?

Mr. SAMPSON: The Railway Department is a law unto itself. Perhaps as time goes on the aesthetic and picturesque aspect will make its appeal more and more to the Railway Department. So far its recognition of the picturesque has been rather in the breach than otherwise. The power of road boards to regulate hoardings should mean that the landscape will not be disfigured to the extent it has been in the past.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What about the man who puts up a notice "Oranges for sale"?

Mr. SAMPSON: The boardings to which I refer are those that advertise something foreign to the particular locality and are erected for gain. Another provision in the Bill is designed to give local authorities power to establish bowsters or petrol pumps.

Weighbridges and weighing machines will also be within the scope of control by a road board.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Their first duty should be to make roads.

Mr. SAMPSON: Every road board member should feel flattered at the great opinion of his ability evidently held by the Minister for Works. The board member must be a man of comprehensive knowledge. He must be capable not only of caring for the roads—

The Premier: The Bill was framed with you in mind.

Mr. SAMPSON: I could wish that the Premier had some experience of road board work. If he had, even he would have baulked at the amount of work with which he would be faced.

The Premier: Of course it is all compulsory! It would not be so bad if it were voluntary!

Mr. SAMPSON: But power is to be given to the road boards to undertake these things. There might be a board possessed of more enthusiasm than real knowledge—

Mr. Davy: One enthusiast could do the harm.

Mr. SAMPSON: Such a board might decide to establish a hospital, a cinematograph show, a stockyard, or a series of workers' homes. All those activities would become the responsibility of a set of men working in an honorary capacity. When the Minister said the time might come when members of road boards would require to be paid, he was surely speaking with a full knowledge of the additional powers sought to be conferred by this measure. I would challenge any man in this House or outside it satisfactorily to carry out all the things that the Bill aims to empower road boards to do. Supermen will be required, men with no other work to do. Road board members in the country usually carry on farms, orchards or other work, and they have not the time, however anxious they might be, to carry on all these activities.

Mr. Marshall: If it will require supermen, you will not get a job on a road board again when this Bill is passed.

Mr. SAMPSON: Road board members will be unable to afford the time to attend to all those duties. I hope that when the Bill reaches the Committee stage the powers proposed to be conferred will be reduced. If it is required that a cinematograph show be provided to enable the local hall to pay its way, let a body other than the road board

or district council do the work. The same applies to the provision of a hospital. Why should any road board be expected to provide its own hospital service? Why have one law for the metropolitan area and another law for the country districts? It is a function of government to provide hospital service for the people, and if the road board established a hospital under this measure, it would be obligatory on them to continue it and maintain it. Throughout Western Australia our men are busy men. At present it is difficult to get men to serve on road boards. The work is strenuous.

The Minister for Works: Do you assert that the boards do not want these powers?

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes.

The Minister for Works: Then I say you do not know what the boards want.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: This is Moscow power.

Mr. SAMPSON: I have not heard that the boards desire to vary the present method of voting.

The Minister for Works: That is the only thing in the Bill they do not want.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Fat "Linda" would prepare a better Bill than this.

The Minister for Works: You know all about what "Linda" wants.

Mr. SAMPSON: As every man with the slightest experience knows, the work of a road board is very strenuous and it occupies a good deal of a member's time. If a road board member acts conscientiously, all his spare time is occupied by the work. In many districts he has to carry out inspections; he has to assist in the supervision of work. Consequently a man who has consented to serve the ratepayers in this capacity and who is called upon to travel 10, 20 or 30 miles each way to attend a road board meeting, has to work long hours on his farm to make up for the time spent in that way. The fact that road board members are not paid is another question. Not only is there no payment, but members who have to travel such distances are not allowed travelling expenses. As a rule such expenses are not asked for. Members of boards are pleased to do everything in their power to assist. I am glad the Bill has been introduced. It is a measure to be dealt with mainly in Committee, and I hope the Minister for Works will agree to strike out some of the objectionable clauses. I am sure that on reconsideration he will agree that no local authority should be expected to undertake

such a responsibility as the building of workers' homes and the conduct of a hospital. These are duties really beyond what can be properly expected of any local authority. If the road boards throughout the State do what is expected of them, namely, look after the roads and make it possible for people with produce to convey it from farm to market, there will be no reason to complain. I shall support the second reading, but in Committee I shall do my best to secure the deletion of some of the clauses, the presence of which have the effect of weakening the measure.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [7.59]: Although this Bill looks rather formidable, most of the clauses on perusal are found to deal with the proposal to alter the name of local authorities from road board to district council and also to alter the voting power, with numerous amendments consequential thereto. I realise that if the boards undertake all the functions proposed to be given under this measure, they will require a much more glorified name than that of road boards. At the same time this is the only State in Australia where the local authorities are termed road boards, and we shall be bringing our local authorities into line with those of the other States if we give them the wider title. The proposal to alter the voting power is important. Although quite a number of amendments of the original Act follow that proposal they are all consequential upon that clause being passed. It has frequently been stated in the House that it is right and democratic to give one man one vote. The House has even been likened to a road board. The House, however, makes laws for the road boards to carry out. Generally speaking the duty of a road board is to strike a rate, collect the money, and spend it. It is only right and proper that those who pay a bigger proportion than others should have more say than those who contribute only a few shillings to the funds of the road boards. For that reason it is not advisable to alter the system of voting. Other clauses also open up big questions. Clause 32 gives the Government power to open or divert a road. This appears to be a dangerous provision. If 20 or more ratepayers hold a public meeting, they can carry a resolution to open a road, and send that resolution over the heads of the road board, which may object, and the road may be declared. That would not be

a good thing in country districts. Some road boards receive many applications for the granting of roads. In the case of the road board with which I was associated, before we considered such applications we notified the surrounding land owners with the object of getting their views. One man may want a road, and go right away from the spot and get 19 other ratepayers to sign a petition. In that way he may get the road he wants, but may do an injustice to others. I do not know what the Road Board Association thinks of it, but I consider it is a dangerous provision.

Mr. Sampson: It is not nice to go over the heads of road boards.

Mr. LINDSAY: No.

The Minister for Works: The hon. member wanted me to go over the head of a board, and dissolve it.

Mr. Sampson: That would be an exception, and perhaps was justifiable.

Mr. LINDSAY: Another alteration to the Act deals with the fencing of a road. In the early days the Act provided that if within 90 days of the taking of any land the owner wrote to the board, a fence had to be erected equal to that already existing on the property. The period was subsequently amended to six months. This Bill says that where land is fenced, or no fence is provided, and the owner asks that it should be fenced, within six months the board is bound to put up a fence on both sides of the road, irrespective of whether there has ever been a fence there before or not. It will be difficult for road boards to open a road under such conditions through any class of country. Say we put a road through a block one mile long and there was no fence on it. Twelve months or two years later the owner may decide to fence, because by so doing he may save himself the cost of one mile of fencing. He would thus not have to erect that mile of fencing, but the board would have to do it. If we were putting a road on one side of a boundary, 100 chains long, we would have to pay the owner compensation for his improvements. We usually pay according to conditional purchase arrangements, and on the land rents that have been paid. When the owner comes to fence his land, he may call on the road board to erect the boundary fence for the full distance of the road along the boundary, and this would probably cost £60 or £70. This will be a big strain on the resources of any road board. In the old days

the board was forced to put up a fence similar to that already existing. Under this Bill, the board will have to erect a fence whether or not the property has ever been fenced before, or has only been partially fenced. When the owner decides to fence, he calls on the board to put up the whole of that fence. That is not right from the point of view of the board.

The Minister for Works: Suppose the fence divided the property?

Mr. LINDSAY: In the old days, if the board put a fence through a man's property, both sides of the road had to be fenced. Road boards do not usually run a road through the middle of a property, but in most cases do so at the side, although the same provisions hold good in that respect. In future people will be looking to the road boards to do their fencing for them, and the money will have to be found by the ratepayers of the district. The clause should be reconsidered. Another important clause is that dealing with exemptions from rates. I have had some experience of this matter. I do not know whether this applies to the Agricultural Bank or not. People have taken up land, and it has become rateable in two years. It may be forfeited, with the result that the rates are gone. In the case of the Agricultural Bank, when the property is forfeited the institution retains the mortgage over it. The consequence is that, although the forfeiture is gazetted, the land is not actually forfeited because there is still the debt upon it. The bank always refuses to pay rates. In the case of a private institution that holds a mortgage, the road board can always claim their rates upon it. They have, therefore, asked for this amendment. In my district one property was held for ten years, and yet legally it was not rateable. Four or five different persons had held it, but the road board could get no rates out of it. This amendment has been required for a good while. Another important matter is in connection with Clause 41, with regard to the valuations the Minister may make. The Commissioner of Taxation has made certain valuations in road board areas. Generally speaking, with the assistance of the Minister's department, the road boards have accepted the valuations. I do not say that they are right or wrong. In the case of a road board in my district it was found necessary to test the valuations, and this cost the board £40. There must be something wrong. The road board holds a court

of appeal every year. The ratepayers then appeal against the valuation, and according to the Act the board must sit to hear those appeals. The Commissioner of Taxation or his officer made certain valuations and promised the road board, which accepted them, to send a departmental officer to assist in the hearing of appeals. The Wyalcatchem Road Board followed the usual practice and notified the Commissioner of Taxation. It was told to hold the court of appeal, take the evidence and adjourn the court sine die. Meanwhile the officers were to reinspect the properties, make further inquiries, and when the rest of the evidence had been collected, the court was to sit again. There were 29 appeals. The evidence was taken, the Commissioner sent his officials to the district, reinspected the properties, and the board sat again. There were 20 blocks in the case of one appeal, all held by one man. The board allowed the appeals in the case of four blocks after the inspection. These valuations were made by the Commissioner and not by the board, and they should have been correct. There should have been no question of testing them or getting them reduced. The board allowed a reduction in four instances from £812 to £419. In the case of the remaining 16 blocks, they refused to alter the valuation. After this the owner of the land took the matter before the local court at Goomalling. This is the only test that has been made in country districts of the valuations of the Taxation Department. The magistrate who heard the case reduced the values by 50 per cent. in the case of each of the 16 blocks. The values were reduced from £5,923 to £3,955.

The Minister for Works: On the 16 blocks?

Mr. LINDSAY: Yes, and it cost the road board £40 for the services of counsel. There were 29 men who had appealed to the road board and had been turned down, but only one of this number went to the local court and secured a reduction. I am prepared to say that if the other 28 had taken the same course and employed the same counsel, they also would have secured reductions. These and other ratepayers in the district are suffering an injustice because they were not prepared to follow the course taken by the other man. The Minister has power under the Bill to compel road boards to accept these valuations. I do not say the valuations are too high. In the case of four blocks this road board agreed that

there were some anomalies, and reduced the price. The police magistrate, who heard the case, said he was not prepared to do anything detrimental to settlement in the district, and reduced the values to what they were before the Commissioner of Taxation made his valuations.

The Minister for Works: He ought to have his head read.

Mr. LINDSAY: Either that, or the valuations made were too high. I do not think they were too high, but when people hear of these things, it causes them to say, "Why should we not go to law?" It would be a fine thing for the lawyers, but a bad thing for the settlers, and not good for the State. These are the principal points I intended to bring before the House. Although we have been twitted to-night in connection with another Bill regarding the question of valuations, I know from my own knowledge that there are many anomalies. There should certainly be some better method of arriving at valuations than we have at present. Generally speaking, I support the second reading of the Bill.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson) [8.16]: I support the second reading of the Bill and compliment the Minister upon his amendments to the Road Districts Act. The measure will fill long-felt wants and will meet the representations that local governing bodies have made for years for more extended powers. I cannot understand the attitude of the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) in opposing the Bill.

The Minister for Works: That is right; trim him up!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I do not intend to trim him up.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Not one member on the Government side is game to say what he thinks.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Road boards have asked for more power for many years past and now, when we have a Minister who brings in a Bill to meet the wishes of local governing bodies, we have the member for Swan opposing the measure, holus bolus!

Mr. Sampson: Not holus bolus; I said I was not in favour of road boards conducting hospitals and cinematographs, or erecting workers homes.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The hon. member said that the Government were giving the local authorities too much power. For many

years the chosen men of the various districts have given their time gratis in helping to develop the country in their capacity as members of local governing authorities. Constantly they have been squashed because of their lack of power. Now, when we have their wishes met along certain lines, we have hon. members opposing such legislation! I cannot understand their attitude. I intend to go baldheaded for the amendment of the principal Act. Despite that, however, the Bill contains some clauses that I shall endeavour to have amended.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.18]: I am surprised that the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) and other hon. members on the Government side have not displayed more interest in this Bill. I hope the Minister does not intend to go into Committee to-night.

The Minister for Works: We could pass the Bill to-night.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There are not too many members present to oppose the Bill, but there are also not too many to support the Minister.

The Minister for Works: We can do a lot of business with a House like this.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course this type of legislation appeals to the Minister.

The Minister for Works: And to the people.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It means the Minister is getting rid of responsibility.

The Minister for Works: I thought you accused me of desiring to take too much responsibility.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister is not a cheerful giver; he is not the giver of the type the gods love. As with the Bill last year, so with the Bill this year, we find that power is added to the authorities already exercised by road boards, but almost always those powers are subject to the approval of the Minister.

The Minister for Works: A member of the Upper House who tried to throw the Bill out last year, said I was depriving the local authorities of their powers and making the Minister an autocrat.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Perhaps last year's Bill was a little worse than the present Bill.

The Minister for Works: They are practically the same.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Having said in the Bill that we shall give various additional powers to the road boards, we are to make the Minister all-powerful! I do not know that there are many road boards that can do more than maintain their roads, with the money at their disposal. We have very few really good roads in the country, and I think we have given the local authorities enough to do already. The Minister wishes the House to agree to add all sorts of powers and responsibilities to the local authorities, and thus throw upon the ratepayers very considerable additional burdens. The Minister should remember that there are many small owners of properties who will be taxed.

The Minister for Works: The tax will not be much.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Bill will not apply to the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: Who said so?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister did.

The Minister for Works: I did not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Most decidedly you did.

The Minister for Works: There are road boards in the metropolitan area as well as in the outer districts.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Do the provisions of the Bill cover those road boards as well?

The Minister for Works: Yes.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then I think the Minister will find he must redraft some of the clauses, if he can make such a statement as that.

The Minister for Works: That shows you do not know what the Bill contains.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do know.

The Minister for Works: You do not know.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister is decidedly disorderly. The Bill contains powers that will apply all over the State.

The Minister for Works: There you are! Yet you said that it did not apply to the metropolitan area.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Bill sets out what is the metropolitan area and what applies to rural districts. The powers given to rural districts do not extend to the local authorities in the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Works: I say you are wrong.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You will be able to say so later on.

The Minister for Works: I say so now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You are not permitted to do so. The Minister has not studied his Bill; he has not read it. He told us that the Bill was the same as that of last year, and that he did not propose to discuss it. Will the Minister contend it is necessary to give the local authorities power to erect workers' homes? The other day I heard one Minister—I think it was the Minister for Works—complaining about the Federal Government entering upon this work. I agreed with him. The Federal Government have set aside £20,000,000 to provide homes for the people.

The Minister for Works: I hope they will spend some in this State.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope they will spend the whole of it in this State if we have the people to occupy the houses. But we already have a Workers' Homes Board that is doing excellent work. It is a well managed institution, the only trouble being that not sufficient funds are placed at its disposal. With the necessary funds available, the board could do all the work that is required. The Premier was misinformed when he said the other day that the Workers' Homes Board had money to invest. On hearing his statement, I sent a message to people in my own electorate telling them that money was available and as their applications had not been endorsed, advising them to submit their applications again. They did so, but those people were told that no money would be available for months to come! We do not require more than one authority to advance money for the erection of workers' homes, nor do we require to duplicate the cost of running such a department. Our Workers' Homes Board has done wonderful work. People have got houses that have been well built; the interest has been fairly cheap; and the people's interests have been looked after well by the secretary of the Workers' Homes Board. We should not ask the local authorities to find money for this work. It is not necessary, nor is it advisable, that they should be put to the expense of managing a department such as this. All that is necessary is to supply our own Workers' Homes Board with additional funds. With the Federal Government spending money and a little assistance from our own Workers' Homes Board, sufficient build-

ings will be available to meet our requirements.

The Minister for Works: If the homes are not required, the local authorities will not have to undertake those duties.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It is ridiculous to give the local authorities power that they are not to exercise. It will mean that additional rates will have to be paid by workers.

The Minister for Works: The other day a road board made representations to me that it was impossible to get houses for their own officers. Why should such a board not use money to provide a home for a road board officer in such a district?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Why should not the Workers' Homes Board function?

Mr. Heron: The board does not function too well in the country.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the local authorities are to undertake such work, it will mean an additional obligation to be borne by the taxpayers. If that is to be the position, the additional impost will fall heavily upon many people. Too often are members heard saying, "What is 10s. or £1 a year?" That is a considerable amount for working men to pay year in and year out. We should not regard our task so lightly. Under the Bill, the local authorities will be able to run cinematograph shows.

Mr. Panton: They are paying propositions.

The Minister for Works: In other parts of the world the local authorities run boarding houses and hostels.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If we go to Russia—

The Minister for Works: Not Russia; that is done in Great Britain.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The county councils in Great Britain are in a totally different position. The local authorities there do a great deal of the work that is done by the Government here.

The Minister for Works: The local authorities run nursing homes and all sorts of things.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, because they do much of the work that the Government do here. The Government ask hon. members to agree to the people paying the same tax twice for the same purpose, once to the Government and once to the local authorities.

The Minister for Works: Where is the tax?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister cannot do anything without collecting money.

The Minister for Works: We can; you could not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I established the other night the utter recklessness with which the Government have been expending money.

The Minister for Works: We are not as reckless as you were.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We did not have money rained down upon us by the Federal Government, as they have showered it upon the present Government, neither did we get the revenue that the present Government have received.

The Premier: Now then, do not be extravagant!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: By no stretch of imagination can that remark of the Minister for Works be justified. I shall endeavour to show him that while we got value for the money we spent, the Minister for Works, while possessing many good qualities, is not able to see that he gets good value for the money he spends.

The Minister for Works: I have Scotch blood in me.

Mr. Wilson: Too Scotch altogether!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister has Scotch blood in him, but it obtrudes itself at the wrong moment and never when it should. If he possessed the caution and the mind built for economy like that possessed by the member for Collie (Mr. Wilson), it would be a different matter. I shall show where the money has gone since the Minister has been in office, and what value has been received.

The Minister for Works: Don't induce me to say where it went while you were in office!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: As a matter of fact, the public accounts were published every year I was in office. They have not been published so far this year but we will have them before the Estimates are passed. If the Minister refrained from interjecting it would be much easier for me to get through the debate. As I have pointed out, there will be three authorities building workers' homes. The majority of the people of the State are not having their wishes given effect to. Hon. members think that the people who pay taxes to the road

boards are the wealthy class; the great bulk of the ratepayers are those who cannot afford to pay anything more by way of taxation. Many additional powers have been given to the local authorities with respect to hoardings on private properties. I agree that if the landscape is being disfigured, we should have the power to prevent that. But when we say that a man is not to erect hoardings on his own property, we are going too far. If a boarding is to be erected, a license has to be taken out.

Mr. Sampson: That is what it means.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is wrong. A good many of the clauses in the Bill are devoted to the change of titles that the Minister has decided upon. He is going to dignify those people who sit on the boards by calling them councillors. My friends from Canning and Murehison will be known as councillors, and we shall have councillors galore in this country. I do not know whether it matters what we call the members of a board provided they do their work. Therefore I do not see that there is any need for a change. I realise that in a place like Katanning some confusion might be caused and that it may be of advantage to change the name in an instance such as that. When the Bill is in Committee I hope we shall have a full explanation from the Minister in regard to all these new proposals. I notice it is intended to impose a betterment tax. That is something new in legislation in this State. At Gosnells an orange grower may have his property flooded, and if a road board cut a drain to drain the road, and incidentally drained the orchard, the betterment tax could be applied. Perhaps the orange grower would be the only one to benefit by the drain, and he would find himself compelled to pay a considerable sum. There is the danger, and I should like to warn people of it. If the betterment tax does not become law it will do so for the first time in the history of the State. I cannot understand why we should always be endeavouring to make changes without receiving any real advantage. We have spent a great deal of time this session passing legislation that will have very little effect on the lives of the people in the State; the real effect will be to impose more taxation. Certainly there will not be any constructive work that will be likely to do any good. We ought to devote our time to things that would mean more work and

progress for the people. It is all very well for the Minister to say he is satisfied with the work of the Government. I suppose it is unreasonable to expect him to say anything else. But I should like to make him think otherwise, and if I could there would be some hope of him mending his ways, in the way of the legislation that he introduces. Day in and day out we get Bills, very few of which are of any value to the community. I am surprised to find that the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) is giving his support to so many proposals in the Bill, but I am not surprised that he is opposing some of them. When the Bill is in Committee I shall endeavour to induce the Minister to be reasonable and to make certain amendments. It is necessary that we should keep many of the Minister's proposals off the statute-book, because once they get there, they will do harm rather than good.

MR. BROWN (Pingelly) [8.40] : This Bill, no doubt, has been introduced by the Minister as the result of the conference recently held.

Mr. Sampson: Some of it.

MR. BROWN: The greater part of it has the concurrence of that conference. There are only one or two matters to which I intend to refer, and to which I am seriously opposed. I agree with the proposal to alter the title of Chairman to President, and that of members of boards to councillors. That is only right, because it will add some dignity to the positions. Road board members have done a considerable amount of work in the past for which they have received no recompense. They have given their time gratuitously, and it has all been for the benefit of the ratepayers. For many years I was a member of a road board, and part of the time as chairman, and in those days I assure the House there were no three per cents. But as time has progressed, these institutions have advanced, and therefore it is a splendid idea to alter the title from road boards to district councils. The part of the Bill to which I have the most serious objection is the question of one ratepayer one vote. Probably none of us here who have been elected on this franchise have any objection to it, but, if we take a road board district, the position is entirely different. One man may hold a fair amount of property, and he may be paying £100 in rates, whilst another man may be paying only a

few shillings. Is it right that the latter should have the same voting power as the man paying the larger amount? In nine cases out of ten the interests of these two people are not identical. Why should the man paying only 5s. have the same power as the man paying £100 to declare how money should be spent. It is possible for a number of small ratepayers to take control of a district council. In that event, what would it matter to them what rates they imposed? They would not be affected to any extent; certainly not to the same extent as the bigger landowner. That is not right. The big landowner must be protected. The Minister knows well that at the conference 90 per cent. of the votes were cast against the proposal. Therefore I am surprised to find that the Minister insists on its inclusion in the Bill. If he persists, the Bill will surely be wrecked. With the exception of that one clause, not much fault can be found with the Bill. It has been framed having in view the advancement with the times. But one ratepayer one vote is too drastic, and before the Bill has passed through its various stages the Minister will find that that is so. In the general assessment the councils will have power to assess their own lands. I have been twitted here with not being patriotic, but I can tell the Minister for Lands, and he knows full well, that if he takes the reports he will find that very often in a 1,000 acre block there will be 200 acres of first-class land; 500 or 600 acres of second-class land, and the balance will be third-class land. It stands to reason that every block cannot possibly be assessed on the same basis. If the Minister wanted to buy a piece of ground, he would go into that aspect thoroughly before completing the bargain. In Western Australia we still have an enormous area of really first-class land. We also have huge areas of light lands which will produce first-class crops. But we should be most particular in our assessments. Members of road boards are best qualified to assess land justly, because in nine cases out of ten they live in the district and till its soil. I once had the privilege of assessing every block of land in a road district, and was afterwards complimented on my work and received a bonus for it. A good many of the valuations I increased from 10s. to £1 per acre, but on the other hand I decreased many blocks valued at 10s. to 5s. or 6s. per acre. The original valuations were probably made by early surveyors.

Our present surveyors are more accurate in their estimates of the value of land. Still, there is no doubt that our country is of a patchy nature. As time goes on, with proper methods of cultivation and with the application of phosphates, wheat will probably be grown wherever there are no rocks. Even our sand plains produce excellent crops; I refer to sand plain country on which our agricultural bank would not now advance a shilling.

Mr. Clydesdale: What has this to do with the Bill?

Mr. BROWN: If a man is attacked, it is well for him to defend his character while he has the chance. In Committee amendments will probably be made, but on the Bill as a whole we can congratulate the Minister. I except, of course, the one clause to which I have made special reference. The great majority of members on this side of the House have practical experience of tilling the soil, and the Minister would do well to accept our advice instead of allowing his Bill to be wrecked.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—STAMP ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th October.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.50]: I shall not offer any opposition to the Bill, which represents what has been the law since 1917. In that year it was considered advisable to obtain more revenue from transfers of land. I only regret the necessity for reimposing the higher tax.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1926-27.

In Committee of Supply.

Debate resumed from the 5th October on the Treasurer's Financial Statement and on the Annual Estimates; Mr. Lutey in the Chair.

Vote—Legislative Council, £1,555.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [8.54]: Before discussing the Estimates generally, I have a few matters of parochial application to bring forward. In connection with the Education Vote, the Eric-street school is in need of attention, and I would like the Minister for Education to take steps which will ensure accommodation sufficient to meet the increase in the number of pupils. At the Swanbourne school there is an opportunity for acquiring certain lands, which will provide for future extensions. This would be better than waiting for years and having to pay much more for the land. I also request that the Cottesloe State school should receive what it needs towards ground improvements. The grant that is requested is well merited. The local parents' and teachers' association have spent £200 or more of their own money in providing improvements. On the Health Vote I would ask the Honorary Minister whether he is able to carry out the promise made to me last session, through Mr. Munzie, that the department would inculcate through the schools the benefit of dieting on whole-meal bread. The information given me last year was that the question was before the Health Department, that there would be no legislation on the subject, but that propaganda for whole-meal dieting would be instituted in the schools. From inquiries I have made I gather that no such propaganda obtains in the Cottesloe schools. The Honorary Minister might ascertain whether scholars are being instructed or not in the value of whole-meal bread. Dr. Dale, I know, is giving some important lectures on the subject; but these represent a private enterprise, and apply only to those who wish to attend them. There has been a Press propaganda with reference to the Old Men's Home. I certainly do not see fit to make any attack on the conduct of the institution, which I have visited repeatedly. I find that the institution is being run very well indeed, and that there are extremely few complaints. It would not pay me or my district to make unfair attacks, under cover of an attack on the Government, upon the conduct of the institution. I repeat that in my opinion the Old Men's Home is being conducted properly. In this morning's paper I see a complaint that although newspapers and magazines are supplied for the use of the inmates, some of them cannot avail themselves of this literature because of failing eyesight. That is unfortunate, but we cannot put new eyes into the inmates. The old men whom I have in-

interviewed have had very few complaints to make. There were grievances about water and about the bathing place. Some six months ago statements were published that shocking scenes were to be witnessed in Claremont—old men, youths, and young ladies lying down in a pool together to bathe, and similar rubbish. I understand that the pool is now available for the use of the old men. Seeing that things at the Old Men's Home are entirely satisfactory, I fail to understand the publicity which has been devoted to the institution during the last few weeks. Turning now to a matter of somewhat greater importance, it has come to my notice that during the last six months the Railway Department have experienced great difficulty in improving the capacity of existing lines. The Minister for Railways is not here to-night, but I trust this matter will be noted. Government and Parliament give a good reception to anything that is said with reference to the people of this State having more miles of railway in proportion to population than any other Australian State. However, the existing lines of 4,000 miles require improvement, as can be ascertained from the report of the Commissioner of Railways; and there is always difficulty in obtaining the necessary funds. That is a shocking state of affairs, because it means that in this public utility efficiency is being sacrificed to extension of mileage. If these conditions continue, the time must come when our lines will be absolutely obsolete. It is pathetic to read in the departmental reports how the Commissioner begs and begs, with a self-sacrificing air, for money to put the existing 4,000 miles of line in order. It is shocking, I repeat, that we lose thousands upon thousands of pounds annually because the department cannot afford the necessary grading. The shortage of funds is due to our anxiety to construct new lines in the agricultural districts and elsewhere. I plead to Parliament, so long as Parliament runs the railways, to grant the Commissioner the funds he needs. Incidentally, I do not agree with Parliament running the railways; I would rather see the railway system run on the lines adopted by New South Wales, where the Commissioners borrow money on their own account and are responsible to themselves. Our railways are run by Parliament, and not by the Commissioner at all, as we can dot the i's and cross the t's in every case. It is necessary, therefore, for Parlia-

ment as a whole to take more interest in existing lines and display less eagerness to extend the mileage. I believe it is a fact that if the department is anxious to get certain regrading done, it has to use the excuse of unemployment. All that the department can do is to wait until some Minister is worried about unemployment and then catch him on the hop, saying, "Here is a nice little job of regrading that would provide employment for a lot of men." If the railways were truly under the control of the Commissioner, the efficiency of the permanent way would be attended to. Then there is the question of the supply of electricity being run entirely through the Commissioner of Railways. The Government should allow the manager of the Tramways and Electricity Supply to report direct to the Minister for Railways. Last session we had the spectacle of the manager of the Electricity Supply having to apply to the Commissioner of Railways for permission to instal electric stoves at Cottesloe. Mr. Taylor, an expert, had secured information from all over the world as to how these stoves can be hired out and installed, and when all his data was in order, instead of his going to the Minister direct he had to go to Colonel Pope. So it was left to the Commissioner of Railways to say whether or not there should be electric stoves in Cottesloe. I suggest to the Government that Mr. Taylor should be allowed to report direct to the Minister for Railways and so avoid the conflict of interests between himself and the Commissioner of Railways. Another phase of the same subject: with electricity consumed in so many houses in the metropolitan area, we have almost invariably the vile disfigurement of front porches by electricity meters. I suggest that the many thousands of pounds of State money tied up in electricity meters could be put to much better use.

Mr. Clydesdale: They are getting good interest on their money.

Mr. NORTH: But what is the use of that to anybody? When I was mayor of Cottesloe I took a deep interest in this matter, and we considered a scheme to save the enormous cost of meters, amounting in some houses to £15. That money could be utilised in the provision of stoves. When we came to read the meters in Cottesloe with a view to inaugurating a better scheme of supervising current consumption, we found that house after house used the same quan-

tity of current. Practically all 4-roomed houses were consuming half a crown's worth of current per month. Hundreds of houses were using the same quantity of current; yet meter readers at great expense were covering thousands of miles, thousands of pounds were locked up in meters disfiguring front porches, whilst an enormous staff of clerks were writing down figures month after month, year after year in the production of accounts so similar as not to be worth the keeping.

Mr. Clydesdale: That is all very well while you have restriction, but where should we get to without the meters?

Mr. NORTH: That is what I am coming to. Electric bulbs and nearly all electric appliances have a limited life. If the bulbs are used continuously and carelessly they quickly burn out. The time has come when we should dispense with the meters and see if supervision cannot be exercised through the bulbs. I am not going to suggest that the Government should handle all the bulbs, for that would be a solecism. But it could be done if some central authority were to arrange with the distributing firms to be in charge of the supply of bulbs. Suppose on every bulb a rebate was made to the Government. It would not affect the distributing firms, nor would it affect careful consumers, for they would be saving the money previously spent in the rent of useless meters.

Mr. Withers: What would you do with all the meters installed?

Mr. NORTH: That is a perfectly reasonable objection. But we are buying thousands of pounds worth of meters every year, and maybe we could find a way to cut them out and supply the current on a monthly flat rate basis to cover the overhead charge, which is the chief charge. For 24 hours in East Perth the coal is being burnt whether the current generated is used or not. The meters are there merely to prevent persons from using that which is produced for use. The Government should consider the question of gradually cutting out these disfiguring meters and using the money in the provision of electrical appliances to be hired out to householders.

Mr. Sampson: Could the lamps be marked in some way to determine the consumption?

Mr. NORTH: Suppose during the first few months a few fools left the lights burning all night. Presently they would require to buy new bulbs, and when they found

that those bulbs carried a tax to be paid to the Government, they would soon be more reasonable in their use of the current. At present the consumers are prevented by the meters from wasting current. When they found that although the meters had been removed, if they waste current they had to buy bulbs more frequently, they would cease to waste the current.

Mr. Davy: Might not they use power current for lighting?

Mr. NORTH: There again we come to the extraordinary variety in retail cost of current that is bought in bulk at a uniform rate. In the city of Perth there are all kinds of charges for current, domestic current, factory current, and lighting. Then there is another rate depending upon the floor space of the house. Yet all the time the current is purchased in bulk at a uniform rate. All these anomalies arise through the varied forms of meter reading, creating all these departments to attend to the consumption of current. In Perth to-day there is one uniform scheme known as the floor space scheme. Under that only one meter is used to do the work of various types of current consumption. What is the sense of all this variety, all this building up of clerical staffs to write down these wonderful figures month after month, year after year, when all the time actually the coal is burnt at East Perth whether the current is used or not? I do not wish to weary the Committee, but I emphasise that the time has come when the question of the amount of money tied up in these schemes should be investigated. If we are not prepared to abandon the lot, let us follow the scheme of Wellington, New Zealand, where they have one meter per house and not three or four in a house. On the verandahs of some of the houses in Perth there are meters to the value of £15.

Mr. Marshall: Is not that due to the fact that some of the meters are measuring current on a concession rate?

Mr. NORTH: Yes. It is marvellous what schemes of power rates, industrial rates, factory rates and domestic rates have been adopted that have led to the use of additional meters, more books in the office, the production of bigger figures, and a more impressive position generally, simply to retail current that is supplied to the city of Perth at the one price of .75d. per unit. There is enough money tied up in the Government retail supplies in the metropolitan area to provide at least an electric iron in

every house that uses current. That is a point worth considering. If that were brought home to the people they would demand an inquiry into the practice of reading meters month after month when the difference varies probably between 2s. 6d. and 2s. 8d., or between 3s. 6d. and 4s. I ask members to consider the bills that they personally pay each quarter.

Hon. G. Taylor: Some of them are very distressing.

Mr. NORTH: Members will realise that it is a question of the number of points used. If the question of the abolition of meters were considered, the guiding factor would be the number of points used in each house. If consumers were aware that the bulbs have only a limited life, just as have clothes or motor cars, they would use the current with care and would not need the check of meters to make them careful. I do not wish to criticise the department; I shall be only too pleased to hear why meters are used. I have raised this question because I think it might well be given consideration. The cost of living rises in all directions. We have Arbitration Courts, and we employ numerous devices in our efforts to overcome the ever-rising difficulty of making both ends meet. This is one way in which a saving might be effected, and even though it might be termed collectivism, the same argument would apply if a company were retailing the current. This, as well as other ways in which we are wasting money without realising it owing to unnecessary difficulties that we have created for ourselves, is a question that might well be investigated. I put this matter on a par with the lack of a standard gauge of railway, with which I dealt a few weeks ago. With these few remarks I shall leave the Estimates until we come to consider the items.

[Mr. Angelo took the Chair.]

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [9.19]: In common with other members, I was greatly interested in the Premier's Budget Speech. It contained a mass of figures, and I do not profess to be sufficiently expert to understand all the ramifications of the work of those who prepared the returns. The Premier told us that the year had not proved as favourable as was expected. He was referring to the railway returns for the transport of wheat. The figures show that £302,945 was received, whereas in the pre-

vious year the amount was £349,223. While the anticipated revenue last year was £3,500,000, the actual receipts were £3,317,140. The difference on the carriage of wheat amounted to £46,308. The implication in the remarks of the Premier is that the comparatively poor harvest meant a loss to the railways of the difference between the £3,317,140 and the £3,500,000 anticipated, the amount being £183,000. During the year 1925-26 3,139,019 tons of goods were moved which in point of tonnage, was greater than the tonnage moved in any other year excepting 1924-25, when the total was 3,179,749 tons, or 40,730 tons more than in the year 1925-26. The point to which I wish to direct attention is that the reduction of tonnage should surely have meant a reduction of costs. Railway earnings in 1924-25 were £3,334,008 and in 1925-26 £3,317,140. The expenses in 1924-25 were £2,361,760 and in 1925-26 £2,519,712. Thus, while the earnings were £16,868 less, the expenditure required to produce the revenue was £157,952 greater. Those figures do not include interest or sinking fund. In the circumstances some reason other than the reduction in the quantity of wheat carried must be found for the heavy loss made on the railways. The figures clearly show that it cost more money to move a smaller tonnage in 1925-26 than it cost to move the bigger tonnage in 1924-25. I desire to refer to the special rates for the carriage of fertiliser. At present the manure rates apply all over the State during the months of December, January, February and March, but in certain of the Great Southern and South-Western districts—the fruit and potato growing districts—fertiliser is carried at the manure rates throughout the whole of the year. I want to ask the Minister for Railways if he will make the preferential rates apply to the whole of the potato and fruit growing districts. Why should the growers at Mundaring, Wooroloo, Toodyay, Gingin, and those along the Canning Mills line and at Karragullen, have to pay a higher rate for exactly similar goods than do the growers at Harvey, Manjimup, or any other station in the South-West? I appreciate the fact that consideration is given to those producers—

Mr. Withers: Would you have a flat rate?

Mr. SAMPSON: The preferential rate should apply to all the fruit and potato growing centres. The present position is not equitable and I cannot understand why the

Premier agreed to the variation. Possibly it is in the mind of the Premier to reinstate the old rate, thereby giving to the producers of fruit and potatoes in parts other than the Great Southern and the South-Western line the privilege enjoyed by them. If this were done it would be much appreciated. The growers who are not living in the favoured parts have to pay a considerably increased rate that they of all people are least able to bear. If a reversion to the rates previously charged were brought about, there would be widespread appreciation. I hope the Premier, in the absence of the Minister for Railways, will be good enough to say at least that consideration will be given to the question of adopting a uniform charge for what is a uniform service. I am sorry that the Premier remains silent.

The Premier: What is that?

Mr. SAMPSON: I hope the Premier will consider the question of giving the growers in the non-favoured districts the benefit of the preferential rate.

The Minister for Works: Why could not you persuade the Minister for Railways, in the Government of which you were a member, to do that?

Mr. SAMPSON: I think the Minister is aware that this variation was made recently.

The Minister for Works: It was not.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am advised that it has been made within the last three years. I do not wish to emphasise that without being certain, but I have been advised to that effect. It was stated by the Minister for Railways that the hills districts were located in close proximity to the city markets, and therefore did not have the same disabilities to face as those who were further removed. The principle acknowledges the need of these growers for fertiliser at varying periods of the year. The fruitgrower and the potato grower require fertiliser at times other than those when the special rates apply to all portions of the State. I hope there will be a reversion to the previous rate that was so much appreciated.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [9.31]: It appears from the Estimates that our revenue has doubled within the last 10 years. In 1917-18 the revenue was £4,622,000, and the estimate for the current year is £9,791,611. This shows that the country is progressing, and that the people are more able to bear increased taxation. The land tax

shows a remarkable increase. We have been told that this increase is to go towards a reduction in railway freights, but I cannot find that the amount has been credited to the railways, though it may appear in the losses. The revenue of the railways has also doubled, while the mileage has increased. I admit that the depression on the goldfields makes it difficult for that part of the system to pay its way. Nevertheless the railway system has been extended considerably since the decline of the goldfields set in, so that in the long run the position of the railways is even better than it was when the goldfields were in a state of prosperity.

Mr. Marshall: You have to allow for the increased patronage of the railways in the city.

Mr. LINDSAY: Very few people in the metropolitan area travel by train. For the most part they use motor conveyances. Most of the goods also come up by river or by motor truck. It cannot be said that the improvement in the revenue of the railways comes from the metropolitan area.

Mr. Marshall: Increased population in the city must mean increased patronage of the railways.

Mr. LINDSAY: The figures prove that we can continue extending our railway system with profit to the State. They also prove that railway extensions are a good thing, and that the railways have not suffered the loss that was anticipated. In my district nearly every siding or railway station is on the other side of the line from the township. There seems to have been no co-ordination between departments. The railways were not concerned in the survey of the townsite, and the Lands Department were not concerned in the survey of the railway siding. On the Dowerin-Merredin loop there is only one town on the same side as the railway station. This is most inconvenient for people, and will become more inconvenient as time goes on. Requisitions for overhead bridges are constantly being made, but these could have been obviated by a little co-operation between the departments. I asked the Premier if any inspection had been made by the Railway Advisory Board of the country east of Lake Mollerin. I hope that an inspection will be made before we deal with the Bill for the construction of the railway. This line does not affect my electorate, but I think it is intended to put it in the wrong place. I believe a reinspection of the coun-

try further north would cause the mistake to be rectified. Many lines have been built on the advice of the advisory board that have subsequently been found to have been built in the wrong place. In other cases the routes have been altered a year or two later. Unfortunately railways have been built on routes recommended by the advisory board, and it has cost the State a good deal to place other railways where they should have been put in the first place.

The Minister for Mines: They ought to have more experience after all these years.

The Premier: That has often happened. Some railways were not built on the routes recommended by the board.

Mr. LINDSAY: In the case of the Dowerin-Merredin line, the railway from Goomalling to Dowerin may or may not have been built on the advice of that board, but I know that the extension from Dowerin to Merredin was built on that advice.

The Premier: Was not the Goomalling-Dowerin line built before the advisory board came into being?

Mr. LINDSAY: The extension was made afterwards.

The Premier: Are you sure that Parliament did not deviate from the route that was recommended?

Mr. LINDSAY: The Railway Advisory Board arrived at Dowerin one night. Mr. Morrell, the Agricultural Bank Inspector, who has lived in the district all his life, has run sheep there, cut sandalwood there, and knows the country better than anyone else, met the advisory board. I was with him. He asked them to put the line eight miles south of Benjabbering Well. I waited until he had put this up to the board, and when he came out he told me they had agreed to do this. On the following day the board went to the well and I had lunch there with them. They were travelling in buggies. As the two horses were yoked up and went away, one of the members of the board was left behind. He said, "Do not leave me in this desert." I lived only two miles away. When the line was built from Goomalling to Dowerin it was placed between two settlements. There were two separate agitations, one wanting the line to go to Dowerin and the other wanting it to go to Komberkine. The Cowcowing agricultural area was being surveyed at the time. In order to touch that district a flying survey was made to Minni-

vale. Mr. Weir was the engineer at the time, and he made the flying survey. Mr. Morrell's job was to endeavour to get the railway brought further south. If the board had carried out its promise there would not have been the trouble over the Yarramongy-Yorkrakine railway. They gave a definite promise to bring the line down eight miles south of the well, but ran it two miles north, so that it is 10 miles out of its proper route. The advisory board may not always be right. We, as representatives of the people, should not be silent on these subjects. Some three or four years ago the board went to the Benjabbering district, and said the land was not good enough for a railway. Since then it has been proved to be better land than it was thought to be, and the route has been altered to the proper place.

The Premier: No one claims to be infallible.

Mr. LINDSAY: I think the board was wrong in the instance I have quoted. The Minister for Lands stated that the Agricultural Bank were advancing money on light lands. Last year a light lands commission reported on this question and recommended that the Agricultural Bank should advance 50 per cent. of the value of the improvements made on light lands. This is being done with the exception that the Bank are under the impression that a man requires a large area on which to make a living. It is thought that 1,800 acres is scarcely sufficient on which a man can make a living. During last February and March I visited the Eastern States to inquire into the light lands question. I attended a conference of farmers in the northern mallee country of Victoria. There were 300 delegates there, and I was made chairman. In that position I was able to get a good grasp of the subject under discussion. I also travelled hundreds of miles through the country by motor car, and examined the land very closely. Our light lands are equal to the northern mallee lands. The farmers at the conference discussed the area required for a man in order that he might make a living. At that time the blocks were cut up into 640 acres, but a motion was moved that the area should be increased to 800 acres. I would rather have 800 acres of our light lands, that is the good solid sand plain, than I would have the same area in the northern mallee country of Victoria. In the interests of Western Australia, those who select land

should be allowed to select only a living area. If we are to assist people it is better to settle the country in small blocks so that the whole of the country may be improved within a short time. It is better to do this than allow the country to be taken up in 20,000 acre blocks, which take so much longer to settle and improve.

The Premier: The State is justified in assisting a man to make a decent living only, not in enabling him to secure a big income because of the Government assistance.

Mr. LINDSAY: One of the troubles, in connection with water supply matters, that I experience in my electorate arises from the fact that the soldier settlement authorities forced the men to take up two blocks—the land is heavy forest country—before the authorities would provide water supplies. Each man there has partially improved one of the blocks he holds, but the average man will not be able to improve the second block for years to come. The result is that the soldier settlers are faced with taxes they know they cannot pay. It is not the work on the partially improved blocks that they are afraid of, but the knowledge that they will not be able to improve the other blocks and yet will have to face the additional financial burden. This question of areas should have been faced before now. No other State has provided so much land as we have provided in Western Australia, and that means it will take longer to improve the land already held than it will elsewhere. The present state of affairs is bad for the settlers, because, after all, we are all land hungry, for we secure larger holdings in the belief that the land will become more valuable. We should look to the interests and the good of the State, rather than of the individual. In looking through the Estimates I find one item that I cannot understand. It deals with group settlement. The statistics attached to the Estimates show the actual indebtedness on the group settlement work to be £3,175,029. In the next column there appears an entry setting out that the actual cash spent totalled £3,788,973, a difference of approximately £600,000. I cannot understand the meaning of those two items. A little while ago the Minister for Lands presented figures dealing with group settlement matters and if it is a fact that we have spent approximately £3,800,000 on this work, we should be getting some re-

turn for that expenditure. Groups 3 and 4 were established on the 24th May, 1921. According to the Minister's own statement, the settlers on those groups, after five years' developmental work, have a fraction over four cows per man. According to the opinion of the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith), the revenue from those cows would represent £24 gross per year; if hon. members accept my figures the return would be £56.

The Premier: Do you say that is the average number for all the groups.

Mr. LINDSAY: I am dealing with Groups 3 and 4, which were established at an early stage. The average number of settlers on Group 3 has been 20 and the average number of cows on the group, 77. On Group 4 the average number of settlers has been 15 and the average number of cows, 71. That gives an average of just over four cows per settler. That result surprises me. I know we must not say much against the group settlement scheme, but this shows that the development has been slow, much slower than it should be. Those two groups are established in good forest country and certainly the settlers should be deriving more revenue to-day than four cows will bring in to the average man. I desire to bring this matter before the House because we have not had an opportunity of discussing the question and I doubt if we ever shall. There are a few other matters I intend to deal with, but I will have opportunities when we are discussing the items and, therefore, it is not my intention to delay the Committee any longer.

Progress reported.

PAPERS—BENCUBBIN-KALKALLING RAILWAY EXTENSION.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received an intimation that the file relating to the Bencubbin-Kalkalling railway extension is required by the department. The file has been on the Table of the House and if no objection is raised, I shall release it accordingly.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: May we have the file again prior to considering the Bill?

The Premier: Yes, if necessary, but the file has been on the Table for a week or two.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I did not know the file was on the Table.

Hon. G. Taylor: I presume the file is required for the work of the department.

The Premier: That is so.

House adjourned at 9.54 p.m.